

# **Johnian News**

Issue 17

Lent Term 2005

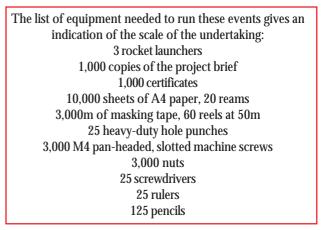
## **Rocket Science**

In March St John's College was asked to host a number of technology courses as part of National Science Week. Professor Harry Marsh, former Fellow and Director of the College's Science Project (see page 7 for more information), was responsible for organising the courses. Here he writes about the experience.

Staff at St John's College were asked to nominate local primary schools to be invited to take part in this event, and by January we were fully booked with ten halfday technology courses for a total of 728 pupils. The idea was that each team of four pupils would design and build a launchpad to support a rocket launcher weighing about 5kg, and would also build a rocket to be launched outside. When schoolchildren realise that they can apply their knowledge of mathematics, science and technology and produce a rocket which will almost disappear out of sight, it changes their view of these subjects!

A request from one of the local primary schools to put on the project specifically for them as part of their family day on 19 March meant that we would be working with 968 schoolchildren and parents and 242 rockets in total!

Each course started with a fifteen-minute slide presentation to demonstrate how science and engineering affect our lives. We then thought about the types of structures that are strong and learnt how to roll strong paper tubes. Each team built a triangle and a tetrahedron, and then, having learned how to construct the basic components, each team was ready to design and build a launchpad.



The next step was to build a rocket from paper and card and to attach a nose cone and fins. We were ready for lift-off!

In Merton Court the teams took turns to launch their rockets, with everyone counting down to firing. With the help of compressed air, the rockets rose to a height of 100 to 125m - far higher than the Cripps Building - and some landed in Magdalene College!

These courses provided an opportunity for children to be creative in seeking solutions to real engineering problems. One parent commented that her son had arrived home 'exhausted and exhilarated', which is probably our best measure of success.  $\circledast$ 



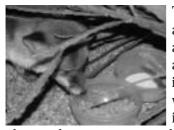
Building a rocket launcher in the Fisher Building



Preparing for lift-off in Merton Court



### **College News**



The College recently had a visitor in the shape of an **elderly vixen**. She appeared one morning in Second Court and was so uncharacteristically tame that it was

obvious she was not in great shape and needed medical attention. Members of the Catering Department enticed her back to the Wilderness using sausages, which she devoured; Adam Magee, then Deputy Head Gardener, ensured that she could sleep in the greenhouse. Once a local vet had checked her over, he found a sanctuary in Northamptonshire, the National Fox Welfare Society, which was willing to take her on. She is now being treated, and the NFWS will keep her there as long as she is happy to stay. According to staff members, she is very affectionate and demands cuddles by chirruping as people pass her enclosure. ↔

**Andrew Arsan**, who took his BA in June 2004, has achieved national recognition with his final-year dissertation. The essay entitled 'Shukri Ghanem and the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914' gained top marks out of all final-year history dissertations in the University and was therefore put forward for the University's Gladstone Memorial Prize. Having won this Prize, the History Faculty then entered Andrew for the Royal Historical Society/History Today Undergraduate Essay Prize. He won this Prize and received a diploma.

Andrew is now reading for an MPhil at St John's, with his special interest in middle-eastern immigrants to French West Africa. He is currently applying for funding to continue at St John's for a PhD during which he intends to research immigration to British and French West Africa. 🛞

On Thursday 24 February 2005, the Master, Richard Perham, was the guest of honour at a **Johnian dinner** in a private room at Le Pot au Feu restaurant in Menlo Park, California. None of the guests beat the Master for distance travelled, although one had made the not inconsiderable journey from Palm Beach, Florida. The matriculation dates of Johnians attending ranged from 1943 to 1996. Professor Kevin Tierney (BA 1964), a member of the JSUSA Organizing Committee, writes: 'the evening started with a champagne reception at which le patron himself, M. Dominique Deviller, obligingly uncorked an appropriate number of bottles of his excellent house champagne; the dinner following was a sociable affair. The main course choices all maintained the reputation of French cuisine, but paradoxically the least opted one - jambonette de poularde Farcie, got the most praise. The desserts were delicious but in general not for the diet or health conscious. Over coffee, the Master outlined the challenge facing the College in financing entrants who do not have the means to support themselves now that the old government grant system has gone. The success of the occasion may be judged by the fact that after the Master's talk, festivities continued and only broke up because of buses and trains and planes to catch or (in at least one case) a babysitter to be relieved.' 🏵

The **George Guest Memorial Concert** took place on Tuesday 14 December 2004. The Chapel was full to capacity with friends and relatives of George Guest. Mr Jeremy Huw Williams (BA 1990 and a former Choral Student) joined the College Choir as guest soloist. 🛞



Mrs Nan Guest (centre) with her daughter, Elizabeth (left) and Dr Nancy Lane Perham (right) after the concert

*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**

The College has elected a new **Senior Bursar**, following Dr George Reid's resignation. Mr Chris Ewbank, a Johnian (BA 1984), took up the post on 18 April 2005. Chris has most recently been Chief Operating Officer of Rothschild's Asian Investment Banking in Hong Kong, having joined Rothschild in 2000. While at St John's he could be found on the playing fields as a member of the Rugby Club and as a University Rugby Blue was also an Eagle. Chris received a Larmor Award in his final year.



Speaking about his appointment, Chris said: 'I am absolutely delighted, after a little over 20 years, to be returning both to the College and, with my young family, to the region where I was brought up. I very much hope I can use my experience to contribute to the financial well-being of the College in what are challenging times for

the university sector. I also very much look forward to getting involved in College life in general.'®

On 17 January 2005, the College welcomed Bill Brogan to the post of **Catering and Conference Manager**. Bill came to St John's from Cheshire, where he was Hotel Services Manager for P&O Ferries. Prior to this, Bill was Catering Manager for Astra Zeneca (ICI) and was responsible for setting up two of their prestigious locations.

During his career he has won many awards, the most notable being a Michelin Star and a Catey Award (the food industry's equivalent of the Oscar) for 'Menu of the Year'. He has also been voted one of the top 12 chefs in the UK and this year he



will be the Top Judge at the International Wine Challenge in London.

Bill's varied career has allowed him to travel extensively throughout the world and indulge in two of his greatest passions - food and wine. He has worked in Finland and France, for a vineyard in Coonawarra, Australia, and has set up Hotel Schools in Spain. Bill also spent three years working in Japan and is the author of a book about Japanese food and culture. He hopes to bring his wealth of experience to the tables of St John's and is keen to promote and expand the College's already high reputation for conference and private dining. 😁

A recent discovery has revealed that **St John's College Choir** started recording much earlier than was first thought. The Choir Association has come across a recording of *Have mercy upon me, O God* by William Byrd, which was made in 1926 under the direction of Cyril Rootham. It is of surprisingly good quality; Alastair Roberts, Chairman of the Choir Association, commented 'I am surprised at how good the Choir sounded at that time; it is not as polished as today but it still sounds very musical'. The recording was done at a time when the Choir consisted entirely of Lay Clerks employed from the town rather than the Choral Students that we have today.

This may not just be a first for the College Choir, though; it is possible that it is one of the first electrical recordings of a choir ever. Certainly, 1926 was the year that most of the recording companies began experimenting with electrical recording equipment rather than acoustic. The Choir Association have commented that this is something they will be looking into further. What is clear though is that Cyril Rootham must have had some very good connections in the recording industry.

### **College Notice**

A message to all UK-based Johnians from MBNA (MBNA Europe Bank Limited):

MBNA, the provider of the St John's College credit card, wishes to apologise for any inconvenience caused as a result of an unapproved mailing that was sent out in the name of the Master inviting you to apply for a St John's College credit card. This mailing took place in August 2004. MBNA strives at all times to provide a high quality service and on this occasion, we failed to meet our own high standards. We have taken action to ensure there is no reoccurrence of this problem in the future. Thank you for your understanding.



#### Win, Love or Die

John Gardner (BA 1951) is one of the world's leading thriller writers, and has published more than forty novels, many of which have been bestsellers. Among these are sixteen books in the legendary James Bond series, including 'Win, Lose, or Die' and 'Never Send Flowers'. Amanda George and Kim Townsend from the Johnian Office met him to talk about his writing, life and loves.

You read Theology at St John's and went on to be ordained a Priest. How did you move into writing? When I came up to St John's in 1948 I imagined I had a true vocation to be a priest. However, I was not really a terribly serious-minded person. My experience of life had been school, where I was mad about English and Drama, then a year waiting to join up spent working as a professional magician. Then off I went into the Royal Marines and was taught how to be a soldier. Others spotted that I was not ideal material for the priesthood; and later I became so concerned with my situation that it drove me, literally, to drink. But once I had faced up to the true facts, the drink went from my life and a new world opened up to me. When I finally renounced my priesthood I had no idea what I was going to do. Then out of the blue someone told me that there was a job going at the Stratford-upon-Avon Herald. I got the job and interviewed most of the leading actors and directors of that time, covered all kinds of theatre, went to the United States, Canada and Moscow and had a wealth of experience. Having learned to be a journalist I began to write books, beginning with the black comedies of my series character Boysie Oakes. From there I moved to slightly more serious thrillers and novels of espionage.

#### Have you always been interested in writing? What are your earliest recollections?

Yes, in retrospect I believe that writing was one of my major passions. At about the age of nine I announced that I was going to be a writer, so my father, being an indulgent parent, bought me some pencils and a large, fat notebook. I retired to bed early and when my father came up to see me I had already fallen asleep. The new notebook was lying on the floor, its pages still blank. On the cover were written the words, The Complete Works of John Gardner. It remained like that for many years.

#### How did you get into the Bond novels? Has it been a positive experience for you?

The offer to do the continuation Bond novels came unexpectedly and I wanted to turn it down. However, my agent at the time talked me into doing one. In the end it became fourteen. I'm still not certain if I should have done them. They led to amusing experiences, lots of travel and much hard work, but I did manage to thread my own books between the Bonds. It was fun, but I'd hate to be remembered only as the man who wrote all those extra Bond novels. One of the characters featuring in your more recent novels is based on a current real-life love interest. Could you tell us a bit more?

In 1996 I was taken seriously ill. I recovered, but then my wife was suddenly diagnosed with inoperable cancer and she died in 1997. I started to work again about a year later but word had got around that I had been very ill. The result was that nobody wanted to know, so I spent some time thinking



John and Patricia outside F1 New Court where he proposed over fifty years ago

about a series of new books that might grab the imagination and decided on six books set during World War II, centred around a young, inexperienced woman Detective Sergeant. I named her after the girl I had been engaged to at St John's, Patricia Mountford, who was then a first-year student nurse at Addenbrooke's. Our engagement was broken off in 1949 (at that time she could not have gone on with her career as a nurse and married me). Last year I had an unexpected letter from her. We met again last summer after over 50 years and we are now, as they say, an item again. The last years of my life have not been easy but the re-emergence of a much loved lady into my life has made a great deal of difference.

#### What are you working on at the moment?

I'm working on the fifth Suzie Mountford novel – *In The Mood* – and have also just signed a contract to do a third Moriarty book, which continues the 'true' history of Professor Moriarty, arch-enemy of Sherlock Holmes.

#### If you had any advice to give to Johnians just setting out in their careers, what would it be?

It will sound pretty trite but I reckon you should go out into the world prepared to move mountains, start fires, raise storms, explode volcanoes and never give in. I suppose this is what I learned at St John's.



## **An Olympic Dream**

Gemma Farrell matriculated in 2002, and is studying for a BA in Geography. We met her to learn more about how she juggles her student life with her ambition to become an Olympic Gold Medallist.

'Winning is definitely addictive', explains Gemma Farrell, when asked what draws her to sailing. The water, the speed, the thrills, and mastering the unpredictable are all elements in her passion for taking to the waves. It's not really surprising to learn that the ambitions of the St John's College prize-winner for contribution to sport in 2004 are to win the Match Racing World Championships in 2007 and a Gold Medal at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. And when you meet her, it is easy to believe that these ambitious dreams could become a reality.

When Gemma was eight and living in Germany, her father taught her to sail by towing her behind him in his larger boat. She soon picked up his enthusiasm for the sport and became a member of the Great Britain Youth Squad at the age of 11. Five years on, and she was being selected for both European and World Championships and in 2001, at the age of 17, she achieved the number 1 female ranking in the country.



Gemma Farrell (centre), Yngling Europeans, 2004

Inevitably, Gemma captained the Cambridge University Sailing Team, and sailed with the First Ladies. They finished in the top 4 at the BUSA (British University Sailing Association) finals, earning her a Cambridge Blue. But as if this wasn't enough, Gemma has also played in the College first teams for rugby, football, tennis, and hockey. She explained how she manages to balance all this with her Geography degree: 'I'm very productive when working under pressure, and good at planning ahead.' These are skills that have also proved essential to her when sailing.

Although when interviewed for St John's College, Gemma said that she did not intend to take part in Olympic sailing whilst studying, a year later she was made an offer that she could not refuse. In the summer of 2003, she had trialled for the British Keelboat Squad, the selector of which also happened to be one of the Olympic coaches. He recognised her talent and drive, and at his suggestion she trialled and was picked for the Olympic Development Squad later that year. There are currently nine people in this squad, but only three of them will be chosen to go to Beijing in 2008. The competition is tough, and Gemma is required to spend ten hours per week in the gym, with regular health and fitness tests. Her sailing skills are reassessed every six months, and if she fails to meet any of these targets, she will be dropped from the squad.

This may sound tough but for Gemma this is the easy part. She told us that she spends up to an hour every day trying to secure sponsorship, something that is vital if she is to succeed in her dreams. Money can give one competitor the edge over another, in terms of boats, equipment, and clothing: 'Time spent off the water fundraising... gives away progress to our British and International rivals.' She and her two Olympic teammates have just taken out a loan to purchase a £15,000 boat, which they hope will give them an edge.

Gemma will not be sailing between now and her finals, but she plans to take a year off after that to sail full-time. One thing is for sure, whether or not she pursues sailing as a career in the long term, this tenacious young lady is sure to succeed in whatever she does. If self-belief, level-headedness, drive and talent have any part to play, then it is clear that Gemma Farrell has a bright future ahead of her.  $\circledast$ 



*'Champions aren't made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them: a desire, a dream, and a vision.'* (Muhammad Ali)



#### **By Our Own Admission**

There has been much criticism in the media recently of the Oxbridge Admissions process. Here Dr Matthias Dörrzapf (the College's Senior Tutor) talks about the Admissions policy at St John's.

What qualities do you look for in a St John's College applicant?

Successful applicants are enthusiastic and excited by their subjects. Candidates need to know what they want to do and what the course involves. We put them through a mini supervision as part of the interview; this is usually a good way of finding their potential.

#### How does St John's compare with other colleges in terms of its applications procedure?

Unlike some of the other colleges a candidate will have at least one interview with the Director of Studies and other Fellows in their subject and a more general interview with a Tutor. We think that it is important to have an independent person involved. St John's does not use the points system that many colleges use, which gives applicants a certain score for their GCSEs, A Levels, the school they attended, whether they had a gap year or not and so forth. This method isn't statistically proven and it makes the interviewer biased before he or she has even met the applicant; it also means that slightly unusual or special applicants get overlooked because they don't necessarily score very highly.

#### What do you do to make sure that people from less privileged backgrounds apply?

St John's takes part in a lot of Access initiatives such as Open Days, Shadowing Schemes, and the Target Schools Initiative, which encourages current students to give a talk at state schools in their home area. We welcome people who apply through the Special Access Scheme, whereby a candidate's school highlights any disadvantages they may have had during their education. We also run the EAGLE project, which focuses on schools in the Lambeth area of London. These schools have been given the opportunity to bring pupils on visits to the College, take part in master classes, and receive funding for school trips and activities. Another good example of our initiatives is provided by the Maths Open Day that we ran last year: 21 people attended it, 17 of which applied to the College and 10 of these were successful. Further aims include getting the current students and Fellows more involved, and exciting and involving schoolteachers more.

#### It is often said that Public School students have an edge over State School applicants at interview because they are better prepared for it. How do you make sure that there is a level playing field? You can see within two minutes when a student has been coached for the interview - we try to look

beyond this. We're not primarily interested in a candidate's existing knowledge; we want to teach them something new at the interview and observe how they respond to it. We believe this gives state school students the opportunity to shine, as they are often used to teaching themselves new ideas because of a lack of support at their schools. Furthermore, this year we hosted a course to help prepare applicants for the STEP papers as many schools have little or no experience of pupils taking these exams. The pupils who take part in the Open Days or Access initiatives are all given advice on how to apply and what to expect at interview; this, we hope, levels the playing field a little.

#### How will top-up fees affect applications from the less privileged sector?

I fear that certain subjects will become 'posh' subjects. Because going to university will be so much more expensive, students are going to want to choose courses not for enjoyment but for the increased earning potential that they will give them. We will have to have more bursaries in place to stop this from happening and to stop poorer students from being discouraged. Most of this money will have to come from donations so we're hoping that our alumni will see it as a good cause.

#### In what way has the admissions process changed since you applied to university?

I applied to Karlsruhe University in Germany, where there seemed to be no restriction on the number of undergraduates they took and no selection procedure. There were about a thousand students squeezed into a lecture theatre with only six-hundred seats. There was no support for students and this lead to a 50% drop out rate. In contrast, the St John's admissions system gives feedback to students; we don't want to admit people who are not suitable and then see them drop out. The people who do come to St John's are given a great deal of support to ensure that they get the most out of their time here. 🛞



Eagle Project students on a visit to St John's College



#### **The Schools Project**

In the Michaelmas Term 2000 edition of Johnian News we announced the start of a new project, funded jointly by the College and the Gatsby Foundation, which aimed to help improve the teaching of mathematics, science and technology at schools in the Eastern Region. This Project is now in its fifth year, with the College contributing £25,000 per annum and the Gatsby Foundation contributing the same amount. Beyond 2006, though, a third partner must be found in order for the Project to continue. The objective of the Schools Project is to improve the teaching of mathematics, science and technology for all schools in the Cambridge Region. This 'Region' comprises Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, South Lincolnshire and Suffolk, and the Project works with schools of all levels, from primary schools to sixth form colleges.

The Project has two strands: Teacher Associates working on projects to improve the teaching of their subjects; and support for initiatives which attract young people to careers in mathematics, science and technology. Those who wish to become Teacher Associates must present details of their proposed project and can apply for funding to provide up to 40 days of teaching 'cover' at their school. The distribution of the 40 days can be chosen to meet the requirements of the project, the teacher and the school.



A model of the Tyne Bridge made by 850 children

There have been several interesting initiatives by the Teacher Associates. At Bignold First School in Norwich, Cherri Moseley explored the teaching of multiplication and division, in particular 'how' and 'when', leading to the publication of a book. At Parkside Community College, Cambridge, Richard Valler developed computer animation as a tool for learning in mathematics and Frances Wilson investigated how the style of teaching should be modified to make effective use of interactive whiteboards.

Children With Paul Warwick of the University's Faculty of Education as a mentor, teachers from eight primary schools in South Cambridgeshire have collaborated to improve the teaching of primary science, while teachers from Swavesey Village College and Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, have collaborated to 'smooth the transition in science'. They have produced a document which offers guidance on the way in which science topics will be taken forward in the sixth form and on the different styles of teaching and learning. Students are then better informed and this may lead to a higher proportion choosing to study science at sixth form level.

The second strand is to support local initiatives that seek to attract young people into careers in these subjects. These have included 'taster days' of hands-on project work at Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, for Year 10 students from local schools and a mathematics and technology fair for primary schools in Boston, Lincolnshire. Other activities have included Technology Days at Bungay High School and at Linton Village College; Technology courses in the University Engineering Department for 1,500 schoolchildren; and science, technology and enterprise days, organised in conjunction with SETPoint Cambridge, for 10,000 children.



Students creating a wind-powered vehicle

To date, 91 teachers have participated as Teacher Associates and grants to local initiatives have supported handson project work for 40,000 schoolchildren. The Schools Project is meeting its objectives; it has developed into a scheme where higher education, schools and teachers work together to improve the teaching of mathematics, science and technology and encourage innovation and problem-solving skills. It is a very successful model which could be repeated in other university cities.

The College and the Gatsby Foundation have decided that continuation into Phase 3, 2006-2009, will only be possible if a 'Third Partner' can be identified; either a single organisation or a group of organisations with a similar vision of education. We hope that a third partner will be found and that the good work of this Project will continue.  $\circledast$ 



### **Dates for your Diary**

A **Regional Reunion** for Johnians and their guests will take place on Friday 3 June 2005 at the Edgbaston Golf Club, Birmingham. Invitations have been sent out to those living nearby, but if you would like an invitation pack, please contact the Johnian Office.  $\circledast$ 

The **May Bumps** take place from Wednesday 15 to Saturday 18 June and support for the LMBC is most welcome.  $\circledast$ 

**Henley Royal Regatta** takes place from Wednesday 29 June to Sunday 3 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 Wednesday for a 'Club Day' and for the opportunity to meet the President of the LMBC, Professor Richard Perham.

If you have any Stewards' Enclosure tickets that you do not intend to use for this, or another day, please send them to Catherine Twilley, Senior Treasurer, LMBC, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP, so that we can provide entry to current students and recent graduates.  $\circledast$ 

This year's **Johnian Society Golf Competition** takes place on Friday 29 July at the Gog Magog Golf Club, Cambridge. Details can be obtained from John Loosley (email: john@loosleyj.freeserve.co.uk). 🛞

The first **Johnian Dinner** for 2005 has already taken place, and invitations have been sent out to those in matriculation years up to and including 1945, 1971, 1972 and 1973 for the dinner on Saturday 17 September 2005.  $\circledast$ 

#### **General Contact Details**

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#### Johnian Office Contact Details

Telephone: +44 (0)1223 338700 Fax: +44 (0)1223 338727 Email: Development-Officer@joh.cam.ac.uk **The University Alumni Weekend** takes place from 23 to 25 September 2005. Detailed information can be found on the University Development Office's website at www.foundation.cam.ac.uk. The College is holding a dinner for Johnians and their guests on the Saturday night and a drinks party on the Sunday. Bookings for the College events should be made with the Johnian Office, while bookings for the weekend as a whole should be made with the University Development Office. ⊗

A **Regional Reunion** for Johnians and their guests will take place on Tuesday 27 September at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, by kind permission of Sir Tim Lankester (Honorary Fellow of St John's and President of Corpus Christi, Oxford). Invitations will be sent out to those living nearby, but if you live elsewhere and would like an invitation pack, please contact the Johnian Office. <sup>(S)</sup>

There will be a **dinner at the Athenaeum Club at CalTech in Pasadena**, on Friday 30 September. Johnians living in California, Arizona and Nevada will be invited to attend. Invitations will be sent out in June and we hope that you will be able to join us. If you do not live in one of these states, but would like to receive an invitation, please contact Clare Laight in the Johnian Office (c.l.laight@joh.cam.ac.uk).

The sixth **Hinsley Memorial Lecture** will take place on Monday 24 October 2005 in College. Professor Peter Hennessy (BA 1969, PhD 1990) will give a lecture entitled 'The Last Customer: British Intelligence and the British Historian'. �

Advance notice is given that the annual **Johnian Society Dinner** will take place on Saturday 17 December 2005. Application forms will be sent out with this year's edition of *The Eagle* in the summer.  $\circledast$ 

Further details about all these events can be obtained from the Johnian Office or on the web at www.joh.cam.ac.uk/johnian/events. Future events will also be advertised on the website as details become available.