

Oakhill Old Oaks

December 2011

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Oakhill Twenty, Twenty One

“Oft I remember...” are the first 3 words of an immortal poem, so immortal that I will not continue it here. You have all wanted to know when Oakhill will be celebrating getting out of the teens. So let’s look at the baby since conception.

Oakhill came into being within 5 months of two women, Pam Muir and Celia Ruthven, each with a toddler and each pregnant, discussing the possibility of creating ‘something different’. Also sitting at the picnic on the banks of the Knysna Lagoon in September 1991 was Trish Griffin, whose daughter, Joni, was a pre-teen. Add to that discussion, the active search by André van Niekerk and then mayor, Chris Edwards, deciding to start a 2 teacher school for 20 pupils to cater for their 2 daughters each touching the teens. They had looked at a farm school with the mix of 2 teachers and 20 pupils. At the same time, a group influenced by Athena Rodgers were seeking an English speaking school in Plettenberg Bay. These forces came together, appointing Allan Graham as the first Head in late November of 1991 on condition that, if the school failed, he would only get one term’s salary.

It was due to Allan that the School became a College from day one, as his daughter Reneira was going into Grade 10 (Standard 8) to join the one other member. And thus Oakhill was born. On January 17th 1992 the first 58 pupils moved into the upstairs of Woodmill Lane. One term later, through the influences of the mayor, Chris Edwards and

the Founding Board, they were given the use of 5 rooms on the site of the abandoned fenced in Girls’ Craft School on Heuvelkruin that had been used by the Department of Culture as a sleep-over venue when the Navy visited Knysna or when officials wanted a holiday. The beds and mattresses were moved out by the end of the year, and systematically the bricks and walls were replaced with more bricks and walls and the clay was shifted to make the school that we see today.

With ‘numbers’ being an ongoing challenge, the School went through phases and stages. It had the advantage of joining the newly founded IEB and of forming at the time when Nelson Mandela’s undoubted charisma was changing attitudes; but it also formed and grew at a time of unrest and corruption that motivated established families to emigrate – with Knysna being a ‘last act of hope’ in the country before fleeing. In time, in fact in 1996 - the creative Founding Principles were resisted by those who tried to mould the school into their vision of a Gauteng Private School “By die Kus”. One can call it ‘dynamics’, whereas someone else could call it ‘stress’. Tessa Edwards and Marthy Watson were the only ones with the intelligence and the moral courage to call it what it was. How we miss those two angels of mercy!

People were indeed hurt along the way, so that the sound of “Oakhill” does not

If you want to be successful, it's just this simple.

Know what you are doing. Love what you are doing. And believe in what you are doing.

- Will Rogers



Scenes around present day College campus

Oakhill Twenty, Twenty One (Cntd.)

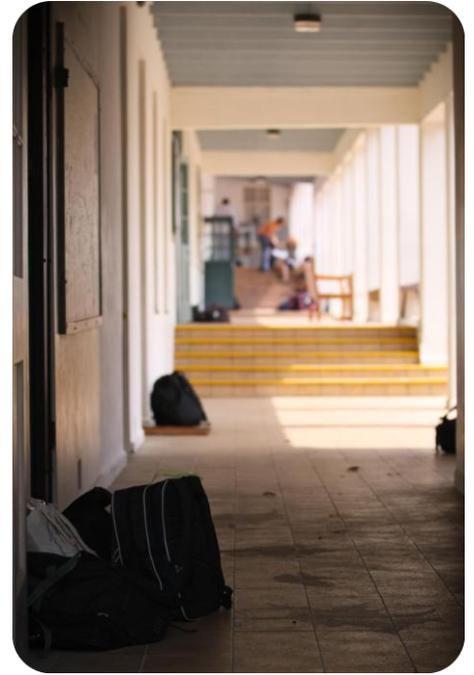
always wring out smiles and elation. Some overcame the hurt, seeing that 'this grey old earth, that needs more of our mirth, has troubles enough of its own' and thus realising that the wider world hurts as well. Fortunately there were tutors in the school, from the lower (like Janet Hallick) to the higher grades who respected the Founding Principles and worked at developing the ability of pupils to think critically and perceptively, and to look beyond imminent feelings.

hear of "Oakhill Twenty" or "Oakhill Twenty One".

Oakhill can only truly be measured by the sentiments of the children at the school, and consequently through the mouths of its past pupils who have gone on to mix with youth from other schools in other study scenarios, and to make comparisons. There are different scenarios. It is these, and the memories conjured, that we celebrate when we

You are educated. Your certification is in your degree. You may think of it as the ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world.

-Tom Brokaw



Snap!



Matric Art 2011 exhibition

So, when are all these celebrations?

celebrate.

At last, the date has been pin-pointed. **28 February 2013.** Call that from Saturday 23rd February to Saturday 2 March, if one wants to fudge it a bit.

A committee has been formed to earmark what will ultimately be more than 21 events, encompassing Academic, Culture, Sport, Outreach and Benefactors. These events will be outlined by mid-year 2012 and posted on the Oakhill website so that you – and you – and you – in Australia, in England, in Johannesburg, in New York, in Eden can grab your day.

The intention is to use the 28th February to welcome the various ex-Headmasters, the Founding Board, the Founding Pupils in a very special way, and to open avenues to all Past Pupils, Past Parents, Past Benefactors, Past Staff to rub shoulders with those who had the courage to say “Let’s go for it.” They took the Oakhill Option.

And that, my dear reader, is YOU!

AND SO... WHY NOT 29 FEBRUARY 2012?

Now you would never have been a rebel and asked that question had you not been at Oakhill? Have you heard of the Salami Tactic? In the war, prisoners got a zonker of bread and a piece of salami. The greedy ones gulped the salami and the bread and delayed suicide by 24 hours till the next one. The wise ones ate the bread, keeping the salami uneaten but

*“The more you praise
and celebrate your life, the
more there is in life
to celebrate.”*

- Oprah Winfrey

underneath their noses, whiffing away. When they got to finish the bread, they had enjoyed the aromas of the salami, which they promptly sold to the avaricious eyes gawking at them – for 2 salamis on the I.O.U. system. So there was a bit of salami pushing.

It should have been the 29th February 2012, the 6th Leap Year including 1992. Did you know that if a year ends in 00, it is not a leap year, but if it ends in 000, then it is a leap year? But things happen quite fast here. The Head had dreams of creating a MAD centre – Music, Art and Drama - alongside the swimming pool where the heather and erica used to grow, and that was filled in to make the “Top Field” that has never been a happy bit of clay. Clay? You ask? Yes, during the excavations, the clay started to shift and threaten a huge subsidence. So the MAD guys will be awaiting, hoping for conclusion by your visit in 2013.



WHAT OF US IN 2012 CUM 2013?

Now you got the message that everything in 2013 will have flags a flying. McNamara’s Band will be out in a flourish.

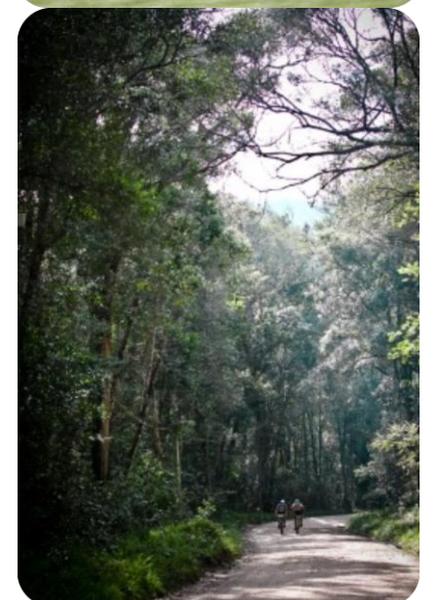
*“Oh me name is McNamara, I’m the leader of the band,
Although we’re small in number, we’re the best in all the land;
Oh, we play at wakes and weddin’s and at every county ball;
And when we play at funerals, we play the march from Saul. “*

If you are planning a visit, plan for 2013. If any of you would like to visit, feel free

to do that at any time. You are always welcome and you can strut around saying, “When we”.

In previous correspondence I suggested to a good angel that she could maybe organise her groups’ Reunion and I received a right royal raspberry. She is a Mommy now, and being a Mommy is a job in itself.

When planning your visit, realise that there are busy times in Knysna, with the Cycle Race, the Forest Marathon, during which times accommodation is expensive. But in quiet times, accommodation is a steal. You can get accommodation along the new lagoon road from R125 a night in off-season.



Cricket Memories

I paged through the scorebook that had Michael Hallick bowling 7 wides in the opening over against Wittedrift High. He had a real scratch team, dressed in all sorts of attire. Today they are all dressed in white and wear Australian styled caps.

The other day our U15's went to Hornlee to play Knysna Sekondere, who normally clobbered us. This time the highly talented Chris Marrow (67) and the classic Caleb Bell (72) put on 132 for the first wicket. Knysna Sekondere were all out for 43. In November of last year,

Oakhill were 300 for 0 at a game in Plett. The team is now playing in the SWD league, and Josh Pieters (the younger brother of Jonty), the Marrow brothers, Tom and Chris and spinner, JJ Strydom, have made their way into SWD teams.

KNYSNA PUBLICITY AND TOURISM

Contact info@knysna-info.co.za or www.visitknysna.co.za or call (044) 382 5510. To give you an idea of the spread over the last 2 years, the Knysna Literacy Festival was in mid-April, the Sedgefield Slow Festival in late April, the Pink Loerie in mid-May, the Simola Hill Climb in late May, the Oyster Festival in early July; the Karoo to Coast cycle race in late September. Just contact the Publicity Association if you want to coincide with or avoid any of these festivals.

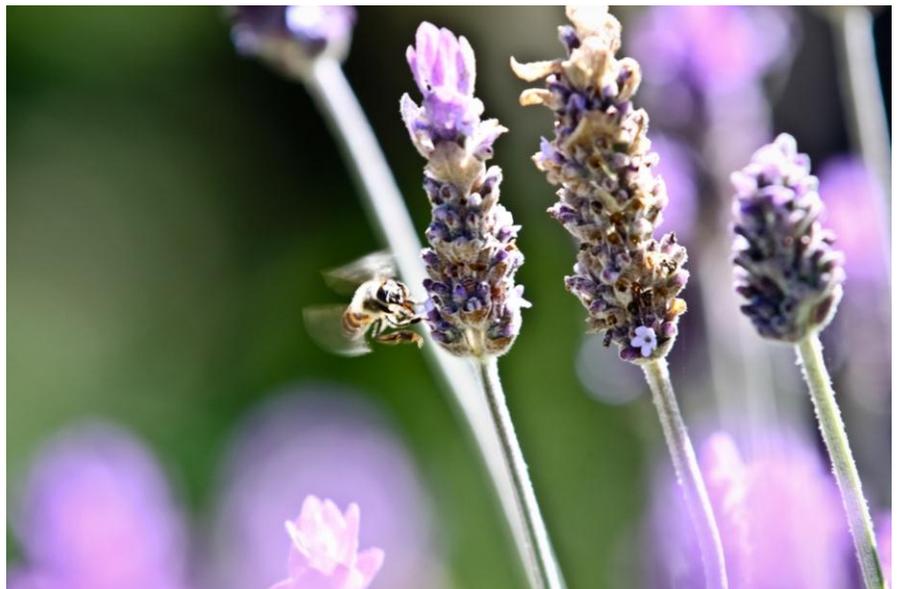
Contact Elna Brown at : e.brown@oakhillschool.co.za for any further information.

You do realise then, that come the end of February 2012 and February 2013, it's buzz and BUZZ time respectively. If your group of Past Pupils wishes to meet at Oakhill in 2012, you may do so. However, the clever thing to do, is to latch on to one of the events of 2013. Just let Auntie Elna know your wishes, the dates you would like to be here. She can provide you with as many e-mail addresses as she has. If you want to boss your peers into position and arrange a date or event, then the School will arrange to fuss over you when you do arrive.

Adventure Racing

There is quite a unique young man, Nick Cuthbert, who left Oakhill to go to Woodridge for Adventure activities. He returned after a term or two. The fellow is a way out lateral thinker. He recently won the Eden Duo, together with partner Brandon Willcocks and teamed up with 2011 SRC president, Harry Maarsingh, and super-fit Brandon Willcocks and young Nicola Giliomee to come third in the AR Nationals this year.

In March 2012, the Grade 10's take off on their Odyssey, a 400km journey. All rugged gung ho and Baden Powell stuff. There will be much planning and soul-searching – with hiking, abseiling, rowing and all those things one misses if one travels by jet plane.



Oakhill's grounds abundant with life

The Matrics of 2012

Our largest group of Matriculants in the history of Oakhill in 2012 will be 55.

This is a vibrant group that have carried Boys' Hockey just like the Matrics of 2011 carried Girls' Hockey. Tall, lanky Joshua Pieters captained the cricket and hockey teams in 2011 and will do so again in 2012. He is learning to bring the best out in his

peers. His bowling is top quality and he took 4 wickets for SWD in a game against Western Province.

There is a tiny fellow called Luke "Tinky" Bell, who is a top intellectual. He used to answer the rhetorical questions. Now he supplies the answers before the questions arise! He and 4 others are doing Additional Mathematics by correspondence.

The Bells are ringing

This is not the same “Tinker Bell”. Our original Kali Bell, one of the most loveable kids who attended Oakhill, is now living in New Zealand, having also lived in Australia. She and husband, Harlan, have their own bee business CoBee Queen Bees. “Tinker Bell” has been in contact with winemaker, Mia Fischer and with author Lara Mare and Jessica Hutchings. She hopes to tour South Africa soon.

I have received some Facebook messages, but am loathe to open them because I hate button pushing, so one day I might learn. E-mails are easier in

the meantime.

A few weeks ago South Africa played Australia at Newlands. Australia were 184 for 8 overnight, and went on to make 284 with captain Michael Clark out for 151. I got clearance to travel down on Day 2 hoping to get 3 days ‘rest’.

When I left George, SA were 23 for 0. By the time I got to Riviersonderend, SA were all out for 96 and Australia were 21 for 9. My luck! I saw SA win through in the first 2 hours of Day 3, and had to trundle all the way back, taking 8 hours, to do so.

Snap!



Matric Art by Mitchell Sohn



Dave Pryke awarded by the 2011 Matrics



The Matric Walk



Happy Little Oaks



20/20 - Barbara-Ann Hayward and Elna Brown celebrate an incredible 20 years of service at Oakhill



Past pupils at Newlands, Robert Muir, Georgie Goullee, Lucas du Toit, Michael Goullee, Paul Maughan-Brown and Simon Wallington



Lateral thinkers Greg Austin and Stephen Cameron



Alexander Boomer and Stephen Campbell



Melanie du Toit



Belinda (nee Ralph) and baby pay us a visit



Visiting Spatz, an Oakhill friend

I popped in at Meerlust. Their present Chardonnay is overpriced at R180 in a screwcap and too simple, but the Rubicon 2007 (at R280) is one of the all-time greats, matching the 1982 and 1984 that currently sell for R2000.

From there I went to visit bio-dynamics pioneer Johann Reyneke. The Reyneke sells out within weeks, as Scandanavia grabs almost all. The idea is that selected weeds grow between the vines, and these soften the soil, with cow manure in horns, to make a rich humus that one can dig into. The reflected heat cannot damage the grapes from below, because of the carpet of weeds. His Chenin Blanc and the red Cornerstone at R80 each are truly great wines.

Many an Oakhill kid, in the days of more low cost tours, have spent an evening enjoying farm supper with the Sperlings of Delheim, and then sleeping in the old farm house. Spatz is now 81 and has Parkinson's, but he is so alert that his son has to bypass him to make decisions.

The Spatzendreck with its label of the bird doing its dropping is still being produced. The current Gewurztraminer and the Edelspatz Noble Late Harvest are very convincing.

On our first tour to Cape Town, I travelled down with Tessa Edwards and captains Jonathan Ralph and Evelyn Brady, with 24 other kids. We stayed at Delheim. Next tour, there were 40 of us. We stayed at Delheim. When we arrived, Spatz came out and said : "Bishop, I will never allow you to bring 40 kids here again!" I said: "Okay, next time I bring 60." We took 60 the next year!

Spatz used to boast to his friends that the

Oakhill kids, with their long hair and innocent eyes, would descend the bus, hold out their hands to shake, and say: "Hello, Mr Sperl, I am (whoever)". Spatz was always so impressed. He often donated wines or gave special prices when we had functions at school. How about a DELHEIM tasting in 2013?

Those of you who do come visiting will be pleased to know that there are 2 Wine farms already producing to the market from Plettenberg Bay, and both families have their youngsters at Oakhill.

Peter Thorpe of Bramon makes a Sparkling wine from Sauvignon Blanc, and opens his restaurant out among the vines in summer whilst guests see the elephants on the neighbouring farm strolling by. Peter Gent of Packwood makes a great Sauvignon and will be producing a Pinot Noir soon. Some of you guys may remember the great entrepreneur, Greg Gilbert, who worked on cancer research from his Boskey Dell farm near Plettenberg Bay. Greg moved the research to George, then sold the business. He, with wife Rae, have planted 14 hectares of vines on top of the brow above the farm. The winery could be called Gilbrook.

Final thing on wine: Our hockey captain of 1997, Jonathan Ralph phoned me a few weeks ago to ask questions on the KWV. He had applied for a job and was one of 63 who had to undergo 9 tests. A few more phone calls and then the news: Jono is now Marketing Developer for KWV in Eastern Europe! When we visited Villiera in 1997, he, new from Gauteng made some quip. I apparently replied: "Careful Jono, you could be working for the wine industry one day!"



Past pupil Nicole Kuhnert now representing Glenwood wines



Spatz Sperl



Talent - Look at those legs!



I bumped into founder parent Celia Ruthven, mother of the phenomenon Erastus. Forget whether, as Erastus sat in his Mommy's tummy on the Westford banks of the Knysna River one day in 1991, discussing with the late Pam Muir, who had Robert in her womb, about creating a school that offered "something unique", that not only was Oakhill born within a few months, but that the most unique Erastus, aka "Rusta" popped out, looked left and right, did none of the normal things babies do, moved into PeeBee's class in Grade 8, kept on walking around, defending himself and attacking any semblance of order.

Well that very same chap has made a life of that. He has studied film-making and won TOP PRIZE for BEST MOVIE. Now Celia tells me that Gemma Eyre had also achieved top ranking though this year, she is concentrating on acting. Simone Heymans is also in that game, as are a number of Oakhill students, whose names Celia struggles to remember.

On 29 February 2012, to honour 20 years of Oakhill, Celia Ruthven will present "THE TALENTS OF THE OAKHILL EARLY ERA". Book the date. More to follow.



Michael Hallick and partner Ally

If you are in that sort of game, like acting instead of real life (ha, ha – it's like playing golf), or have developed a unique talent – be it movies, adverts, promotions, just brains like the Potts, come to Oakhill on that day and persuade our present kids that it is for them to dream and pursue their dreams. "Rusta", you MUST be there, then you can get your revenge on PeeBee!

Celia's contact details are e-mail: cecilia@sirknysna.co.za cell: 084 951 0416.

Jacqui Rodgers was in that class that suffered so much stress in 1998. She then went to Australia as a Rotary Scholar, and came back to study Physiology. She married a Doctor Sam, and their 6 month old son has the unusual name of Botha, from what I interpret. Her e-mail is:

jacsrogers@gmail.com, and she seems part of the new Plett swingers. Her brother Mark works with Dad in Rodgers Aluminum Enterprises, is married and has a 7 month son.

Wonder when the first "Second Generation" child of someone who matriculated at Oakhill will sign on? Annelize Bain signed her firstborn in with Barbie Leibbrandt who handles Admissions, but Annelize matriculated at Woodridge. Likewise, Jackie Wilson, who came to Oakhill for a while, but went on to Matriculate at St Andrews in Gauteng. I keep on trying to get Marthy Watson's e-mail address and land up in Facebook and shiver because I don't know what buttons to push. Apparently their elder son, Gian, married, but I can't find the right sequence of keys to push.

Tamara Paramoer works as Strategy Planner and Analyst for Ernst & Young in Jo'burg – a city she loves. She was such a dedicated worker – the model, and a brave girl in facing some rough times in 1999. I spoke to her on the phone and she was so joyous, that I thought that she was in the Butcher's Grill enjoying a Reyneke Bio-Dynamic Chenin Blanc 2010!

Michael Hallick continues to build his empire. I had a wine-tasting with him, and he spoke so well of Tamara, and of Din Din (Lyndon Dafert in Dubai) and of Cum Cum with a Tum Tum (Nick Cummings) and all those guys that he bonded so well with at school. michaelhallick@gmail.com. He has a lovely Argentinian girlfriend, Ally.

Remember then, that though 2013 is the big celebration year of OAKHILL TWENTY ONE, we will portray talent on 29 February 2012; and we will organise any event that you ask for.

Come forward with your "Why don't we's?" so that you guys can meet again.

As Auntie Tessa would say :

"When shall we 3 meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"



Pee Bee and Celia Ruthven at Oakhill

Lady of Spain

In 2002 it was Holland. In 2005 it was Holland. In 2008 it was Argentina. In 2010 it was Holland. In 2012 it will be Spain for the Hockey Tour, but this time, linked to the Arts. Art teacher, Amy Nuttall is on a high as she joins a group of 57 students and 6 teachers. One of the mothers, Vanessa Eyre, aunt of "The Airs" of Bronwyn fame, has been doing all the slog work. A wonderful workhorse! Vanessa is also our Bursary and Development Officer.

Dollars or Pounds to help out a Hockey/Art student meet their tour cost to Spain, you may communicate with myself or with Catherine Brodie at c.brodie@oakhillschool.co.za We could mail you a précis on two or three deserving students and you could then decide. Don't tell anyone that I am using this column to beg a bit, but you are investing in children and their memories, just like you are enjoying your memories.

You might find yourself being prosperous and wanting to gain a tiny corner of holy Ireland in Heaven. You may contact Vanessa at: eyre@cyberperk.co.za. Vanessa effects bursaries, so all she needs is your introduction.



Puerta de Alcalá, Madrid, Spain

If you wanted to throw in a few Euros or



THE JOY OF LEARNING

Oakhill School
 Uitsig Street
 Heuwelkruin
 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

Snap!



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peebee@oakhillschool.co.za*