



The
OLD JOHANNIAN ASSOCIATION
Summer 2023
Newsletter

EDITOR'S NOTES



Hello and welcome to fellow OJ's.

If you are reading this, you have found our new website or been sent a hard-copy version.

My name is Stefan Bartkowiak, and I am currently the OJA editor. I've been with the OJA and served on its committee for close on 30 years and now I am 'back in the saddle' temporarily. I'll get straight to the point for this newsletter issue as there is a lot of significant news to report.

Just to let you know that the intention is that the newsletter should be scheduled to be published 4 times a year:

Spring / Summer / Autumn / Winter on the first day of each third month:

March (3rd month) June (6th month) September (9th month) and December (12th month)

I should point out the sad and unexpected sudden loss of our previous chairman, Peter Cullinane. There are several references to Peter in this issue because of his central role in the OJA, and this mention will hopefully put the narratives into perspective.

We have sadly also lost another long-serving OJA committee member, Charles Hoar after a long and trying illness.

*****IMPORTANT*****

OJA Contact details

You can contact the OJA through either our email address or the Facebook Group page.

OldJohannianAssociation@gmail.com

(Old email: OJASJC@yahoo.co.uk)

(Please note: this email will be replaced with the new email attached to the new web site.)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/904877970929790>

www.old-johannian-association.com

Our main point of contact will be through our web site which is in its final stages of construction.

Please visit the OJA FaceBook page for OJA recent updates.

Visit our web site to:

To join the OJA

Download the latest newsletter

Get details of upcoming events and purchase tickets

Access archives

View OJA consultation documents

Please do not hesitate to share these contacts details with your other OJ contacts.

It is only through our ability to contact OJ's can we fulfil our true OJA role.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	TITLE	VENUE	DETAILS
<i>We ask your patience with this calendar whilst we consider the implications of the loss of the college, OJA dinner venues, the options for continuing the golf and the planning of a series of smaller events that will add support to the stated aims of the OJA.</i>			
TBA	Annual Dinner	TBA	TBA
TBA	OJA Golf	TBA	TBA
TBA	Other	TBA	TBA
TBA	Other	TBA	TBA

Saint John's College (SJC)



The college closure.

2022 was a watershed year for the College and the OJA. Many of us received notice that the college would not be re-opening after the summer holidays. It officially closed on the 14th July 2022. The numbers had dropped (*the number of pupils reportedly fell from 630 in 2010 to 256 in 2022,*) and the overheads were spiralling. Reluctantly the decision was made to close after over a century (114 years - founded in 1908) of providing education to the local area and later, the wider world community via its boarding department.

Recent college history.

This was the statement published by the De La Salle trustees.

"The Trustees of De La Salle are saddened to learn of the decision by the Governors of St John's College Southsea to announce the closure of the College due to declining numbers of pupils. The College was a De La Salle school until 2015 at which date De La Salle transferred the College, as a viable going concern, to an independently formed charitable company, 'St John's College Southsea Limited'. This company, which is entirely separate from the De La Salle Trust, took over the school's assets and the running of the College.

De La Salle has had no governance responsibility for the College, nor for the maintenance of the College's properties in the seven years since 2015.

The De la Salle Trustees, as ever, wish the pupils and staff the very best in their future endeavours."

I understand that a rent was due to the De La Salle trustees for the college site, and for some considerable time this rent was generously written off in an attempt to support the college and its survival.

College plaudits include....

"St John's College was an academically strong institution. In 2018, a pass rate of 77% A-C at A-Level was achieved with multiple individual successes and this resulted in the College's Sixth Form becoming the highest value-added in the Portsmouth area that year."*

"An investigation by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) carried out between the 25th and 26th January 2017 concluded that "the education the pupils receive, enables the school to fulfil its aims of offering a fully rounded educational experience in all aspects" as well as concluding that "The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good" while "The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent". At this time, the College had a total of 577 students on roll according to the report."

Like many institutions of this kind, it builds its character over the years and now that continuity has been lost, the traditions and associated strengths of the college have also now been lost for all time. It was interesting that in my tenure of chairman back in 2018/19 for the OJA centenary year, I visited the college many times. I remarked on the increasing dilapidation of the fabric of the college and offered to try and recruit support from the OJA membership for some voluntary renovation work, but no response or interest was forthcoming from the college. For whatever reason there seemed an inability of the college management to rectify the situation and clearly the situation did not inspire the parents of prospective new pupils.

Apparently over 20 years ago, a chance conversation with one of the brothers revealed that the SJC site had been valued at £6.5m.

An open day was held on the 3rd July 2022, allowing former staff and pupils to explore the school one final time.



A point of interest.

An application to the College of Arms for the school crest was granted in the early 1930s. The five-pointed star represents the Lasallian Order, the position of St John's by the sea is affirmed by the six waves.



The sale of the college.

Hugh Jesseman and Claire Howell were appointed as Joint Liquidators of the Company on 26 August 2022.

The college has now been sold to the Nicolas James development group.

On the 19th June 2023 there was an open day on the college site to allow interested parties to discover the development plans and to consult with the development company.

The OJA archives representative (Steve Bedingham) was able to attend, and reports a very constructive meeting with the company representatives. Not only is the company keen to preserve elements of the history of the site, but has also given us access to the large quantity of archive material and memorabilia that they have discovered. They also appear to be very keen to hand over this material to us.



The land offered for sale is delineated in red and there are 4 exceptions to the 'island.'

- Part of the lower school.
- Hayfield (*The reception building off Nelson Road.*)
- The old infirmary on the corners of Cavendish and Albany roads. (*Already sold?*)
- The privately owned house at the corner of Nelson Road. (*Never owned by SJC*)

The sale was for offers in excess of £8m by estate agents Bernards estate agents, Southsea office.

Key features

- EXISTING USE/DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- EDUCATIONAL FACILITY
- DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- 1.87 HECTARES (4.62 acres) SITE
- CIRCA 11,609 sq. m (124,947 sq. ft)
- FREEHOLD
- OFFERS INVITED ON UN-CON BASIS

Property description

EDUCATIONAL FACILITY/DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR SALE

We are pleased to offer to the market St John's College. A former independent school extending to approximately 1.87 hectares (4.62 acres). The site comprises a mixture of purpose-built teaching accommodation, grounds, and collection of period buildings

Having spoken to the estate agents I was informed that being such a large sale, it was handled entirely by the MD (Daniel) and the sale went through Friday 17th February for currently an undisclosed sum. Apparently, there was a great deal of interest in the site.

I have repeatedly searched the UK Land Registry database and there appears to be no record of the sale listed. The postcode PO5 3QW is also not recognised.



THE OLD JOHANNIAN ASSOCIATION (OJA)

(Inaugurated as the "Boys' club' in 1919 and converted to the OJA in 1925)

The OJA commissioned its own crest, thought to have occurred in the 1970's.

The Association is now having to react to the news that the college is no more. The first effect is that no more OJ's are being created. The next thing to consider is that the OJA has now become the custodian of college archives, memorabilia and potentially all other matters related to the memory of the college. The OJA also needs to bridge the gap that exists between the 'Alumni' association as was administered by the college comprising of the younger element of OJ's, and the OJA itself which has carried the torch of facilitating OJ's over decades. Somehow, we need to avoid losing contact with as many as OJ's as we can and to extend what we do to provide what the younger element requires of us. We are minded of Aristotle's saying "*The whole is greater than the sum of the parts,*" when we contemplate the possibility of bringing the OJA and the SJC Alumni together. For years the OJA has sought this unification and during visits to the college, the prospect of this was advanced considerably, but not enough for the OJA to have been able to amalgamate the membership records.

OJA AGM 2022

At the last annual dinner, held at the Queen's hotel on Saturday 12th November 2022, the OJA AGM was held prior to the meal. It was well-attended by more than 16 members, and apart from the perennial business the position of OJA Chairperson was contested for the first time in memory. Peter Cullinane was the incumbent and chairing the AGM and was offering to continue in the role. Pat Mallon who was serving on the committee and acting as MC to the dinner that evening also put his name forward for the position of chairperson. Previous committee elections at the AGM were a formality and the members would be elected as standing members continuing to serve with new additions. The new committee would then meet and allocate who would take on the executive positions.

Considerable interest and debate ensued on this occasion and it was agreed that an election would be set up with Stefan Bartkowiak nominated as the 'Returning officer.' This would give the candidates the opportunity to set out their vision and the electorate to consider their vote. To keep within the Association rules, the committee committed to honouring the election result for the position of chairperson. The election took place and on Monday 12th December and Pat Mallon was declared the new OJA chairperson by a majority vote.

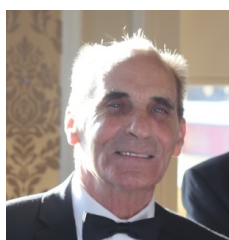
THE OJA COMMITTEE

The committee stands at present as:

1. Andy Valvona Chairperson / Secretary / Membership / Treasurer
2. Stefan Bartkowiak Editor / Archivist support / Web site / Facebook
3. Steve Bedingham Archives
4. Stephen Davies Events
5. Dominic Fontana LinkedIn



Andy Valvona



Steve Bedingham



Stefan Bartkowiak



Stephen Davies



Dominic Fontana

We also have the following committee member

Trevor Clarke Honorary member (until official resignation due to ill-health received.)

The committee has agreed to meet via the Microsoft 'TEAMS' app and regularly in person at an agreed venue. (*Currently the Queen's hotel.*)

Owing to significant personal pressures, Pat Mallon has reluctantly resigned from the committee. After a short caretaker period Stefan Bartkowiak has handed over the chair to Andy Valvona.

The OJA committee task list

The committee currently has a huge workload with all the changes, and our intention is to keep you all fully informed through the website and this newsletter.

Please be assured that there is no intention of passing any of these significant changes without a full consultation and support from the membership.

We are determined to keep the OJA as democratic as possible.

The Association rules need a re-write. They are out of date with many of the references being made to the bar in the Castle. The task had fallen to Stefan Bartkowiak and Peter Cullinane with the intention of submitting drafts to the membership with final adoption at the next AGM with the necessary membership approval. This is a re-build of the last known set of OJA rules dated 2011.

Going digital. Migrating many of our activities over to digital forms is also quite a task. Everything from the website through to on-line payments for dinner tickets and the like. The web site will be our main gateway for the membership and we need time to get it right before launching. We should have some form of reduced service within 3 months.

Membership contact. Re-assessment of methods of membership contact with the added dimension of maintaining a service to those who are not (nor ever likely to be) digital.

Honorary OJA president. The position of Honorary OJA President had been created some years ago and recently conferred on Peter Cullinane. This position was in recognition of his dedicated support for the OJA over the years. The role is intended to be purely ceremonial with the executive work remaining with the chairperson. We were pleased to be able to recognise Peter's work and elect him as president within the OJA with the intention of ratifying his position with the membership at the next AGM. We are now debating how this position should be managed in the future.

Long-serving OJA committee members. Trevor Clarke is another very long-standing member and tireless supporter of the OJA. He currently feels that due to declining health it is time for him to step down from what has been an exceptionally long period of service. We presented Trevor with a painting of the college with thanks on behalf of the OJA. He is delighted with the gesture.

The OJA finances are kept in a Barclays bank account with 3 signatories. 2 of those signatories have recently suddenly passed away and sorting out the administrative requirements to appoint new signatories from the committee is nearly completed. I understand that we have approximately £6k in the account.

Membership categories. It has become clear over the years that there has been a gap on the OJA thinking, namely.... what constitutes an OJ? For the last 3 years Steve Bedingham has served on the committee and the last dinner was also attended by Dr. Graham Goodlad. They are both past teachers at SJC. We are also in contact with a number of other past teachers. Steve and Graham both expressed an element of unease at being regarded as possible interlopers as they are not past pupils. We now have a clear belief that all SJC staff should be considered as candidates for OJA membership. Firstly, they would have much to contribute to the OJA in their own right, but also at reunions, they would present an essential and desirable element to the event for any OJ's attending. Our deliberations centre around whether the invites should be open to all or by invitation. Should the position be honorary or simply another category of membership with fees attaching and whether these memberships confer full voting rights at AGMs and other votes. These issues will be part of the rules review which will be presented to the membership for approval at the next AGM.

Insurance. The question of public liability and insurance has been raised. It is being investigated further, but currently we believe that in the past we have been covered by the college insurance or the insurance at the venues. No other circumstances where insurance was required has been identified. Nevertheless, as part of due-diligence the matter is being further researched.

Taxation. We have ascertained that no annual returns are required with HMRC. Peter Cullinane was able to give a professional opinion on the matter and we are currently seeking confirmation.

The SJC alumni Association. The committee intends to reach out to the younger OJ element by organising virtual meetings and exploring new initiatives. This requires careful planning to ensure we reach as much of our intended audience as possible and then to offer them something of relevant interest to encourage them to become OJA members.

OJA Golf



Bro David & David Harris

The OJA golf has run and run for many years. Initially setup by Bro David and continued by David Harris. Every autumn an OJA tournament following Stapleford rules was held at the Waterlooville golf club. In the last few years, the OJA sought to develop this and included the pupils of SJC with sponsorships and coaching. All this was choreographed by Brian Saunders who was a sports master (also deputy head) at SJC and has many contacts in the sporting world. There is an OJA desire and willingness to continue to support this event, but from now on, we need to rely entirely on OJ's to take part to make this a continuing success. We remain responsible for administering the £500 David Harris legacy fund. **Please contact us to register your interest in the OJA golf.**

From Brian Saunders

With the feud between the PGA and LIV engaging the press it reminded me to re-emphasise my reasons for being involved in sport in the first place. Fun, and a chance to compete and meet old friends. This inspired me, when asked by Stefan, to write a few words for the OJA newsletter.

OJA golf is a wonderful opportunity to meet compete and have fun. It is also, if the right venue is selected, a chance for those who don't play but would like to meet up with old College friends or teachers, to get together.

I have arranged to meet some OJ's to seek advice.

My aim is to find a venue with golf that has a hotel and a bar and an environment conducive for a reunion.

There is no better time than now as the College no longer exists in bricks and mortar but can still flourish in the achievements and friendships established over many years.

This is the first small step in trying to connect many people who spent their formative years together, and who are keen to share their stories.

If you have any good ideas or would like more information as the idea grows, please contact the editor and he can put you in touch with me. Or if you prefer, please email me direct at bpspe@hotmail.com

I would greatly appreciate your help.

Kind regards: *Brian Saunders*.

More events. It has been agreed that apart from the annual dinner and golf, the OJA should endeavour to organise at least 1 extra interim event per year.

Supporting the OJA committee. The committee is well-aware that in the immortal words of the saying "*a problem shared, is a problem halved.*" In this case we are referring to load sharing and skill sets especially among the membership. If there are any amongst you who would be interested in lending a hand in any particular aspect of the work to be done or any new initiatives, the committee looks forward to hearing from you. This could be anything from helping with the planning of the dinner, administration, archiving and/or research, communications, new events or indeed anything we haven't yet thought of. This need not be a permanent commitment and we are well aware of the time pressures that plague us all currently, but it may be that you have a particular interest or a skill that could open our horizons further.

Networking. An essential component of any organisation such as the OJA is networking. It forges and strengthens links amongst the OJ community. It generates new friendships based on shared past experiences. It is the 'bread & butter' of an organisation such as the OJA. It needs an interactive membership. One that creates its own agendas. Where does the OJA fit into all this? It provides the core of the Association that members can draw upon to further their own social groups. The OJA provides the annual dinner and golf and the newsletters. It is keen to provide more and it will focus on creating at least another 2 events per year to widen the appeal. What you, as members can contribute, is to share our contact details with your OJ colleagues and encourage them to become members. I am sure that you would agree that 'social media' is a powerful force, and the OJA aims to provide an aspect of that 'force for good' that is targeted at our own community. Membership details will be available from the web site.

Please remember to share our contact details with fellow OJs that you remain in contact with.

Lost but never forgotten.

We now come to the sad news of our long-standing and stalwart OJA committee members:



Charles Hoar

Charles has served on the OJA committee over many years applying himself with great commitment and energy to various roles including editor and chairperson. He had a wide circle of OJ friends, and was highly regarded by those who knew him. He had been suffering from oesophageal cancer for the last year and passed away on Friday 27th January 2023. His funeral took place on Thursday 9th March 2023. The OJA have passed condolences on to the family on behalf of all of us who benefitted from Charles' dedication.

Peter Cullinane

Peter has been a tireless supporter of the OJA and has been the treasurer for a couple of decades. He has also taken the role of secretary and chairperson. A very private man, but congenial and dedicated. Being an accountant, he had a great eye for detail which he used to the great benefit of the OJA. He led an active life with his 'Beagling' interests amongst many others. Quietly dealing with his health issues, we eventually learned that he had Leukaemia and was unable to survive the stresses of the chemotherapy. He died on Thursday 19th January 2023 and his funeral took place on the 23rd February 2023.



Two great stalwarts of the OJA whose dedication and commitment over many, many years will be sorely missed.

Lost friends

We have recently learned that Bro Terence passed away in January 2023. May he rest in peace.

Looking back

This is where we remember lost friends from the past.

You are invited to contribute to future newsletters by sending in memories of staff or OJ's you would like remembered.

JOHN OFFORD

1924-2007

John Offord was one of those inspirational teachers who left his mark on generations of OJ's. As part of a triumvirate with Helen Dyer and Ronnie Mills, he played his part in inculcating a love of the performing arts in their charges. John combined, philosophy, history and a sense of the romantic in a unique blend, touching so many of his pupils who became his friends. With a mixture of his love of contemporary European drama and studied eccentricity, he brought a real breath of 'Mittel Europa' to Southsea's sounding shores.

Born on the 7th of August 1924 in Southsea, and educated at Portsmouth Grammar School, he was called up in 1942 and joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and was seconded to his beloved Fourth Hussars. They served in North Africa, Italy and Austria between 1943 and 1945

After 1945, John elected to remain a career soldier and over the next twenty-three years he served in places as disparate as India, Cyprus, Düsseldorf and Reading. He finished his service in 1968 as the last commanding officer of Southsea Castle before it was demilitarised in that year.

He gained his degree whilst he was still in the Army, and achieved his teacher's certificate at Portsmouth Polytechnic (as it then was) after leaving the Army.

St. Johns was his first teaching appointment, and he soon made his mark with a production of "The Long and the Short and the Tall" in 1969 with the benevolent assistance of Brother Swithun. For the first time St. John's sixth formers appeared on stage smoking and swearing in a new "reality".

Many productions followed. Works by Betti, Camus, Chekhov, Camus, Dürrenmatt, Pinter, Sartre, Schiller, Shaw, Sartre and Zuckmayer, during the course of which John combined the talents of staff, friends and pupils in an almost seamless robe, which, for many, was the bridge between boyhood and manhood.

John retired from teaching in 1989, and became a stalwart of the Theatre Royal, of which he remained a Trustee until he died. He wrote a Portsmouth Paper on the history of Theatre in Portsmouth, which is still in print. In his later years he combined in his love of spectacle, with his love of philosophy in his support for St Agatha's Church Portsea, which was, under its charismatic nineteenth century parish priest, Father Dolling, the model for Compton McKenzie's novel, "The Altar Steps"

Perhaps the best epitaph is the conclusion of a rather puzzled brother, on seeing one of John's productions for the first time was: - "Well. I didn't understand it. But then I don't suppose anyone else did. So, I suppose that it really doesn't matter."

Romantic. Soldier. Teacher. Mentor
(Much admired by those, whose lives he touched.)

Brother Edmund Damian Roe FSC

Born: Peter Mervyn Roe on 21st April 1921 in Ealing, London

Died at Clayton Court 8th February 2011

Aged 89 Years

1933 Juniorate at Vauxbelets, Guernsey

1937 Novitiate at Castlemount, Dover

1938 Scholasticate at Castlemount, Dover

1940 Teaching at St Joseph's College, Beulah Hill

1946 Final Profession

1955 Teaching and School Bursar at St Joseph's College, Ipswich

1959 Teaching at St Joseph's College, Beulah Hill and District Bursar

1962 Deputy Head at St Joseph's College, Beulah Hill

1965 Teaching and Housemaster at St John's College, Southsea

1969 Headmaster at St John's College, Southsea

1976 Teaching at St Joseph's College, Beulah Hill

1979 Headmaster at St Joseph's College, Ipswich

1987 Teaching at St Joseph's College, Ipswich

1988 Teaching at St John's College, Southsea

1991 Part-time teaching at St John's College, Southsea

1999 District Archivist at the Provincialate, Oxford

2007 Retired to Clayton Court

May he Rest in Peace

Bro Damian was a man of great thought and conscience who always tried to understand everything for himself and then apply an unbiased judgement. He was a reluctant head for St. John's, wishing to shun the publicity, but nevertheless, the college thrived under his administration.

The Annual Dinner

Owing to the pandemic, the annual dinner(s) had been postponed and finally re-scheduled for November 2022. This now leaves us with the problem of how to bring it back to its traditional date of the weekend after Easter. One of the considerations for this choice was synchronising it with the SJC holidays, especially in the past when the meal was held in the college refectory. The Castle bar was central to the event and the boarding houses were made available to guests for overnight accommodation (ended in 2014.)

The committee believes that maintaining a consistent date for the dinner is essential for its continuing success and further expansion. We considered a smaller event after this coming Easter to re-jig our timings but with insufficient time to organise such an event we must now incorporate an 18-month gap from the last dinner in our future planning.

Of course, we will continue to investigate other options and seek the best solution for continuing the OJA traditions.



THE OLD JOHANNIAN DINNER—1933.

The SJC refectory where the dinner was last held in 2005. Always a large turnout and a popular retire to the bar afterwards where the event extended into the early hours.

70 years on



OJA Annual dinner 2003 (SJC Refectory)

The Royal sailors' home club, Queen's Road. Received our first visit on Saturday 13th May 2006. We returned here the following 2 years to 2008.



OJA Annual dinner 2017 RN & RAYC club



Another of our old standby's is no longer available to us. The Royal Navy and Royal Albert Yacht Club in Pembroke Road. We have successfully held several dinners there in the past from 2010 but sadly the club has now closed.

We have been served well by the Queen's hotel. Our first visit was in 2009 for the college centenary dinner. We also enjoyed a very successful OJA centenary dinner there in 2019 and again the dinner last year. It is located in Southsea, overlooking the Solent and Southsea common. Its location is logical for us. We are currently in talks with the hotel to explore possible longer-term arrangements whereby we would enjoy more advantageous rates for the dinner venue and guest accommodation along with a venue for our committee meetings.



OJA Annual dinner 2019 Queen's hotel

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Here we just post items that are of historical interest to the OJA and of SJC.

The 'SPICE ISLANDER'

The boat was a converted lifeboat that was berthed in the Camber dock. It was 'skipped' by Bro Reginald and regularly taken into the Solent including one trip as far as the NAB.

Is there anyone out there that can tell, us more about the "SPICE ISLANDER"?



SPICE ISLANDER
The SJC boat used for pupils during the earlier days of the college.

The OJA bar in the castle.



The original home of the OJA, which included the meeting room, office and a place for all the OJA trophies.



A closing thought?

As memories fade and experiences of being at SJC pass into the 'mists of time,' I wonder how the school song will be remembered?

It always seemed a bit cumbersome and many were reluctant or unable to join in (particularly at the annual dinners.) It was definitely memorable in a funny sort of way, and those lines....

"The School, The School, The School"

I have no doubt will remain with us.

The School Song

In the days of old, when hearts of gold
For Right made common cause,
They left to Fame a glorious name,
But not for vain applause!
JOHANNIANS, we, with souls as free,
Can do as they of yore,
And sow the seeds of noble deeds
By SOUTHSEA'S sounding shore

Chorus :-

The School! The School! The School!
And all who love its story!
The School! The School! The School!
Its name – its fame – its glory.
"PER LABOREM AD HONOREM"
Runs its golden rule
So now with me,
Give – Three times Three!
The School! The School! The School!

The School Song

Be this our goal – with heart and soul
Our ALMA MATER'S name
To guard – renowned – with glory crowned.
High on the role of Fame:
In work and Play to hold our way.
When Honour's Rule shall be.
For one and all, a trumpet call
To strike for Victory!

Chorus

We realise Life's golden prize
In Youth is lost – or won!
With noblest aim we'll play the game
Until our Duty's done!
ST JOHN'S fair name in living flame
Of Love, shall, day by day.
A symbol shine of Love Divine
To light us on our way!

Chorus