



## The Old Collyerians' Association

### Autumn 2016

#### President's message

**T**he most irritating part of being President is that you only serve one year in office. A year that consists mainly of three committee meetings, one AGM, two reunion meetings plus attending two functions of the college, notably the Christmas concert in St Mary's Church, Horsham, and presenting the OCA's awards at the college prize giving ceremony. Not a very onerous task during a twelve months' timescale, particularly when these functions are either organised by the college or - mainly - by the long standing other members of the committee, who, by their own admission, would willingly stand down to make way for the younger generation.

With this in mind I decided to analyse the age profile from the September 2015 membership list. This contained 468 names of which only 12 are ladies. Ignoring the eight centurions, for the remaining 460, who were born between 1920 and 1977 (prior to the establishing the Sixth Form College), the average age is 70 years and 2 months. However, there are eight members who have joined since the formation of the College, and their average age is 32.

Thereby lies the problem or part thereof. For 80 people on the current list, we have no details, apart from their surname, initials and years at the school. There are 31 addresses overseas (France and Canada being the most popular).

#### Contact us

**President:** Eric Austin

**Vice-President:** Dave Picknell

**Secretary:** Andrew Campbell

**Assistant Secretary/Recorder:** Derek Sturt \*

**Treasurer:** Stewart Mackman

**Membership Secretary:** Mark Collins,

4 Stallett Way, Tilney St Lawrence, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE34 4HT

**Newsletter:** Bill Thomson, The Haven, 18 Fern Road, Storrington, W. Sussex RH20 4LW and Lawrence Windwood

**Other Committee Members** (in addition to those named above):

John Meese

James Pullen

Peter Ticehurst

\* *ex-officio committee member*

**College representative:** The Principal (Sally Bromley)

**Webmaster:** Ian Wilson

E-mail is the best way to reach us:

please send correspondence for the newsletter to: [ocanewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:ocanewsletter@btinternet.com);

general correspondence to [secretary@oldcollyerians.org.uk](mailto:secretary@oldcollyerians.org.uk)

118 reside in Horsham, plus 34 who have another RH area postcode. 31 have other local postcodes. The remaining 197 reside, as far as we know, elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

This same problem is affecting all other old pupils' associations for grammar schools which, like Collyer's, became sixth form colleges. The main difficulty is that today's students only attend the college for two years, thereby not having the same commitment or value obtained over the longer period, starting at a younger age, that we grammar school boys enjoyed. Despite the fact that, on leaving the college, students are offered a number of years' free membership of the OCA, few, if any have taken up the offer, so it has certainly not achieved the intended result.

Perhaps the Government initiative of re-introducing grammar schools may be the answer!

Perhaps, too, a plea from the President may be permitted at the end of my term of office, which I have found enjoyable and interesting. First, I thank the committee for all their efforts, especially David Picknell the current Vice-President who stood in for me at a couple of meetings.

My plea: out of our current membership 335 are life or long term members. Even though these subscriptions are invested, the income does not produce anything like enough of the revenue needed to support the Associations' activities, and in particular the annual awards we give to the college students and which are paid for out of OCA funds.

Only 85 people out of the total membership, as we know it, have given us an email address by which they can receive this newsletter without incurring any production, printing or postage costs. For all the others, newsletters are copied and sent out via the Royal Mail. Although we are grateful to the college for helping keep down the costs of printing and postage, it does make a hole in our finances. Therefore it would help, if you have an email address, to forward it to the membership Secretary, ([mandscollins@talktalk.net](mailto:mandscollins@talktalk.net)) in order that we can reduce our postage expenses. These, of course, increase annually, which just adds to the burden.

A happy Brexit to you all,

*Eric Austin, President*

## Jottings

### The HIVE

*Stephen Talbot (1951-1958), now from Langport, Somerset, writes:* I was intrigued to learn a great deal about the Hive, featured in the last couple of issues. It was formed during my fifth form year.

The picture showed Christopher Rees, the son of the maths master, who joined our biological group from the fifth form, to take A levels. I did not recognise Peter Leedham, though we were both medical students in London at the same time. I remember being jealous of Chris because he could cut a year off the course, which I don't think helped his career a great deal, but might have helped either Peter, Keith Linnington or me to go to Oxford or Cambridge, as in those days one had to spend three years in the sixth form to take an Oxbridge scholarship exam.

My grandmother Wood had taken a degree course at Oxford in the days when one could complete the course, pass the exams and excel and still, as a woman, not receive a degree. I was later told that women were subsequently offered a degree but by then she was in her thirties, married and with a family, so declined the offer.

If I had obtained a medical degree through Oxford, I think my father would have been pleased about it despite his opposition to my going to university. However, I now believe my five years at Guys Hospital on a state scholarship were right for me. I have loved my medical life right up to 2009, spent in many places, and would have carried on after the age of 68 if medical problems had not affected my vision.

We live in Somerset, which I think is nicer than Dorset, in a listed farmhouse. My brother still lives in Horsham, after receiving a different education at Forest School following our father's death in 1964.

### Mea culpa...

*Derek Fosberry, now living in the Netherlands, emailed to point out an error in the last issue:*

Salve! I enjoyed the Newsletter for Spring 2016 but, on reading 'Jottings' on page 3, I detected a change in the Earth's orbit, doubtless caused by 'Fred' Bennett turning in his grave. Somebody needs to write out, 100 times: "Even Sam and the Peke know that 'Vale' is singular, the plural is 'Valete'."

## Drewe Henley

The name won't mean a lot to most readers, but Drewe Henley was a star at Collyer's back in the late 1950s. As a lead in our drama group's *Richard II*, in which I was but a humble scene shifter, his performance still sticks in the mind; even then he had a self-evident charisma that was to lead, at least for a while, to fame and fortune and a Hollywood film role.

The Spring 1959 issue of *The Collyerian* reckoned that "John of Gaunt (D. Henley) was a triumph and exceptionally moving". Others were pretty good as well, not least Horsham Society member Frank Hall, who as one of the gardeners "displayed his talent with a 'Stage Mummerzet' accent, and provided a welcome touch of light relief amid the prevalent gloom of the play's theme".

Drewe died on 14 February 2016, aged 75, and as his obituary in *The Times* put it, he was a stage, television and film actor, perhaps best known for his role in *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*, and for his marriage to Felicity Kendal, which the paper described as "tempestuous".

After Collyer's he studied at the Central School of Drama, and in his film work acted alongside top names such as Alan Bates and Anthony Quinn. But while Kendal's career took off, Henley's did not; he was troubled by mental health issues, and sadly his professional acting petered out. He later moved to Devon where he was involved in an amateur dramatics group and ran a bed and breakfast business in Combyne with his third wife.

His *Star Wars* role as Red Leader, a pilot in the Battle of Yavin alongside Luke Skywalker, was his last film role and his main claim to fame.

*Mark Collins sent in this article which first appeared in the Horsham Society Newsletter and is reproduced here with grateful thanks to its author, OCA Member Brian Slyfield (1953 - 1960).*



*Drewe Henley with Felicity Kendal in 1967 in "Gone and Never Called Me Mother"*

## Nigel Buxton



*Nigel Buxton as "BaaadDad Buxton" with his son Adam*

*Mark Collins has also contributed these notes, to add to the account of another former Collyer's pupil (like Drewe Henley, not, as far as we know, an OCA member) which appeared in the last issue.*

Old Collyerian Nigel Edward Buxton passed away on 30 November 2015 aged 91. One of a family of seven children he was born on 29th May 1924 and brought up in the small Sussex village of Cowfold. After leaving Collyer's he went on to Imperial Service College, Windsor and then volunteered for military service, in 1942 joining the Royal Artillery. His active service included spells in Normandy, where he was mentioned in despatches, and Operation Veritable in the Rhineland during the severe winter of 1944-45.

He was finally de-mobbed in 1947 having attained the rank of captain and returned to education obtaining a degree in Modern History at Worcester College, Oxford. A career in journalism followed and in 1961 he became travel writer for the newly launched *Sunday Telegraph*, continuing to work for the paper until his retirement as travel editor in 1989.

His time at Collyer's had instilled in him a meticulous approach to grammar and language and one contributor who wrote the words, "you catch the bus..." was told: "Don't tell the readers what they do or don't do." It has to be "one catches the bus".

He wrote a number of books on travel and in 1993 his *Walking in Wine Country* won the Lanson Prize for best wine book of the year.

Three years later his career saw a remarkable resurgence when he became a regular on the Channel 4 comedy programme *The Adam and Joe Show* which was devised by Nigel's son Adam and Joe Cornish. Nigel's role as "BaaadDad Buxton" was to investigate contemporary youth culture which included everything from reviewing current music and fashion trends to visiting nightclubs in Ibiza and outdoor music festivals. His reports, delivered in the droll style of an old-school, Fleet Street hack, earned him an army of younger fans and he was often recognised whilst out shopping - something which he very much enjoyed.

He married Valerie Birrell in 1966 who survives him along with their daughter and two sons.

## The 'Remove'

OCA Secretary Andrew Campbell points out that, in his recollection, the Remove (see last issue) was an ephemeral form. It appeared once during his time at Collyer's (1955-1963), but only for one year.

"I suspect," says Andrew, "it depended on being economically viable, i.e. enough boys to sustain it."

Andrew adds that the 'song' sung at the College end of year service is in fact a hymn, *Praise to our God who with Love Never Swerving*, by the famous H.B. Gray, a hymn writer who was apparently much admired by P.A. Tharp, Stanley Sutton and Jimmy Hodgson.

# 2016 Winter Reunion

**I**t's that time once again - how the years fly by when you're getting old (or in my case maybe it's got old).

For 2015 we changed our Winter Reunion to the fourth Saturday in November. This seemed to suit most people better than the previous customary date of the third Saturday, so we are doing the same again this year - note the date, 26th November - hoping for another successful event.

As usual the AGM will precede the dinner. The AGM will be held at the College of Richard Collyer in Horsham, in the Memorial Hall, starting at 4.00pm. On past experience this is likely to be fairly short. We fully understand if you cannot find the time, or do not wish, to attend but if you are able we will be pleased to welcome you.

The dinner will be in the recently refurbished Duckering Hall - 6.30pm for a 7.00pm start.

Our excellent and reasonably priced bar, also in the Memorial Hall, will be open from 5.30pm and again after the Dinner. Catering is by our good friends, DH Catering, and the menu that has been selected is as follows :-

- Starter : Farmhouse Pate and Melba Toast.
- Main Course : Poached Scotch salmon with a wine and dill sauce.
- Dessert : Profiteroles with a rich chocolate sauce.
- Fresh filter coffee & mints.

A shared cheeseboard with biscuits will also be provided.

A vegetarian option will be available for the starter and main course. There are several possible options, so for further details please contact me (see below).

The Dinner is open to all Old Collyerians (students, staff and governors) whether members of the OCA or not, and their partners and friends.

We have been obliged to slightly increase the cost this year to £30.00 per person which we believe is still great value for money for a special evening.

Do please make a note of the date and join us if you can. You can ensure your place by sending a cheque to cover the full cost (made out to the Old Collyerians' Association) to our Hon Treasurer, Stewart Mackman at 23 Bens Acre, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 6LW. The full application form is included with this Autumn 2016 Newsletter.

Payment can also be made by bank transfer and our details are:-

- Bank - NatWest, 47 Carfax, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1FD.
- Sort code - 601117
- Account no. - 62146556

If you do use this method of payment *please confirm, by email, to Stewart that you have done so at: [stewart.mackman@natwest.com](mailto:stewart.mackman@natwest.com).*

We do *not* send out tickets but when you book please ensure that you provide us with your contact details (preferably e-mail or telephone) and Stewart will confirm your booking back to you.

If you have any queries or require further information please contact me, Derek Sturt, at [sturt99@hotmail.com](mailto:sturt99@hotmail.com)

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible and think you can be sure of an entertaining evening with friends old and, perhaps, new.

*Derek Sturt*

# Two years at Collyer's - 1940s



Left to Right: Jim Pullen, Len Gardner, Lawrence Windwood (picture: Mark Collins)

**F**or students attending Collyer's today, a two- year stint - perhaps to take A-Levels or a vocational qualification - is the norm, but prior to the mid 1970s most pupils would have been there for 5 or 7 years. However, for Len Gardner exceptional circumstances during WWII led to him spending just two years at the school.

I spoke to Len at Mercers' Hall back in March when a number of OCs were able to join old boys from Mercers' School at their annual lunch. He shared some of his memories of his time at Collyer's. Readers will probably know that during the Blitz, many pupils of Mercers' School were evacuated to the Horsham area to continue their education at Collyer's. Len was one of those who arrived by train - his first memory being of walking two abreast down Hurst Road to the school. He was conveniently billeted at No 24, Hurst Road with the Wyman family who ran the Horsham Steam Laundry, with Mr. Wyman also finding time

in the evenings to help man a searchlight at Storrington.

After the Blitz had ended many of Len's contemporaries returned to London but his family home had been destroyed in the bombing and his parents had temporarily relocated to Box Hill where they were living in a caravan. It therefore made sense that he stayed on in Horsham to carry on his schooling - cycling over to Box Hill to visit his family at the weekends. Like Mr. Wyman, Len's father was also doing something for the war effort and was a sergeant in the local Home Guard which led to Len joining the platoon too (reminding him of this, his children sometimes now affectionately call him Private Godfrey but of course because of his young age he would have very much been the Private Pike of the group!)

Len wasn't the only Mercers' boy to stay on and along with Lex Byle the two of them became the sole members of the Mercers' School section of the sixth-form "based in a broom cupboard under the stairs in the new block" (was this where the tuck shop was located in the 1970s?) - being taught by Collyer's masters but sending their essays back to London for assessment and marking.

He was very grateful for those two years and the opportunity to see life outside London. By his own admission his background was very much working class - his father having left school at 14 - and the scholarship he won to Mercers' School gave him a much better start in life. His time at Horsham also gave him a taste of middle-class life as the Wyman family had a maid! Len spoke fondly of his time at Collyer's, where he was a corporal in the air cadet section, and was very grateful not just for the education he gained but for the warm welcome he received both at the school and from residents of the town.

Postscript: It was only after saying goodbye to Len that I learned he was a keen yachtsman and had been a crew member during the infamous Fastnet Race in 1979 when many yachts capsized and tragically several crewmen lost their lives. He went on to write a book on his experience entitled *Fastnet 79: The Story of Ailish III*.

Mark Collins

*We need your recollections. Does anything stick in your mind about your years at Collyer's? Or has something in this issue awakened your memories? If so, please send it to us - email is best, to [ocanewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:ocanewsletter@btinternet.com), or by traditional mail to the address on Page 1. THANK YOU*

# Summer Reunion 2016

**T**he name of Brooklands will be familiar to some as the home of British motor racing but it also had a strong association with aviation. Today, as the Brooklands Museum (just outside Weybridge in Surrey), it houses an important collection of both forms of transport - with several bicycles, motorcycles and buses thrown in for good measure.

At the suggestion of our current President, this was the venue for our Summer Reunion and it proved to be a fascinating and enjoyable day. After an introduction by one of the enthusiastic volunteer guides we split into groups and our party headed off to look at the collection of London buses, which included horse-drawn omnibuses from the 1870s, trolley buses and of course the iconic red Routemaster. There was then time to look around several of the aircraft on display including a Vickers VC10 from the Sultan of Oman's Royal Flight, lavishly fitted out with two double bedrooms, plush armchairs, and a full size kitchen. Luxury indeed!

The weather was fine and dry and, although a little too breezy to sit outside for lunch, we were able to enjoy an excellent and reasonably priced hot meal in the Sunbeam Café - housed within the original 1907 Clubhouse.

Next up was a look at some of the early racing cars such as the Napier Railton, powered by a massive 24-litre aero engine, and in complete contrast the more sedate collection of bicycles.

At 14.25 we all assembled for the highlight of the day, a guided tour of the first British production Concorde. Gathering beneath the huge delta wings we were introduced to some of the technical features of this stunning aircraft (the flight-deck, tailfin and much of the fuselage were all manufactured at Brooklands) before entering through the rear cargo door for a look inside. We were then able to take our seats for our 'Virtual Concorde Flight' - a video presentation by the last British Airways Chief Concorde pilot.

Safely, back down to earth and a little disappointed that we hadn't left solid ground we decided to experience what it was like to be a pilot with the Red Arrows in the adjacent 4D theatre. Here strapped into moving seats and using flight simulator motion technology we took off from RAF Akrotiri and rolled, dived and corkscrewed over Cyprus.

Although, the motor racing track at Brooklands is sadly no longer complete, the adjacent Mercedes Benz World does have a 2.5km circuit and while some of the party finished the day by heading off there to look at some top of the range vehicles, we had to be content with a low speed, half circuit of the M25 in the humble Ford as we headed back to Norfolk. Our thanks to Eric Austin for arranging the visit and to Derek Sturt "back in the office" for the behind the scenes work that went into making it such a success.

*Mark Collins*



*Above: The Old Collyerians' party squeezed into the Concorde cabin for the virtual flight - a presentation by the last British Airways pilot of this iconic aircraft*



*Right: The OCA group boards Concorde for the tour and virtual flight*

*(pictures by Mark Collins)*

# College News

**O**n A Level Results Day 2016 it was a delight for me as Principal and all the staff to see so many Collyer's students achieve the examination success they richly deserved. The A level pass rate was a record high of 99% accompanied by a 1% increase in A\*-B grades. Value Added at AS and A level remained in the ALPS 'Excellent' category and there were significant improvements in the GCSE English and Maths pass rates. We were all very pleased to see that AS results in the 14 new linear A level qualifications remained high, testament to the dedication of Collyer's staff who were determined that students would be well prepared.

It has been a busy summer for the estates team as work on the Library refurbishment was carried out and repair work to the GB1 roof continues.

We have experienced a record enrolment and will exceed the target of 1760 I set in the Strategic Plan by a broad margin - the reputation of Collyer's grows. Due to the closure of the Haywards Heath campus of Central Sussex College, the Education Funding Agency is prepared to fund us 'in year' for up to 50 additional students which is good news for the budget. Usually, our funding is 'lagged' i.e. we receive funding next academic year for the number of students on roll this academic year.

*Sally Bromley, Principal*

## A Level Results

Collyer's students excelled with an A2 pass rate at 99%, with 56% achieving grades at A\*/B. At AS, the pass rate was 92% with 63% achieving A to C grades.

In a number of subjects the results were particularly outstanding. Art Textiles A2 had a 100% pass rate with a staggering 86% of students achieving A\*/B, Further Maths A2 had a 100% pass rate with 77% at A\*/B, 71% of A2 Photography achieved A\*/B with 100% passing, while 100% of A2 Health and Social Care students passed, with 69% achieving A\*/B. A2 Philosophy enjoyed a 100% pass rate, with 67% achieving A\*/B, 66% of A2 Maths and 65% of A2 Economics candidates achieved A\*/B.

In A2 Psychology 63% achieved A\*/B, A2 English Literature had a 100% pass rate with 61% achieving A\*/B, while 60% of A2 Chemistry were at A\*/B. 100% of A2 Dance and A2 Media students passed, with 60% of both cohorts achieving A\*/B. 60% of



A2 Film Studies and 59% of A2 Art and Design students posted A\*/B grades, A2 Geography and German both enjoyed a 100% pass rate with 58% and 57% respectively achieving A\*/B. 56% of Biology A2 students were delighted to achieve an A\*/B.

Collyer's excellent quality of vocational course provision continues, with great results in Level 2 and 3 BTEC Diploma Art, Business, Early Years Education (EYE) and Sport.

## Physics in practice

Collyer's recently held its own glider competition. Physics teacher and competition organiser, Matt Horncastle explained: "Students were given the task of designing and building a glider that has the best range and accuracy possible. They were given basic materials and asked to do their own research to decide how to make the most aerodynamic glider."

The teams demonstrated their aircraft to judges including Alex McMillan, a former Collyer's student who is now Senior First Officer with Thomas Cook. The gliders were marked out of ten for how well they flew and the groups also had to present their designs.

The winning team comprised Luke Foreman, Thomas Claridge and Giles Rennie.



# Membership

Due to data protection considerations,  
membership changes etc  
are available only to members of the Association

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**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:  
Peter R Ticehurst, Flat 32, Bowes Close, Horsham RH13 5SZ.