



THE OLD PRIORIAN ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Prestigious
Sports Journalism Award
for
Eddie Keogh (OP 1981)



For the love of running with The Running Ranger

OPA Oxbridge Reunion Dinner 2020



From Ealing to the Bulgarian National Ballet



Exclusive: OPRFC Player Profiles!



St Benedict's CCF 90th Anniversary Dinner

...and much more inside!

Issue 22 autumn/winter 2019



Welcome from the President

Dear Old Priorians

Through these current unprecedented circumstances, should we look to 'our' Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats? Could this be an opportunity to grow stronger...in Faith, Hope and Charity...through coherent action?

That there will be an answer, may we always have Faith. That 'teams that work together often achieve more than their acting members, may we not doubt'. Witness and be inspired by the heroic efforts of all the medical staff dealing daily with this disease with tremendous courage. We have also witnessed how families are gathering together, adapting to new routines of

home teaching and learning and communicating. Let us also acknowledge the Hope that technology affords for social and business interactions. Might we observe with a kindly eye the Charity that emanates from the Heart: the Mutual Aid groups, St Benedict's DT department producing over 1000 visors and face shields for local distribution. Include also the extra contributions of childcare taken on by staff 'pro bono' in order to help the social needs of their colleagues...indeed the list is long and heartening.

In this newsletter, may I draw your attention, first and foremost, to the 'Letter from the Headmaster' highlighting this resilience of Spirit manifesting itself in a 'variety of ways but always through the same Spirit'. School routines have adapted but the school continues as a place of education through its thriving E-learning initiative. Particular mention is made of the excellent 'Rescue Fund', to help those in the school community who are struggling. This manifestation into action, of the school motto, 'a minimis incipe', epitomises a very Christian attention to social detail in the sharing of its burden of citizenship.

Other articles include an account by the OPRFC of their mixed fortunes and how they have turned relegation into a positive opportunity 'to run with the ball' and use this as a reason to focus on strengthening their second team.

Continuing this theme of 'resilience of spirit' are three interviews with Old Priorians that highlight their individual journeys: award-winning sports photographer Eddie Keogh (OP 1981); international ballet dancer Alessandra Messa (OP 2017) and OPA Council Secretary, Marina Ranger (OP 2009), intrepid International Ultramarathon runner and GBR athlete.

These three reflect the wide diversity of a special 'something' that makes the OPA such an interesting and THRIVING association of young people.

Further items include an account of the 2018 Christmas reunion by Lorcan O'Brien, class of 2018 head boy; notes from the Annual Richard Baker Lecture which discussed the connection between demographics and its influence on political decision making. Dr Francis Cuss (OP 1972) FRCP (who generously sponsors the Annual Science lectures) was invited as this year's Guest of Honour, to the OPA Oxford & Cambridge Dinner ('vide infra' for further details).

The 'CCF90 Dinner' allowed many alumni to gather together in celebration of the 90 years that have passed since the CCF's formation. Other news covers the Careers Fair; a 'fundraising for floodlights' Fireworks Party and a 'behind the scenes peek' at a school production of 'High Society'.

Finally, an uplifting note - on behalf of the OPA Council may I congratulate Old Priorians Jess and Sean Taylor-Beirne (OPs 2009) on the birth of their baby daughter, Matilda Taylor-Beirne. Jess is a current serving member of Council. Here's to wishing young 'Matilda' a joyous welcome into the larger family that is the St Benedict's community.

Lewis Hill (OP 1975)
Old Priorian Association President 2019/20

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Edited by Olivia Davies (OP 2015),
Development and Alumni Relations Officer.

The Editor reserves the right to amend copy to fit
the newsletter.
If there are any errors or omissions, please notify the
editorial team at opa@stbenedicts.org.uk

Designed by Olivia Davies (OP 2015)

Letters to the OPA are welcome and may be
included in future issues.

Front Cover Image

Eddie Keogh (OP 1981).
Photo courtesy of Eddie Keogh.

Marina Ranger (OP 2009)
Photo courtesy of @marina_danger_ranger

OPA Oxbridge Reunion Dinner 2020
Photo: Andrew Fosker

Alessandra Messina (OP 2017)
Photo courtesy of Alessandra Messina

St Benedict's CCF 90th Anniversary
Photo: Andrew Fosker

OPRFC 2019/20 Season Report

As with most things, our rugby season this year was brought to an abrupt end, due to the spread of Coronavirus. The Rugby Football Union used an algorithm to estimate a final points total, which has ultimately seen the Old Priorians relegated, having spent the last 6 seasons in London 1 North (Level 6).

Off the back of our two best points totals ever and 8th placed finishes, the Old Priorians largely struggled this season, due to injuries and availability, which severely limited the cohesion of the team on a week to week basis against some very good (and some semi-pro) clubs. Furthermore, it was one of the wettest winters in recent memory which hardly helped the Old Priorians who are known for playing open, running rugby.

Three wins in four games over Christmas against Amersham, Ruislip and Woodford gave the Old Priorians a good chance and we dragged Amersham down into the relegation dogfight with us. However, some heart-breaking losses (12-7 vs Eton Manor and 20-12 vs Chingford) made the task even tougher.

There were some undeniable highlights this season, including:

Our home and away double victory against Woodford which was particularly pleasing as we had to show resilience and grit, despite some low confidence, to see out the close games and grasp late wins.

The second fixture against Woodford, played under lights at Grasshoppers, also featured a stunning team try superbly scored by James Booth (OP 2008) for which he won the Maximuscle Try of the Month Award.

The OPRFC continues to provide a legitimate playing opportunity for rugby players, especially St Benedict's recent leavers. Over the course of the season, the

OPRFC teams have featured 11 recent leavers, with Luis Gomez-Rose (OP 2019), Tomek Tsang (OP 2019) and Dan Moore (OP 2019) achieving many 1st XV appearances.

Ultimately, the relegation has great potential to provide a much-needed boost for the club. Level 6 is a tough, competitive league with some serious clubs, who spend an awful lot of money. It also features a whopping 26 league games with fixtures as far away as North Walsham, on the North Norfolk coast.

Stepping down to Level 7 will mean we can play four less games, so hopefully have less injuries and more consistency in selection. We will have significantly less travel and be able to save the money that would be spent on away buses. This will give us a much-needed opportunity to continue re-building the 2nd XV, which has seen steady progress in the last three years.

The OPRFC is constantly looking to welcome more players and Old Priorians on to the teams so please do feel free to get in touch if you would be interested in playing with us.

Thank you to all our supporters and volunteers, we are extremely grateful for all your support, whether that be on the touchline, helping to run the club or financially.

Edd Conway (OP 2005)
Director of Rugby, OPRFC





New Head Coach for the OPRFC

A tribute to Edd Conway (OP 2005) by Mark Machado (OP 2004)

Since the rebirth of the Old Priors Rugby Football Club in 2008, Edd Conway has been an ever-present and reliable member of the club. Fresh out of University in the early years of the club, Edd's consistent performances in the back line were instrumental to the club's rapid rise to London 1. A monster on the pitch and understated off it, Edd won the respect of his team mates and the admiration of the fans who flocked to Perivale to watch his ferocious tackling and silky hands.

For observers, it's clear that for him coaching is a vocation.

It's something he's known he's wanted to do from at least his mid-teens. He studied coaching for his undergraduate degree, and his thirst to learn about coaching and performance doesn't appear to have dwindled since then, as he remains a committed student of the game. His transition from player to head coach was seamless and he was instantly able to impact results on the pitch leading the club to its best performance in Level 6 and with his vast knowledge, he was able to improve and challenge every player in the squad.

Edd is stepping down as Head Coach and will be taking on a role at a school which won't see him being able to commit as much time to the club as he has in the previous few years. I'm sure he will continue to be one of the hardest working men in Rugby, alongside his role at the club, he also had roles at the London Irish Academy, Middlesex Rugby, Latymer School and Guy's Hospital Rugby Football Club. Everyone in the club wishes Edd the best of luck in all his future endeavours and we all look forward to seeing him and his wife Hel at Perivale as and when time permits.

To commemorate the handover of the role, we interviewed Edd and new head coach, Adam Preocanin, about the OPRFC and their thoughts on the club.

To read the full interview, please take a look in the OPRFC group on St Benedict's Connect [here](#).



OPRFC

Player Profiles

Tomek Tsang



Age: 19
Class of: 2019
Job: on a Gap Year
Position: Fullback

I starting playing rugby at the age of 6, at Ealing Trailfinders. The best thing about the OPRFC is the post-match curry. My favourite personal rugby memory is representing Hong Kong at the U20 World trophy in Brazil.

Kimen Nyam



Age: 18
Class of: 2019
Position: Wing/Fullback
Job: Student, Brunel University

I started playing rugby when I joined St Benedict's in Year 9. The best thing about the OPRFC is being able to keep playing rugby with my friends from St Benedict's, both old and new. My favourite personal rugby memory is winning the Middlesex 7s plate in U6th.

Alex Ozegovic



Age: 25
Class of: 2012
Position: Captain
Job: Structural Engineer, DCL Engineering

I started playing rugby when I joined St Benedict's, aged 11. My favourite personal rugby memory is being asked to represent the Serbian National Rugby Team. The best things about the OPRFC are the 'joue'-style rugby and extravagant social hours.

Mark Machado



Age: 34
Class of: 2004
Position: Front Row/Management
Job: Broadcast Journalist & Producer

The best thing about the OPRFC is playing and socialising with great people, some of whom I've known for 30 years. My favourite personal rugby memory is at Twickenham for the Middlesex End of Season Awards with Alex Pl and my mum, where she won the Middlesex Rugby Volunteer of the Year!

Class of 2018 Christmas Reunion

My memory of last December's Christmas reunion, for those Old Priorians who had left St Benedict's 16 months prior, is a fond one.

We had an unexpectedly large turnout comprised of friends, new and old, that cut across the spectrum of those who had been at St Benedict's from nursery, all the way up to those who joined for sixth form.

Most of the recent leavers, I had not seen since our last day at school (other than occasionally bumping into some at the Haven Arms).

Everyone gathering in the Benet Bar was a great chance for a catch-up, and to hear stories - and about the experiences - of the others' lives so far, whether that be at university, the world of work, or otherwise.

It was just that range of post-school lived experiences that (despite the short time since we had left) made hearing what everyone had been up to all the more interesting - a very generous subsidy from the OPA didn't hurt either!



Most of the us now are currently at university, studying subjects as varied as the assortment of places and institutions we are attending.

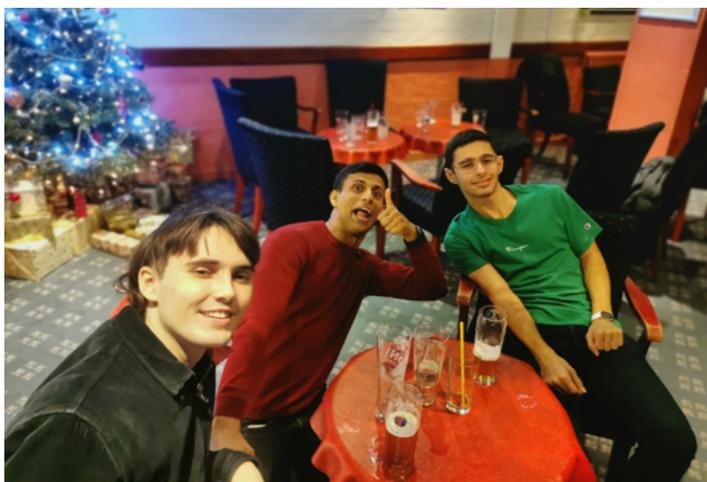
I found it particularly interesting to chat to those Old Priorians who are studying abroad, and to hear about how their experience of uni and life more broadly differs from those of us still in the UK.

The reunion was a great opportunity to come back together as a year group, not only to chat over a pint about our lives since leaving school, but to reminisce about our time at St Benedict's, which seems so long ago, and memories of which we all share.

Thank you to all who came to the reunion, and to the OPA on behalf of all the 2018 leavers.

It was a fantastic night, and I for one am looking forward to the next.

Lorcan O'Brien (OP 2018)



Organising a Reunion?

Reunions are a great way to get together with your old school friends and rekindle those nostalgic school memories.

All Old Priorian organised reunions can seek a subsidy from the OPA.

If you would like any help organising a reunion and to apply for a subsidy, please contact us at opa@stbenedicts.org.uk!

Annual Old Priorian Oxford and Cambridge Reunion Dinner 2020

In early February, once again, Old Priorians gathered at the Oxford and Cambridge Club in London for the Annual Oxford and Cambridge Reunion Dinner 2020.

This year's guest of honour, Dr Francis Cuss (OP 1972), joined us all the way from New York, where he lives with his family.

Francis is an alumnus of Kings College, Cambridge, where he studied Anatomy. Francis was the Head of Research and Development, Executive Vice President & Chief Scientific Officer for Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Francis' enlivened after-dinner speech, shared his journey since leaving St Benedict's, entering university and his career since graduating.

We were delighted to also welcome Lucy Griffiths (OP 2003) for the first time to the Oxford and Cambridge Dinner. Lucy is an Oncology Clinical Trials Manager at Oxford University.

For the second year in a row, we welcomed Lorcan O'Brien (OP 2018) and Matt Barrett (OP 2018), who are both current students at Oxford University.

As always, the Oxbridge Reunion dinner was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect and catch up with some of our Old Priorians and to share with them the developments of St Benedict's and the OPA community.

If you would like to keep in touch with your fellow Oxbridge Old Priorians and stay up to date with the latest Old Priorian Oxford and Cambridge Dinner updates, please join the 'OP Oxbridge' group [here](#).

The date for our Oxford and Cambridge Reunion Dinner 2021 is still to be confirmed, however our guest speaker for the evening will be Richard Little (OP 1973).



CCF90: A Dinner to Celebrate Ninety Years since the Foundation of St Benedict's School CCF

24th January 1930 to 24th January 2020

"The atmosphere around the CCF is electric, and feels like it is heading in a very healthy direction."

- Major Tom Foote RE

In 2015, we held a very successful Mass and reception for the 85th anniversary of the formation of the CCF in 1930; this year we decided to mark the 90th by resurrecting the Annual CCF Dinner. We were overwhelmed by the response, and sixty of us sat down in the Cloisters on the anniversary. We were summoned to take our seats by the superb bugle-call of LCpl Shan Arden.

To my mind, the Cloisters had never looked better: the table filled the space without being cramped; the lights were low; blue-red-blue candles burned in silver candlesticks; Dmrs Erika and Cara Abano played the grand piano softly; and a slideshow of 200 select images of CCF life from 1930 to the current day ran on a loop. Our guests included many serving and former officers, resplendent in their scarlet Mess Dress, which undoubtedly added tone.

Guests of the Contingent included the Headmasters of Cardinal Wiseman and St Benedict's; Mr Richard Kornicki (Deputy Lieutenant for Ealing); Col Ian Denison (Colonel Cadets for London District); Capt Alistair Grant (our former SSI, and now SO3 Cadets at HQ London District); Cdt SSM Emilia McFadzean (the Head of CCF); Dom Alexander Bevan OSB; and our Guest Speaker, the energetic Major Tom Foote of the Royal Engineers.

Once Mr Johnson - officially the CCF's Commanding Officer - had welcomed our guests, our first course was brought in by uniformed Cadets.

After the main course, the Corps of Drums entered under the direction of Dmr Ben Dovey, and performed a medley of tunes, my favourite being *The Great Escape*. Their wonderful sound filled the room, their drill looked immaculate, and before they had even finished marching out the Deputy Lieutenant had booked them for the Ealing Remembrance Day parade. It was hard to believe that they had only been in training since September.

"Considering their limited experience, they handled the pressure of the occasion superbly. I congratulated them afterwards, where I found a joyous group of Cadets who were rightly pleased with their achievement."

- Major Tom Foote RE

After the dessert, cheese, port and coffee had been served, Cdt SSM Emilia McFadzean proposed the Loyal Toast, Capt Spivey a toast to the Royal Engineers, and Mr Johnson a toast to St Benedict's School CCF. Presentations were made to Sgt Instr David Cuss (OP 2017) and Capt Spivey, both of whom leave the CCF this year.

Major Foote spoke about the great value of the CCF to Cadets, their communities, the Armed Forces, and British society. His speech was elegant, humble, intelligent, and well received. He concluded by proposing a toast to the Next 90 Years, reminding us that we are just one stage in our Contingent's history.

"I hope that you, and the whole CCF, is as proud of your affiliation to the Corps of Royal Engineers as we are with our affiliation with you. You are as much a part of the Corps family as any member of the Reserve, Regular, or Retired community."

- Major Tom Foote RE

As guests began to make their farewells, it became clear that many were unwilling to leave - always a good sign. The atmosphere had been perfect from the start, and the general feeling was of celebration and happy memories:

"Thank you for such a fantastic evening. From the conscripted waiters, to the entertainment, the recent leavers, and the old boys, everyone had a story to tell, and all were proud to be part of the School's CCF."

Old Priorians, former CCF staff and former Cardinal Wiseman cadets present at the Dinner were:

Mr Bernard Stutt (1955), Lt Col (Rtd) Richard Baker (1959 & 1991), Mr Chris Stevenson (1964), Mr Kevin Kiernan (1970), Mr Gerry McManus (1978), Mr Dominic Cuss (1980), Mr Tony Clarke (1982), Mr Ian Potts (1982), Mr Paul McGill (1983), Mr Frank Casali (1984), Dr Philip Hopley (1984), Mr Peter Allwright (1988), Mr Matthew Jennings (2008), Mr Oliver Graves (2012), Mr Andrew Hutchinson (2012), SSI Hussain Sadiq (2012), Sgt Instr Jamie Fenlon (2016), Sgt Instr David Cuss (2017), Miss Lucy Atkinson (2018), Miss Eden Comins (2018), Miss Charlotte McCosker (2018); Miss Trinity Yau (2018); Mr William Bignell (2019); Mr Ben Dunleavy (2019); Mr Dominic Grzorzec (2019); Mr Kimen Nyam (2019); and Mr Danylo Simonov (2019).

One recent leaver commented:

"It felt very strange being back at school so soon, but I'm glad I took the opportunity to attend."

We were also delighted to welcome parents of serving Cadets. The Regular Army was also represented as well as Wilson's School CCF and the staff of St Benedict's CCF.

"I was fascinated, when talking to a variety of guests, particularly the parents, that their knowledge of the CCF varied so greatly. The dinner was a great opportunity to inform everybody about what the CCF is and what your Cadets are up to. "

- Major Tom Foote RE

Our thanks go to St Benedict's wonderful catering team, and to the Year 12 NCOs. We were startled to hear them singing "Happy Birthday" at the end; it turned out that Cpl Mucko had given up the evening of her birthday to serve at the dinner!

"The Cadets who served us during the evening were brilliant, and it is reassuring that you have developed a culture where they volunteered to do such a duty."

- Major Tom Foote RE

Just as our CCF is honoured to be part of the Sapper family, we hope that all those who serve or have served with the Contingent, as well as the parents who encourage their children's participation, know that you will always be a part of the St Benedict's School CCF family. We look forward to seeing many more of you at our Centenary celebrations on Thursday January 24th 2030.

Follow us at @stbenedictscf on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to stay up to date.

Shaun Hullis
Captain & Contingent Commander, St Benedict's CCF



Annual Richard Baker Science Lecture 2019

'The Science of Population Forecasting - or is it?' delivered by Professor David Coleman (OP 1964)

We were delighted to host our third *Annual Richard Baker Science Lecture* with Professor David Coleman (OP 1964) as our guest lecturer.

David Coleman is the Emeritus Professor of Demography in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at Oxford University.

After finishing his education at St Benedict's, David went on to receive a BSc in Zoology from Oxford and obtained his PhD in Demography at LSE. He started his career at the Advanced Teachers' College in Kano in 1968, where he taught Science. From 1970-80, David was a lecturer at UCL. He then became a lecturer in Demography at Oxford University in 1980, before being appointed Professor in 2002. He became Emeritus Professor in 2013.

David's research interests and specialisms include comparative demographic trends in the developed world, immigration, the future of fertility, the demographic consequences of migration and the demography of ethnic minorities.

During his early career at Oxford, David was the special advisor to the Home Secretary and later the Ministers of Housing and Environment.

His talk was an insightful and informative look into the theories and explorations in Demography and

discussed *'The Science of Population Forecasting - or is it?'*

As with previous years, the evening also showcased a current St Benedict's 6th Form student. This year, Finlay Healy, presented his Extended Project Qualification Research (EPQ), on *'The rise of national populism in Italian and French politics since the recession of 2008'*.

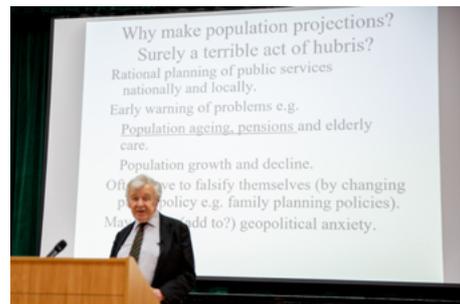
Finlay presented with ease and confidence, clearly demonstrating his passion for politics; a subject which he hopes to study at Oxford University in September 2020.

Finlay has fantastic potential and the OPA wishes him all the best in his future.

The evening was brought to a close with an address from Dr Francis Cuss (OP 1972), who generously endows this lecture series in honour of Richard Baker (OP 1959).

Our thanks to those who joined us for such an interesting and stimulating evening.

The date for the 4th Annual Richard Baker Science Lecture will be announced in due course.





From the Headmaster

Dear Old Priorians,

I do hope that you and your families are keeping safe and well during this extremely difficult time, and that you are managing to find peace and solace in the present regime of lockdown.

It is heartening to look back over the academic year, pre-pandemic, and to appreciate our pupils' many achievements and endeavours.

After celebrating excellent examination results in the summer once again, the Michaelmas Term was as busy as ever. At half term, our historians explored Vietnam, the geographers toured Iceland, and the classicists visited Greece, while several Duke of Edinburgh's expeditions took place closer to home. Lord Patten awarded the new sixth form scholarships in November, and election fever took hold: a lively general election hustings, chaired by sixth form students, was attended by all of the prospective parliamentary candidates for Ealing Central, and politics students held a US election event with BBC's Jon Sopel and Channel 5's Andy Bell. The Richard Baker Lecture was given by Professor David Coleman (OP 1964), who introduced us to the science of demography and population forecasting.

In the Lent Term, four students received Oxbridge offers: to read medicine, music and biology at Oxford, and Classics at Cambridge. Our biennial Careers Fair was a huge success, thanks in no small measure to the considerable numbers of Old Priorians who gave up their time to give advice and insight to our students.

On the arts front, the Music Festival was adjudicated by Professor Mark Tucker (OP 1976), which was followed by an impressive production of Cole Porter's High Society.

We also celebrated the 90th anniversary of the CCF, with a splendid dinner in The Cloisters. While the Old Priorian Oxbridge Dinner was a very enjoyable and successful event, we were sorry not to have been able to hold the OPA dinner or the Ray Codd Memorial Cup match, although we are hopeful that the latter may be rescheduled in the autumn.

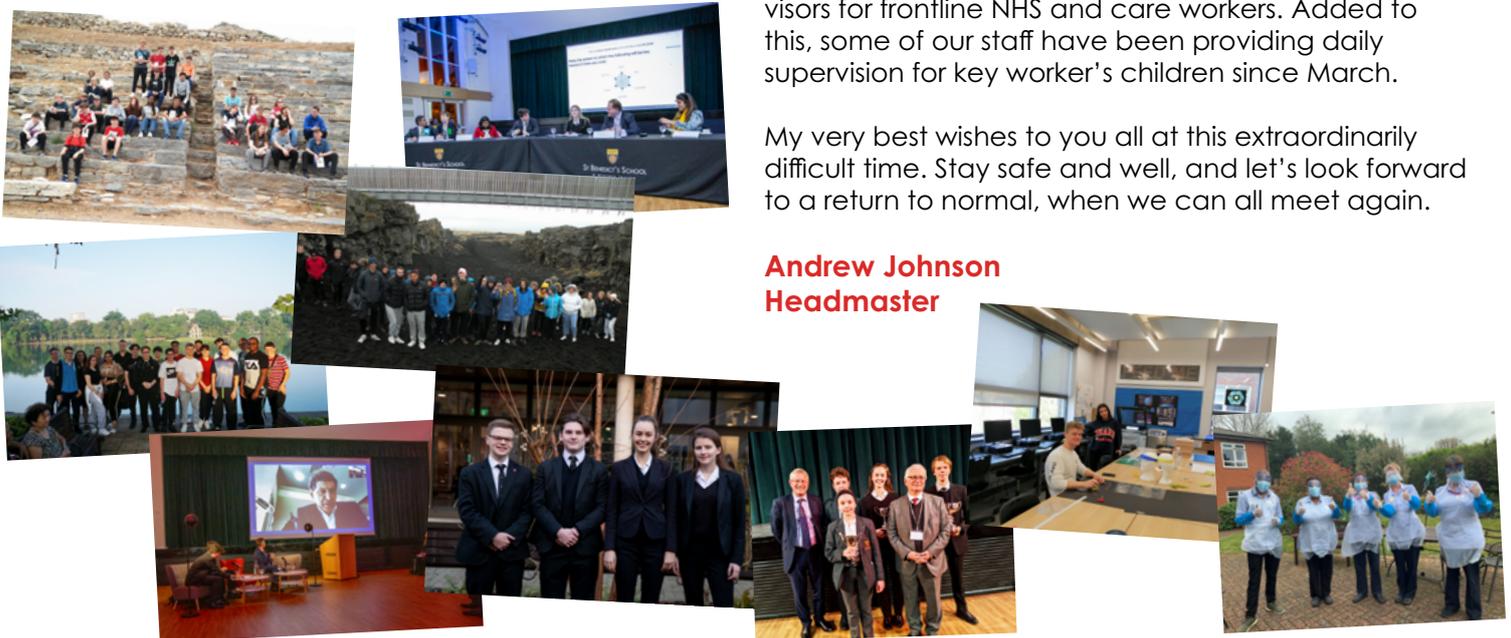
Meanwhile, St Benedict's is faring pretty well during the current lockdown, with online lessons and a virtually 'normal' timetable provided for pupils right across the school – from nursery to the sixth form. I am hugely impressed by how our teachers, pupils and parents have risen to this challenge, going above and beyond to ensure that education, wellbeing and progress is not compromised by this crisis. We have a full programme of sports, CCF, pastoral care and co-curricular provision too, including virtual music lessons, fitness challenges, prayer and reflection and tutor meetings.

As you may imagine, some families are struggling to pay the fees at the moment as a result of the present financial crisis. In response we have set up a Rescue Fund. In less than one month we have raised more than £100,000 to support hard-pressed families. There have been many generous donations by parents and OPs, and we are extremely grateful for their support of the school and of St Benedict's families at this time.

Finally, I'd like to share with you the incredible work of the St Benedict's DT department and sixth form volunteers, who have made over 1,000 protective visors for frontline NHS and care workers. Added to this, some of our staff have been providing daily supervision for key worker's children since March.

My very best wishes to you all at this extraordinarily difficult time. Stay safe and well, and let's look forward to a return to normal, when we can all meet again.

Andrew Johnson
Headmaster





From the Development & Alumni Relations Office

Dear Old Priorians

As I write, we are in week 7 of lockdown and life at St Benedict's has changed considerably. However, Richard, Olivia and I are working hard to ensure the OPA Community remains as vibrant and as active as possible.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our Old Priorians who have generously donated to our Rescue Fund. Unfortunately, many of our current families are facing real and sudden hardship. The fund allows us to support families in financial difficulty and ensure our students remain with us here at School.

The first half of the year saw a very successful Richard Baker Science Lecture series, delivered this year by Professor David Coleman (OP 1964).

Our thanks, as always, go to Dr Francis Cuss (OP 1972) who generously endows our lecture series. It was especially heartening to welcome Francis (who lives in New York) as our Guest of Honour at our annual Oxford and Cambridge Reunion Dinner in February. We look forward to welcoming Richard Little (OP 1973) as Guest of Honour for the 2021 Dinner.

Thanks to our membership of nearly 900 Old Priorians registered on [St Benedict's Connect](#), we have been able to deliver a weekly Careers Clinic, offering advice from individual Old Priorians on their chosen careers. This year's A Level and graduating university students are entering a challenging economic environment. We believe these clinics offer sound, practical advice and real Mentorship opportunities. If you would like to know more about the Careers Clinic please go to the Groups section on St Benedict's Connect where you will find the OP Mentoring Group (or click [here](#)).



My thanks also to our Old Priorians who supported our biennial Careers Fair in February, where we welcomed over 800 students and their families including several local schools. This is the largest event the School holds and the support we receive from our Old Priorians ensures we deliver a high quality evening of career information, advice and guidance.

We are very disappointed to have to postpone many of our spring/summer events including the Inaugural Ray Codd Memorial cup, OPA Dinner and the OPA Golf Day. However, we are hoping to host many of these events in the forthcoming Michaelmas and Lent terms. I will send further event information once we have the new dates are confirmed.



Finally, a gentle reminder that we have established a "Here for You" group on St Benedict's Connect ([here](#)). All Old Priorians are welcome to reach out via this Group during this lockdown period and we look forward to hearing from you.

Very best wishes,

Tara George
Development & Alumni Relations Director



St Benedict's Fireworks for Floodlights

This November, we kick-started the year with our first-ever Fireworks Evening at our Perivale Sports Fields.

We were delighted to welcome over 400 St Benedict's students, parents and Old Priorians.

The event was a fundraiser for the St Benedict's Floodlight Appeal, which is raising money to install state-of-the-art Floodlights at St Benedict's Sports Fields.

Floodlights will not only provide more opportunities for our St Benedict's students to train and develop their key sports skills at their home ground, but it will also benefit our alumni sports clubs, such as the OPRFC (Old Priorians Rugby Club) and OPCC (Old Priorians Cricket Club) and the wider community, as we can offer the space to local Ealing sports clubs.

The evening was a huge success with fun activities for children of all ages, hot food and drinks, and a superb Fireworks display courtesy of The Fireworks Firm.

We cannot thank the volunteers we had from St Benedict's SPF and our Old Priorians enough for all their help in the lead up to and during the evening.

Our Fireworks Evening 2020 will be on Friday 30th October - Save the Date!!



Behind the Scenes at High Society

We were delighted to be joined by some of our Old Priorians and St Benedict's families for another first-ever event - Behind the Scenes: High Society. This was a unique opportunity to experience the behind the scenes of a St Benedict's production, which this year was Cole Porter's High Society.

Over the years, St Benedict's Drama and Music departments have developed and grown to produce outstanding productions and concerts time and time again. It was wonderful to share the incredible talents we have, as well as reconnect our Old Priorians with Drama and Music at St Benedict's, sharing with them how far the two departments have come, especially in recent years.

Our thanks to Head of Drama, Katie Ravenscroft and Head of Music, Chris Eastwood, for a fantastic production - as always!



"The production of High Society was thoroughly engaging. The dress rehearsal was very slick. The performances were strong with some great ensemble work. The music was superb too. Overall a very impressive production."

- Angela McHale (OP 1987),
Actor/Director & Communications Coach



"Cole Porter's High Society was a top class revival of a Ravenscroft classic. A characterful and skilful cast provided glamour, comic extravagance and touching emotion. Well done to all involved.

It is wonderful to see students given invaluable performance experience to play alongside the professional peripatetic instrumental teachers. All musicians in the pit were effortlessly lead by Chris Eastwood.

High praise indeed are to be given to the Music and Drama Departments!"
- Catherine Bench (OP 2015)



Careers Fair 2020

The biennial Careers Fair is St Benedict's largest single event, to inspire our students to use their unique talents as positively and powerfully as possible in the workplace and the wider world beyond St Benedict's.

Representatives from over 150 organisations attended the evening, covering a huge range of careers, including medicine, engineering, law, teaching, marketing, architecture and journalism. Many of the stands were staffed by Old Priorians, who took time following a busy day at work to provide advice and insight to students from St Benedict's and three other schools. In some cases, they travelled a considerable distance to join us - reinforcing the community and ethos of St Benedict's, as returning 'old' girls and boys.

By having Old Priorians at events like these, we can demonstrate to current St Benedict's students the paths and journeys that are open to them once they leave St Benedict's. The Old Priorians who attended and supported the Careers Fair offer a unique perspective compared to the other stall holders and presenters who are not directly connected with St Benedict's. Especially, our younger Old Priorians in attendance who, despite only being at the beginning of their careers, are already achieving so much!

Seven Speaker Presentations, some presented by Old Priorians, offered specific advice, tips and inside information on a range of themes:

Starting out: first jobs and the move from full time study to full time work with Zubin Dalal, Rasna Sagoo and Ben Udwin (OP 2014)

Alternative Routes: Bypassing university and fast-tracking the civil service with Ollie Lythgoe (OP 2015)

Qualified yet confused: How to find a career when you have no idea what you want to be with Christina Haddad (OP 2012)

The Careers Fair closed with keynote speaker Tim Woollias, Senior Industry Head Google. His general advice was: get a good education, learn from a good boss in your early career which will provide a solid foundation for risk-taking and branching out on your own; find something you're good at and, towards the end of your career, support the next generation, by mentoring and offering work experience.

With thanks to our Old Priorians who gave their time to support the Careers Fair, and to the Careers Department and Development and Alumni Office for organising such a successful event.



From Ealing to the Bulgarian National Ballet...

Alessandra Messa (OP 2017) contacted the OPA in January 2020 to share her journey since leaving St Benedict's in 2015 and the start of her career as a professional Ballet dancer.

Alongside my studies at St Benedict's, I attended one of the most prestigious ballet schools in London. I also performed in the St Benedict's Dance Show, three years in a row.

After completing my GCSEs, I moved to Cuba as I was accepted by the world-renowned National Cuban Ballet School in Havana. I completed a two-year course and thereafter was accepted with a full scholarship for a pre-professional program in Miami, Florida with a prestigious ballet master.

I returned to London, once I had completed the program and was fortunate enough to sit my A Levels at St Benedict's as an external student, all while auditioning for ballet companies around the world.

When I finished my A Levels, I was also invited by the Ballet des Monte Carlo and Leipzig Ballet to dance and perform with them.

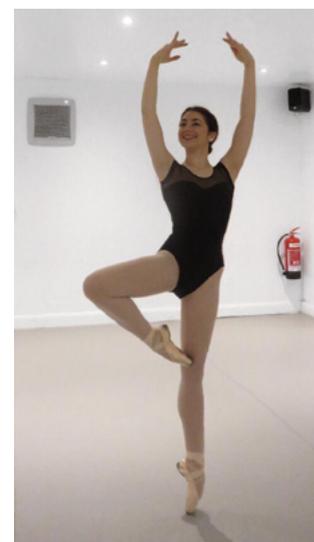
Shortly after this and after returning to London again, I was offered my first official job contract with the Bulgarian National Ballet.

This, so far, is my biggest achievement as it marks the start of my career as a professional ballet dancer!!

It was a long journey but with passion and consistency, I feel as though I have finally made it! The support I received while at St Benedict's, both from the staff and from my classmates was so important to me. My teachers were all so supportive and encouraging and this made a huge difference to my journey and the final picture.

I hope that one day when I return to London to dance, I could potentially perform at St Benedict's School!

Alessandra Messa (OP 2017)



An Interview with... Eddie Keogh (OP 1981)

Eddie Keogh (OP 1981) is a professional sports photographer. He is the official England Football Team photographer, Premier League Photographer for Reuters and England Rugby Photographer for O2 Sports. We were delighted to learn that Eddie won the British Sports Journalist Award in the 'Away from the Action' category for the second year running. We reached out to Eddie to discover all about his incredible career.

How did you get into photography?

The summer after doing O levels, I went travelling around Europe with my mother in a VW dormobile; she gave me a small Kodak 110 film camera and the job of taking some pictures. I enjoyed it so much that I decided to save up some money to buy my own SLR camera when I got home. Mike King (OP 1981) was in my year and he was a keen photographer as well. He went on to also shoot sports photography and in his day was regarded as one of the best in the business. Unfortunately, Mike passed away 5 years ago - a real loss to photography.

What was your first professional job?

My first job was with Mercury Press Photo Agency in Liverpool. There I learnt to be an editorial photographer but when I began to shoot Liverpool FC and Everton FC, I knew that's where my heart lay and that was the beginning of my journey to be a sports photographer.

Has sports photography always been your main area of work?

Sport has pretty much been my speciality all my life. I have always loved sport so to combine that with my passion in photography was a no brainer.

What has been the best moment(s) in your career?

Following the England rugby team around Australia for 6 weeks and photographing them win the Rugby

World Cup was pretty special. The World Cup in Russia was also just as special as I was the official photographer for the England football team. To work on the inside with Gareth Southgate and the boys was a joy.

What are the challenges facing the photography industry at the moment?

I've spent the majority of my life shooting editorially for newspapers, magazines and most recently for online clients. Newspapers are losing circulation massively and as a consequence have less and less money for good journalism and photography. So I'm lucky to have good clients in the FA, Reuters and O2.

Do you have any big projects or exciting new jobs in the pipeline?

Well I'm still the official photographer for England and was due to be with them this summer for Euro 2020 but all my work has disappeared due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Fingers crossed we will see some sport back in July!

How do you see your career progressing?

I guess my career will carry on a few more years. I still love going to work, which is something if you've had the same career for 35 years. I doubt I'll ever put the camera down until they lay it beside me one day.



For the love of running with the Running Ranger!

Marina Ranger (OP 2009) has travelled the world competing in Ultra-marathons, Triathlons and IronMan challenges, she has represented GBR at the ITU Long Distance Triathlon World Champions, all alongside working full time. We spoke to Marina to find out why she loves running and her top tips for any aspiring ultra-marathon runners.

When did your love of running start?

My love of running started when I was 22, I had just completed my first ultra-marathon in the Kalahari Desert. It was a 270km, 7-day, self-sufficient race, so I carried all my food, kit and camping gear on my back. The whole adventure and experience was life-changing. I quickly became addicted and one race led to another...

How did running progress into ultra-marathons, triathlons and representing GB? Was it a natural progression or did you fall into it?

I was always sporty at school and loved being part of school teams but I had never done running. I was working and needed a more time-flexible sport to practice. My boss put on a competition for a place at the ultra-marathon in the Kalahari Desert – I had to raise money for charity and prove I was fit enough. I won the competition, did my first marathon 4 months later and the multi-stage desert 6 months after that. After 4 years of ultra-racing, I wanted to try something new so entered my first IRONMAN, which qualified me for the ITU Long Distance Triathlon World Championships, where I represented GBR. That was a

lifelong dream for me to achieve - a true highlight in my racing career!

Having seen how often you train on social media, how has running and competing affected your life?

I would be a COMPLETELY different person if I didn't have my current lifestyle! It's added a new level of perspective to my life that I can rationalise within so many situations. It has a positive snowball effect on so many aspects – physical health, new friendships, life experiences, personal growth and mental wellbeing (self-fulfilment, confidence and happiness). Knowing you can achieve things, you once thought impossible, and pushing through endless comfort zones teaches you how much you are capable of, that hard work pays off and limits can be exceeded.

What are the best parts of the races you participate in?

There are genuinely too many great things to list. In a nutshell, the whole experience - the training journey beforehand, the people you meet during, the places you see and the learnings you get from it. The fulfilment these races make them truly special events. I have friendships for life through them and some of the places I've visited are so unique as I would never have otherwise visited them. I find I really come back as a new person and on top of the world!

What advice or tips would you give to anyone interested in starting ultramarathons?

Don't waste time wondering if you 'can' or 'should'. You can do anything you put your mind to. The minute you say yes, the rest will naturally fall into place, then the fun starts - commit to hard work and you'll reap the rewards.

Finally, what next races you're looking towards?

- Ultra X Azores, April – 125km in 2 days (ultra-marathon)
- Grafman Middle Distance, May – Half IRONMAN (1.9km swim, 90km cycle, 21km run)
- Outlaw Full Distance Triathlon, July – Full IRONMAN (3.9km swim, 180km cycle, 42.2km run)
- My own self-organised challenge in September for Breast Cancer – 5 IRONMANs, 5 days, 5 countries



News & Memories

Bringing you all the latest news and memories from the Old Priorian community.

Kevin McCormack (OP 1965)

In January 2020, Kevin McCormack emailed the OPA to let us know about the passing of Peter Hemy (OP 1967, RIP). Kevin attended Peter's funeral along with Adrian Rapazzini (OP 1964). Here are some memories of Peter, which he shared with us:

"Peter was a good friend of mine in my last years at St Benedict's as, like me, he lived in Ealing (as very few of my contemporaries did) and was a fellow railway enthusiast.

I think it is probably safe now to admit that once (and only once) we bunked off school and thankfully no one noticed!

The date was Friday 11 June 1965 and the occasion, which we were keen not to miss, was the running of the last scheduled steam-hauled passenger train from Paddington (the Mon-Fri 4.15pm to Banbury). Fate was on our side because normally we couldn't have disappeared for over an hour without someone noticing. However, this was the Friday following the Annual General Inspection and as a reward we were allowed to wear muffi and the afternoon was more low-key than normal. Peter was in Signals and I was the Staff Sergeant in charge of Training Office (maps, compasses etc). I parked my Honda 50 motor bike round the corner with the intention of photographing the train at Park Royal where it would pass through at about 4.30pm. Peter and I disappeared from the Black Pitch at about 3.45pm, saw the train and managed to sneak back to school in time for the final parade just after 5pm. My parents at that time used to buy the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express (I've long since forgiven them for that!) and Saturday's papers both had large photographs of the train leaving Paddington so it was a significant historic event attracting media attention. And we got to witness it. Peter was taking the greater risk in bunking off with me because I was leaving a couple of weeks later whereas he was staying on for another year!"

Maurice Conroy (OP 1981)

Maurice Conroy emailed the OPA to say that on Friday 17th January 2020, a small gathering of Old Priorians, mainly from 1981/2/3, was held in the Summerhouse in the Garden at The Grange on the

Common W5. Maurice mentioned to the OPA that Joe Kearns (OP 1950) made an appearance.

Tony Clarke (OP 1982)

In January, St Benedict's received an email from Tony Clarke (OP 1982) with regards to the upcoming CCF 90th Anniversary Dinner. Tony's father, Joe, was also in the CCF when it started in the 1930s (see picture below - Joe, aged 13). Tony's shared the below with us:

"Joe later became a Novice at Downside (known as Benedict Clarke), where his mentor was Dom Bernard Orchard. In 1940, Joe was returned to Ealing to consider his vocation under the wing of his brother, Dom Philip Clarke - where Joe soon got to know the Burkes, a good Catholic family of the Parish that included my mother...

When called up, Joe was recognised as being well-educated, put through Sandhurst in 1942 and commissioned into the Royal Horse Guards (the Blues). He was one of the few Household Division officers without a title, which was quite an honour. Based at Windsor, he was soon responsible for the mechanisation of the Division, devised the Army's first Tank Driving Test and waterproofed vehicles for D-Day.

My parents were married two weeks after VE day in bomb-damaged Ealing Abbey and set about building the peace. Joe left the Horse Guards in 1946, became an editor and publisher, among other things co-founding the Angling Times. I am their tenth child - and a broad Catholic education was always their top priority.

My side is much less interesting, but my time in the CCF did lead to 17 years in the TA with 10 Para."



News & Memories

Harry Graepel (OP 1969)

In February 2020, Harry Graepel emailed the OPA with regards to the Ray Codd Memorial Match and with his memories of school with Ray:

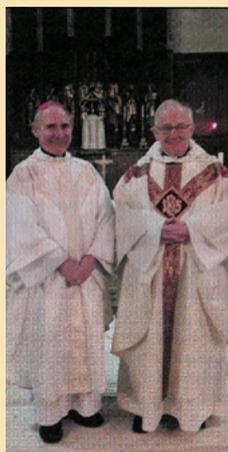
"I have very fond memories of Ray's sporting prowess even though he was three years older than me.

One memory that comes to mind is that in training for a seven-a-side competition, our coach Basil Nickerson got us to play the 1st seven consisting of Ray, Pat Lavery, Peter Hearn and others, as a final run around before the start of our respective competitions.

I recall Ray being in possession of the ball in this match and going into tackle him, wrapping both arms around his thigh. I also recall his thighs being so solid that I couldn't get him to the ground, so I just hung on. Thinking that because I had at least stopped him from running freely, he would at least have passed the ball to one of his team members, I released my hold on him after a few seconds. Little did I know that Ray had maintained possession of the ball throughout this would be tackle, and would run away to score a try. Ray was certainly one of those players that us younger boys looked up to as a great role model. I therefore hope that this memorial will prove to be a great success."

Desmond Baker (OP 1958)

From the Westminster Record March 2020, the OPA discovered that Fr Desmond Baker (OP 1958) celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood with a Mass of thanksgiving at St Mary Magdalene Church on 17th January. Bishop Paul preached the homily, also present was the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, Richard Moth.



Patrick Tobin (OP 1960, RIP)

Patrick Tobin (OP 1960) who taught History at St Benedict's (1963-1971) completed another book, this one was started whilst he was teaching at St Benedict's - "The Gong Tormented Sea: The Norman Kingdom of Sicily and The Byzantine Empire."

It will be published on 20th May 2020 by the Escourt Press, Winchester.

It is very much a 'St Benedict's Project'. Professor Christopher Mulvey (OP 1960) has provided invaluable help towards publication and Edward Fennell (OP 1968), a pupil of Patrick's in the 1960s, also participated actively. There will be many other Old Priorians with memories of Patrick's teaching who might now be interested.

The Gong Tormented Sea explores the collision between the empire founded by Constantine and the Norman buccaneers who wrested southern Italy from Constantinople and captured Sicily from its Arab conquerors. It was a collision that first triggered and then exacerbated the schism that separated Greek from Latin Christendom. A struggle to the death led to the appalling events of 1204.



Jess and Sean Taylor-Beirne (OPs 2009)

We are delighted to share that Jess and Sean Taylor-Beirne (OPs 2009) have welcomed their second child, a daughter called Matilda. Congratulations Jess and Sean from all of us at the OPA!

OPA Obituaries

Michael Tedeschi (OP 1970)

Died October 2019. Aged 68. RIP

Paul Olsen (SBS Staff 1955-1963)

Died 8th October 2019. Aged 96. RIP

Paul taught History at St Benedict's. On leaving St Benedict's in 1963, he became the founding Headmaster of St Thomas Aquinas School in Birmingham, the first lay headmaster of a Catholic School in the country. Paul left St Thomas Aquinas School in 1974 to become the Headmaster of St Augustine's in Redditch. In 1982, he retired to Burnham-on-Sea.

Peter Hemy (OP 1967)

Died 21st December 2019. Aged 71. RIP

Brother of Anthony Hemy (OP 1971). Peter's funeral was held at St Raphael's Church in Surbiton and was attended by his fellow Old Priorians, Kevin McCormack (OP 1965) and Adrian Rapazzini (OP 1964).

Christopher Hopper (OP 1963)

Died 1st February 2020. Aged 74. RIP

Brother-in-Law of David Randell (OP 1957) and son of Mrs Amy Hopper (RIP 1997), former St Benedict's Senior School Librarian.

Peter Walsh (OP 1946)

Died 10th February 2020. Aged 91. RIP

Brother of Anthony (OP 1941, RIP) and William (OP 1947, RIP)

William (Billy) Withall, Major General, CB (OP 1945)

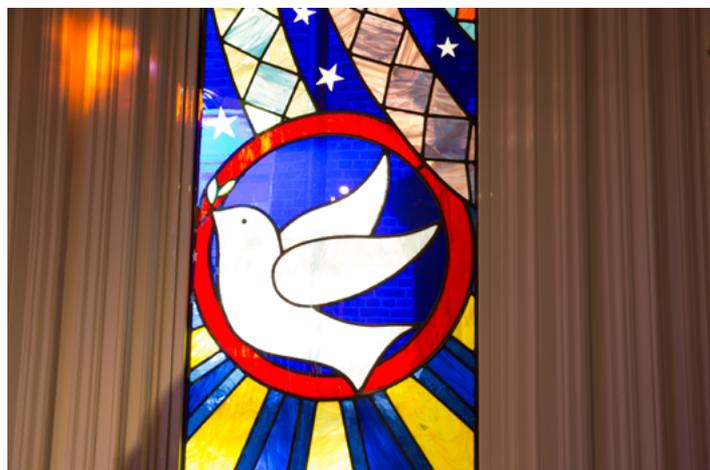
Died 21st February 2020. Aged 91. RIP

Brother of Michael (OP 1956).

Joseph Green (OP 1963)

Died 6th March 2020. Aged 75. RIP

Brother of Mark (OP 1960, RIP 2011).



Reginald Chillman (OP 1948)

Died 29th March 2020. Aged 89. RIP

Dom Gregory, Monk & Priest of Ealing Abbey (1948-2020). Dom Gregory died in the 71st year of his monastic profession and the 66th year of his priesthood.

John Hanley (OP 1960)

Died 13th April 2020. Aged 78. RIP

Brother of James (OP 1966) and Mark (OP 1972), son of Frank (Staff 49-75, Head of Modern Languages, RIP). To his wife, Faith, and son, Liam, we offer our deepest sympathy.

Michael Barley (OP 1958)

Died 16th April 2020. Aged 79. RIP

Brother of James (OP 1961) and brother-in-law of John Collins (OP 1966).

Michael spent his working life as a GP in the Brighton and Hove area.

Robert Wykes (OP 1949)

Died 16th April 2020. Aged 87. RIP

Brother of Valentine (OP 1943, RIP).

Robert is survived by his wife, 5 children and 11 grandchildren - to them we offer our deepest sympathy.

Robert was a civil engineer. He was a keen rugby fan and in his 20s and 30s had played for Ealing.

Peter MacGregor (OP 1957)

Died 18th April 2020. Aged 81. RIP

Brother of John (OP 1960) and Richard (OP 1963).

Colin Atkinson (SBS Staff 1966-1978)

Died 20th April 2020. RIP

Colin was the Director of Music at St Benedict's for 12 years. He built the firm foundations on which the school's current music department has developed to the very high standards it has today.

To his wife, Wendy and their family, we extend our deepest sympathy.

Patrick Tobin (OP 1960; Staff 1963-1971)

Died 29th April 2020. Aged 78. RIP

Brother of Michael (OP 1962, RIP) and cousin of Paul (OP 1966).

To his wife Margery, 4 children and 13 grandchildren, we extend our deepest sympathy.

Patrick had a great educational career with at least two Headmasterships at Prior Park (1980s) and Erskine Melville College. He was the Chairman of the Public Schools for a year and involved with the CISC and HMC. Patrick was also a published author, with his second book to be published early May.



The Old Priorian Association

Founded 1927

The Old Priorian Association was formed on Friday, 1st July 1927, with the name reflecting its beginnings within Ealing Priory School, which was the name of St Benedict's School at the time.

The Association was established to form a centre of union for alumni of the School and to hold meetings to renew old bonds which connects Old Priorians with St Benedict's. A vital role of the Association is to forward and promote, in every practical way, the interests of the School, whilst conducting its business according to The Rules of The Association (see OPA Website), which form the structure within which it operates.

The Association is governed and run by a Council consisting of three elected Officers, no fewer than four elected Members and a number of Ex-Officio Members.

Full details about the Association and its activities can be found at www.opaealing.org.uk

The Association has office facilities within the School and may be contacted at:

Email: opa@stbenedicts.org.uk
Telephone: 020 8862 2249
Post: The Old Priorian Association, 54 Eaton Rise,
Ealing, London W5 2ES

Elected Officers

Lewis Hill (OP 1975), President
Marina Ranger (OP 2009), Honorary Secretary
Vacant, Honorary Treasurer

Council Members

Brian Taylor, CB (OP 1960)
Christopher Stevenson (OP 1964)
Frank Casali (OP 1984)
Alex Pereira-Inacio (OP 2000)
Katie Wilmot (OP 2002)
Mark Machado (OP 2004)
Kumaran Perinpanathan (OP 2009)
Jessica Taylor-Beirne (OP 2009)
Olivia Davies (OP 2015)

Ex-Officio Council Members

Andrew Johnson, Headmaster, St Benedict's School
Rob Simmons (OP 1987), Headmaster, Junior School
Catherine Bedwin, Bursar, St Benedict's School
Joe Berger (OP 1976), Chairman, St Benedict's Governing Board
Jean O'Brien, Society of Parents and Friends
Richard Baker (OP 1959), Administrator OPA
Tara George, Development & Alumni Relations Director, St Benedict's School



Your Newsletter

Please do let us know about your news and views for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

Please also remember that images submitted must be of high resolution and as large a file size as possible.