



Johnian News

Issue 13

Lent Term 2003

St John's College gains Investors in People accreditation

St John's College is the first of the Cambridge and Oxford Colleges to achieve recognition as an Investor in People for both the Academic and Assistant Staff.

Investors in People is a scheme that sets national standards of good working practices, providing a framework to work within to help and enable people to improve their performance, thereby helping to improve the overall performance of the organisation.

The College made a formal commitment in February 2001 to work towards achieving the standard, setting itself a target to do so within two years. In the intervening period the College introduced a number of new initiatives, working practices and policies. These included defined communication and consultation policies, a commitment towards training and development and an annual personal development review system for all Assistant Staff.

The Master, Professor Peter Goddard, said that achieving the standard has involved a considerable amount of hard work by a large number of people in the College.

He is confident that Investors in People, with its focus on training and developing people to improve their performance, will allow the College as a whole to achieve practical benefits in all areas of its work.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Cambridgeshire delivers the Investors In People standard in the county as one of its many initiatives to encourage lifelong learning and foster skills development.

"We are delighted that St John's is the first Oxbridge College to achieve IiP recognition. This has involved a lot of work and is a reflection of the real benefit that organisations, particularly the education sector, can gain from the Investor in People framework. By investing in their most valuable asset, their people, organisations are seeing a real improvement in performance", said Debbie Longhurst, Business Development Adviser, LSC Cambridgeshire.



Ruth Spellman, Chief Executive of Investors in People UK presents the plaque to The Master

The College was presented with the plaque by Ruth Spellman, Chief Executive of Investors in People UK, at a ceremony in the Hall on Thursday 24 April. 🌸

Late News: On 24 April the Governing Body met to receive the resignation of the Master, Peter Goddard with effect from the beginning of January 2004. The Master has accepted appointment as President of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, an independent school institute whose former faculty members include Albert Einstein, Kurt Gödel and John Von Neumann. The Master commented that, at the time of his election, he said that he expected to stay for ten years. The Fellows will elect his successor in the Michaelmas Term. 🌸



College news

A Brian Mercer Postdoctoral Award for Innovation has been awarded to Dr Janet Lees, Lecturer in Structural Engineering. Dr Lees' research investigates the use of advanced composite systems to strengthen and repair existing concrete structures, extending their lifetime and resulting in considerable financial savings. Dr Lees commented, "The award will be used to develop technology for taking reliable dynamic measurements of the structural behaviour. The insight gained will enable the provision of safe, durable strategies for the long-term enhancement and sustainability of existing infrastructure." ❀

A CD featuring the voice of Ollie Lepage-Dean, a former chorister at St John's College, was released in February. 'An Evening Hymn' is devoted to music written



for solo treble and it has reached No 17 in the classical charts and is a frequent player on Classic FM and BBC Radio Three. The CD has been dedicated to the memory of George Guest CBE, former Organist and Choirmaster of St

John's. The CD is available to buy from the Johnian Office at £5.00. ❀

In April this year the Johnian Society of the USA hosted receptions in New York, Boston and San Francisco. Each event was attended by the Master and preceded with a piano recital by Jennie-Helen Moston, a current second year student studying Music at St John's. Each event was well-attended and we would like to thank everyone for their support of the JSUSA. ❀



The sixteenth Johnian Society Lecture took place on Monday 3 February 2003. The lecture was given by Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, the Chairman of Anglo American and formerly Chairman of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. The title of the lecture was 'Business, society and development'. ❀

Professor Usha Goswami, Fellow of St John's College, and Professor of Education at Cambridge University, delivered the Broadbent Lecture at the Annual British Psychology Society conference in Bournemouth in March 2003. **She will give a similar lecture at St John's on Monday 19 May 2003 at 5 pm.**

Professor Goswami's current research addresses the issue of why children learning to read some languages acquire reading quickly, while children learning English acquire reading more slowly. She argues that part of the answer lies in the difficulty of the learning problem itself.

English is a very difficult language to learn to read having many levels of inconsistency in its spelling system. Children in England start learning to read at around the age of four, while those in Scandinavian countries begin around seven. Despite this early start, English-speaking children require 3-4 years tuition to reach accuracy levels of around 90%. Children learning Finnish, German, Spanish, Italian and Greek reach accuracy levels at or above 90% proficiency in the first year of instruction.

Professor Goswami also explains that dyslexic children across languages show impairments in phonological awareness (awareness of the sound structure of language). However, for dyslexic children learning to read languages with highly consistent spelling systems, a measurable deficit in accuracy disappears very quickly. Dyslexic children in England rarely reach high levels of accuracy when compared to dyslexic children in Greece, Germany and Spain who can read nonwords or perform phonological awareness tasks accurately but slowly. Spelling consistency seems to hold the key.

One important source of development of phonological awareness skills is early childhood language games and nursery rhymes. Professor Goswami's current research with dyslexics suggests a specific impairment in the neural mechanisms that detect language rhythms. This suggests that extra time spent in language games emphasising rhyme and rhythm could be important. ❀



Landmark Discovery by Johnian

Jeevan Deol, a research fellow in Indian History at St John's made an astonishing discovery at the British Library in London in September 2002.

Most of the time when I tell people what I'm working on, I'm lucky to get an understanding smile. For a brief few weeks this September, the media was very interested in my work, and I found myself speaking (sometimes all at once) to the press in Britain, Canada, the USA and India.

I'm currently working on a union catalogue of all the manuscripts in the Punjabi language outside of India and Pakistan. Spoken in northwest India and in Pakistan, Punjabi ranks twelfth among the world's languages by number of speakers—and is the most widely spoken language in the UK after English. The catalogue will include some 650 texts, including such varied fare as love stories, historical documents, translations of classical Sanskrit philosophical texts, indigenous medicine and religious texts from the Hindu, Sikh and Islamic traditions. The texts are held in places as varied as Tashkent, St. Petersburg, London, Paris and Kansas. The catalogue will be published in print format and online, so that Punjabi speakers and others will be able to appreciate for the first time these forgotten treasures.

All very worthy, but hardly likely to make the papers. And so I thought when the news of what I felt to be my most exciting discovery made its way into the big wide world. Among the manuscripts at the British Library in London is a copy of the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*, that dates from the middle of the seventeenth century. The manuscript is the oldest outside of India and one of the thirty oldest copies of the scripture in existence—and the only object that we know of outside India to date from the lifetimes of ten Gurus, or spiritual guides, who founded the Sikh religion.

The manuscript had always been assumed to be an ordinary nineteenth-century copy of the scriptures, and I can say with all honesty that a thrill ran through my body when I first opened it up and saw its pages. Although the final portion of the manuscript had been rewritten on new paper at some time in the nineteenth-century, the original portion of the text is quite simply one of the most important Sikh scriptural texts in existence. And at another, purely emotional level, to touch it was to connect with the period in which my faith was founded.

Many months of checking and rereading the text ensued, as did a footnote in an obscure scholarly article. But when news of the manuscript's discovery was released on a quiet Monday in September, the response exceeded all expectations.

Within an hour, the story was making its way around the world on the Associated Press wire service, and by evening I had done interviews for the BBC World Service in English and Hindi and for various newspapers and local radio stations in the UK.

Amandeep Dhaliwal (Matric 1998), a Johnian working in television noticed the press release, and before I could catch my breath I was explaining the importance of the find on News 24. Substantial press coverage in Canada, the USA and local and ethnic media in the UK followed, and it was fully two weeks before my phone stopped ringing. Sikhs the world over had become excited by the discovery and had in the process learned something about their heritage. ☸

PHOTO

For me, it was a good education in the world of the media. But it was also an example of what we as academics have to do: where we can, to make our work relevant and accessible to the wider world.

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



Food Writer of the Year Award

Bee Wilson matriculated in 1992 at Trinity College and is now a Fellow at St John's. She was a regional finalist on the BBC's Masterchef and has had a food column on the New Statesman. More recently Bee has won the BBC Radio 4 Food Writer of the Year Award for her work campaigning for better food teaching in the National Curriculum.

Like so many other journalistic appointments, my life as a food writer began through a combination of nepotism and luck. The lucky part came about five years ago, when I appeared on TV as a contestant on Masterchef, the BBC amateur cookery competition (now cancelled).

I won my regional heat, allowing me to use the title Master Chef of the Eastern Regions 1998, before being roundly defeated in the semi-finals (I overcooked my tuna and undercooked my asparagus).

I mentioned this - including the tuna - to the Deputy Editor of the New Statesman whom I happened to meet at a party. By coincidence, the magazine's food writer had just decided to quit her column and they were looking for someone to take her place. They took a chance and offered me a go at it. Honesty forces me to add, however, that they knew that my father was a journalist too. For some reason, editors love to promote the offspring of hacks, as if the ability to turn out 500 words to deadline were passed on in the genes.

Perhaps because it seemed like such a stroke of luck, and a sideline to my academic work, my New Statesman column always had a rather eccentric feel to it. It was never designed to be a recipe slot - there are enough of those already in British newspapers, besides which New Statesman readers can be rather austere types, offended by the thought of too much luxury in food. Nor was it a restaurant column - the magazine has never had enough money to finance grand dining.

Instead, the column covered anything and everything that came into my head. Sometimes the pieces were biographical: Hitler's vegetarianism; Beatrice Webb's anorexia; Hitchcock's gluttony; Nietzsche's indigestion. Sometimes they were literary or artistic: Chardin's still-lives; the diet of Sherlock Holmes. Sometimes they were about social or economic food trends: the history of the wedding cake; the inexplicable continental love

affair with the American muffin; the startling rise in price of the tinned tomato. And sometimes they were just about the history of food I liked: walnuts; melons; whitebait.

Most recently, I've written a series of articles on food and education, highlighting the neglect of food teaching in the National Curriculum and the poor state of food on offer in many state school canteens. This turned into something of a campaign, and I won the BBC Radio 4 Food Writer of the Year award for my work in this area. Numerous British pupils do not even have access to clean drinking water, never mind nutritious lunches; and their Design and Technology classes can encourage them to believe that the subject of food begins and ends with constructing a chocolate encased snack bar for mass consumption. Yet what children eat is just as important for their development, physically, educationally, and emotionally, as what they read or what they write. It is a disgrace that more attention is not paid by the government to school meals (in England and Wales - free meals in schools has become a hot topic in the Scottish Parliament). I am no longer writing for the New Statesman but, all too conscious of the pleasures of St. John's high table, I still want to campaign to improve food in schools.✿

PHOTO



Georg Ell matriculated in 2000. He is studying for a BA in Management Studies and Social and Political Sciences.

“It’s the World’s Toughest Yacht Race...32,000 miles, around the world, the *wrong* way...Temperatures as low as -20°C, waves 80ft high, weeks and weeks at sea, and no more than 3 hours sleep at a time. Why would anyone want to do this – it’s insane, right?”

Well, 1200 or so people around the world think it is possibly the best thing that ever has happened or will happen to them. What sets these people apart from you? Nothing – that’s the beauty of it. *It’s about ordinary people doing extraordinary things.*



The Global Challenge, which takes place every 4 years, is the only sailing race to circumnavigate the globe against the prevailing winds and currents, in a one-design fleet, in yachts crewed entirely by amateurs. Not highly paid and experienced professionals, but volunteers from all walks of life – rich and poor, young and old, experienced and very, very green. In fact, 70% of those who take part in the Global Challenge have never sailed before, yet they are willing to commit to years of training, fundraising, and finally 10 months away from their families risking life and limb in the most remote parts of our planet. The identical fleet ensures that only the seamanship, skill and determination of the people taking part make the difference between winning and losing.

People ask me why I want to take part in the Global Challenge – I’ve done some Mediterranean sailing before, but I have no blue-water racing experience. It’s not an easy question to answer, and ultimately every Crew Volunteer has their own motivations. For some it is an escape from ‘normal’ life, others seek adventure, and there are those for whom the allure of ocean racing is too strong to resist. I have been looking for a big adventure ever since day-dreaming as a child, and this is one of the last great adventures still existing. More than 6000 people have climbed Everest – I guess fewer than half that number have sailed around the world east to west.

There are points in the race where the fleet will be farther from land than they would be if they were orbiting the planet in space!

There should also be no doubt that this is a race. Imagine the kind of team focus that is required to coax every last drop of speed out of the yachts, when the crews are exhausted, wet, cold and fighting against the worst that fate and the elements conspire to throw against them. This is existence at its rawest, where the survival instinct kicks in and all the senses are switched on in overdrive. Nobody who contemplates an endeavour of this nature should delude themselves of the many dangers involved. These do not only consist of the physical – the storms, icebergs, and injuries – but also the psychological dangers. Any ocean racer will tell you that the hardest challenge is a mental one, to remain positive and focused in the face of hardship. It is impossible to do this all the time, and conflicts will inevitably arise where 18 people must live in such close proximity under stress.

The first of many challenges ahead is fundraising. The race itself is a charitable event, and *raised over £1m for Save The Children* (the official race charity) in 2000. In addition to the £27,000 each Crew Volunteer must raise to cover his/her berth fees, we all hope to raise equivalent amounts for Save The Children throughout the race. In 2000, it was estimated that *2 billion people* were aware of the BT Global Challenge, through the newspaper, television, and internet media. Clearly this is an outstanding platform for business partnerships and sponsorship opportunities, and both the Crew Volunteers and Save The Children hope to benefit from this exposure.

So why do I want to do the Global Challenge? Why not run the Marathon or climb Everest? The answer is this is tougher, I love sailing, and fewer people have done it. It’s about everything I’ve written above, the good and the bad together. It’s the experience I’m after; to have done it, to have survived it, and to have learned from it (maybe even to have won it!).



Georg Ell is a third year undergraduate studying Management Studies. Fifteen months after graduating in summer 2003 he will set off on the Global Challenge in September 2004. He is currently considering careers in consultancy or the Army. For more information on Crew Volunteers, the Global Challenge, business and sponsorship opportunities, please check out www.challengebusiness.com ☺



Three Johnnians on a Trampoline

On the sixth of September 2002 a new communications technology was unveiled to its first group of users in London. The fact that three Johnnians were responsible for creating it was the result more of chance than intention, a good illustration of how alumni links can really come into their own.



The story starts in December 1994 in London's Kings Cross underground station. Charles Armstrong (matric 1990) was working with Lord Owen, the EU Peace Envoy, to produce a CD-ROM documenting the peace process in Yugoslavia. The missing piece in the jigsaw was a database expert capable of structuring and inter-linking the massive archive of documents involved. Enter Craig McMillan (matric 1988), hurrying towards the Northern Line. Recalling Craig's face from a lively evening in the SBR he asked, "You know something about databases, don't you?" Two months later Craig joined the project as Technical Director and in November 1995 the CD-ROM (Balkan Odyssey) was launched at Westminster.

Four years later in November 1999, Charles was living on St Agnes, an island of 75 people doing research in the local community. The fluid information-sharing dynamics he observed gave him an idea for a new technology to help enterprises collaborate more effectively. Charles phoned Craig who was working as a Senior Architect at Sun Microsystems to outline the idea, and the seed of the Trampoline Collaboration Engine was sown.

The essence of Charles' idea was that organisations could greatly increase productivity if individuals and teams were empowered with more flexible ways to manage communications, and if these communications were automatically structured around projects, meetings, client relationships and other natural points of focus. People working with businesses, non-profits and governments alike suffer from floods of low-relevance email, whilst it is typical for information from one part of an organisation never to reach other parts where it would be valuable. Conventional solutions have relied on rigid centrally managed publishing models. The innovation Charles proposed was to create a new layer

of fluid "bottom-up" controls to complement this. As well as enhancing an organisation's communications, it also seemed that a hybrid approach of this kind could benefit other key business activities such as task management and decision-making.

Craig and Charles started sketching out how the system might work. By early 2001 they were ready to put together a detailed design. Meanwhile the Principal of a San Francisco venture capital fund had become involved. Finance was raised from several grant-making trusts to build an initial version of the system for the School for Social Entrepreneurs and a software engineer was recruited from Seattle to build the system under Craig's guidance. Initially work went well, but several months into development the software engineer abruptly left the venture for personal reasons. Charles and Craig then had just two weeks to recruit another engineer, or the plug would be pulled.

This is the moment when Richard McGregor (matric 1989) enters the story. Richard was a College friend of Craig and is now Principal of Codeface, a London technology firm. Craig explained the project's predicament to Richard who was interested in the concept and by a miracle had a gap in his schedule. A contract was agreed and development of Trampoline recommenced with a full complement of three Johnnians.

The system was completed and launched in September 2002, and is now helping a growing network of social entrepreneurs around Britain to organise their projects and share expertise. You can explore the public face of this system at www.sse.org.uk.

Discussions are now proceeding with venture capital firms on both sides of the Atlantic with a view to closing a substantial investment round towards the end of 2003. A commercial version of the Trampoline Collaboration Engine should be ready to launch mid-2004. Before this point the system will be implemented with selected clients to gain more real-world experience. There has been a strong Johnnian flavour to the venture so far and it will be interesting to see how this develops. Any alumni interested in contributing to the project's development or learning more about it should get in touch with Craig or Charles. ☎
charles@tramposys.net craig@tramposys.net



One Johnian and a Trapeze

Alastair Pilgrim matriculated in 2001; he is studying for a BA in Natural Sciences but has a unique hobby.

The woman 10ft below me has stopped climbing and has wrapped both arms around the ladder; she's determined to make it. She eventually makes it to my narrow platform, and shakes uncontrollably as I hook her into the safety lines. Two minutes of persuasion later, I have lifted her off her perch, and swept her feet into the void. She's one of the 30 adults who have arrived this afternoon for my trapeze class whilst on holiday in France.

There are several different types of trapeze of which the flying trapeze is the most famous. Most people have only experienced this in a circus, but it is a fast growing sport. I started when I was twelve years old on holiday in Florida and there has been no going back; I even wrote my A-Level Physics project on 'The Physics of the Flying Trapeze'. Club Med offer it as an activity at around twenty of their resorts worldwide and children from as young as 4 years old can have a go.

On leaving school, I applied for a job as a circus instructor in Club Med's resort of Opio, France, a village in the heart of Provence. As an instructor a large proportion of the time is spent on encouragement, since flying 20ft in the air is not an easy thing for most people. From the heaviest man to the lightest child, all have to be gently encouraged to do that most unnatural thing of jumping into a void supported by a thin metal bar in your hands. Whilst in the air, they are constantly supported by safety lines and an operator who will shout commands and control the safety lines. Every afternoon, we would catch the best flyers of the day. This involves one of us swinging upside down from another trapeze and plucking flyers out of the air and swinging with them in your arms.

A catch is one of the most satisfying and exhilarating things you can do on a trapeze. Falling through the air and placing your complete trust in someone supporting your weight is very hard and the timing is crucial. I have to call all the timings, judge the height of the flyer and adjust my own, catch the flyer if they're on time, protect my face if they're not...and all whilst swinging upside down 20ft up! Trapeze is both physically and mentally demanding and even the simplest swing places tremendous strain on the shoulders and mentally requires high levels of concentration.

Safety is a major issue. It always amuses me that people are quite happy to bounce on the trampoline, but are turned to a quivering wreck by the thought of the trapeze - when the former is far more dangerous! From the moment you reach the board, you have an enormous net below you, and safety lines that slow any dangerous descent. However the risks involved should not be underestimated. I train without safety lines and have had to learn to fall correctly into the net and to judge timings whilst falling. A good spacial awareness in the air is particularly important (as on the trampoline). However, the feeling of flying through the air without safety lines, and the advantages this extra freedom gives to technique are well worth the risks.

For me, the most rewarding moments are watching other people achieve something that they have never thought possible before. I will remember for the rest of my life catching a 74-year-old man for the first time, and carrying a paralysed teenager up to the platform so he could have a swing.

PHOTO

Trapeze doesn't exist in the same way in England, and I have to get my fix from trampolining. I coach for the University club, and competed in the Varsity A team. I have also started a high diving group. Despite all this, circus will remain a hobby for me; I have no aspirations to join a professional circus in the near future. Circus for me is a great way of keeping fit, stretching my limits, and meeting new people. For me, that makes waking up in the morning and aching all worth it. ☺



Notices

Members of the Johnian Society will be sad to hear that **Dr Roger Morgan (BA 1950)**, Chairman of the Johnian Society from 1992 to 1999 died on 1 March 2003. An obituary notice will be included in The Eagle. ☼

Members of the Johnian Society will be delighted to hear that a baby daughter, Isabel Catherine was born to Catherine Twilley and her husband Richard on 22 March 2003. ☼

Dates for your Diary

The May Bumps take place from 11-14 June 2003; support for the LMBC is very welcome. ☼

Henley Royal Regatta takes place from 2-6 July. As usual, John Durack (BA 1970) will generously provide 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'. ☼

St John's College, Cambridge Disability Forum and Cambridge Disability Resource Centre are pleased to announce the **1st Annual Lecture on Disability Issues: Developmental Dyslexia: A Cross Language Approach**. The speaker is Professor Usha Goswami (Professor of Education and Fellow of St John's College). The lecture will take place on Monday 19 May 2003 at 5pm in the Palmerston Room, Fisher Building, St John's College. ☼

On Saturday 20 September 2003, St John's College will host an Alumni dinner at St John's College, Oxford by kind invitation of Sir Michael Scholar (Matric 1960). Invitations to 'local' Johnians will be sent out in due course. Please contact the Johnian Office for more details ☼

The University Alumni Weekend takes place from 27 to 28 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 limited accommodation will be available for Johnians and their guests attending the weekend. There will be a dinner on Friday 26 September for Johnians in the Wordsworth Room; please contact the Johnian Office for more details. ☼

Dates for your Diary

On Friday 26 September at 4pm in Lady Mitchell Hall, Sidgwick Avenue Dr Robert Jordan will give a lecture as part of the University Alumni Weekend.

The title of the lecture is 'Sir Edmund Hilary's Schoolhouses in the Clouds: their first inspection in 1968.' 2003 is the 50th anniversary of Hilary climbing Everest and since then Sir Edmund has raised millions of pounds to help the Sherpas, by building schools and hospitals. Dr Jordan worked for the British Council in Kathmandu, Nepal from 1965 to 1969, training teachers of English, and was involved in the first inspection of Sir Edmund Hilary's Schools. ☼

This year's **Johnian Society golf competition** will take place on Friday 25 July at Gog Magog. Any member of the Society wishing to be added to the mailing list for the golf competition should contact John Loosley John@loosleyj.freereserve.co.uk. ☼

A **Johnian Dinner** is due to take place on Saturday 28 June 2003. Invitations have been sent out to those who matriculated up to and including 1943, 1961, 1962 and 1963, but if you have not received one, please contact the Steward's Secretary at the College. ☼

The **Open Weekend** for Johnians and their guests takes place on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 July 2003. Those who matriculated in 1952, 1953, 1967-1968, 1974-1976, 1983-1984, or 1988-1990 have been invited. The Weekend offers an opportunity to come back to College for a number of exhibitions, lectures, open rooms, dinner in Hall and other events. ☼

Johnians from other matriculation years who are resident overseas and who expect to be in the UK at the time, are welcome to join us. Please contact the Johnian Office to receive an invitation. ☼

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