

Oakhill Old Oaks

October 2010

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From Peebee's Pen

They say that the pen is mightier than the sword. If I had a sword, I would use it to destroy that which destroys me – computers! The moment I touch them, they do not work. I had a circular ready to go out on Day One of 2010, but the good lady who was supposed to format it, lost focus with me and life took over its rush.

Barbie has told me that if I write this blurb,

she will stick it on the web. Rather her fingers than mine.

If you want to read about Oakhill's Hockey Tour to Holland in 2010, where I added a report of my 5 day wine visit to the Provence, the Rhone and Burgundy as well as my 5 day stay in Paris because of the Ash, you'll find it on our website under News and Events, Oakhill Echoes.



What is "old"?

I was phoned by a youngster whom I taught to bowl leg breaks at York in 1981. Clint Steyn is now a lawyer in Abu Dhabi. He must be circa 42 – old and venerable. He offered me a number of World Cup tickets for matches in Cape Town. I saw 5 games in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. I took him to Vergelegen, where we had a great tasting with Andre and Maritza van Rensburg, and Clint spent a small fortune.

Incidentally, Clint was a great leggie, and a great leader of what became a nice hockey team. He ended up as Head Boy, and met up with me in Cape Town, where I 'taught' him wine. Now he is able to buy big time, whilst I sit like an impoverished non-striking teacher!

This good lad got me thinking – getting onto 43 and still a bit rollypoly – just like the plump 13 year old he was. So what about the first kids I ever taught? They must be creeping to 60. The first kids I taught at York have just turned 50. The first kids I taught at Oakhill must be 33 at the most. So you guys are not

OLD!

The oldest Founder Pupils of Oakhill are probably going onto their 33rd birthdays. Spring chickens! Puppies! Nowhere are they near the sere and yellow leaf of life!

Millionaires, perhaps? Parents, yes? Entrepreneurs, yes? A credit to their school, of course? But not old! "Hello, young lovers, wherever you be, I hope your troubles are few", are the words of a song. You are still in the flush of youth.

So do we call you "Old Pupils"? or "Past Pupils"? ARE WE "OLD OAKS"? When I tried to call up "Old Oaks" on the Internet, I got pages and pages, but not about Oakhill School, Knysna. Apparently Somerset College in Somerset West, call their Past Pupils Association "Old Oaks". We did that, too. But I saw a note on Somerset's that said: "This site has been suspended".

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us

What is “old”? (Cntd.)

The message is thus that we should not keep the nomenclature: “Old Oaks”, as there are so many other bodies with that name. I do not know what Alistair Pott would say. I hate and detest computers so much, so don't get me to decide.

Barbie suggests: For the time being, let's stay with “OLD OAKS.”

THE OAKS & THE ACORNS

In about 1995, a delegation came from Somerset West and another came from Franschoek to ascertain from Allan Graham what was involved in starting an Independent School in their respective,

respectable towns. As would have it, Oakhill had 3 oak leaves and 3 acorns. When Somerset College and Bridgehouse took to the Oaks, they plagiarised as far as they could and used different combinations of leaves and acorns in their badges.

So, do we refer to ourselves as “Old Oaks”, because it is the natural flow of words associated with Oakhill, or do we contrive another name?



facebook



I am button-illiterate and though my son put my name on Facebook, I have no clue what buttons to push. I wrote a letter to Tessa Edwards in Taiwan and she died in horror, as what I had said went to the outer cosmos. I have not tried to write anything since. I do, however, know that both Tessa Edwards and Marthy Watson are Facebook friends with me – I think. So, once again, Barbie must come to the rescue!

You can find me on Facebook as Peter Bishop. I will try to get someone to tell me what buttons to push. It is worse than my trying to teach “Completing the Square” to the Standard Grades of 1998! In fact, I have just the tutor. She happens to be a miracle maker and a lifesaver in the form of special Oakhill Mom, Justine Edwards.

I apologise to Tessa and Marthy for not replying, as I do not know which buttons to push. Marthy's e-mail address is :-gmt4@netspace.net.au, and she will be visiting George in December, 2010. What date, Marthy – so that we can plan a link-up? She teaches at a private Catholic Boys' school in Auckland. Older son, Gian (would have matriculated with those boys and girls whom he shared the Grade R class with – Matthew Muir, Erastus Ruthven, Tim Leibbrandt, Robyn Wilson, Anika Venter and teachers Caroline Dix-Peek (now Payton) and Amanda Satchel. Gian works for

Queensland Health. Tessa, Marthy and housekeeper, Martha Williams, remain tops in my perception of Oakhill – for sheer integrity and moral courage- far in excess of the norm. You will find a photo of Martha with her granddaughter, Claudine Croutz. Claudine pursued her internship at Oakhill and graduated as a teacher last year. The kids loved her – open, honest and confident. She now teaches at Wittedrift Primary and bubbles with passion, as she always did at Oakhill. Martha relinquished her post as housekeeper six years ago when she was diagnosed with TB. She has subsequently given up smoking and is in great health now. If anybody should get honorary status as an “Old Oak”, it is Martha, who always wore an Oakhill top, and with pride.

These good ladies – Tessa, Marthy and Martha - were everything in those tremulous years, 1994 until about 1999. Great vision, insight, and the ability to control headmasters!

Tessa still loves Taiwan. Her email address is tessaedwards@iti.org.tw and she is a great communicator. She has been returning to Knysna most Decembers, so would it not be great to sit down with these 2 great women and reminisce.



Oakhill's greatest fan, Martha (right) granny of that superb student teacher Claudine (centre) with her mother. This at Claudine's gowning.

Meeting One - 21 October 2010

That great class of 1999 – the only one that laughed at my jokes even when they were not jokes – have earmarked a HOCKEY MATCH – on York full Astro and on our mini-Astro – on the afternoon of 21st October of this year.

“Din Din” (Lyndon Dafert) will be getting married and the whole class will be in Knysna for the wedding on Saturday. (Guess who is also celebrating a Birthday?) You may well remember “Din Din”, as the immensely tall Hollander, who was a great pace bowler. His Mathematics project covered the pusillanimous saving habits of a typical Holland family!

Mastering all the arrangements is London-based Michael Hallick, whom we met on the Holland Hockey Tour in April. Michael’s e-mail is: mhallick@ntlworld.com, and he has



Peebee in the stony vineyards of Chateauneuf du Pape

brought in the heroes of that era. Their names and e-mails read as: topgun@websurfer.co.za; ammo@aboutblank.co.za; Andrew@milkmag.co.za; paulw@picasso.co.za; seteckirm@hotmail.com; alessandro@h20.co.za; shaunbrown67@hotmail.com; ldafert@alec.ae.

I don’t recognise the name Craig Glattharr, his email is Craig@propelafrica.com, but he is burning to be there.

One of these mysterious men is Oakhill’s greatest keeper ever, Jacques Antoine. I would love him to meet our very own Caspar Lee, and prove the point to me.

You will find the boys, whom you oppose, as young – all Grade 10 or 9 or 8, but kids who have had the luck of being trained on the astro that Hilton Stander put down 5 years ago, and that has done so much good. Joshua Pieters, brother of Jonty, will probably captain. I think you guys might be outplayed unless you listen to my advice: get fit and play up the right wing. Try to get David Correia and Inge Hilbert and Nick Cummings to join your ranks. You may need them!

Meeting Two - 18 December 2010



Last year and the year before, we did what the British Empire did – we held the flag.

I put it to Headmaster, Shane Kidwell, that we could all meet from 14h00 to 18h00 of the

18th December – being the SATURDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS in 2010. He agreed.

Even if there are only 2 cats and a dog, we will make sure they are happy cats and happy dogs. You can swim in our 20 metre pool, you can play astro hockey, you can braai, you can chat, you can bring your kids.

Last year, we ended with a Wine Tasting at 19h00 and can do that again, if you respond well. If we can persuade Marthy Watson and Tessa Edwards to be there – then WOW!

Meetings in 2012

Shane Kidwell favours the year 2012 as being the apt time to celebrate OAKHILL TWENTY. It is my idea to hold 20 Big Functions – at least 2 of which will be devoted to PAST PUPILS.

The difficulty is “When”? The 29th February is the School’s sixth “29th February” – the official birthday of the School. Then again, the first week or two after the June holidays could be perfect, as it would co-incide with British holidays, and would be a time when occupancy in Knysna is at its least expensive. Then again, the Saturday before Christmas could be prohibitive, though opportune.

So, we need to hear from you. I think it would be great if we had a Brag Day, not where the kids put on something for the visitors, but where you guys say “Because of, or despite my being at Oakhill, Baby, just look at me now!” Maybe then you will appreciate the emphasis on independent thinking that earmarked early Oakhill, and

that flowed in the blood of the Founding parents – the Muirs, the Edwards, the van Niekerks, the Ruthvens. Things have changed a lot, but there were great values in those early days. So, are you ready to brag?

Bragging does not just mean the Degrees you earned, the property you own, the job you occupy yourself with. Your value could be your generosity, your decency, your quality of friendship.



Other Meetings

At Fairmont High – a school that started in 1980, and had their first Matrics in 1982 (when I taught there) - they have the 8th August every year to celebrate the 10th, 20th, 25th, 30th celebration. York does a similar thing – but they do it in the first weekend in May. Our first Matriculants were in 1994, who will celebrate 20 years in 2014.

We can start the tradition of 10 years, 20 years, 25 years at a certain time of the year. Think and feedback. If it is May, we could play York Past Pupils! If August, we might be able to institute Independent School

Tournaments in Knysna, like we had in 2000, and you can be there.

A number of you have called for a Reunion with your group. Let’s know your wishes, and maybe we can line up a time in 2012, and go from there.

What we need is a catalyst person, to say, “I’ll do it!” like Michael has done with his crowd of lovelies.



King David and young Charles van Tonder



Nicole Nortje with the Jamieson girls, Sarah and Sammy

The best things in life come in threes...
friends, dreams and memories

History and whose story?

I was asked by Shane Kidwell to write a History of Oakhill for 2012. I have read about 20 books on Knysna – about the myth or legend of George Rex, whose farm estate it was for 30 years and of how the different schools came into being.

At one stage there were 59 schools in the area. Obviously there were reasons why there was a clamour for an independent school that could foster independent thinking, and that could give space to the basically English-speaking community to learn without the prevalent restraints of Christian National Education, that was entrenched in the constitution until 1994.

By all means, you early guys, if you want to drop a line to peebee@oakhillschool.co.za and include a photo or two, you could give interesting interpretations to your days at Oakhill.

The premises were once used as a Hospital for Infectious Diseases, before – in 1937 – becoming a Housecraft School for Girls from Std 6 to Std 8, before being abandoned in 1988. You guys moved in on 21st April 1992, as probably the first school not to have racial restrictions written into its constitution. Look forward to the History of Oakhill, as it is an interesting story.

Allan Graham has given some lines, but I am expecting more. Hilton Stander gave a

brilliant reply to my request for his interpretation. But to date, I have not received other Headmasters' responses.



Knysna Yacht Club by Dale Elliott (circa 2000)

Oakhill never has been, nor probably never will be Halcyon High or Nirvana North, but it does have a certain dynamic, and it does create the instinct to keep on changing and modeling it on institutions that were created for other purposes at other times.

So, if you ask Jean Paul Sarte "What is Oakhill?", he would say, "Who was it for?" "Kids." "Kids are those who give meaning to the School". So let's hear from you early kids on the Oakhill that added meaning to your life. I met up with Hilton Stander in Maritzburg when I was coaching the SWD Under 16 at the National Tournament, and true to form, he gave them the advice that saw them turn from 0-2 down, to 4-2 up.

Those who ran away

Did you know that as at the end of 2009, exactly 400 pupils had matriculated from Oakhill with no failures! But we did have some worthies who left us. Richard Mather captained my Under 14 and Under 16 teams, before going to St Andrews, where he landed up getting a bursary and entry into SA Breweries. Richard was a great captain. His group went on to be in the first group to tour Holland. Richard used to be thrown out of Mr Kent's Maths class every day for talking to Neil Foley. His email is richard.mather@sabmiller.com



New pool, new astro and new fields

The Dramatic Effect

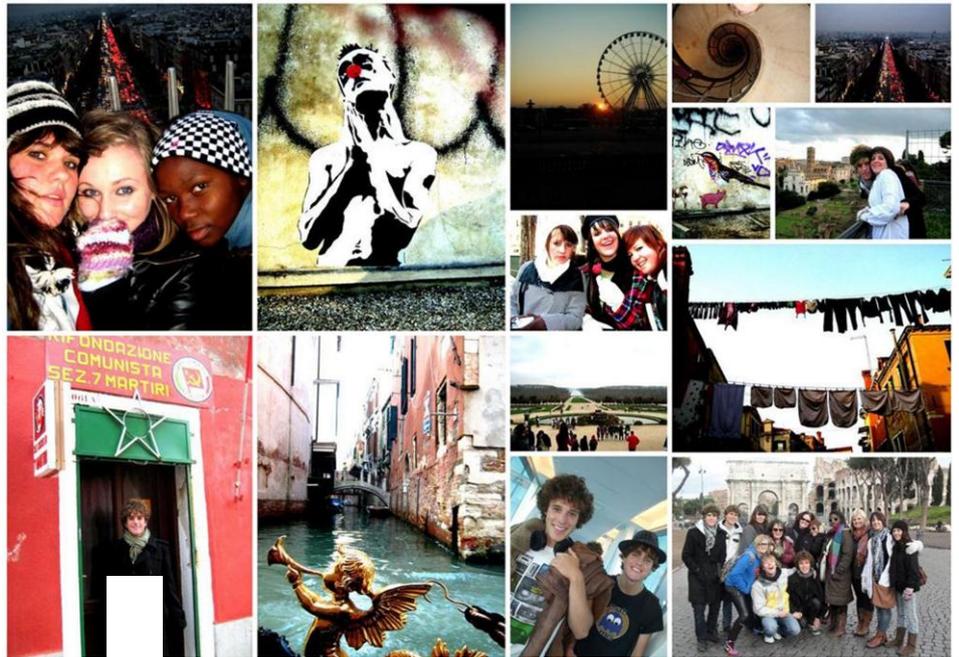


*English Teacher Melanie Cloete
and Drama Teacher
Jaci de Villiers (right) at Oakhill's
2010 Matric Dance*

Whether or not they were loved by the authorities, Oakhill always had interesting drama teachers who took so many kids out of their despondent moods.

The latest, who wears her hair like Hecate, is Jaci de Villiers, who took some Grade 11 kids to Paris, London, Florence and Rome on a memorable trip, as well as continuing what your earlier teachers did – going to Grahamstown.

Twice she took her Senior group to Johannesburg and to Sun City respectively, to do corporate entertainment.



2010 European Drama Tour

School Yearbook

The 2009 Oakhill Yearbook has been published. It was brilliantly got together by a mom, Brenda McKechnie, after numerous delaying factors.

There are copies available from Oakhill. Call Elna, call Barbie and we will deliver.

Meanwhile, give us your news and photos, so that we can include you in the 2010 Magazine.

Send to peebee@oakhillschool.co.za, but don't trust my ability to push the right buttons. You can also try Auntie Elna at e.brown@oakhillschool.co.za.



Snippets

You all know that the bravest of all of our Girl Captains at hockey, **Nicole Nortje**, who captained the 2002 team to Holland, teaches in the College. Her health is still affected by the collapse she had in Antwerp after having given every energy on the field of play! She has such a nice way about her. Her younger sister, Daniella, has been sailing the seas with Andrew and Elaine Hare – her uncle and aunt. d.nortje@hotmail.com.

Apparently you can read her adventures on a blog in www.getjealous.com/dan88. She sailed to St. Helena, Ascension Islands, Brazil and also had time in the 'Big Apple'. She is currently studying a B.Com. Marketing.

Rhian Berning: rhian@naturenetwork.co.za is one of our Founder pupils. She has moved back to Plett to pursue her interest in the environment.

Nick Schady, son of David and Moira, has become the Western Province Super Heavyweight Boxing Champion. If only we could have made a goalkeeper out of him!

Karim Dhanani runs Pirate Entertainment, and seems to be a super entrepreneur. Get him at karimdhanani@live.com.

Leigh Victor is married and has a top job in Biological matters in Mauritius. leighvictor@hotmail.com.

Carrie Harper has married a Stellenbosch wine farmer. At 96% I think she has scored the highest Mathematics mark by an Oakhill pupil. She is on her way to a Doctorate in

Microbial Biotechnology. carrie@sun.ac.za.

I am hoping that **Reneira O'Donnell** (nee Graham) can persuade Dad, Allan, to feed us with the early history of Oakhill. reneirao'donnell@yahoo.co.za Reneira works in London. I saw her sister, Diana, at a World Cup game in Cape Town. Allan is living in the Lake District, and teaching Maths, of course!

Michelle Eray still canoes competitively. Remember that it was Michelle and Eveline Brady who were the initiators of Girls' Hockey.

Kirsten Berrange is an Audit Supervisor in Cape Town.

Jacqui Rodgers, who had spent a year in Australia, is now Mrs Botha, living in Port Alfred. Her brother Marc is with the NSRI in Plettenberg Bay. I hope their Mom, Athena, will feed back on the early days of Oakhill.

Ashleigh Metzger (now Mrs Coull) went from cleaning toilets in London with Kerri Buchan, to doing Strategic Management.

Chloe Bunnett has set up a blog on her world travels and surfski races. She is en route to the Race of Champions in Portugal and will give a live commentary on her site. chloebunnett@hotmail.com

Jack Palance: "Do you know what the secret of life is? One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and everything else don't mean nothing."

Billy Crystal: "Yeah, but what's that one thing?"

Jack Palance: "That's what you've got to figure out."

-From the movie City Slickers



Barbie hugs Claire Charpentier who chaperoned Peebee in Paris



Young Jonty Pieters and mature Michael Hallick

Dreams

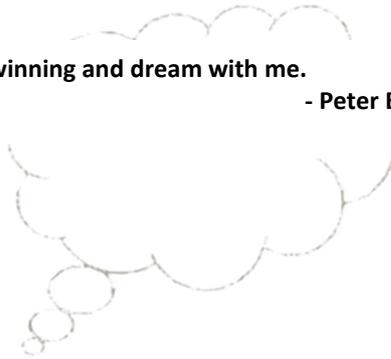
Pee Bee is dreaming! What if, in 2012, we can launch an Oakhill Past Pupils' Bursary for Tertiary Education? Let's dream, rather than squeeze.

A Nostradamus expert predicts that the world will end on 21st December 2012, which is not actually a palindromic date. It is when the earth, the sun, and the centre of the Milky Way align. So, you won't live to lose all your money!



Carry on winning and dream with me.

- Peter Bishop



Oakhill School
Uitsig Street
Heuvelkruin
Knysna, 6571
South Africa

Phone:
+27 44 382-6506

Fax:
+27 44 382-5753

Old Oaks E-mail:
peebee@oakhillschool.co.za

www.oakhillschool.co.za



Oakhill's surrounding beauty



(Aerial images by Patrick Canny)

*Please forward your news, snippets and images to
peebee@oakhillschool.co.za*

*Thanks to Dale Elliott for kind permission to display
original artwork*

*To succeed in life, you need three
things: a wishbone, a backbone and
a funnybone - Reba McEntire*