



# The Old Collyerians' Association

# Newsletter

## Autumn 2004

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### YOUR PRESIDENT'S VALEDICTORY MESSAGE

As I come to the end of my presidential year, I must say how honoured I have been to represent the OCA. I had hoped during my reign, to recruit a lot of new members to the association, and indeed I have had limited success. However, sadly we have lost several of our members during the year, so numbers will remain much the same as they were at the beginning of the year.

Hopefully my successor, Anthony Barnard, and other members as well, can make it their new year resolution to each recruit/press gang at least one new member during the coming year.

I take this opportunity to wish incoming president, Anthony (and all members of the OCA), all the best for 2005 and beyond.

Sincerely yours

*Brian J Sturt (1945-1950)*  
*President*

We understand Brian has been in poor health recently - we wish him well.

### Diary dates

#### **Saturday 20 November**

*OCA Annual General Meeting* - at the College of Richard Collyer, 4pm.

See letter sent out to members during October. Please attend, as more volunteers to help with the running of the Association are always welcome.

#### **Saturday 20 November**

*Winter Reunion.* At the College of Richard Collyer, Horsham, following the AGM. Any last-minute enquiries to Nick Weller, see below.

### Contact Us:

**President:** Brian Sturt

**Gen. Hon Secretary:** Anthony Barnard  
118, Downs Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 1AE

**Treasurer:** Nick Weller, 12 North Ash, Hawthorn Close,  
Horsham, West Sussex RH12 2BW

**Hon. Membership Secretary:** Mark Collins

**Newsletter:**

Bill Thomson, La Tertenaye, 50640 Ferrières, France and Lawrence Windwood

*www.oldcollyerians.org uk - e-mail us via the web site*

*(Please note new web address)*



## New principal for Collyer's

The new Principal at the College of Richard Collyer took up her post in September 2004 - she has the distinction of being the first female to hold this post in the school's long history.

Dr Jacqueline Johnston, formerly the Deputy Principal at Esher College in Surrey, took over from Michael Marchant. Mr Marchant was appointed as Education Practice Manager for the Mercers' Company in the City of London.

The Governors' at Collyer's, chaired by Rosemary Cowley, said that they were impressed by Dr Johnston's energy and her grasp of the sixth form sector. They believe that she would take Collyer's forward, and were confident that they had made a bold and exciting appointment.

As the 33rd head of Collyer's, Dr Johnston will be the first woman to take over in the four and a half centuries of the college's existence.

Having graduated from University College, London in 1978, she went on to gain her D Phil at the University of York

and then her Post-Graduate Certificate of Education at Garnett College. More recently, she gained a Distinction in her MA from the Institute of Education, University of London.

She lectured in English at Langley College, Berkshire, for seven years, before becoming an English teacher at Henley College in 1989. She then moved to Esher College in Thames Ditton,

Surrey and quickly progressed from Head of the English Department to Senior Director to Deputy Principal, taking up this post in 2001.

Dr Johnston is married with one daughter, and she has a strong interest in Theatre, Literature and the Arts. She has a particular interest in the Medieval Period, and also enjoys swimming and hill walking.

Michael Marchant left Collyer's in August, but previously worked for a period with Dr Johnston to

ensure a smooth hand-over.

Mrs Cowley, Chairman of the Governing Body for 20 years, said that appointing a new Principal was one of the most important tasks undertaken by governors, and she looked forward to working with Dr Johnston.



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## Obituary

### Dennis Chapman (1937-1944)

It is with sadness that we have to inform members of the death of Dennis Chapman in April 2004, whose son Duncan sent us the following information. Dennis attended Collyers between 1937 and 1944 and was head boy during his final year. He spoke frequently with fondness of his time at the school and was particularly proud of having scored runs against Christ's Hospital at cricket.

Dennis won a scholarship to read Physics at Merton College, Oxford (quite a rare occurrence in those days), gaining a first class honours degree. He worked in Textile research for the whole of his working life. He is survived by his wife, Mavis, and two sons, Duncan and Daryll.

*Anthony Barnard*



# Jottings



Following the obituary for the late Dick Tidey in the last issue, we have received further memories of this remarkable man. Chris Weall writes:

“During my time at Collyer’s, Dick was one of those members of staff who was at first, feared by reputation, but as I climbed up through the years, came to get to understand the person behind the gown. As commented, he was always very generous in his encouragement, especially when trying to persuade me that cross-country running was good for the soul. He was very loyal to the school except when it came to football!

“I was persuaded that I should be playing in goal for the "other" Old Collyerians team, Horsham Trinity 2nds, for whom, if I recall correctly, Dick was playing centre half. Many of that team were either existing pupils or old boys that he had recruited from under the noses of the official team, to play in green rather than the old gold of the official club. I had two thoroughly enjoyable seasons playing before departing to the then North Staffordshire Polytechnic, Stoke on Trent.

30+ years on from leaving, he, of all the staff at that time, stands out as a massive influence on my school years at Collyers.”

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*Derek Dinnage (1938-1945) writes from New England:*

Thank you for the Spring Newsletter, just received in New England, forwarded from my Florida address.

Sadness, however, to learn that 1940's school friends of mine, Dick Tidey, and Dave Limbrick, have passed on.

On the brighter side, the OCA Membership List still includes many of my colleagues from my School years, and OCA Committee days.

I am prompted to write to correct a small detail regarding Dick Rivaz (not Rivas).

I treasure original copies of his two books, *Tail Gunner*, one of my 5th form prizes, and *Tail Gunner takes over*, written after he had retrained as a pilot following his tours of duty as a Tail Gunner. Both of these books were autographed by the author.

While Dick Rivaz at one time was a member of Group Captain Cheshire's crew, he did not lose his life in combat. He died after the end of hostilities, in October 1945, when the "Liberator" (US Bomber) in which he was flying as a

"passenger" crashed on take-off from Brussels airport. He was on a British Council Lecture tour at the time, I believe.

At the time of the accident, I was 'square--bashing' during my short stay in the Army, before going on to University. Our PT instructor was Sgt Jack Rowley, whom some will recall by his Manchester United fame. Jack was in Brussels at the time, playing for England (or perhaps the Army), and was at the airport when the Liberator crashed.

For those interested, Dick's book, *Tail Gunner* was republished a few years ago, and I was able to obtain a copy from Amazon.com.

Other memories of Dick Rivaz include his invitation to "come fly with me" in a Magister (???) two seater, while on camp with the ATC in Lasham. As a passenger parachute was not available, the flight was scrubbed. Only then did I learn that the passenger cockpit was without serviceable seat straps.

Dick also happened to be on leave and visiting the school on that foggy day in February 1942 (1943??) when a low

flying Dornier 215 dropped three bombs on Horsham, the last one on a house in Richmond road. Dick led those of us still at school after hours ( ATC Navigation Class) to the house to help.

Sorry to be such a bore !!!

Best Regards to all, and particularly to those with whom I spend enjoyable times.

Perhaps I will make it over for an OCA event some day.

TTFN.

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*Nick Weller writes, just as this newsletter closes for press, that he has received a letter from the daughter of the late A C Hull (former head of art at Collyer's grammar school in the 1950s and 1960s) informing him that one of Mr Hull's*

*paintings is now on display at the D-day Museum in Southsea.*

*It's a watercolour painting, dated 1945, of the minesweeper Mr Hull was on on D-day, and is in the Portsmouth memories section of the museum.*

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## The laboratory assistant

To assist with the season ticket I was elected lab assistant in 1945. This meant, after last class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I reported to the chemistry lab to put in an hour before catching the later train to Crawley. This was a five-pound-a-term post, I think it nearly covered the season!

There were no official job descriptions in those days; I used to report my presence to Bob Greenop and would normally be handed a small slip of paper upon which, in copper-plate handwriting, would be listed the tasks to be carried out. So many litres of this or that, so many clean flasks on the front bench and any other things that Bob wanted for the next day. Did this explain the lack of gear for periods on Mondays and Thursdays, I have often wondered?

The copper-plate script was not always there. Sometimes Bob would say "Bottles", how I hated this. It would mean starting at the front of the larger lab and I would have to spend an hour wiping clean acid, alkali and some bottles that had no label. Boring. There were other times that stick clearly in my memory. These were the evenings when bottles had been cleaned on Tuesday and nothing special was needed for Friday and Bob would say "Do something

useful". Do not think this was a time of slackness or swift fag round the back etc. Not a bit of it. Invariably with the squeak of the hinge in his false leg our Bob would come into the lab, where one was doing something useful, sit on a stool, and pontificate. I believed then, and still do, that he was trying out an address to a forthcoming audience or three. I lapped them all up; it gave me a good excuse to listen and stop the doing of something useful.

"You will see man walking on the moon" on one occasion in 1945, "You will see a ship circumnavigate the globe with fuel the size of a lump of sugar", I must admit I never doubted nor tried to disprove him subsequently. I got a school prize for something at this time and, on a 'do something' lecture I asked Bob to suggest the books that I should request. "Neils Bohr, the World and the Atom and the Social function of Science" he immediately replied, I still have them.

The climax, nadir, call it what you will of this extramural tuition for which I was being paid came on a do-something-useful evening. The parquet flooring blocks in the senior, smaller, lab were loose in many places. Taking one up I discovered amid the dirt of decades tiny drops of mercury. Fossils from countless

dropped thermometers. After taking up an area of loose tiles I could see that a reclamation exercise might be profitable. On reporting the development to Bob he leapt with a squeak and came to inspect. Not only was he delighted as mercury in war-time was unobtainable but now he had plenty of it that tiresome Jennie Lee could now proceed with Physics without all the complaints.

Losing a leg in World War 1 indicated to me that Bob, apart from deputy head and head of the chemistry department, my employer, was an adult to be respected along with my Dad, as it were, who had landed and survived Gallipoli. (Bob never told me where he left his leg, nor did I ask).

Memory fades but I can be pretty sure that this mining operation was on a

Tuesday. The next time I reported for duty, say, the Thursday, a beaming Bob said "Now you shall learn all about Mercury hold this chamois leather". Into my surprised possession he gave a large piece of new chamois leather. He then, at the same time giving me the total make-up of mercury, properties, place in the periodic table, etc., demonstrated how filthy mercury could be squeezed through chamois leather to return it to purity.

Many years later in Ulster the lab assistant had to make a tricky electrical connection in a terrorist bomb designed to kill anyone dealing with it. Bob's mercury did the trick and I am here to tell you about it.

*Thanks to George Styles for these memories.*

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## Michael Marchant - outgoing Principal

Michael Marchant retired as Principal of Collyer's at the end of Summer term 2004. He has taken up the role of Education Practice Manager for the Mercers' Company, being responsible for the Company's relations with the schools and colleges with which it has links. Michael served as Principal for five years, all too short a time, but he has left a very strong legacy. During the last few months of his reign Collyers achieved excellent exam results and a first class report from the Education Department's inspection.

The most significant development in Michael's time as Principal was the development of the Learning Resources Centre, a project that he most eagerly pushed forward. Those who attended last year's Winter Reunion will remember Michael's enthusiasm when showing guests round the new centre and his readiness to answer questions about all aspects of its operation. Michael commented at the time that just as Association members return to Collyers

and remember the buildings in which they were taught maybe forty, fifty years ago, in the same way he would like current students to return in fifty years' time and remember learning in the Resources Centre.

As well as his dynamic and clear-sighted contribution to the College, Michael has also been keen to maintain and strengthen links with the Association. Committee members will recall the full reports he gave of the College's activities. Michael will also be remembered for warmly welcoming Association members at Winter Reunions. His speeches at Reunions shone with enthusiasm for all that was going on at Collyers; his ability to time jokes was envied by all other speakers on the same bill.

In recognition of Michael's contribution to Collyers and his support for the Association, the committee has elected Michael as an Honorary Life Member of the Association. We wish him well in his new role.

*Nick Weller*

# John Walters

John Walters' death at the end of August marked the end of a link with Collyer's that spanned over 60 years. He was on the OCA committee for just under four years; in that time he served as President and Secretary, and made a major contribution to the Association. The service he gave us was just one aspect of a multi-faceted contribution that he made to Horsham during his years in the town.

John attended Collyer's from 1943 to 1948 as one of the 'Crawley Mob'. He always downplayed his academic career; whilst not one of the stars, he seems to have been a solid B-stream performer, with perhaps his biggest regret academically not being able to take Latin to a higher level. John preferred to remember the staff who taught him; Bob Greenop hopping down the corridor was a vivid memory. John also recalled his not always successful efforts trying to avoid being caught smoking. He freely admitted failing to realise that as a smoking area, the air-raid shelters had the disadvantage that smoke generated within could clearly be seen from outside by patrolling staff.

John also liked to talk about his National Service. Serving in Europe was clearly a very significant experience for him, as afterwards he found his life employment in the travel industry. He arranged the holidays of many Horsham people over the years and built up a base of loyal customers who employed his firm year after year. Many remember the articles on travel that he wrote in the local press. John also served as a District Councillor for Trafalgar ward for many years. He much enjoyed music and was regularly involved in concerts at the Parish Church.

John was a member of the Old Collyerians' Association from the time he left school (his father paid his life

subscription). He volunteered to serve on the committee in response to the appeal for new members made in 2000. Joining the committee undoubtedly enhanced John's enthusiasm for the OCA. He worked hard for the Association and was the obvious choice as President in 2001. John was a very gentlemanly President. No-one would suggest that he was an aggressive chair of the committee, but business was nevertheless always concluded satisfactorily in a very sociable atmosphere.

John very much enjoyed the opportunities being President gave him to attend functions. He marvelled at the range of academic activities celebrated at the College's prizegiving. He was perhaps slightly daunted by attending the Installation dinner for the Master of the Mercers' company, but once there soon relaxed. 'A very pleasant Major made himself known to me to make my presence there a little easier. My first introduction was to a Lord, but even he was very approachable.'

John also much enjoyed OCA functions; above all the chance these gave him to re-establish contacts with school contemporaries whom he had not seen for many years.

During the last two years of his life, John had to cope with the death of his wife and his own illness. An enhanced Christian faith aided him, and he entered into church activities with great enthusiasm; the contribution he made was recalled at his funeral.

John once remarked that a lesson of national service was that you should never volunteer for anything. Undoubtedly he never learnt this lesson and his wide contribution to Horsham life will be missed. We shall remember his courtesy and consideration.

*The Committee*

# Archives report

I've had a couple of recent requests for information.

Karen Bowen would like to contact anyone who has information, additional to the material in *A History of Collyer's School*, about the two Richard Craggs and their family, who were her ancestors. Richard Cragg the elder was Usher (Assistant Headmaster) from 1822 to 1852. Richard Cragg the younger succeeded his father as Usher in 1852 and subsequently became Headmaster in 1868, teaching amongst others Dr Duckering.

Karen can be contacted at: Manor Cottage, Rothamsted Estate, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 2BE; tel: 01582 712986; e-mail bowen.karen@virgin.net

Duncan Chapman would like to hear from anyone who remembers his father, Dennis Chapman, who died earlier this year. Dennis was at Collyer's from 1937-1945 and was Head Prefect and Head of Denne House. Please contact me if you can help.

*Nick Weller*

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## Steaming to school in the sixties

**L**ike so many OCA members, I was a child of the sixties, reaching the age of 11, and thus moving to secondary education, in the first year of that memorable decade.

Entry to grammar school was of course through the 11-plus exam. As I recall it, my classmates from Henfield primary school all went on to Steyning; most to the secondary modern but two or three to Steyning Grammar School. I think I was the only one given the choice of Collyer's - could this have been because of good 11 plus results? I certainly got told to go for an interview for a possible place at Christ's Hospital, where I met some of my future Collyer's classmates.

Although I was the only state school entrant from Henfield, two others who had been privately educated started from Henfield at the same time as me - Andy Bowden and Robert Tidey. Bob was one of, I think, several nephews of the late Dick Tidey to go to Collyer's. There was also an Old Collyerian friend of my father, Tom Tidy, from Henfield who had attended several years before (no relation as far as I know - different spelling).

I'm not sure why, but I found myself put in the A stream, with my two fellow Henfieldians in the B stream. It soon

became obvious that, in general, the country bumpkins and those from humbler backgrounds stayed in B and C (as outlined so graphically in the Neil Lundon/Barnacle book about Collyers in that era); so I really should have been in less exalted company, particularly as my father was a humble, and impoverished, motor mechanic. I have no idea why I was an exception - perhaps again it was to do with 11-plus marks? I was certainly made at times to feel a little out of place among the sons of teachers, lawyers, airline pilots etc.

The other benefit or drawback, depending on which way you looked at it, of being one of the rural crowd, was that we had to find our way to school by public transport. There was a choice - but the bus was even slower, less frequent and less reliable than the train (and that's saying something). In order to achieve the 9am to 3.45pm school day, I had to leave home before 7.30am and arrived back at something like 5.30pm; this being for a 10-mile journey. The distinguishing factor of the train service was that, at least for my first three years or so, it was operated by steam power. I recall that this was one of the last outposts of steam, and seem to remember

that even then the locomotives used were some 80 years old or more - no doubt the rail buffs will put me straight on this? Anyway the inevitable result was that it was not a reliable form of transport, I recall frequent detentions for missing assembly due to train breakdowns. Because of the long day, and the need to fit in homework before the early bedtimes which were then the norm, these detentions (and later the CCF) were about the only after-school activity I was permitted to attend.

During the time I was at the school it was under the charge of Douglas Coulson. By all accounts it was a very different school then from the less exclusive regimes of Coulson's predecessors. I won't dwell on this, the resultant snobbery has been well dealt with in the previously mentioned Neil Lyndon book. However, I think it was accepted then, and now, that to Mr Coulson, Collyer's was merely a step in his career path which ended, as he hoped, with the headship of a public school. Certainly he saw Collyer's as a minor public school and those of us from the sort of backgrounds which would never have given us access to private education were never really welcomed. Today's school league tables didn't exist then, so Coulson made his own - and if he could arrange the results to show that his Collyer's had, for example, achieved better A-level results or more Oxbridge places than some private establishments, that meant more Brownie points for him.

The attitude extended to many of the staff - though thankfully not some of those hanging on from the Tharp era,

like Fred Bennett, 'George' (as I seem to remember him being called then) Henderson, and 'Frog' Kenyon, all of whom were willing to include this working-class lad among his so-called betters. Others who memorably bypassed the snobbery included Frank Whitbourn and 'Percy' Pointer, who achieved the amazing feat of making me interested in Physics. Those who didn't included a temporary maths mistress (mother of one of the prefects) from whose classes I was excluded in the run-up to O-level because I must be a trouble maker - it couldn't have been any of the 'nice' boys who would be responsible for her inability to keep order. Fortunately Mr O'Connor let me sit in on his classes working on my own from a text book, and I got my GCE pass.

I was frequently reminded that 'my sort' wasn't really suitable for an A-stream education, but I don't think my results, though unremarkable in most subjects, ever merited demotion.

Unlike Lyndon, I'm not bitter. Collyer's gave me a good, balanced, education, opened my eyes to different ways of thinking - and I'm grateful.

Somehow it is the steam train journey that, for me, characterises Collyer's in the 1960s. Other aspects of the era, like the Beatles and the hippy movement, are more notable, but their influence is still felt today. But steam trains were being consigned to museums even during my Collyer's years and the fact that I used to travel on one every day seemed

unbelievable to youngsters working for me even 15-20 years after I left.

*Bill Thomson*

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## **OCA on the Internet**

The OCA website can now be found at [www.oldcollyerians.org.uk](http://www.oldcollyerians.org.uk). The extra two letters on the end save a fair bit of money, which as the site is frankly little used seemed like a good idea. There was also a mess-up by the hosting company I use over the original domain name renewal, so changing was the simplest option all round. Please visit the site, and contribute to the discussion forum, which has been totally unused since it was re-built last year. I hope that all links have been updated to take account of the current address - if you have any problems please contact me at [webmaster@oldcollyerians.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@oldcollyerians.org.uk).

*Bill Thomson*

# **MEMBERSHIP**

Sorry - Membership information is available only in the printed version of the newsletter

# **The Richard Collyer Masonic Lodge and Chapter**

The Richard Collyer Masonic Lodge is almost as old as the OCA having been formed in 1927, while the Chapter is a mere junior having been formed in 1958. Both are very active organisations and meet regularly at Horsham Masonic Hall. The Lodge members would be delighted to hear from any old Collyerians who would like further details or who might be interested in joining. Full details may be obtained from:  
Robert Phillips, 1 Mona Cottage, Minffordd, Llanfachraeth, Holyhead, LL 65 4UR

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## **News from the College of Richard Collyer**

Since the last newsletter we have been informed of the following items of news from Collyer's.

Two large groups (an incredible total of 92 students and 7 staff) from the Collyer's History and Politics Departments visited Moscow and St. Petersburg. They visited many sites intimately connected with their A Level courses, from Lenin's Mausoleum to the Cruiser Aurora, as well as Museums, including the world-famous Hermitage, and the celebrated Moscow Metro.

The students were able to see some of the more impressive remnants of the communist regime, while as is now customary on Collyer's History and Politics trips, respects were paid and poppies placed on the local war memorial, in this case the Socialist-realist pieta for Russia's millions of casualties inside the giant Moscow Victory Park.

Collyer's A Level Student Dance Company New Ground spent four days in a bunkhouse in the picturesque Brecon Beacons in South Wales enjoying the Welsh hospitality and exciting dance opportunities in and around the capital city of Cardiff. The students participated in a performance with Gwent Youth Dance Company and attended a dance performance by dance students of Coleg Gwent.

Rebecca Farr, an AS Level Spanish Student, won a grant to study for two weeks in Spain or Mexico at one of the Don Quixote schools. This was one of only 10 such awards in the UK.

19 Spanish students from Instituto Ruiz Gijón, Utrera (Spain) visited the college at the end of April. They stayed with the AS and A2 Spanish students who went to Utrera (Spain) last February. During their visit they took part in activities including sightseeing in London and a visit to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. They also attended lessons at Collyer's and generally had a good time in the evenings- going swimming, bowling, partying and dining out.

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## **Civic Guild of Old Mercers**

The Installation Dinner for the new Guildmaster, Michael St. John Parker was held on 1st June at Painters' Hall and was attended by over 100 people.

Guildmen and guests. These included the Chief Commoner and the Master of the Mercers' Company. Students from the Guildhall School of Music provided the entertainment. The social calendar for 2004/5 includes visits to the Museum of Docklands, The College of Arms and Osterley Park House.

Anyone interested in joining the Guild can obtain details from the Guild's Old Collyerian representative, Bob Smith, who has been elected Junior Warden.

Bob's address is 95, Whitebeam Avenue, Bromley, Kent BR28DN, tel: 0208 467 5217.

The OCA Committee would like to thank all contributors to this newsletter - we encourage others to share their memories, anecdotes, experiences and opinions to ensure that future editions are full and interesting. We apologise if space has prevented us using your submission this time - we try to use any unused material in later editions.

The next newsletter will be published in Spring 2005.