

The Old Johannian Association

# The Bulletin

Spring 2007



\*\*\*\*\* HEADLINES \*\*\*\*\*

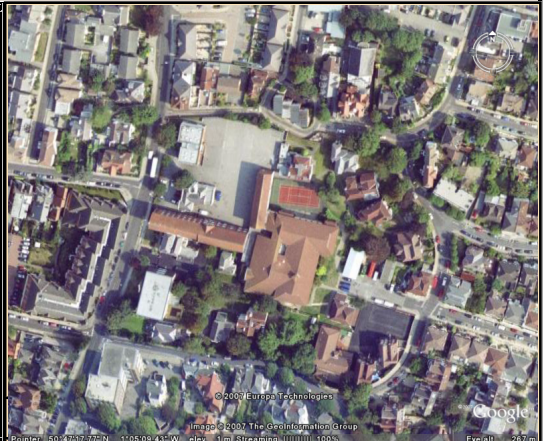
## The Annual Dinner.

The 88th annual Association dinner.  
(28th April 2007)

The OJA AGM  
and elections to the executive Committee

### CONTENTS

- Chairman's column
- Editorial
- The Association update
- Diary dates
- Member's news
- Events
- Annual dinner booking form.
- The last Register
- College News
- Contacting the OJA
- Contacting the college



## Chairman's column



Once again our 88th Annual Dinner and Reunion is almost upon us. The date is Saturday 28th April at the Royal Sailors' Home Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth. 6:00pm for a 7:30 start. The AGM will be held at 6:15pm (prior to the dinner) in the Brookes bar on the ground floor.

Those who came last year know what a wonderful evening was enjoyed by all. My guest of honour will be Brian Saunders (co-master of 6th form,) well known to the younger members of the OJ's. I am sure that we can expect an entertaining speech from him.

Limited accommodation is available at the special price of £32 bed and breakfast. Please book early.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very happy Easter, and I look forward to greeting you on Saturday the 28th April.

*Sincerely*  
*Tony Baker*

## Editorial

### Hello fellow OJ's.

This is the last Bulletin before the Annual Dinner on the 28th April. Along with the annual dinner goes the OJA AGM. It is at the AGM that the Committee re-invents itself for the coming year, and it is no exaggeration to state that now is the time that the all important infusion of new blood and talent is needed. It is an interesting time in the development of the OJA. Much of the old style, time consuming deliberations on the mundane housekeeping chores have gone and the Committee is more concerned with the more interesting and challenging developments that are happening now.



Firstly I would ask you to plan to turn up at the annual dinner early so that you may attend the AGM (18:45hrs) which is held immediately prior to the Dinner. Don't worry, it doesn't drag on and you can take your beer (or whatever your poison) in with you. I would then urge you to seriously consider whether you could join the Committee, either as a general member or in a specific role. There is a requirement to fill the following posts:- membership secretary, editor, secretary, treasurer, 6th form liaison and of course Chairman. Undoubtedly many of the current stalwarts will be ready and willing to stand again, but we do need new blood. Election results will be available in the Summer newsheet.

In any event, it is rewarding to see that the OJA continues to bring OJ's back together and to be able to support the new generations of OJ's.

Finally, it's time for me to say goodbye as editor and membership secretary. My replacements will hopefully

materialise at the AGM. There are some extraordinary people in the OJ community, and it's been enormously rewarding discovering them.

Regards

Stefan Baetkowiak

# ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The OJA currently has a steadily increasing membership. It is also undergoing a slow but inexorable metamorphosis. The decor and design of the clubrooms are under review, the future method of funding the OJA and the activities it supports are being examined. The venue for the annual dinner was changed last year, and following on from that success it returns to the Royal Sailors' home club in Queen street. The production of the newsletters has settled down to a more regular regime. By the time you read this, a new and fairly powerful computer system will have been installed in the clubrooms with WIFI broadband access and will have the capacity to administer the newsletter productions and membership database on-site.

An increasingly productive relationship with the College is developing with some interesting potential spin-offs to be announced when appropriate in the future.

With the acquisition of the computer equipment it is hoped to explore the possibilities of tapping into the current student IT skills for the production of the newsletters. This has the dual

benefit of letting the non-digital members of the Committee off the hook and provide the current 6th form with the opportunity to develop their publishing skills and provide another useful entry on the ever-important CV's they are busy constructing at their stage of life. On that subject the Silver group is getting close to being able to start support activities for the students using OJ talent and skills. A fundamental skill is interview technique, and we hope to run a couple of workshops where OJ's who have been in senior positions that involve experience of interviewing will run a morning session of how to prepare for an interview, and a some short practice sessions with a formal interview in the afternoon accompanied by a critique. Through the Silver group and its contacts a 6th form visit to the Air Traffic Control Centre at Swanwick was arranged.

We are looking at resurrecting sporting links and activities between the OJA and SJC. The College has excellent facilities and they are keen to resume that friendly rivalry that used to exist between the OJA members and the incumbent students.

## Diary Dates

**Annual Dinner**  
May 28th 2007

**24th OJA Golf**  
18th October 2007

# MEMBER'S NEWS

**Val Fontana** is the assistant to Father **Brian Croughton OJ**, as the Portsmouth Diocesan archivist. They took over from Father **Francis Isherwood OJ** who died about 4 years ago.

**Julian Pottage** (early 1970's) writes for the "Bridge club" magazine having written several books on Bridge. He is in touch with **Brian Lupton** and **Dave Sayers**. Dave is now teaching part-time at a girls' grammar school in Plymouth. Dave taught at SJC for 32 years before moving to Plymouth to be closer to his family.

**Peter Bryant** (1942-51) continues to maintain regular contact with Bro. Peter (**Alain Bilien**), one of two French brothers who were at St John's for a time during the war. Peter and his wife Diane spent a birthday break in France over the Armistice weekend and were able to visit Bro. Peter at the Maison de Retraite, St Avé, only a few minutes from the centre of Vannes. Coincidentally it turned out that both Bro. Peter's and Diane's Birthdays are on the same date - 12th November. So Bro. Peter was celebrating his 85th Birthday and Diane something less (Classified). As regular visitors they are always made very welcome and lunched with Bro. Peter - a bit different to the regular meal at St John's of fifty three years ago when it was fish (herrings-in-tomato sauce) and chips followed by cake and custard. In addition Peter also found Joseph le Bars, Bro. Peter's companion at the time and several brothers who had spent significant periods at Beulah Hill and Ipswich - all

very keen to practise their English. It is a pleasure to report that both old brothers are remarkably well. Even after all these years Bro. Peter was able to recall the names of all the boys he was associated with in what was then the Lower 3rd.

**Barry Brown** Has been in South Africa for 25 years. The Africa bug has bitten well and truly. Occasionally playing host to passing OJ's in Johannesburg bursting with energy and boundless enthusiasm for South Africa. A serious OJ networker.

**Professor Andrew Coyle CMG**  
(Professor of Prison Studies)

Andrew Coyle had 25 years' experience at a senior level in the prison services of the United Kingdom. He was Director of ICPS between 1997 and February 2005. He has a PhD in criminology from the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of a number of books and articles on issues concerning criminal justice and has extensive international experience on prison matters, having visited prison systems in many countries as an expert consultant for bodies such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. For the last ten years he has been at London University.

He is still in contact with **Sean McGovern**, who retired a few years ago after a many years with British Telecom. He is just about to take grandchildren off on a skiing holiday - although he says that he is more likely to enjoy the après-ski than the piste.



### 6th Arts (1962/63)

**Back Row:** Chris Wilshere, Anthony Garvey, Paul Catcheside

**Middle:** Chris Rutherford, Andy Coyle, Greory-Janes, Potter, Barry Brown, Mike Fox

**Front:** Rich Downer, Howard Evans, Sean McGovern, Bro Richard, Syd Leui-lette, Bill Everest, Steve Harrington.

## **MBE for an OJ**

### **Neville Stiles**

Neville has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year honours list. He was named on the Diplomatic and Overseas list for his work as project manager of the LX project which is funded by the British government.

For 3 years, Neville has helped promote peace between Belize and Guatemala. He has set up a series of language-exchange programs and activities which has proven unprecedented in bringing together the two warring neighbours.

Neville grew up in North End, Portsmouth. At the age of 19 he went to Mexico to complete his degree in

Spanish and Latin American studies. He has lived in Guatemala for the last 25 years. Currently age 52 and a father of five.

Remembered at SJC for being lead soloist for several years in the productions produced by Helen Dyer.

He says:—"I miss living near the sea in Portsmouth, and the brisk autumn walks along the seafront."

"I always wanted to give back to my country what it had invested in me at university and the LX project has provided me with the best possibility to do just that.

# EVENTS

## The Annual Dinner

### 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner and Reunion Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2007

Royal sailors' home club

75-80 Queen St  
Portsmouth, PO1 3HS

02392 824231

Accommodation:- 02392 837681

This is the last bulletin before the 2007 OJA annual dinner scheduled for the 28th April held at the Royal sailors' home club in Queen street.



*The Royal Sailor's home club located a few hundred yards up from the Warrior and the Dockyard gate.*

Some details of surrounding facilities and how to find the venue:-

Queen street is the road that joins the dockyard (Victory) gate (*where HMS Victory languishes alongside the Warrior*) and St. John's Roman Catholic

cathedral. The Royal sailor's home club is a couple of hundred yards up from the dockyard gate on the right hand side. (*Opposite where the old Whitbread brewery used to be.*)

This a ten minute walk from the Portsmouth harbour railway station.

Recommended parking is in the Gunwharf underground car park, which is security monitored. Parking charges are suspended overnight so the cost is reasonable. This is just under a 20 minute walk away.

Go to

<http://www.google.co.uk/maps>  
and type in PO1 3HS.

It will come up with the rest home and give you the opportunity to see it as a satellite picture to help you get your bearings.

Last year saw our first visit to the RSHC and following on from that success a return is planned. The advantages to this venue included:-

No security restrictions for arriving and departing.

Full support with bar, catering and service facilities.

Accommodation with breakfast.

Massively reduced workload for the volunteer organisers.

The Dinner is preceded by Mass in the College chapel at 5:45pm with transport to the RSHC afterwards. Then the OJA AGM at 6:45pm. Please consider arriving early to attend the AGM. It should take no longer than 45 minutes and is an essential part of the OJA calendar.

The dining area is furnished with large round tables seating 10. The whole venue is conducive to a relaxed and comfortable reunion with old College friends and

teachers. It is certainly worth the effort of networking and filling a table of 10 with your own group.

### **Itinerary**

**Arrive 6:00pm** – Balcony Bar Opens –

**AGM 6:45pm** (Brocks bar, ground floor)

**Dinner 7:30pm**

Menu :

Paté ~ Roast Topside of Prime Beef ~ Old English sherry trifle ~

Cheese & Biscuits ~ Coffee & Mints

Glass of Port

Wine on the Table

(additional wine MUST be purchased from the Club)

The Bar will re-open after the main course has been served.

**Approx 9:15pm**

Speeches & Raffle

Socialising until midnight.

**Function ends 12:30am**

(The Home Club is a 5 minute walk from Gunwharf and it's late night clubs and casino, for those who wish to continue their evening !!)

**COST PER HEAD £28**

**IMPORTANT: ANYONE WISHING TO BOOK ACCOMMODATION SHOULD DO SO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SEE SEPARATE LEAFLET ENCLOSED (£32 bed & breakfast)**

We need to confirm numbers 2 weeks in advance, so plan early. Complete the enclosed form and send it to Anne-Marie.

Tickets will be dispatched from 2 weeks prior to the event.

## **OJA Christmas gathering**

The Gathering on the 30th December 2006 at the Wellington pub, Old Portsmouth went well, with a turnout of about 25, mainly from the younger element. A buffet was laid on by Angus and Kate, and it seemed to mark the Christmas period for the OJ's in appropriate fashion. For many of the new leavers, the hectic period of university, career chasing and simply stepping out into the big wide world makes it difficult to warrant the cost and overcome the

impracticabilities of attending an OJA meet up. The Christmas period provides a window of opportunity, when many OJ's travel home to the Portsmouth area. It seems that there are enough OJ's wanting to take advantage of this opportunity and we intend to consider repeating and expanding the event for next Christmas. So expect another meet up about the same time 2007 and plan to be there.

**Old Johannian Association 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion 2007**

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April**

**Royal Sailor's Home Club**

**Ticket Order Form**

1. Please send me ..... (number) tickets  
for the Reunion Dinner at :- **£28 each**

**CHEQUES PLEASE WITH YOUR ORDER**

Made payable to

**'The Old Johannian Association' or 'OJA' .**

2. Applicant's name \_\_\_\_\_

3. OJA MEMBER? Y / N (Delete as appropriate)

VEGGIE? Y / N (Delete as appropriate)

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Dates at College \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please provide the names of those (*excluding yourself*) for whom you  
are buying tickets.

*(If possible include their ages / years at College.)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
9. \_\_\_\_\_

5. If you would like to make a contribution to the cost of guests, or sponsor a specific guest, please indicate and include this in your cheque payment.

Amount of Sponsorship: £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Guest (if appropriate) \_\_\_\_\_

6. I enclose my cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_ to cover dinner costs.  
(payable to "OJA")



**Old Johannian Association 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion 2007**

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April**

**Royal Sailor's Home Club**

**Ticket Order Form**

**PLEASE INCLUDE A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE FOR THE RETURN OF TICKETS.**

Please send to :-

**Anne-Marie Keogh-Swindells OJ,**

**12 Henderson Ave, Guildford, Surrey. GU2 9LP.**

**TEL ( *for important enquiries only!* ) 01483 838551**

Please photocopy the form on the previous page if you wish to retain your bulletin in pristine condition.

*(We have included the form in the bulletin as it is the most efficient method in time and cost to distribute it)*



## The Last Register



**JOHN HARMAN OFFORD**

Died aged 82

August 7th 1924 - January 25th 2007

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

Born on the 7<sup>th</sup> 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. Seconded to his beloved Fourth Hussars, he 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

# THE LAST REGISTER

certificate at Portsmouth Polytechnic (as it then was) after his retirement from service.

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, including works by Betti, Camus, Chekhov, Dürrenmatt, Pinter, Sartre, Schiller, Shaw 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 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"

JOHN OFFORD  
Romantic. Soldier. Teacher. Mentor  
RIP

*Tim Concannon*

John Offord's funeral:-

Those of you who wanted to be there but were unable to make it might want to hear about it.

Like the man, it was very Victorian and not very practical. He had made specific demands, namely no hymns, no Old Testament, reading, no sermon, no eulogy and no wake.

HOWEVER:- it was in a church so high that it needed scaffolding, (bells, smells and beautiful black velvet chasubles with more gold braid than the Lord Chancellor), there was a full funeral mass concelebrated by two priests, a horse drawn bier and a grave in the Highland Road cemetery. The mourners followed the funeral cortege on foot, which you can imagine from Fawcett Road, past his old house and then down Albert Road causing major obstructions everywhere.

Steve Pitt offered everyone the hospitality of the Eastney Cellars. You may be interested to know that Brother Damien (aged 86) actually walked the whole way from Highland Road to Eastney. The man is truly amazing. About 150 mourners were there.

*Tim Concannon*

As soon as I received the news I wanted to be there with other people who had known or been influenced by John Offord. He meant a lot to me.

There are very few people (teachers) who have really done the business in terms of making me think, totally changing my views on life, inspiring me etc. and Johnny Offord was one of them.

# THE LAST REGISTER

There were a few others at St. John's but we can discuss them another time. I remember him as a Physics teacher who also taught us Culture.

Those of you who remember me as a schoolboy will remember I always had a scientific bent with a particular penchant for physics. John encouraged that. I remember going to him in the 4<sup>th</sup> form (at a point I was adolescent and losing the plot) having just discovered Schrödinger's equation but not understanding any of it. He had to go right back to elementary concepts of a mathematical function to explain it (I was a prat and way out of my depth) but the fact was he took an interest, didn't fob me off, but laboriously went through it a step at a time. Helen Waddell said that education was: "*A miracle as new as the first crocus but its earth was the leaf drift of centuries*". In the last week I have been lecturing the next generation of undergraduates on the concept of the 'scientific method'. Johnny is part of that leaf mould.

I don't know whether it is as important or more important, but John also taught me about culture and dignity. He was not a one dimensional physics teacher. Thank you for reminding us of his production of "The Long and the Short and the Tall". I remember it well even though it was nearly 40 years ago! His love of opera, his passion for theatre, but more importantly his bearing, the way he held himself, the manner in which he spoke.

What more can I say.

*Alex Fedorec (Fred)*

## Jack Pike

(Head boy 1933) died on Tuesday 16th January in Telford Hospital of an embolism after a hip operation at the age of 92.

Jack took over as head boy from Ray Coomber when Ray left the College to enter the Brothers' novitiate. Ray eventually became Brother Caedmon FSC. Jack entered the civil service, Customs & Excise after leaving school. Apart from wartime military service in the intelligence corps, served mainly in the Middle East, he stayed with the Customs & Excise until the mid-seventies. At first he worked in Southampton, and then later he returned to his beloved Portsmouth where he worked in the VAT office and lived in Southsea near the Strand. Jack was married to an ex-Convent of the Cross girl, Etorina Stasi, (Etta) in 1937. Several of the boys of Jack's generation ended up married to girls of the Convent of the Cross which was then situated at the top of Grove road North, not far from St. John's. They had one son, Michael who is a retired major of the Royal Army Service Corps. As Jack and Etta got older, they decided to move to be near their son in Telford. Etta died in July 2004. Jack had other family connections with the College as his brother, Earnie was also a scholar and played for the 1937 first XI football team. Also his nephew, Stephen Lippett was at the College between 1972 and 1976. In addition his wife, Etta was the cousin of Val Fontana.

Jack was a lifetime supporter of Portsmouth F.C. and persuaded his son Michael that, in spite of living in Southampton, he should also support Pompey, and still does.



# College News



The start of term was overshadowed by the sad news of the sudden death of a Year 9 student over the Christmas break. Pupils and staff were deeply saddened to hear how this young member of our community suffered what was believed to be a severe allergic reaction just a few days before the end of the holiday. Prayers were offered at the start of term assembly, a book of condolence was opened and a service of commemoration and thanksgiving for the life of Karim Oughton will be held in school after half-term. May he rest in peace.

The usual rhythm of the academic year resumed for Sixth Formers with the January session of AS and A2 exams. Year 11 pupils – having had time to reflect on their mock examinations – have all been interviewed individually by the Headmaster regarding their plans and aspirations. They now begin the final 'run in' to their final assessments. On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>, almost 90 applicants for Year 7 entry in September sat the College entrance assessment in the New Benildus Hall. Recruitment remains healthy.

The boarding community at St John's is really thriving in all respects. Worthy of particular mention are their weekly services on Thursday evenings. These are an increasingly important element in the spiritual life and routine of the College. Led by various staff members, assisted by pupils of all ages, these services are varied and lively – and really 'speak to the condition' of the young people. They are also attended by a number of day pupils and teaching staff. The weekend events programme for boarders this term will include trips to Brighton, Hampton Court and the Submarine Museum.

Term will end on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March with our annual Lenten Service – to be held in the Sports Hall. As always, any OJs wishing to attend will be very welcome. Please let us know in advance.

A Steele  
Deputy Headmaster

## Contacting the OJA

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