

OLD VARNDDEANIAN

Newsletter

Archive re-issue

OCTOBER 1992

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at the College on Thursday, November 12th at 7pm.

ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner in 1992 was held in May at the College. After the Jubilee celebrations last year it was bound to be a somewhat muted affair. However, 76 souls presented themselves for an aperitif in the library and afterwards for more substantial fare in the Hone Room which is the room where some of you spent half an hour dutifully eating your lunch while others kept a wary eye open in the direction of the top table while they sprinkled salt in their neighbour's glass of water.

Partners were invited and we had a number of ladies present, most of whom were probably amused at the antics on the all male tables. Even Old Varndeanian dinners are not exempt from the unexpected and our President, Don Osborne arrived in time for the coffee due to a bomb scare at Victoria station. The bar closed somewhat earlier than intended so everybody was sober and they all remembered the words of the School Song

For the first time, a raffle was held, organised by Tony Newman, which made a profit of £72 Also, a profit of £76 was made from the Dinner, being the excess of Income over Expenditure.

Next year, it is intended to change the venue. It will be held at the Pelham Restaurant of Brighton College of Technology (with the latest changes in the nomenclature of the education system, it is probably now called Brighton University) in Pelham Street. There will be a 'flyer' in the March Newsletter which can be used for reservations and from the reports and comments of everyone who has had the good fortune to eat there, it will be an excellent meal. The dinner has been arranged for Friday, 30th April. Initial negotiations indicate that the cost will be £25 per head for a four course meal. The price will include drinks on arrival, choice of wine with the main course and liqueurs. Partners are welcome.

OVA Financial Position

At 31st March, 1992, the Association held £2,387.40 in a deposit account, £41.64 in a current account and £672.34 in the Samaritan Fund. Total membership is 603

NEWS OF OLD VARNDDEANIANS

Obituaries

Lord James of Rusholme was a very distinguished Old Varndeanian and was a vice president of the OVA. We can claim only a small part of his education as he was at York Place from 1920 to 1922. He then moved to Taunton School. He was a distinguished educationist. He was the High Master of Manchester Grammar School from 1945 to 1962, having taught at Winchester since 1933. He was appointed vice Chancellor of York University in 1962 and retired in 1973. He was knighted in 1956 and created a life peer in 1959. He gained a first in Chemistry at Queens College, Oxford, and, naturally, taught chemistry. He was co author of Elements of Physical Chemistry. He was by upbringing and nature a Fabian Socialist but he was a champion of the grammar schools.

Philip Bird was not a member of the OVA but he was at Varndean Grammar School in the late 1940s. He left in 1948 and joined the staff of the Evening Argus, becoming the paper's crime reporter and the wine columnist. Finally he was the editorial training manager. He will be remembered with great respect by journalists everywhere for his experience and enterprise. He died in September 1992 aged 59.

Jack Down (1921-1926) was not a member of the OVA, but will be remembered by many because he was Henry Down's brother. He was a pharmacist by profession and was in business in Tunbridge Wells for 30 years.

Dennis Evans (1931-1936) who lived in Hangleton Road, died in October last year.

Brian Hughes (1924-1932) died in April, 1992.

David Birch (1962-1969) was very prominent in the sporting scene in Brighton and will be sadly missed by his many friends in the OVA. David was killed in a car accident in Dyke Road Avenue in June.

L.G. Smith (1916-1920) not a member of the OVA, died recently.

The members of the OVA regret the passing of these Old Varndeanians and those of us who remember them as friends either at school or in later life will miss them.

OTHER NEWS

Tom Brooks (1988-1990) featured in a newspaper article recently, reporting his response to the 'call of the wild'. He was leading a five strong expedition to the Paraguayan jungle to carry out research into the state of endangered species.

Andrew Mallin Jones (1957-64) sends his best wishes to his contemporaries. He is still with ICI and has recently qualified as a lay reader for the Church of England. He has three children.

Ernest White (1937-43), who lives in Oxford, is the Honorary Secretary of the University of London Air Squadron ex Members Association. He wonders if there are any OV's who may be eligible to join if so, the Editor has some application forms.

Richard Beeforth (1983-85) writes to tell us that legal & General Assurance at Hove is staffed by umpteen Old Varndeanians, all of whom were at Varndean Sixth Form College some time during the years 1982-1986. They include Malcolm Kirby who, like Richard, designs computer systems for the company; Sarah Kirby who is married to Malcolm working in Customer Services Administration; Graham Smith, a computer programmer; Paul Chinman, Business Support Manager in Customer Services Administration; Steve Barry, also a Business Support Manager

Paul Rawlinson (1969-77) is now a partner in A.E. Green & Partners in Brighton They are Chartered Quantity Surveyors.

David Banks (1950-57) lives in Caythorpe Nottinghamshire. David is a consultant physician, but he is also the General Manager of the Nottingham Health Authority

Ron Bannister (1930-37) lives at Lingfield and sends his best wishes to all those who are his contemporaries. Next time you are at Lingfield races watching the horses pound down the all weather track, look out for him. He may (or may not) be there.

Steve Sun Chong Lui and Susan Lui (née Crapnell) (1979-82) now live at 56 Roman Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds. Steve is Senior Scientist at Leeds General infirmary and Susan is a Speech and language Therapist at Pontefract General Infirmary. Susan recently gained M Sc. from Loughborough University.

Brian Gibbins (1939-47) has now retired from his job as Manager at Barclays Bank, Lancing, and lives at Eastbourne, Brian was Senior Prefect in his last year at School and welcomes the nostalgia stirred by the Newsletter He sends his best wishes to his friends.

Eric Hayden who is a member of the OVA but whose years at School we do not know, has now retired as the incumbent at Cuckfield where he was a most popular

vicar and has joined the diocese at Salisbury as the parson in charge of three churches

Brian Tulley (1950-54) wrote to us from Brighton and mentioned that his younger son, Richard Tulley who was at Varndean Sixth Form College from 1982 to 1984 is now working in Solihull as a computer programmer.

Peter Tullet (1966-73) lives in Horsham. He works in Airline Finances at the Civil Aviation Authority in London

Chris Strick (1943-51) has now retired from H.M. Customs & Excise having served for 38 years, the last 21 years being at Gatwick.

NEW MEMBERS

Tony Paine (1937-41) lives in Coventry and has been retired for some years from his job as Distribution Controller for the largest Cooperative Society in the UK. However, he has now found a new career and wonders where he took the wrong path when he was younger. He is now the General Secretary of three trade associations.

Tony Worsfold (1955-62) lives in Milton Keynes where he is employed as Project Engineering Manager working on shore and off shore on chemical, oil and gas plants. His career has been centred on chemical engineering which was the subject of his degree from Leeds University in 1966. He is married with two daughters.

Roy Brookes (1938-43) lives in Winchester at 63 St. Cross Road and will welcome contact with the friends who knew him at School.

CYRIL SHELLEY

Cyril is the stalwart of the OVA. He is our most respected member. Our present membership is largely due to his efforts. Unfortunately, time is 'catching him up' and, recently, he had a hip replaced with an artificial joint It wasn't as successful as he had hoped and has had a second spell at the Horder Centre for Arthritis at Crowborough and some time at the Princess Royal Hospital at Haywards Heath. Hopefully, he will have returned home by the time this Newsletter reaches you, but if you have the time, a letter will give him a boost.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Maybe this could be a new feature. There must be many members who would like to contact old friends. So why not ask?

Chris Strick would like to find the whereabouts of Mr. Discombe who was on the staff at Varndean School in the late 40s early 50s. If you can help, contact Chris.

VARNDEAN NOSTALGIA

We have received several pieces over the last six months which set out the anecdotes of their years at School of the following OVs.

Raymond Jeal (1936-41) sent enough material to fill three Newsletters, including photographs. Among his notes, Raymond remembers Derek Ell who was air crew and died in a plane crash in 1944 and Desmond Dunk who served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War and died in 1991. These three spent all their school days together.

He included newspaper cuttings about the deaths of two people of some account. Derek Francis the actor, who was at Varndean School in the early 1940s and after serving in the Army became a professional actor in 1947 He died in 1989. The other cutting was the obituary to 'Gunner' Gibbs who was a member of the staff for nearly 40 years and has been one of those featured in our 'Nicknames' articles. 'Gunner' was a great rugby enthusiast and was a great supporter of Brighton Rugby Football Club as well as being the County representative on the Rugby Union Council. His one disappointment was being unsuccessful in persuading 'them' to introduce the game to Varndean.

Thank you Raymond. Do you want your photographs back?

Malcolm Hampton (1935-40) whose days at School and whose youth were badly affected by the Second World War Wasted years. He recalls the School Scout Troop founded about 1937 by Mr Hamer and their two camps the first at Stratford on Avon where they were joined by two Hitler Youth boys and the second at the isle of Wight where they watched the Royal Navy preparing for war Contradictions indeed

Malcolm also recalls the Hutchins regime which included a number of strict rules, one of which was that nobody was allowed to ride a bicycle down Surrenden Road from the School entrance until he had turned the corner. All cyclists were issued with a 'licence' which was withdrawn should any of the cycling rules be broken. Cars, of course, would be excused

Peter Bailey (1933-41) provided the photograph in the last Newsletter of Sheffield Park railway station and he has many recollections of the School camp which was based at Danehill in the 1930s. Compared to the rigours of those camps, modern camping is Hilton like. Latrines dug by the campers, water drawn from a brick lined well,

straw palliasses to sleep on, swimming in hammer ponds with black mud on the bottom.

There were distractions, of course. Like the claim of one group of miscreants that they had watched some young ladies from the 'big house' bathing in one of the hammer ponds in the nude. My! The main string of hammer ponds is north of Horsted Keynes, so the boys must have walked a good distance to reach them. The only 'big house' on the 05 map in the area is Broadhurst Manor.

Thank you Peter. You will note that the story about the contraceptive has not been included.

HONOURS BOOK

This was mentioned in the October 1991 Newsletter. The details have now been agreed and an Editorial Board consisting of an OV, a College representative and a Governors' representative will be established. The book will be produced by the Graphics department at the College and the book will contain details of the achievements of all Old Varndeanians in any area of endeavour.

Please send these details to the Honorary Secretary of the OVA, Derek Ashcroft. They can be about yourself you must not be modest or about any OV you think should be mentioned.

MEMORIAL TO TONY ALLT

Brian Robson (1939-44) has agreed to complete the first volume of the History of Varndean which Tony started before he died. it is hoped to produce this volume in a form suitable for sale. Publishing costs will be heavy. Between now and the publishing date the Association will endeavour to raise sufficient funds to make it possible. We have already started by raffling prizes at the Annual Dinner. Tony Newman proposes to do this again in 1993 so he will welcome prizes from members. Of course, direct contributions to the cost of publication will also be very welcome and the Treasurer, Dennis Leggett will welcome your generosity towards such an ambitious cause.

COLLEGE NEWS

I am very pleased to report another successful year past and a 'challenging' year ahead.

The College continued its successes on the sports field, on the stage and in the quality of its exam results. 1991 saw men's football and hockey teams prominent in the Sussex leagues and the cricket team, although having a mixed season including a defeat by the OV's enjoying a winning tour in the Thames Valley. An outstanding production of 'Cabaret' in the hall played to packed and enthusiastic audiences during the Brighton Festival and a more intimately staged production of 'Our Country's Good' marked excellent work by our year 1 Theatre Studies students. We are looking forward to the Autumn Term production of 'Sink the Belgrano' on September 24-26, and 'The Last Days of Don Juan' by de Molina on December 11, 12 & 13. Contact the office for tickets.

The penultimate week of the summer term saw 200 of our own students and others from the special needs unit at Ash Cottage spend a week in Sheffield at a university hall of residence. Other students spent valuable time on work experience in Brighton and on outdoor pursuits.

Our 1992 examination results were once again very pleasing in fact the best yet 84% pass rate at A level (5% above the national average!) and a number of exceptional performances with over 20 students gaining 25 points or better. With an A C rate of 60% at GCSE 10% above the national average 1992 proved another very good year for the College and, despite Mr Patten's recent pronouncement, one which cannot be laid at the door of 'declining standards'. In fact we are all heartily sick of the achievements of students being denigrated for political motives!

Next year, too, looks promising. The College continues to grow with more than 730 students including 460 new faces' this September. We have already embarked upon a £350,000 programme of building work which will see two new labs, two new teaching rooms, the refurbishment of existing science accommodation, a new art studio, and modifications which will see a room dedicated to PE teaching, a music room and two rehearsal rooms and two general meeting areas. From the College's own budget we have over the summer completely refurbished the library and redecorated the Hall. I suspect that some of these changes may not be entirely to the taste of OV's but times change and we must look ahead!

April 1st 1993, of course, sees a change in the College's position to an incorporated college in the new further education sector receiving its funding from central government rather than through the LEA. We are busily preparing for the changes which will ensue. The land issue is not resolved and will be adjudicated by the Education Assets Board. I hope to report favourably on the retention of 'Big Field' in the Spring newsletter. Although there are many uncertainties associated with incorporation there are also many opportunities to secure the quality of education we currently provide for our students, to be more flexible in our approaches to the curriculum in, for example, the introduction of vocational courses and courses for more mature students.

If you would like to continue your own education, be in touch and we may be able to arrange a course for you such as our new 'ACCESS' course in European Studies which will provide a direct route to related degree courses for more mature entrants with non traditional qualifications. We also offer a very extensive range of community education classes mainly in the evenings.

So a great deal of change but we are still very keen to maintain our good relationships with all Old Varndeanians. I would be delighted to see any of you should you wish to look round the College. Please get in touch!

Alan Jenkins

DRAMA AT VARNDÉAN – PART FOUR

The Seventies ...

Not everyone had taken the changes of the Swinging Sixties to their hearts. Pinter's 'Dumb Waiter' provoked such hostility from one quarter that headmaster John Mollison was compelled to write at length to one Old Varndeanian to explain that 'Macbeth also displayed evil and character deterioration' and staging the plays didn't mean the school approved of either.

But one thing that did transfer well into the essentially non-Shakespearean era of the 70s was the deft artistic flair of Matt Bruce. The giant heraldic Spanish sun he designed for Shaffer's play 'Royal Hunt of the Sun' was stunning. It dominated the school hall, with eight enormous 'petals' that opened to reveal the massive frame of Stephen Whiteman, dressed impressively in a full length feathered cloak (one of several fine costumes loaned to us by another school and transported down from London by D.A.G. Turner as one of his first jobs as Varndean's new Headmaster).

The strong athletic influence of Paul Bristow and Steve Ovet was to be found among the scantily clad tribe of Inca Indians: and they survived to tell the tale, thankfully. For Chris Bintcliffe's growing fascination for stage explosions had produced in our midst a Spanish arquebus, hired from a London gunsmiths especially for the occasion. It proved a wise decision to give it a test run on the Oval playing fields and not within the confines of the school hall!

1971 had seen another breakthrough: the contacts between the girls' and boys' Grammar Schools, once restricted to the annual hockey match and occasional debate, were extended. Girls appeared on the stage in a Varndean production for the first time in 'Becket'. A rather risqué tent scene between Becket and a handmaiden caused a raised eyebrow from Girls' school head Miss Bartle but the tradition was allowed to continue until we had our own intake of girls.

They were much in evidence in Under Milk Wood where Sussex mastery of Welsh accents brought special praise from the County Drama Advisor who, it transpired, came from a Welsh background and had anticipated hearing dreadful things done to Dylan Thomas' verse.

By now Mike King and David Evans were firmly established as i/c staging and lighting respectively. And at the end of the 70s, with the arrival of a new Head of Music, came another innovation when Varndean Sixth Form College staged its first full musical Cabaret.

Dave Bullock's enthusiasm for both the music and the subject matter; Sarah Blake's fine performance as Sally Bowles; a school hall transformed into a seedy nightclub, complete with a chillingly realistic Nazi presence as the night wore on; all combined to prove that, though its reputation was made on the big screen, Cabaret The Play more than holds its own.

The 70s, a time of innovation. In the 80s there was more to come...

John M. Smith

CRICKET CLUB REPORT

The 1992 cricket season was slightly disappointing, as we lost our captain at the start of the season and struggled to put out a full side on several occasions. On the playing side we had a reasonably good season, thanks to a hard core of regular players and valuable contributions from several guests. The record was played 18, won 6, drawn 7, lost 5.

Highest scores of the season were 115 not out by 5. Parsons, 84 by Bruce Fryer (1965-70) and 83 by Ian Stevens (1971-78).

Best bowling performances were 6 for 68 by Martin Watts and 5 for 23 by Adrian Heft (1969-76).

Highest partnership was 95 between John Morris (73) and Terry Garoghan (39).

Bruce Fryer topped the batting averages with 414 runs at 31.85; Martin Watts headed the bowling averages with 39 wickets at 12.05

Our thanks go to Geoff Stringer (1965-73) for acting as captain for most of the season.

The OV's v College game, played in the wet on July 1st, resulted in a win for the Old Boys. The OV's batted first scoring 121 (Ian Stevens 35 no); the College in reply managed 79 (J.M. Brown 5 for 23). The club is in serious need of younger players and off field assistance. If any OV's or their sons, daughters etc. fancy a game of cricket, or if you can assist with umpiring or scoring, please contact the Secretary, Adrian Heft, on Brighton 563533.

Adrian Heft

OLD VARNDEANIANS FC

The Club enjoyed a very successful season last year with the 1st team finishing runners up in the Premier Division and the 2nd team finishing midway in Division Four of the Brighton, Hove & District Football League. With the new season already upon us the Club is looking to improve even further, and is ambitious for success. Indeed, during the summer the Club applied for membership of the Sussex County Football League Division 3, and although we were ultimately unsuccessful the fact that we were one of the few teams out of the many applying throughout Sussex that were interviewed by the League's Management Committee indicates the seriousness and consideration that went into the Club's decision to apply. The Club's immediate objective is to win the Brighton League Premier Division this season and to re apply for membership of the County League next year, and the first game of the season was an encouraging and hard fought 2-2 draw against a strong Rottingdean side which last season played in the Sussex County League.

During the summer the players have been training regularly, under the guidance of the 1st team manager, Ian Muzio, at Corals Stadium, Hove. Having used the stadium all last season for 1st team matches the Club decided at the AGM earlier this year that for 1992/93 Corals should also be the home venue for 2nd team matches. This is one of the best playing surfaces in the whole of Sussex, and additionally the bar and social facilities are available to Club members both after matches and at other times during the week.

From September 29th, 1992, OV's training switches from Corals to Portslade Community College Sports Centre, Chalky Road, Portslade, and begins each Tuesday at 8.00pm. If anybody is interested in joining the Football Club, either as a player or as associate member, please contact myself, Norman Wright, or Ian Muzio and we will be very pleased to provide you with further details of membership, etc. We are also looking out for Old Varndeanians who might like to help with the team arrangements on match days.

Norman Wright

IN DEO FIDEMUS LODGE

Varndean's own Masonic Lodge continues to flourish, although most new members are now not OV's. Alan Hall, who was the first non OV to reach the Chair, has almost completed a very successful year in office. His successor, to be installed as Master in November, will be Jim MacKenzie (1941-48)

Donald Osborne (Secretary)

PHOTOGRAPHS

Several readers recognised Stephen Davies in the photograph of the NatWest Jazz Band. Yes, he is the moustached one in the front row.

David Banks recalls the days when he and Stephen were associated with the choir at St. Peter's Church in Brighton. Brian Tulley recognised him from their acquaintance in pre war days when they lived 'in Patcham. Steve didn't have a moustache in those days. The first past the post in the Recognition Stakes was Steve's brother in law.

The other photograph in the March Newsletter was of Sheffield Park Station which is still in existence and looks much the same on the Bluebell Railway. It was taken by Peter Bailey whose recollections of the School camp at Danehill have been given earlier in this Newsletter and, of course, the boys on the platform were returning from the camp.

Several people identified it although some confused it with Horsted Keynes at the other end of the line. First past the post was Henry Down (1924-28),

The photograph produced for this issue is of the 1961 School play 'The Government Inspector' by Gogol. Who is this fellow and these two little darlings? Entries please to the Editor for a prize of £ 5.

