

Johnian News

Issue 11

Lent Term 2002

St John's on Park Avenue

On Tuesday 2 April 2002 almost 120 people gathered at the Racquet & Tennis Club in New York City for the inaugural dinner of the Johnian Society of the USA (JSUSA). The Society has been set up to strengthen the bonds of friendship and support between the College and those of its members who are resident in the USA.



The dinner was held in the Racquet & Tennis Club, a building reminiscent of a Cambridge College with sweeping staircases, library and dining room. It was a perfect setting to gather together Johnians and their guests and to recreate St John's in the middle of New York.

The evening began with a private concert by the College Choir. The Choir's singing, and Christopher

Robinson's conducting, left the assembled crowd speechless. The remarkable solos by Oliver Lepage Dean, one of the Choristers, in *Summertime* by George Gershwin, were particularly memorable.



After a champagne reception, Mr Marc Feigen, Chairman of the JSUSA, introduced the Master, Professor Peter Goddard, who spoke about the long-standing connections between St John's and the USA. Marc then described the JSUSA and its aims. After that, members of College and their guests stood with their heads bowed to hear Dr Andrew Macintosh say the College Grace in Latin.

After dinner the Development Officer, Catherine Twilley, spoke about College life and then the Gentlemen of St John's, a musical group formed from the student members of the Choir, entertained the assembled crowd with their own selection of close-harmony. Listening to the Gents while drinking College port was an experience that many of those present will not forget for a long time. ☺

Further information about the Johnian Society of the USA can be found on the website at <http://www.job.cam.ac.uk/jsusa> or by contacting Catherine Twilley at the College. We are particularly grateful to Marc Feigen and members of the Organizing Committee for their work in support of the JSUSA.



After-dinner entertainment from the Gentlemen of St John's



College news

The **President of the Republic of Korea**, Kim Dae-Jung, received an Honorary Degree from the University of Cambridge on 5 December 2001.

Kim Dae-Jung was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2000 and was honoured for his achievements in one of the most volatile areas of the world. He has devoted the major part of his life fighting for the establishment of democracy in Korea, surviving kidnap, imprisonment and court martial.

After the degree ceremony, Kim Dae-Jung was the guest of honour at a reception in the Master's Lodge and a lunch was held in Hall. The picture shows Kim Dae-Jung with the Master. ☺



An **Art Exhibition** took place in the School of Pythagoras from Monday 4 to Friday 8 March. The exhibition was mounted by David Tompson, Joe Skinner and Jamilah Meghji, three St John's students who are talented artists. David writes:

'Since being fairly young I've always enjoyed drawing or painting in my free time. Unfortunately, the pressures of a Cambridge degree don't allow much time for



David Tompson

such things during term time but like other student artists I still find some time in the holidays. As is often said, there is very

little opportunity to display artwork in Cambridge. The annual Cambridge Student Art Exhibition provides a very welcome university-wide forum for student art, but it could never cater for the potential amount of work being produced by students. Likewise, the annual art competition run by the College Library



Jamilah Meghji

has very limited display space and although attracting many photography entrants last year, there was a notable lack of drawings and paintings.

Initially, Jamilah and I wanted to organise an exhibition in College to enable all Johnian artists to display their work. Unfortunately, logistical difficulties meant that we could only get together the work of three artists. We booked the School of Pythagoras for the exhibition, which proved to be an excellent venue.

I think that if a solid base for artists is to develop in Cambridge, then it must develop from the colleges upwards. If students have a more accessible outlet for their work then I feel it might help the current low profile that art has in Cambridge. The College and the University have many talented individuals. Hopefully, if an art exhibition of similar size became an annual event, with a higher profile, then many more people

Johnian News aims to keep Johnians in touch with the College and with each other. It is published twice a year by St John's College, Cambridge.

News, articles, letters and photographs to be considered for inclusion in *Johnian News* should be sent to The Johnian Office, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP. Fax: 01223 338727



College news



Joe Skinner

and architecture respectively.' 🌸

A CD by the Choir of the choral works of **William Walton** was released in February to coincide with the centenary of the birth of the composer. The recording has met with great critical acclaim, with the reviewer in *Venue* magazine writing 'The opening *Coronation Te Deum* is vintage "pomp and majestic circumstance" Walton delivered by a Cambridge choir which runs rings around its collegiate rival at Kings'.

Pieces on the CD include *The Twelve*, *Coronation Te Deum* and *Drop, drop slow tears*. It was recorded in the College Chapel in July last year.

The CD is available from all good music stores and directly from the College at a cost of £4.75 per CD plus 50p per CD postage and packing for the UK and £1.50 per CD postage and packing for overseas. Please send your order to the Johnian Office. Payment can be made by credit card or cheque. 🌸

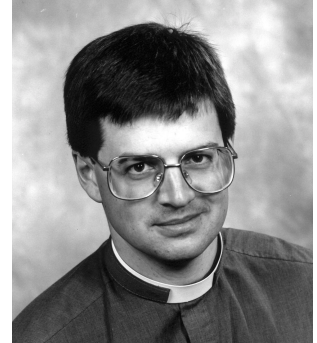
The **College Choir** has recently returned from a tour of the East Coast of the USA. Concerts and Services took place at Buffalo, Greenwich, New York, Ridgefield, Harvard and Boston. The final engagement was the private concert at the inaugural dinner of the Johnian Society of the USA. The tour was a great success, with standing ovations for the Choir at each concert.

It was a particular pleasure for the Choir to sing at Buffalo Cathedral, where the Organist, Dale Adelman is a Johnian (PhD 1993), and at St Stephen's Church, Ridgefield, where there is a Johnian connection through Richard Cutting (BA 1965, MA 1969). There is already talk of a return visit to the USA. 🌸

would get to see Johnian artwork.

Jamilah, Joe and I are all final year undergraduates. We are studying medicine, history

The College is pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Duncan Dormor as **Dean** (with special responsibilities for the Chapel) from 1 October 2002. Duncan has been Chaplain of the College since 1998 and is taking up the post in succession to Dr Andrew



Duncan Dormor

Macintosh, who is retiring. Johnians will be pleased to know that Andrew Macintosh will continue to hold a Fellowship and to live in Cambridge.

Further changes will take place in October 2003 when Christopher Robinson, **Organist**, will retire. David Hill (BA 1979, MA 1983), currently Organist and Master of the Music at Winchester Cathedral, has been appointed to the post of Director of Music on Christopher's retirement. David came to St John's in 1976 as Organ Scholar and took his BA in Music in 1979. His previous posts have included sub-Organist at Durham Cathedral, Master of the Music at Westminster Cathedral and Artistic Director of the Philharmonia Chorus. As well as work with choirs, David Hill is well known for his work with orchestras, including the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. 🌸

Vikram Kumar (matric. 2000) was selected for the British Universities cricket tour to South Africa in February. He was the only student from Cambridge to be picked for the 14-man team.

He said 'I was very pleased to have been selected for the tour. With the new University Centre of Excellence scheme established across the country, the number of professional cricketers studying is rapidly increasing. I was the only non-professional selected for the British Universities tour.

Working with a group of professional cricketers in a foreign cricketing environment was a massive learning curve. Although I did not play in as many games as I would have liked, just being part of the squad was an awesome experience. I hope it will stand me in good stead for the forthcoming season with Cambridge.' 🌸



Broken boats and midnight hot tubs

Justine Curgenven took a BA in Natural Sciences, graduating in 1996. She gained 2 Blues and a Half Blue in Athletics, 3 Blues in Hockey, a Half Blue in Skiing and 2 Half Blues in Rugby. She maintains her active lifestyle and has set up a TV production company to make kayaking and mountaineering programmes and videos, and to film expeditions. Last year she represented England in the World Surf Kayak Championships in Santa Cruz, California, and here she writes about her experience.

The wave is unrelenting and my small kayak is mercilessly driven towards the cliff. I'd been warned about the jagged rocks at Steamer Lane but I hadn't planned on inspecting them this closely. The clean big right hander in Santa Cruz, California, is famous amongst surfers, but equally infamous are the cliffs that the waves (and the occasional kayaker) slam into. It's my second day in Santa Cruz, it's only my third time in my £600 kayak – I absolutely can't hit the rocks.

The wave seeps away, leaving me perched precariously 20 feet above the receding foam, spat out carelessly on several boulders. I have about 10 seconds before the next wall of water will engulf me and I desperately push myself out of my boat. In my panic, I slip and fall. I am jammed between rocks and I can't get out. I hold my breath as my boat and my body are flung around with the impact of the next wave and I cringe as the thin fibre glass is bounced up and down on the rocks. I need my kayak for the world championships and I suspect borrowing another one will be tricky after this. Eventually I manage to get enough water out to clumsily carry the kayak to the safety of the grass above. I arrive at the roadside to the sympathetic concerns of some local board surfers. "You are so f***ing stupid. Do you realise how lucky you are to be alive?"

Just as I think things can't get any worse, the loud sirens and flashing lights come hurtling around the corner. Lots of men surround me and try to drag me to hospital. I am far more worried about the smashed up kayak than my only external injury – a ragged thumb. Bits of my only surf boat are sticking out at quite unnatural angles and I fear it will take much more than a few plasters to fix it. I think I laughed as I examined it, but I may have cried. I spend all of the next day on my knees, head in my kayak, wielding a hairdryer, and playing with sticky fibre glass. I now know the ins and outs of boat repair but I recommend a less stressful way of learning!

5.30am the next morning, I nervously paddle my heavily patched and gaffa taped boat out to Steamer Lane. I am a shivering wreck and only my commitment to the English team stops me from pulling out of the competition. The idea of surf kayaking is to ride the waves in a similar way to a board surfer, staying near to the peeling shoulder and using the energy of the breaking wave to carve, turn, cutback, spin and pop-out. I'm not doing much of that at the moment.

After 4 days of surfing on a beach break where there are no rocks I feel a lot better. The surf is very big and stormy, and a few other surfers break their kayaks. I am just happy that there are no rocks.

A week on, it is the eve of the world championships at Steamer Lane, and everyone is invited to a big party. I am really nervous about having to surf at the Lane again so I decide to drown my worries and enjoy the free beer and band. I crawl into bed after midnight feeling a bit guilty but very happy. Next morning, I have new resolve and the angels are smiling on me. I win my first heat for England with the second highest score of the day. Over the next few days, I win one more heat and come 3rd twice. I guess I have to work on consistency, but after my initial experiences of Steamer Lane, I am delighted to do so well. From nearly kicking it all in, I helped England reach the team final where we came 4th. 🍀



Justine Curgenven in the Power Pocket



The way of all flesh

This year the College celebrates the 100th anniversary of the death of Samuel Butler with an exhibition of his work and a colloquium. The one-day colloquium, to be held on Saturday 22 June, aims to stimulate new research questions by creating a conversation about Butler's multi-disciplinary approach to knowing and imagining the past, present and future. Discussions will include Dame Gillian Beer on Butler and Darwin.

Samuel Butler courted controversy in his lifetime, and remains more than a little controversial today. Best known for his satirical early novel *Erewhon* and for the posthumously-published semi-autobiographical *The Way of All Flesh*, Butler was notorious among contemporaries for, among other heresies, suggesting that the author of *The Odyssey* was a woman, dating many of Shakespeare's sonnets to the mid 1580s, questioning some fundamentals of Christianity and arguing with Charles Darwin, not out of any religious scruple, but because he considered Darwin's scientific arguments essentially flawed. Talented and able - besides his writings he painted, composed music, and experimented enthusiastically with the latest photographic techniques - Butler made too many enemies, and perhaps spread his talents too widely; despite several attempts he failed to secure any significant public or academic advancement. Nevertheless, he remains a fascinating and curious figure, at once typical of and at odds with the age in which he lived.

Samuel Butler was the son of a clergyman and was an undergraduate at St John's College, from 1854 to 1858. His first published work appeared in the very first number of *The Eagle* and he rowed for the College. However, despite a promising start, he did not prosper academically. Following graduation, he became a New Zealand sheep farmer, living and working for some years in what was then a remote part of South Island.

He began to observe human life in all its diversity and dignity through the camera. Among the thousands of surviving photographs in the College collections we find poignant pictures of a questing, mentally handicapped child, the lower and even lower classes: beggars in London, sailors, a little drunk; and then an ethnography of Catholic Italy. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Butler did not seek to categorise his objects into a system of high and low, or evolutionary stages. He observed with respect, and many of his photos bespeak an extraordinary spontaneity in his engagement with people he sought to capture - as subjects. Butler was also interested in landscape, music, and art - he painted, composed, and kept writing throughout his lifetime.

Intensely Victorian in many ways, Butler was nevertheless able to transcend many constraints of his time. He was, perhaps, a 'Victorian Modern', who opened himself up to wider cultural and confessional horizons, experimented with different forms of expression and queried orthodoxies. He never managed to secure a firm professional trust, or official prestige. Yet his two finest novels have remained in print for a century, widely translated and still selling to new audiences. A hundred years after his death, his name remains well known. But not enough is known about him - something we hope to address through the exhibition and the colloquium. ☘

The exhibition will be held in the School of Pythagoras from 26 May to 30 June 2002, between 10am and 5pm, seven days a week. Admission is free. Members of College are also welcome to attend the colloquium and further details are available from the Librarian's Assistant (telephone: 01223 338661).



Family Prayers (1864)



Balancing design in China

James Bichard came to St John's in October 1999 to read for a BA in Architecture. In 2001 he was awarded the Chris Brasher Travel Exhibition to undertake a trip to China in September of that year to work in the Shen Zhen branch of the Sino Pacific Corporation in China.

Hidden almost literally under Hong Kong's shadow, Shen Zhen grew at a staggering rate; declared a Special Economic Zone by the Chinese Government to encourage development, the city would attract businesses leaving Hong Kong as the handover of the state passed back from the British, keeping the wealth within China and the region. Urban planning was hastily drawn up on ill-conceived western principles from the 1960s, shaping disastrously the urban fabric remaining today. Lifeless mirrored skyscrapers soar above six lane freeways, carving up the city into one kilometre blocks. Like Los Angeles or Brasilia, Shen Zhen was designed for cars, alienating pedestrians from street life.

I was there, with a friend, to work for one month with a Chinese Architectural firm. At this stage (September 2001) we had nearly finished writing a book *Contemporary British Architecture*, which had been commissioned by the Chinese government. This chance to live and work in China gave us an opportunity to understand the urban fabric of a Chinese city against which the British buildings featured in the book would be compared, quite apart from the chance to experience living within the world's fastest growing nation.

In the architectural office, we were immediately presented with the onerous responsibilities of designing

the interiors of a set of mansions the firm was building in Saigon, Vietnam. The firm we worked for was unique in so far as it almost doubles the amount of time that is usual in China to be spent on design. Strictly speaking, Chinese architects don't exist in their own right, only as part of a larger construction company. The firm we worked with has tried to offer a more western approach that balances prolonged and more advanced design stages resulting in more successful and creative projects in return - arguably an investment Shen Zhen could have benefited from a long time ago.

Only my friend speaks Mandarin, but we were both welcomed into the office with true Asian hospitality. At street level, we were confronted with the exotic mixture of vendor and business man, zoo displays where the cages' contents of snakes, turtles and toads were actually a living menu for the restaurants behind, and a climate of searing heat and monsoon rains which chose daily to drench us on our way into work.

In the light of Beijing's successful bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games, a staggering £14 billion has been ear-marked for Beijing's redevelopment and the construction of the Olympic venues. The sudden rise in interest of British architects hoping to find work in China is matched by a reciprocal interest which brought about the commission for the book.

Restrictions on day to day life reminded us constantly of the steps China has yet to take before it can openly declare itself a thoroughly 'modern' nation, but watch with vigour over the next six years - Beijing will be transformed (albeit at the expense of some heritage) into a thoroughly modern metropolis - for when the Chinese set their hearts on something, they rarely do it by halves.



For more information about the book or this trip, please visit <http://www.archidog.com>.



Western modernism adapted to the Chinese tropics



College Conference trials Johnian technology

Nick Hardy, Rachel Harker, Jonathan Morgan and John Winn, who matriculated together in 1994, have developed a system called 'Hypertag', which alerts mobile phone users with Internet access to information and services available to them which are relevant to their location and context. Here Rachel Harker writes about how it came about and the progress that has been made. More information about Hypertag can be found at www.hypertag.com.

It was during one of those hazy late night chats when John Winn first mentioned to us that he had an idea. Now in his seventh or eighth year of study at St John's, the combination of the rarefied atmosphere and his continually whirring brain mean that new technology ideas occur to him quite frequently. However, this idea seemed rather different, and we quickly began to see it had quite serious potential. Surprisingly, in the cold light of day, the idea still had potential. Before long, three old Johnian friends had left the humdrum of 9-5, moved back to Silicon Fen and founded Hypertag to commercialise John's idea.

Cambridge is a rather special place to start a high-tech business. The combination of the University with its new drive for entrepreneurship, a concentration of successful high-tech businesses and the close knit community mean we couldn't have chosen a better place to base the business. We were immediately receiving excellent advice, making useful contacts and in the thick of start-up life.

In November 2001, Hypertag received first funding to develop its 'point and click mobile Internet access' technology. We began to look for a suitable environment to test the prototype. After a conversation with the Master, the ideal test bed presented itself - a Microsoft.NET conference being held in College the week before Easter. For the trial, Hypertags (small electronic devices which act like physical Hyperlinks) were deployed around College. The latest mobile phones with Hypertag capability were loaned to Microsoft delegates with Hypertags giving them instant point and click access to a live web-based conference information system and an audio version of the College tour. The system was extremely popular and enquiries for other Hypertag installations came in throughout the week.

Once again, the support of the Johnian network has come into its own. Thanks to the support of several College Fellows and staff, the first Hypertag trial was a great success. It has provided a springboard for our next round of fund-raising and is enabling us to win our first customers. And of course Johnian assistance continues to pour in. Old friends are lending advice on legal matters, PR and providing numerous contacts. Starting a business is never easy, but it's certainly easier with this kind of help.

Now that we have completed the first trial of the system, we are beginning commercial development trials with potential customers, expanding the team and raising our second round of funding. These will enable us to launch the system by the end of the year. We are initially focusing on tourist information systems, moving towards mass market applications like interactive poster adverts and in-train entertainment towards the middle of 2003. 🍷



The Hypertag team - Nick Hardy, Rachel Harker, John Winn and Jonathan Morgan (left to right)



Dates for your Diary

Colette Curran (BA 1996) writes: 'To all **Johnians in London**. Inviting you all to come along to our regular monthly gatherings at the Pitcher and Piano bar, (William IV Street), just off the Strand by St Martin's in the Field Church. We meet here on the first Monday of every month from 7pm to catch up on news and gossip with a bit of networking thrown in. For more information, contact colette.curran@erm.com or tobybeaumont@hotmail.com. All years very welcome'. ❀

Johnians are reminded that an exhibition to commemorate the centenary of the death of **Samuel Butler**, undergraduate at St John's from 1854 to 1858, is taking place in the School of Pythagoras from 26 May to 30 June. Further information about Samuel Butler can be found on page 5. ❀

The **May Bumps** take place from Wednesday 12 to Saturday 15 June and support for the LMBC is very welcome. ❀

A **Johnian Dinner** for those who matriculated up to and including 1942 or in 1956, 1957 or 1958 takes place on Saturday 29 June. The closing date for those wishing to attend is 3 June. Please contact the Steward's Secretary on 01223 338686 for further details. ❀

Henley Royal Regatta takes place from Wednesday 3 to Sunday 7 July this year. As usual, John Durack (BA 1970) will be generously providing a picnic lunch on each day (except for Sunday) for members of the LMBC in the Cricket Club Car Park. We would like to encourage members of the Club to attend on the Thursday for a 'Club Day'. If you have any spare Stewards' Enclosure tickets for this day, please send them to Catherine Twilley, Senior Treasurer of the LMBC, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP, so that we can provide entry to current students and recent graduates. ❀

As announced in Issue 10, **Roger Silk**, the Boatman for the last forty years, is retiring from his post this year. To celebrate his achievements and to thank him for his hard work, a dinner is being held in College on Saturday 17 August 2002. If you have not received an invitation and would like to come, please contact Catherine Twilley at the Johnian Office. ❀

The **University Alumni Weekend** takes place from 27 to 29 September this year and any member of College is welcome to attend, together with their family and friends. An information pack and booking form can be obtained from the University Development Office, 10 Trumpington Street, Cambridge, CB2 1QA and can also be viewed on the internet at http://www.foundation.cam.ac.uk/pages/page02_1.cfm.

St John's is able to offer accommodation for Johnians and their guests who are attending the weekend. There will be a dinner on the Friday night in the Wordsworth Room and a drinks reception on the Sunday in the Master's Lodge.

Keen rowers will be pleased to hear that for the first time an Alumni Regatta will be held as part of the Alumni Weekend. Colleges are being asked to put together crews to race against other colleges. Please contact Catherine Twilley for more information. ❀

The **Hinsley Memorial Lecture**, previously scheduled for March this year, has been postponed until Wednesday 23 October 2002. The Lecturer will be Dr Daniel Yergin as before, who is a highly respected authority on international politics and economics and on energy. The lecture will take place at 6pm in the Fisher Building and all are welcome to attend. ❀

Advance notice is given that the **Johnian Society Dinner** will take place on Saturday 14 December 2002. Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, President of the Society and Honorary Fellow of the College, will be in the Chair. Application forms will be sent out with *The Eagle* in the summer. ❀

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