



The Old Collyerians' Association

Newsletter

Spring 2005

A message from your President

Although I did not achieve any startling academic results during my years at the school, having left nearly 50 years ago without sitting for my A levels, I was well aware of the unusually high standards that were achieved by many of the pupils at that time. I was honoured, therefore, when I was asked to join the OCA Committee, a few years ago, as I had just retired after a number of years working mainly overseas, and was pleased to be able to give something back to the school which gave me such a good grounding, as I did go onto university myself, a few years later. So soon after joining the committee, being elected as president, makes me even more proud, I hope that I do not let you down.

Many things have changed in the years since I attended Collyer's. In those days there were only some 600 pupils in a three-stream entry to year five and a two-year sixth form Grammar School. Now the first five years are no longer catered for and Collyer's has become a sixth form college with over 1200 full time students and some 700 part time adult learners and a staff of nearly 300. Recently, for the first time in Collyer's history, appointed a lady principal. Dr Jackie Johnson joined Collyer's in September 2004 and has made it quite clear that she intends to continue to develop Collyer's into an even better establishment. Welcome, Jackie, and may you have a long and distinguished time with us.

High achievements have continued, throughout the years, and are well evidenced by the Honours Boards listing the names of those who gained scholarships to leading universities. The College is still in the top 10% of schools of its type in the country and has just been awarded Beacon Status by the Secretary of State for Education.

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Diary date

**Saturday 18 June,
at 6pm
Summer Reunion -**

Narrowboat cruise on the Wey & Arun Canal. Meet at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood. Tickets £6 per person. See Page 10 for more information.

Contact us:

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

Congratulations to Jackie Johnson, and all her staff, for this wonderful achievement.

Membership of the OCA still remains static, with the unfortunate loss of our older members only just being made up by new members. It appears that very few alumni from the sixth form college are joining the association and it is intended to address that situation. However, if all existing members, were to do what my best friend did to me, and persuade one or more of their contemporaries to join, then our numbers could be swiftly increased.

Best wishes to you all, and I hope to see plenty of you at the Summer Reunion.

Anthony Barnard (1953-59)



Jottings



Once again, we have to kick off with a sad announcement. Frank Whitbourn, former staff member, is no longer with us. Frank, like many of the masters at the old Grammar School, managed to attain a ripe old age. I, for one, was surprised at how old he actually was. He always appeared younger, both in body and in attitudes, than most of his contemporaries.

He was certainly able to achieve a rapport with his pupils, one of many features of Frank's teaching that instilled a love of his subject and eased the chore of remembering the more boring aspects of English like the rules of grammar and character details in the literary works we had to study. He opened our eyes to a wide range of literature, from Shakespeare and Chaucer - which were compulsory study for GCE - and early English works like Beowulf, to more popular novels including what was to become cult reading for future generations, e.g. Tolkein. In fact rules didn't matter too much if we were being creative and good. Frank had a love for inventing words and bending the rules

of grammar - even the rules of taste - if such could be justified in the name of style or creativity. My recollections of Frank's lessons include coming up with a parody of a James Bond novel (it was about the time that the first Bond film was released) for one of his exercises. I was dreading his comments, but Frank enjoyed the steamier parts as much as my classmates. In the same light, Frank was never one to shy away from the baser aspects of Chaucer (and there was no shortage of those). When the rest of the English department glossed over a particular passage, we knew we could get chapter and verse from those in Frank's English set.

With all due respect to the other staff members I wish I could have enjoyed more of Frank's teaching. It may have meant that I found my eventual *métier* in life much earlier, with an interest in, and love for, the written word.

An appreciation of Frank by David Wood, a well known name in theatre circles (particularly children's theatre) appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Editor

The 1960s again

Following publication of the Autumn 2004 newsletter, we were pleased to hear from Tony Collins (1962-1969) who also remembers Collyer's in the Coulson area. He is the son of Peter 'Hitler' Collins, who taught languages at the Grammar School, who died in 1988. Tony now lives near Aylesbury, working in Christian book publishing, and in his spare time creating a nature reserve as well as enjoying more conventional pastimes like golf, writing and church activities.

Tony remembers the sense of relief and excitement he felt when Derek Slynn arrived as Headmaster - particularly Mr Slynn's early decree that caps need no longer be worn. He also remembers the 'streaming', in which he suspects that perception of academic ability was the key issue. Tony started in 1B and had to struggle up the scale. 'How absurd that such matters should have any consequence now', he says, 'and yet the pain and pride of those distinctions still comes flooding back.'

Recollections sought

Ian Hill, who attended Collyer's during the 1939-1945 War is seeking contact with an old friend, Geoffrey Lesser. He had an elder brother, Victor. If anybody has any recollections of either, please contact Anthony Barnard who will pass the information on to Ian Hill.

Dick Tidey

Canon Denys Graebe wrote to thank the OCA for the fitting tributes to Dick Tidey. But, he says, there was one achievement not mentioned. When Dick was at Queens' College, Cambridge, he was a member of the University Cross Country Running Team, and he won his 'Half Blue' - the highest award given in that sport.

More Greenop memories

George Styles writes:

During the war paper was in short supply at Collyers as elsewhere and old documents with a clean side were frequently used by Bob Greenop, who was in charge of paper, for notes etc. In a previous OCA Newsletter you may remember me describing the offices of the laboratory assistant. It occurred to me that somewhere in the attic amid my host of papers there should still be a portion of a debating society minute book, (pages clean on one side), that Bob gave me for note taking purposes at the end of the war.

Looking for something else I stumbled upon it. The book had been reduced to a portion of its former size due to the war-time paper measures but the minutes for 1934 are there together with the Rules for the Society, and nearly every set of minutes signed by P.A.T. himself. The last entry is for the 12th October 1936 signed by P.A.T. and R. Seed. "That the Integrity of the British Empire depends upon Maritime Supremacy" was either carried or lost by 12-8 votes. Annoyingly a piece of this last entry had been torn out for a place mark elsewhere!

I had a wonderful time going through it, as a one-time secretary of that debating society I realised the importance of handwriting and sympathised with the earlier ones when their attention was brought to essential detail by the chairman. The one error that I love is the error in the date! You see January 1936 confused with January 1935, the same problem I have experienced signing cheques after Christmas,

I am puzzled as to why the rules are set out on the first page. It is as if the only part of the book missing was the front cover! Had Bob taken all the plain sides off?

Further jottings...

Dennis Chapman again

Ben Dibben contacted the Association to say that he was very interested in the article about Dennis Chapman in the Autumn 2004 newsletter. He writes: "Dennis Chapman was head of Denne (my house) in my first two years at Collyer's and I remember his name very well. I can, however, remember only two things about him which you may find interesting:

"His getting a Scholarship to Merton college, Oxford - I was always fascinated by the fact that, at Merton, it was called a Postmastership which I thought was an unusual title to give such a prestigious award!

"More significantly, after the closing Assembly on the last day of the summer term, the Staff played cricket against the school Under XIV team (in later years they played the School First Eleven), and all the boys went down to the playing field and had to stay there as spectators until 3.30pm. The boys tended to gather at the boundary in clusters, mainly by form or year, and were all on best behaviour, of course, I remember Dennis so well - in 1945, I presume - in that, rather than being in a group of Prefects or sixth-formers of his own age and stature, he was with a group of us second-form boys.

"I have sometimes wondered if his election, as Head Prefect, to be with us juniors told one something kindly about him."

OCA committee member Nick Weller also went on to Merton College from Collyer's (although not as a postmaster). According to Nick, in the 14th century a fund was established to provide support for meritorious students at Merton. Scholars supported by this fund were allowed a weekly allowance, known as a 'porno'. The scholars thus became

known as 'portioniste', which by the 16th century had been corrupted to 'postmasters'.

Brian Calloway writes that he too was saddened to read of the death of Dennis Chapman.

Brian says that he started at Collyer's in April 1940 so was not a close contemporary. He continues: "As you know three years makes a lot of difference when you are eleven! I was allocated to Denne house, which was also the house of my father who was at Collyer's between 1917-1923. My brother Keith started in 1941 so he also became a member of Denne.

"Perhaps a couple of years later I became aware of Dennis's presence in the house activities. I recall him as enthusiastic, friendly, outgoing and to me then a rather large fellow. I got to know him better and to like him, when I entered the sixth form in 1944. We both were studying sciences in the old chemistry block and we played cricket for the school. When I was selected to play for the first eleven I was the youngest in the team and physically rather intimidated by Dennis, Cecil Piper and Alan Gorringer. They made me welcome. He led Denne house well but I have no stories or memories of his activities, trials or successes as Head Prefect. Perhaps Cecil and Alan can help here.

"The comments about his views of Collyer's, and his responsibilities at school, are strikingly similar to mine. I share his fondness for the school. The experience at Collyer's of the disciplines of learning, the companionship of like minded boys who became friends, the enjoyment of sport is still with me. All this took place during the war years.

"In 1946 Tharp made me Head Boy of the school and I also became Head Boy of Denne. In the summer of 1947 I led

the first eleven at Christ's Hospital and 'carried my bat' through the innings that day. I know exactly how Dennis felt. Although we lost the match I still recall the game. Later that summer I was fortunate to obtain a State Scholarship to Queens' College Cambridge to study sciences. My last year at school was almost identical with Dennis Chapman's."

Collyer's 75 years ago

John Beeley writes to say that he has come across the OCA website on the net, and was amazed to find a few names that he knows in Brian Slyfield's article. "The name Slyfield rings a bell with me," he writes, "though after all this time I cannot put a face to it.

"I attended Collyers from 1928-33, when P.A. Tharp was headmaster and am now in my late eighties.

"Masters I remember are as follows, nicknames shown in parenthesis :- PA Tharp Headmaster, JB Shrewsbury, Senior master (Snoo), GFW Hart (Twitchy), Mr Carter (Baggy) and Mr. Bob Greenop (both taught sciences in the old lab. block), Mr. Campbell, Mr. Kenyon (Froggy), Mr. C G Jones, Mr A Henderson, Mr G G Hunt, Mr A.N Wilson, Mr F.A. Potter, Mr W. Stanley Sutton [taught music and was also organist and choirmaster at the Parish Church], Miss Williamson, Matron. There were also a Mr Brearley and a Mr. Kelly who were not there for many years; Mr. Kelly started us into seven a side rugby.

"Vic Channon was the caretaker, who also played football for Horsham.

"Mrs Tharp played a role in the day to day affairs of the school, and was the driving force in the production at the end of the autumn term of Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas which ran for three or four performances at the end of term, and were very successful. During my time there we performed *HMS*

Pinafore, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Mikado*, and then a second *Pinafore*. A lot of work was put into rehearsals by Mrs Tharp and Mr Sutton with a cast made up solely of pupils and teaching staff. I remember that the orchestra for the first production of *Pinafore* consisted only of Mr Sutton on piano and, I think, a Miss Fountain on violin, though this was augmented each year after that.

"Sadly I have seen little of Horsham since my schooldays as I went straight into the Navy, and came up to the N.W fairly soon after the war. My wife and I called in for a brief visit probably about 1948/9 after I returned from the Far East, when Mr Tharp was still there, and we went again probably about 1960, and stayed a couple of nights at the Black Horse (very noisy!) by which time Mr. Tharp had died, but some of the staff I knew were still there. I remember being shown Mr. Tharp's desk which had been preserved in one of the first floor rooms.

"It is good to know that the old school is still there - though probably considerably bigger than it was in my day."

Musician needed

The Association needs a volunteer who is able to play the keyboards to accompany the school song, at the Winter Reunion. The singing of the song brings back so many memories and proves a highlight of the event each year. The piano which was provided to the college through OCA donations a couple of years ago has now been located in the school's Recording Studio, which the Caretaker has agreed to unlock during the next Annual Dinner.

Horsham Pool

Many Old Collyerians will have fond memories of using the open-air swimming pool in Horsham Park. The pool's construction was preceded by intrigue and controversy before it opened in

1934, and similar political dissension marked its closure in 1979.

Now that Horsham has a new pool, it seems fitting to mark its predecessor in some way, and a book, entitled *Coming In?* by Ian Chapman, which tells the fascinating story of this former Horsham landmark, has recently been published. The book is available from Horsham Museum, price £11 plus £1.50 postage.

Advanced Latin

Charles Hutton recalls that when he was on leave from the Army in the 1950s, he was called upon to assist his step-brother, Bryan Bushell, who was struggling with his Latin prep. With his elder relative's assistance, Bushell submitted ten sentences on the lines of 'puer in urbem est panem emendam'. He came home the next day with a note from 'Fred' Bennett commending Hutton on his Latin, but pointing out that

gerunds were not taught until the fourth year so he should have used the subjunctive. However, it could have been worse, says Charles. He could have suggested 'pane empta' which did not figure until the fifth year.

Peter Broderick

We have learned of the death of Peter Gale Broderick. He attended Collyer's from 1942 until 1948/49. He became involved with drama both at the school and in West Sussex and he always spoke fondly of his time at school. About twelve years ago he attended the Annual Dinner and was amazed at the changes now that Collyers is a sixth form college.

OCA Committee

The Association is pleased to welcome Paul Smith and Derek Sturt to the Committee.

An appreciation of Frank Whitbourn

Frank Whitbourn was cremated at Basingstoke Crematorium on 9 March 2005. David Wood OBE gave an address in tribute. Although not an Old Collyerian himself, like so many of us, David benefited from Frank's teaching. Thanks to David for giving permission for us to use his text in the newsletter, and thanks to Rod Mengham (1965-1972) for forwarding it to us.

Today we celebrate Frank's life - much as we miss him, much as we are sad to lose him - let's celebrate the happiness we shared with him, as a brother, an uncle, or a great uncle, or an ex-pupil, or friend. He was such a special man, and I am honoured to be

asked to speak about him.

Frank taught me so much - not at school, though I envy anyone in his class at school - rather as a fellow theatre enthusiast who was lucky enough to attend a residential drama course run by him. It was 1958. I was fourteen, theatre-mad in a world where such an interest was looked on as somewhat odd. Thanks to Frank (he insisted on being called Frank, not Mr Whitbourn, which made him immediately approachable), that week was the best week of my life, where I found I wasn't alone, - it shaped my life. Helping him learn his lines as a revivalist preacher, I laughed a lot and learnt a lot and found an adult who

understood. He became my mentor, and for nearly forty years, was the first person to read all my plays, to enthuse, to make spot-on critical judgements, to advise, to encourage. I can't tell you how much I valued and how much I will miss such an acute sounding-board. I treasure the three overflowing box-files of his wise and witty letters written in that unique, exquisite copperplate hand. I want to share with you some gems from these letters. They reveal his amazing memory, his humour and the richness of his experiences. And his enthusiasm! Having received a package of press reviews or a new manuscript from me, he would start: "I say, I say! What a splendid plop on the doormat! Hugissimus thanks!"

He came to see a play of mine and wrote about a child in the row behind complaining, "There's a VERY LARGE GROWN-UP in front of me, whereupon I tried to curl up into obscurity!"

He wrote of his love of books: "I was obsessed by books before I could read them. At about five I was given a book called "The Wallypug of Why" and I can still see myself sitting in a little chair pretending to read and chuckling over it. I read to my mother when she was ill. She enjoyed the sound of her little Frankie's voice - and so of course did he!"

"Whenever any kind uncle pressed a half-crown into my expectant little hand I was off to our local bookseller, William Pile - in Sutton High Street - to buy another volume."

And of course he later wrote plays and books including the splendid history of Lock's, the hatters, a branch of the family who made hats for the gentry and indeed for Nelson and Jane Austen's brother.

Not to mention those wonderful Christmas poems he sent us.

He took his writing seriously: "I shudder to think how many Scandinavian trees I may have used up

in the course of my long and not especially productively poetical - or do I mean 'poetically productive'? - life! I wake up in the night with a sudden flash - or quirk - of illumination, and up I have to get and jot it down for fear it will have fled by morning, like the ghost of Hamlet's father. And how often by daylight it doesn't seem so marvellous and necessary after all!

Typically modest.

Later, theatre became his great passion.

He wrote: "That was a time when Mary and I did a lot of theatre-going. We used to take a return 'cheap-day ticket' (eighteen pence) from Sutton to Victoria (train every twenty minutes) and head for one of the major cinemas where admission was one shilling before noon. After the movie (we just called it a 'film' in those days before the American invasion) we queued at a theatre for pit or gallery for not more than three shillings which included sixpence for hire of a camp stool which stood in to keep our place for us while we snatched a bite at Lyons - 'brunch' for 1/3d - whither we returned after the play for a second snack which exhausted our cashflow."

He loved Shakespeare, of course, and J.M. Barrie, whom I admire hugely too. Barrie wrote Peter Pan, and sometimes I think of Frank as Peter Pan, not that he didn't grow up, rather that his mind stayed ever young.

He, like me went to Oxford. He, like me, got a 'gentleman's third class degree'! And we were proud of it! His tutor at Merton was the famous poet Edmund Blunden, whom he much admired.

Teaching became Frank's vocation, first at Claysmore, where he inspired later- to-become actors, Michael Balfour, Michael Ingham, and Stephen Joseph, who became the great pioneer of theatre-in-the-round. One day the young Stephen said, "Please sir, could you

write a play for my puppet theatre?" - Frank did. It was called ASK A POLICEMAN and was published - for 8 guineas!

Thanks to a fellow teacher he met the famous actor-manager Harcourt Williams, and stage-managed for him, and even acted what Frank called "the inferior end of a cow". He stayed often with the Williamses and met John Gielgud and Sybil Thorndike.

When war broke out, Frank joined the Airforce, but The British Council were looking for military personnel "with an interest in artistic and academic matters". Frank ended up in Teheran and had a wonderful time.

"I put on THE TEMPEST and A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT DREAM in a superb setting and knew that the weather would co-operate. We also did Flecker's HASSAN translated into Persian with real camels en route to Samarkand! These were my glory days!"

After his long teaching career, mainly at Collyer's, Horsham, directing plays and writing them, Frank retired to Winchester with Mary. As he got older, his wit never diminished. He loved gardening - most of the time.

"There's no notable news except that 'the rain it raineth every day', but at least I don't have to stagger forth of an evening with my watering-can".

He still wrote his wonderful letters -

"I note that my penmanship is even more obscure than usual. I think this must be because Mary and I have had a

visit from our chiroprapist this morning, and though I don't write with my feet (even if it looks like it!), I suspect it's a side effect."

He didn't like the work of Andrew Lloyd Webber!

"The only moment I enjoyed in PHANTOM was when the candelabra got stuck and wouldn't go up or down and we sat in the dark for twenty minutes or so while sweating stage hands tried to fix it. That interlude was almost worth the exorbitant price for admission. It was rewarded with the largest hand of the afternoon".

We all loved Frank. We all, family and friends, are grateful for his love. Above all, hundreds and hundreds of us will forever be grateful to him for opening the door to the joys of drama and literature. Some years ago I was to speak at the funeral of my headmaster's wife, who also opened doors for us. I asked Frank if he knew a suitable poem with which to close. He didn't - but wrote one especially.

It is appropriate that I end with his poem, to thank HIM.

"One who loosened...

Windows opened onto far horizons, lit,
Candles of courage for doubting youth
to climb,

Dark midnight stairways, or illuminate,
Blind corners in the corridor of Time."

Frank, hugissimus thanks!

David Wood - 9 March 2004

Civic Guild of Old Mercers

The Installation Dinner of the Guildmaster elect, Old Mercer R.A. Lawman, will be held at Tallow Chandlers' Hall on 2nd June 2005.

Social events have included visits to Spitalfields and Dennis Severs' House; to the library at St. Paul's Cathedral and the College of Arms; to the Docklands Museum and finally to Osterley House.

Anyone interested in joining the Guild can obtain details from the Guild's Old Collyerian representative, Bob Smith, who is Renter Warden elect. Bob's address is 95 Whitebeam Avenue, Bromley, Kent BR2 8DN, tel: 0208 467 5217.

Membership news

Membership news - e.g. changes of address, new member contact details, deaths etc, is available in the printed news letter

College news

In addition to being named as a particularly successful college by Ofsted, Collyer's was recently named as a top provider in the annual report from the Adult Learning Inspectorate. The college offers adult education for several hundred part-time students in the evenings and at weekends.

The college is proud of its achievements in 2004 and has an A level pass rate of 98%, as compared to a national average of 95%. Its pass rate on vocational courses for 2004 was

100%. Students at Collyer's gained an average of 307 UCAS points per student and the college performance in the DfES league tables was 'outstanding' in the maintained sector. The top 150 students in the college gained an average of 422 points per student - the equivalent of 3 A levels at grade A and an AS at grade A.

Inspectors judged all curriculum areas of the college as either 'good' or 'outstanding', with the majority as 'outstanding'.

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, LL65 4UR.

Summer reunion 2005

Once again, in response to popular demand, the Association gets afloat for its summer reunion on 18 June. Arrange to meet your old ship mates at The Onslow Arms in Loxwood, West Sussex, on the B2133, from where you board the boat, *Zachariah Keppel*, for a gentle two hour trip along an idyllic restored section of the Wey & Arun Canal. Stay and have a drink at the pub afterwards. There's a large garden if the weather's good to us.

The boat trip starts at 6pm and there are places on board for up to 30 people. The cost is £6.00 a head, and partners and adult guests are welcome. Pets are not allowed on board, and the Company also regrets that the carriage of wheelchairs is not possible.

Please send a cheque for £6.00 a head, with a stamped addressed envelope, to the Hon. Treasurer, Nick Weller, at 12 North Ash, Hawthorn Close, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 2BW.

Cheques should be made payable to *The Old Collyerians' Association*. Please make it clear that the cheque is for the Summer Re-union.

THE WEY & ARUN CANAL 'London's Lost Route to the Sea' The Wey & Arun Canal runs through Surrey and West Sussex in Southern England. Much of the canal is no longer navigable - the Wey & Arun Canal Trust aims to restore the whole Canal back to navigation. When it is restored, there will be an inland waterway link from London, via the rivers Wey and Arun, as far as Littlehampton on the Sussex coast.

This rural waterway is recognised as a national heritage asset, as well as providing a haven for wildlife. Although certain stretches are private, some sections of the towpath are accessible for walks. The Trust has numerous current restoration projects, and several lengths of the canal are now in water.

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 Autumn 2005.