

St Dunstan's Review

June 2000



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Cover picture: "If Grant
Cooper asks me to do
anything again, I'm going
to run a mile!" Actually
Dave Powell ran 26.2 miles
in the London Marathon.

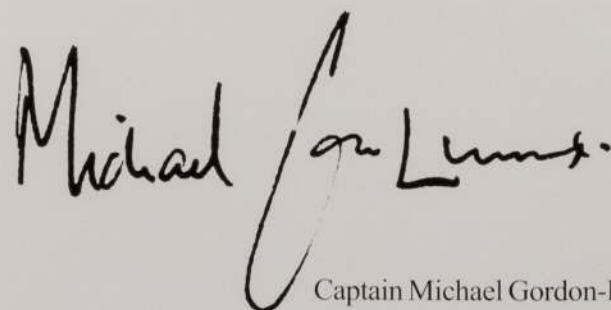
Full details on page 24.

From the Chairman



Throughout its history, St Dunstan's, like other closely-knit groups of people, has had its achievers. It is the physical feats which tend to catch the headlines. The more cerebral successes are no less remarkable but are attained with generally far less in the way of fanfares!

Jamie Cuthbertson deserves to rank amongst that band of meritorious St Dunstaners. He has just taken part in an event, which must be one of the most testing in the world. To race walk 235km across the Sahara desert, carrying food and bedding, climbing mountainous sand dunes, or with uneven, rocky going underfoot, scorpions, poisonous snakes, temperatures from 0 to 45 centigrade and succeed is worthy of our deepest admiration. He relied on no outside technical or physical help apart from a guiding hand. Jamie's challenge was between his body and his mind – he won through with both and completed the race. He is the first ever British-born totally blind person and only the third visually impaired person to have done so. Very many congratulations to him and our thoughts also go to his wife, Shauna for her support and to Roraigh Ainslie, his guide.



Captain Michael Gordon-Lennox, RN



NOTICE BOARD



SUMMER CRAFT EXHIBITION AT OIVINGDEAN – JULY 18th-25th

As advertised in the April *Review*, the Rehabilitation & Training department is organising a Summer Craft Exhibition. All St Dunstaners, friends, relatives, volunteers and staff are welcome to join in. Entries will be judged in various categories and, if you wish, exhibits can be offered for sale.

The Exhibition will be set up on Monday, July 17th, ready for the opening on Tuesday, July 18th, so all entries need to be at Ovingdean before that date. Bring or send them in anytime after the end of June. Let us know if you need something collected and we will try and arrange it. If you would like to take part, please contact Ness Young in the Rehabilitation & Training Department at St Dunstan's Ovingdean on 01273 307811 ext 3103 and she will send you, or fill in on your behalf, an entry form.

DOLPHIN DROP-IN DAY CHANGE OF DATE

The Dolphin Drop-In Day is on Thursday, June 29th at St Dunstan's Ovingdean from 10am to 3pm. No appointment is necessary, just turn up and "drop-in". For more information contact Janis Sharp at St Dunstan's Ovingdean on 01273 307811 ext 3297.

SHIRTS IN STOCK

A cotton polo shirt is available in blue with a left-hand yellow chest logo in medium or large only or white with a blue logo, medium and XL, at £8.00 each. St Dunstan's cotton t-shirt, white with small blue left-hand logo, is available in large at £4.00. St Dunstan's sweatshirts are blue with a left-hand yellow chest logo and priced £8.50. Available in large only. To order contact the Public Relations department at HQ either by telephoning 020 7723 5021 or by mail. Please add £2.00 to your order to cover p&p.

CHURCH STRETTON REUNION

It has been suggested that St Dunstaners who trained at Church Stretton may like to go back there for a reunion in 2001. This would include staff and escorts who were there. All St Dunstaners would have to be accompanied by an escort.

Any St Dunstaners, former members of staff and escorts who are interested in taking part should please write to me via the Public Relations department at Headquarters. Please state accommodation required; double/twin bedded, two single rooms or if you would be willing to share a room with another St Dunstaner. I would appreciate a reply by the end of July to give those interested some idea of the cost involved.

W.F. Shea

(Church Stretton March 1944-June 1945)

EX-POW REUNION

The dates for St Dunstan's Ex-Prisoners of War Reunion in 2001 will be April 20th-23rd.

ST DUNSTANERS TIES

The St Dunstaners tie, sporting our familiar torch emblem, is French Navy in colour and made from polyester for easy washing, priced £5. It is available from the PR department at Headquarters.

A GOOD LAUGH FOR A GOOD CAUSE

A new collection of short stories by Army humorist 'Sustainer' has been published in aid of The Army Benevolent Fund. *Spit & Polish* costs £12.95 (inc p&p) and can be ordered on 07000 777 789 or online at www.sustainer.co.uk. Written orders can be sent to Spit & Polish, Freepost LON15206, London SE1 7BR with cheques made payable to ABF Scotland. Sustainer's first book *Reveille & Retribution* is also available for £10.95.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE

The final date for submitting items for publication in the August *Review* is June 30th.

The final date for submitting items for publication in the September *Review* is July 28th.

Life and Times of Ovingdean

by Lyn Neville



By any standards this Lodge has a unique membership. Bill Miller, Ron Cattell and Ron Freer were amongst the St Dunstan's Masons who met at Ovingdean in April.

April has been a very busy time at Ovingdean with Widows' Week from April 6th-13th. A group of widows took part in activities such as flower arranging and a fashion show, as well as trips out to Royal Tunbridge Wells and a local countryside centre, among other places of local interest.

At Easter a good time was had by all, enjoying traditional activities like Easter bonnet making and an egg hunt. We had an Easter party on Saturday evening and a concert, *The War Years* performed by



BUS COMMEMORATES SIR ARTHUR

Brighton travellers are now being serviced by a bus named after St Dunstan's founder Sir Arthur Pearson. The bus is a new Dennis Trident Double Decker, a buggy bus which will take wheelchairs and prams on board with relative ease. It is 836 on the fleet. *Sir Arthur Pearson* is running on the 49 route which goes through Brighton, Hove and Southwick.

the concert group Radio Days on Easter Monday. This had everybody tapping their feet and singing along to many well remembered tunes.

The last Bank Holiday of April brought us the best weather of the year yet and people have been walking along the seafront and relaxing in the grounds of Ovingdean.

PAM RETIRES



Betty Sheriff presented Pam with a bouquet, as a token of St Dunstan's ex-POWs appreciation.

Pam Durie retired after 20 years service to St Dunstan's as cookery instructor in the Rehabilitation and Training department at Ovingdean. She originally joined us on February 29th 1980.

Over the years, many hundreds of St Dunstaners benefited from her instruction – whether in the art of survival cooking, cooking for pleasure, making Christmas pies and puddings or, in the case of the Residents, three-course meals. Pam gave advice on cookers and utensils and was responsible for initiating several recipe cassettes.

During her time here Pam had seen many changes within the Charity and especially the Rehabilitation & Training department. The facilities in the new kitchen meant she was able to cater for many differing visual impairments and those in wheelchairs, thus extending the range of her assistance. Pam will be missed by staff and St Dunstaners alike and we all wish her well in her retirement.

Struck by Graves' Muse, Matthew Rhodes lapsed into blank verse, making a Heathcote Williams-style report on recent activities at St Dunstan's Ovingdean.

A Wonderful Spring

by M.C. Rhodes

How lovely early spring was
With us down South.
From wet to dry,
Warm to cold,
We seemed to have every kind of weather
You can get on this planet
But oh what fun we had anyway!

As you enter the Ovingdean area
And see the front lawns of St Dunstan's,
You can see, riding the hill
Hundreds of dazzling daffodils,
All reaching for the sky above.
These give the building
Such a welcoming look,
And must give all people who can see this beauty
A feeling of happiness, joy, fulfilment!

On the 17th of March
Until the 19th,
Our golf team went and had
An excellent weekend.
We kipped in the Sergeants' mess
Of the Royal Marines,
Based at Barnstaple, Devon.

The first night there we got introduced
To the wondrous, but cheap bar,
And oh what fun some of us had!
The next morning we were early to rise,
Refreshed from our hard night,
With an outstanding breakfast,
Then off to the golf course,
We humbly went forth!

The weather on the day of golf
Was superb.

The game was excellent but very long.
After we had gathered our wits,
Off around the course we briskly trotted,
With clubs in hand and spirits in mind,
And played golf to the best we could!

The course was a hard five hours
Of true guts and determination.
But once we had finished,

What sheer joy of admiration,
We had for ourselves!

Our final score put us at a good third.
The fact that there were only three teams,
Is kept quiet!

The bowls which started on Saturday 25th March,
Is another great display,
To show the average public
Of how our injuries have not,
Laden our fun.

Many sighted people, who I know,
Can not believe how we roll the balls
With such precision, such accuracy,
From seeing hardly anything,
To nothing at all!

When you see the gentlemen playing,
You can see the happiness in their faces,
And it tends not to matter,
If you win or if you lose,
Just the fun of taking part,
In this lovely, dignified game!

One thing which does look good
Is the delicious cookhouse,
Which is now choc a bloc full!
The staff here are still doing a magnificent job,
Hardly spilling a single bean,
Just bringing the dainty food
To our insatiable mouths!
This reminds me of the saying
My Grandfather always used to tell me,
"The army marches on its stomach,"
And oh how truthful that saying is!

We are all looking forward to the coming summer,
When we know the weather,
Will be outstandingly radiant,
We hope..!

Sinking of the Titanic

The first issue of *BBC History Magazine* carried a CD with an assortment of historical broadcasts. Amongst them is a November 1936 recording of Charles Lightoller describing the sinking of the *Titanic*. He was second officer on-board the stricken ship and against the odds survived the disaster. His niece was late St Dunstaner Beryl Sleight.

The Walkers Came Out Two By Two



St Dunstan's Walkers sample the delights of the Dorset countryside along sandy paths lined with heather.

Portland, Plymouth - gale force 8, southerly - sunshine and showers, some heavy, no change for the rest of the week." This was not what we wanted to hear on our car radios as we headed south-west towards Bournemouth for our Annual Walking Holiday. But the spirits were not dampened as we met up at the Burley Court Hotel, greeting friends who had been together on similar holidays over the previous decade.

The hotel was not one of the modern chain hotels and we were received with kindness and creaking floorboards! Our rooms were adequately large, with all 'mod cons' and initial conversations inevitably dealt with comparisons. We were pleased this year to welcome three newcomers, Sue and John Lilley and Ralph Taylor. Both had travelled from the far north! The West of the country was represented by Norman and Mary Hopkins and Trevor Tatchell, the South by John and Elisabeth Walbrugh and the East by Mike Tetley and George Male, plus the Hazans. We were pleased to welcome, as always, Bill and Betty Weisblatt, Bill and Bidy Reed, George and Catherine Johnston. 'Herding' the group were the wagging tails and 12 paws of the three guide dogs - Susie, Sabyn and Chad.

The initial party of 16 (we were joined later by Mike Tetley and George Male) were seated at one long

table in the dining room. This made for animated conversations and we had to pity the other guests! There was much news to catch up on and this was only silenced by the excellent food, from the very varied menu, that was served to us. It was a great pleasure to welcome back Mike Varney, our driver for the week. He had always supported us so well when the walks took place in East Sussex. His cheery laugh is always a welcome sound at the end of the day's walk. Nothing is ever too much trouble for him.

The first day greeted us with patchy clouds and a brisk, cold wind. However, we did not need K wells for the ten-minute ferry ride over to Brownsea Island. There we were welcomed by staff from The National Trust, who offered us audio cassettes and braille describing the island, which is a wildlife sanctuary and nature reserve. It was an appropriate place to spare a few moments in memory of Stan Tutton, a veteran walker, who had been on every walk until his passing. The trail led us through the various sites on the island and the audio cassette conveniently described life in the past on the island; its castle, the Church, dwellings, flower and vegetable gardens; there were 20 tons of daffodil bulbs exported in the 1920s. Lord Baden-Powell ran his first scout camp in 1907 on the island. There were delightful walks along firebreaks, where we were protected from the brisk breeze and could feel

the warmth of the sunshine. Where better to picture the Lilley's than in front of a lily pond! The sights and sounds of walking gave us all a good appetite so we descended upon the restaurant for lunch with enthusiasm. As if by command, the rain started just as we headed back on the ferry across to the mainland.

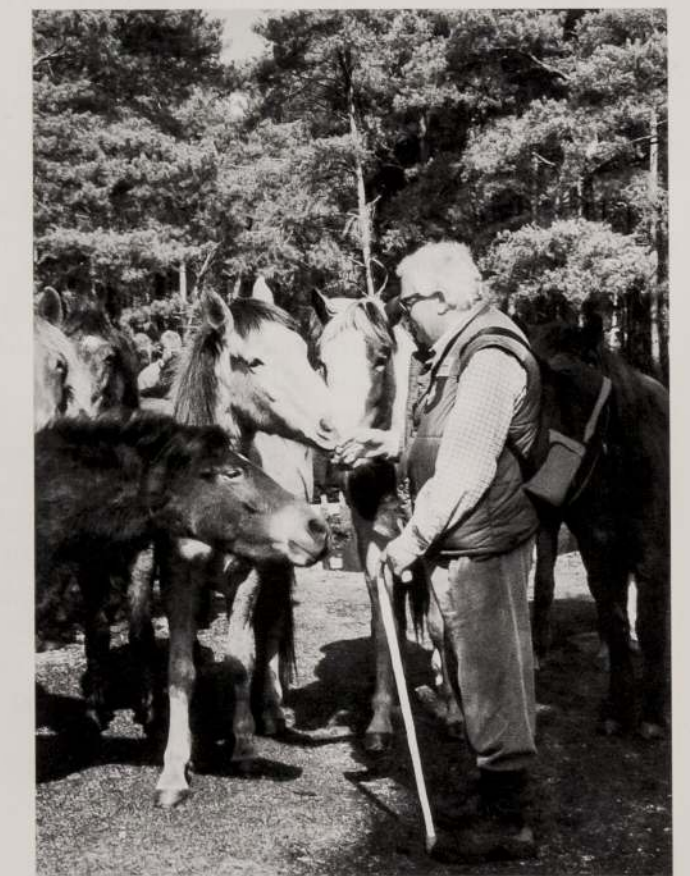
The next day the sun shone down upon us, for the walk organised by Robbie who had previously lived in the area. A gentle climb from Ulwell, led up to the ridge on "Nine Barrow Down" and from there it was a gradual downhill walk to Corfe castle. Underfoot, we felt the soft grass, above us the sun shone brilliantly, and all around several conversations were being pursued. The picturesque stone village of Corfe, with the imposing ruins of Corfe Castle towering above attracts many tourists - but fortunately it was relatively empty being the weekend before Easter. We were tempted to buy from home-made bakeries and sweet shops and I'm pleased to say several of us gave in to the temptations!

It was warm enough to bask in the sun in the pub garden for lunch and to smile at the sign, which read: 'Dogs are welcome with owners, on leads'. Later, one half of the party were last seen gathered round an old-fashioned coal fire in Corfe station, before they boarded the steam train to Swanage. Some of the 'younger' members headed down to the coast, where they had a three-mile uncluttered walk along a beach. The fact that you either got your feet wet or struggled through soft sand ensured you kept along the straight and narrow! It was wonderful to be able to let go of your escort, stretch your legs and walk unaided for an hour! There was a very cold breeze blowing off the sea and this guided us neatly into a cafe for a hot, sweet cup of tea! Conveniently, the road from Swanage ran past the front of the cafe and as our minibus passed we were all able to clamber on-board in order to take the chain ferry back to Bournemouth. This ferry literally 'hauls' itself along the enormously heavy chain links, stretched across the bay, and saves about 45 minutes of road travel.

On Monday, we were hosted and guided by the South Dorset Ramblers. Anne and Eric were kind enough to lead us and several Ramblers acted as escorts. Our start point was the village of Tolpuddle, from whence originated the well-known martyrs. It was a muddy trail through woods and fields and the intermittent rain made it quite a challenge for those with replacement hips and bypasses and the more veteran members of the group. But spirits were

raised by the reception at the pub where a local was inveigled into providing a lively accompaniment on the piano. The Tolpuddle Martyrs museum was specially opened for us after lunch. Here we were able to listen to topics covering the period, from a talking machine, and have the various displays described to us. Whilst some of the group returned home after the visit, others continued on a further three-mile circuit. At one stage we descended into what felt like a high-sided pathway, which protected us from the high wind, whilst the sun shone down on us. It felt warm, still and calm. All the while, the wind was thrashing the trees above. It was an eerie sensation.

Tuesday proved to be perhaps the wettest stay on record! Undaunted, the party walked a brief couple of miles before lunch, just enough to get up an appetite! It seemed somewhat incongruous at the 'Sailors Return' at East Chaldon to read a notice saying "Save water, drink beer!" Thus while several inches of water fell outside, we neatly obeyed! That afternoon, under the guidance of Bill and Brian of the East Dorset Ramblers, we climbed steadily onto the main Purbeck chalk ridge, an ascent of 925ft. What should have been a stunning view of the spectacular coastline, turned out to be a limited view of clouds,



John Lilley makes some four-legged friends.



The afternoon Walkers enjoyed an easy going ramble through the tranquil forest.

rain and more rain! As we joined the South West Coast Path, one person, who shall be nameless, and who had left his belt behind, found himself in a precarious position. As his trousers got heavier and heavier with the rain, they started slipping from hip nearly to knee! Those behind, were warned of a possible bare behind, but they were spared! It was a damp but elated party who descended down into Lulworth Cove, having completed the four miles in two hours.

But 'the sun shines down on the righteous', or is it that 'the devil looks after his own'? For our final day dawned under a brilliant blue sky. We walked around the outskirts of Bournemouth and were afforded excellent views over the city and its surrounds. Our leader Bill was an expert in the area and above all things natural. Walking up a deserted trail, miles from anywhere, we were confronted by a police car coming our way! Bill was heard to mutter, "when you want a policeman — you can never find one!" Further up the hill we stopped at a vantage point. Bill explained to our escorts how the roof of the hospital they could see had been painted blue to keep the seagulls away. Contrary to what one might believe, it really had, and was still working! Further on we encountered a herd of New Forest ponies — what a wonderful sight. How they had got there was a mystery to the wardens who had been warned of the intrusion onto their Nature Reserve. The going was soft and dry, the sun was warm and we were cooled by a gentle breeze. This is the very stuff of walks! Lunch was at *The Avon Causeway Inn*, which has been developed on the site of Hurn Station. This was

part of the 1870's Bournemouth to Ringwood railway and many railway mementoes remain. At the side of the inn, on the original Hurn station platform stood an elegant Pullman coach, beautifully refurbished in the style of the Orient Express, used for dining and Murder Mystery Evenings. But we chose to sit at the picnic benches outside in the sun! There we met Don Planner, only limping slightly after his London Marathon two days before, and his wife Sharon. The afternoon walk took us out through woods and to further vantage points overlooking the local countryside.

It seemed all too soon that the week past and was drawing to its conclusion. Our last evening meal was as lively as ever, surpassed only by conversation and good food. Speeches were made, thanking the hotel staff and organisers, and presentations made to Mike for having looked after the dogs (they always take preference to the walkers!) and to Sue and John Lilley who had walked every single yard. We hope, though no doubt in vain, that we might wean John from his other passion, archery. But I very much doubt it, so members of the Archery Club need not worry!

The St Dunstan's Annual Walking Holiday is all about fellowship, fresh air, exercise and good appetites. This year was no exception. The weather is beyond everybody's control and in view of April now becoming a wet month, we hope to be able to move the walk next year to early in May. It is highly likely that we may return to the same area. If you are interested in receiving details, then do please let us know in the PR department at HQ.

AUTUMN LEAVES

The following item comes from the *Mildenhall Church Magazine*.

Last October the leaves were piling up in my drive. The sun was shining, so I decided to go out and do something about it.

As I brushed away, beautiful music came floating across the air from a distance and getting louder. Someone was whistling as they walked along the road. Now I have to say there are whistlers and there are those who can claim to have turned this skill into a real art form, and this was one of them.

Hardly stopping to look up from my work, I sensed them going past the gate and was compelled to say "how nice to hear someone so cheerful and happy on this lovely autumn day." I was acknowledged with a cheerful "thank you" and the whistler moved briskly

on. Only then when I looked up as he passed by did I realise that the man was completely blind, being led along at a fairly brisk pace by his all seeing dog companion.

As I said a little prayer to speed the musician on his way I reflected on the fact that it is at times like these that we stop to say "thank you God for the gift of sight and hearing." Today I was also constrained to say "and by the way, I'm sorry for the times when I am put to shame, by the courage of others, when I grumble about little pin pricks. Thank you for sharpening my inner sight and hearing."

Regards, Hugh

The whistler turned out be St Dunstaner Dennis Crouch of Mildenhall, Suffolk who was out walking with his guide dog Ailsa.

POETS' CORNER

WHY DO I?

Why do I use strong language when there's cars parked on the path?
 Why do I pour the tale instead of essence into my bath?
 Why do I hit the door-edge when the doorway's open wide?
 Why do I often bang my head on an archway when outside?
 Why do I sit on a lady's lap next to a vacant seat?
 Why do I ask position of my food before I start to eat?
 Why do I hear a new thing and think that I'd like to try it?
 Why do I ask my harassed wife to serve me a see-food diet?
 Why do I use a LLI* when I'm making, cups of tea?
 Why do I get a shoulder tap when people speak to me?
 Why do I sometimes scald myself from a boiling kettle spout?
 Why do I find things turn white not black when I am just knocked out?
 Why do I get the dirty jobs when gardening with my wife?
 Why do I do the smelly things she won't do to save her life?
 Why do I sometimes wear odd socks, one black, the other brown?
 Why do I embarrass my better half when shopping in the town?
 Why do I when in Safeway knock down tins stacked six feet high?
 Why do I say "Good morning, Fred" when it's Bill who passes by?
 Why do I have the feeling I'm a dead loss to mankind?
 Why do I think you've guessed it? It's because I'm ruddy blind!

*Liquid Level Indicator.

George W. Powell

REUNION ROUND UP

St Dunstan's reunion season continued apace in fine fettle.

The second reunion was in Norwich on April 12th. At the Jarvis Hotel Norwich, St Dunstan's Vice Chairman Michael Delmar-Morgan presided over a gathering of 11 St Dunstaners and 11 widows.

Our President Colin Beaumont-Edmonds, MC joined fellow St Dunstaners at the Liverpool Reunion on May 3rd. He presided over a gathering of 33 St Dunstaners and 13 widows at the Gladstone Hotel.

Mr Beaumont-Edmonds also presided at the Birmingham Reunion on May 10th. He was joined by 15 St Dunstaners and seven widows who met at the Thistle Birmingham Edgbaston Hotel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor are always welcome.

Send a letter, tape or disk to 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1A 4XB. Fax: 020 7224 9616.

E-mail: ray.hazan@st-dunstans.co.uk

From: W.F. Shea, Great Totham, Essex

There is no reference in the April 2000, *St Dunstan's Review* to the EGM held on 2 March 2000, I presume this was because it failed to make the deadline of 28 February 2000. I have found no reference in the press, perhaps you can let me know where to look for it.

Our President, Chairman and Chief Executive have all assured me that the EGM was by no means a rubber stamp operation.

However I read in the April 2000 *St Dunstan's Review* that eight newcomers were welcomed to the St Dunstan's Family in February 2000. Were these newcomers St Dunstaners or at that time beneficiaries of the Gubbay Trust? If they are St Dunstaners, was the *Review* forecasting the outcome of the EGM, or did they jump the gun or was the EGM indeed a rubber stamp operation?

I also read in the April *Review* for the first time that the St Dunstan's slogan has been changed from "Caring for men and women blinded in the service of their country" to, "Caring for blind ex-Service men and women." This appears to have been done without any formal announcement, surely this should have been in our President's letter in February. The decision was obviously made before the EGM. This does not present St Dunstan's to the public as it should. The slogan has not changed on the web site. A "War Blinded St Dunstaner" is a suggestion that would present St Dunstan's to the public in a more accurate manner, "Caring for war blinded and blind ex-Service men and women."

I look forward to the views of your readers.

Reply from the Chief Executive:

The outcome of the EGM was not published in the April *Review* because we wanted St Dunstaners, widows and widowers to be told first about the changes. This was achieved by a personal letter to each individual.

The change to our Constitution has not been widely published in the press. Other charities, especially ex-Service, and databases around the country have

been notified. For the past two years, millions of fund raising leaflets informing blind ex-Service Men and Women of the Diana Gubbay Trust for the Blind have been widely distributed. This will continue, obviously reflecting the change in Constitution, and is regarded as a more effective way of getting the message across.

The Editor apologises for 'jumping the gun'. Any non-attributable blind ex-Service person joining before April 1st was a beneficiary of the Diana Gubbay Trust for the Blind. By the time the April *Review* had dropped through the letter-box, they had technically become St Dunstaners.

The *Review* copy date (in the case referred to, February 28th) is just the beginning of a long process of preparing the pages before going off to the printer. There was time, therefore, after the EGM to change the strap line in the April *St Dunstan's Review*. Mr Shea has suggested an alteration to the strap line and has asked readers to respond. The web site is currently under-going a comprehensive revision and it will be amended to reflect the changes in our Constitution.

From: Alec Mason, Southampton

The following items may be of interest to some St Dunstaners:

■ There is an organisation known as COGDO (Circle of Guide Dog Owners). It is dedicated to social interaction and to the well-being of guide dog owners. It acts with all official bodies including the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association on all matters concerning the welfare and improvement of guide dogs and their owners. All interested please contact the treasurer Mrs Christine Parker at 116 Potters Lane, Send, Woking, Surrey GU 23 7AL who will be pleased to hear from you.

■ A new free braille transcription unit has recently started at Winchester Prison and I have been asked by the organisers there to publicise their work. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this service please contact Prison Officer Robert Nicholson at West Hill Braille Unit, Her Majesty's Prisons, Romsey Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 5DF. Tel: 01962 854494.

In the May Review you read about Jamie Cuthbertson's preparation for the most gruelling physical race in the world. In his typical unassuming and modest manner, Jamie describes his conquest of the Sahara.

DESERT BATS COMPLETE THE MARATHON DES SABLES



The Desert Bats in chipper mood before the start of one of the most demanding sporting events devised.

by Jamie Cuthbertson

Pictures by Roraigh Ainslie

Home in one piece – almost!! Yes, we made it all the way round the longest ever Marathon des Sables course, a mere 235km and with relatively little in the way of scars to show for it. Only one or two holes in our feet and tired limbs but otherwise intact. Some others were not so lucky! What an experience! I don't want to see another grain of sand for the rest of my life – well perhaps until the next holiday on the West Coast of Scotland!

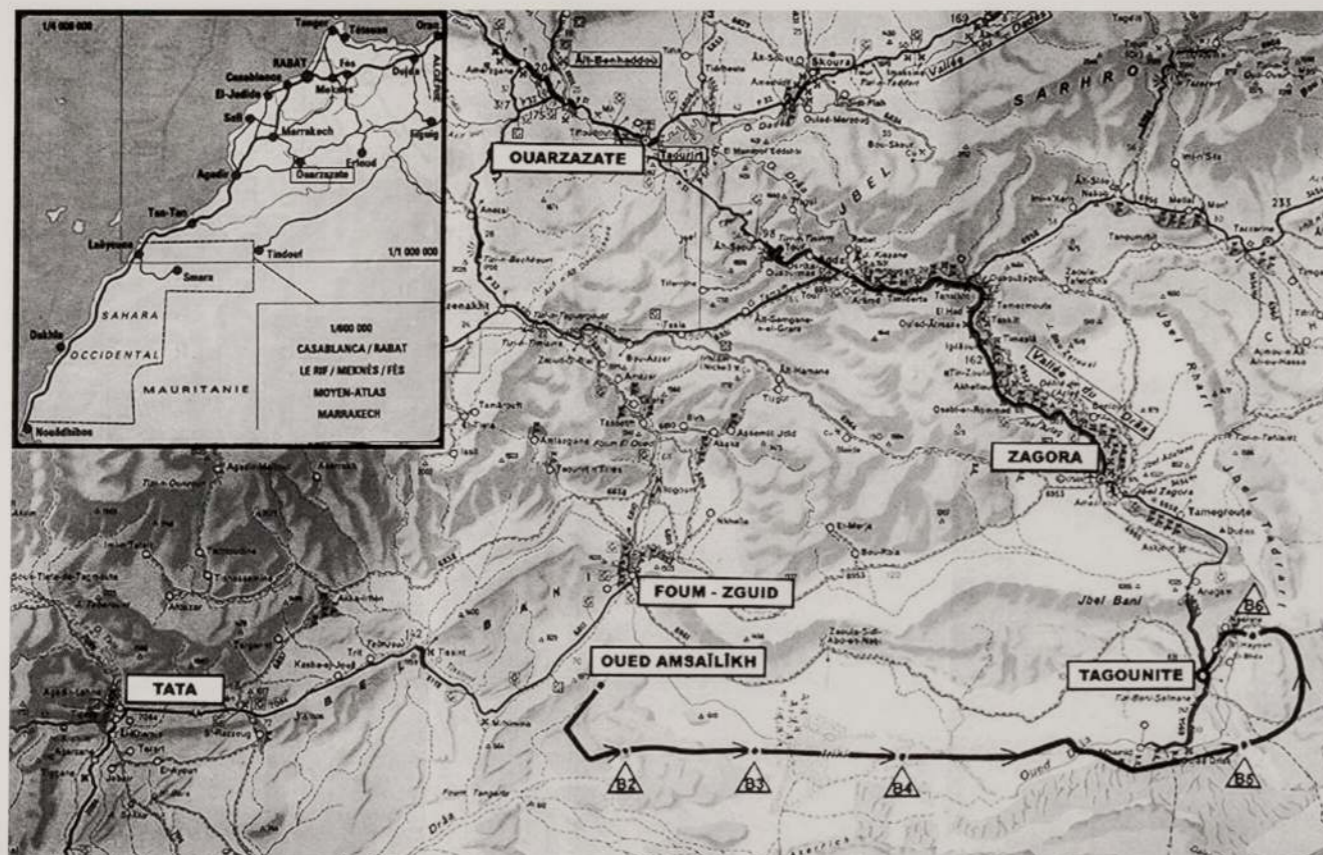
Six-hundred and eighty competitors started the race and around 100 failed to finish. We came in 443 and 444 of those who did finish. The desert did not

disappoint us either in terms of the heat (often well into the 40's) or the mixture of terrains, ranging from sand dunes to massive boulder fields.

This is the tale of how the Desert Bats conquered the Sahara.

Thursday 6 April

The British contingent arrives at Gatwick ready for the flight out to Morocco. The Desert Bats team (Roraigh Ainslie, Dave Scott, Nick Dillon and myself) are looking very dapper in our kilts. Everyone is trying to look cool and relaxed but there is a palpable sense of tension in the air – we are finally about to depart on the adventure of a lifetime for which we had been training for months. We meet the three Royal Engineer female officers who will end up in our tent group in the desert. After a short delay we are



Moroccan miles! The stark terrain that Jamie and his comrades had to cover.

on our way to Ouazazate in Morocco where we will spend our last night in a proper bed for over a week. Over a couple of beers we manage to find out some inside information about the course from some of the organisers. It sounds horrendous. We wish we had not spoken to them!

Friday 7 April

We are bussed out to the desert in coaches and then in Moroccan Army trucks for the last half-hour. The signs looked promising – overcast and raining (just like Scotland he thought) but this was not to stay. Packed lunch and a mild dose of the trots to keep one's mind active. We set up camp in Tent 65 along with the three Royal Engineer ladies, an airline pilot and a sports therapist. What a happy crew! We are treated to some excellent catering in the field complete with wine or beer – this must be the quiet before the storm. Most of us get to sleep quite early to the sound of Moroccan drums and dancers.

Saturday 8 April

Time to take our publicity photographs for our sponsors – a last look at the kilts before they get packed away for good. We have time for final preparations of kit and registration takes place in

mid-afternoon. We hand in all excess kit to be returned to the hotel and not to be seen for seven days. This was our last day of laid on food and relative luxury. We made the most of it as if we were taking part in the Last Supper.

Race Day 1, Sunday 9 April (28km)

Helicopter overhead, flags flying and with much cheering we were finally under way. Roraigh and I set off at a gentle jog with our trusty piece of rope (known as McSporran) linking us together. We ran to the first checkpoint at 9km and decide that I was not fit enough to continue at that pace. We decide to walk most of the way from there. Some small dunes and patches of rocks set the tone for the remainder of the race. Spotted a very unlucky lizard, which has been run over by a Land Rover!

Very tired I finish the day and dispose of around 1 litre of water from my belly at the finish line. Not very elegant but at least I had finished. We hear later that some people have already begun to drop out. The girls have had a good day but one of them is not feeling good and sleeps for some time. Jim, our masseur, gives her a rub down later on and she recovers well – purely medicinal I'm sure!

Accommodation is very basic Berber tents; they are literally hessian sacking or similar, sewn together to make a sun shield for those finishing before dark. A thin carpet is also provided to lessen the effects of the desert rocky ground. The tent does not stop the delightful dust from constantly covering us from head to toe, even when pinned down at the windward side. As for other facilities, there were none!

Race Day 2, Monday 10 April (34km)

A fairly tedious day with a long rocky section on the first leg – we lose a good deal of time. I am still feeling tired so we carry on walking. We begin to make up some ground on the later sections where the ground is fairly flat. There is not much to see other than the odd desert grave and pile of camel bones. Other people are continuing to drop out of the race. I finish the day in a much better state than yesterday, perhaps I am beginning to acclimatise? Roraigh sets to and takes on the catering on a camel dung and stick fire. We queue up to send e-mail messages to our folks back home before crawling into our sleeping-bags for the night.

Race Day 3, Tuesday 11 April (37km)

The dreaded 'Dunes Day'. We have 15km of beautiful flat ground before hitting the dunes. We have time to chat to some amazing people as we gather our mental strength for the dunes ahead. This year is a mere 19km of continuous dunes, some of which are as tall as houses. No water replenishment,

just carry double rations all the way! Roraigh has agreed to carry a video camera for the organisation and soon regrets this generosity. None-the-less he is feeling strong and knows what to expect. The heat and physical effort nearly does me in. A couple of dowsings at the top of a high dune and a rest in the breeze sees us through. We meet up with Mike, our airline pilot from the tent, who shares his water with Roraigh until we reach the next checkpoint. Only 3km to go now and we press on relieved to be clear of the dunes (for now at least). We get in just around nightfall and collapse. Many more competitors do not make it through the dunes and are out.

There are many shell-shocked people around the campsite with many queuing to have blistered feet seen to by Doc Trotter – the medical vultures from the organisation. I manage to phone home but my wife, Shauna is not in and the satellite link is very poor. At least I managed to leave a message with Shauna's mum to say I was still alive and kicking!

Race Day 4, Wednesday 12 April (76km)

The 'Big One'. Another very hot day with plenty more dunes and miles and miles of rocks. Again I find the heat very hard going but we finally make it to nightfall at checkpoint 3. We bash on into the night and I begin to get my second wind. More dunes and more rocks. We pass through a mystical village lit up with candles and in the middle of nowhere. The sky is lit up by a half moon and distant drumming is heard



Desert Bat Jamie Cuthbertson out on the hot sands of the Sahara.



A moment of relief for Jamie as he has his feet tended to.

for some time. If only we could stop and go to sleep! Many other competitors were doing exactly this at checkpoints 4, 5 and 6. The more delay, the longer the clock runs for you on this stage so we press on into the night. It seems endless – where did all these rocks and dunes come from?! We meet up with Nick and Dave just before the end and walk in with them. We cross the finish line having been on the move for nineteen and a half hours and tumble into bed in a state of collapse.

Race Day 5, Thursday 13 April

'Rest Day'. Spend most of the day sleeping and doing personal admin. Hellish dust storm means that everything is perpetually covered in filth - don't you love it? There certainly seems to be no peace for the wicked – what did I do in my former life to deserve all this?

Race Day 6, Friday 14 April (42km)

'Marathon Day'. The course for today has been chosen to be very flat and boring so the marathon runners can get good times. We are still walking but making good speed. Roraigh's foot is in some considerable pain but he hides it well. Nothing to talk about on the scenery front apart from one large monolith of rock which looks as if it should have been in Arizona. Final nail in the coffin is the last 5km of

almost continuous rocks. Feet are now throbbing heavily. A large number of other competitors come to cheer in the stragglers like us – a very welcome boost. There is a sense of enormous relief now as all the long days have been conquered. We just make the cut at 450 to leave in the morning with the fast group.

Race Day 7, Saturday 15 April (18km)

'The final push to the line'. Most of this day is on good tracks through villages and cultivated fields. We end up as Tail End Charlies for most of the way as the slower group set off an hour earlier than us. The local children are out in numbers and demanding pens, sweets or anything else you might have. Roraigh almost causes a riot at the water checkpoint by producing a power bar to hand out – just saved by the village elder. The finish is in sight and we run the last 600 metres. We manage to get within sight of the line and I take my first fall of the whole race – good for the cameras but hellishly frustrating! Many of our tent group has stayed behind to welcome us in. What a feeling!

We are given a packed lunch and taken back to Ouarzazate and chill out in a wonderful bath with cans of beer at the ready. Time to attend to sore feet and aching joints. All the tales have started and people compare their war wounds. We have our first

fresh food since the start of the race and it tastes fabulous. Some of the more sturdy members drink and dance the night away - as for me, I am goosed and quite happy to get to a proper bed nice and early!

Sunday 16 April

We hand in safety equipment and wander the streets looking for real food and presents. After acquiring the compulsory purchases we head back to the hotel to get changed for the Gala Dinner. In the end this turns out to be a total disaster as the weather is very cold and the meal was supposed to be outside. Most people stayed long enough to drink the free wine and then abandoned ship to find alternative food. A bit of a party has begun back at the hotel and a few drinks are had by all. Perhaps I am losing my touch but again I couldn't stand the pace for long and sneak off to bed.

Monday 17 April

An early start to get breakfast and get ready for the coach to the airport. Mike lays on champagne and wine on our flight home. Everything already seems so long ago. On arrival at Gatwick everyone disappears into the crowd and the adventure is over. We are filled with a mixture of joy, sadness and emptiness. How can life back home ever match this thrill and the emotions we felt in the past two weeks? What will be our next challenge for the Desert Bats? Let's hope it is not quite so hot and that there is no sand!

The Desert Bats team is aiming to raise both the £8,700 entry fee and additionally they hope to raise £10,000 to donate to the following two charities:

Sight Savers International who save the sight of thousands of adults and children and train eye surgeons in modern techniques.

The UK Children's Cancer Study Group, which works to develop new techniques for the treatment of child cancers.

If you would like to contribute to the Desert Bats efforts then your contribution would be very gratefully received. All you have to do is to make your cheque or postal order payable to 'Desert Bats' and send it to me at the following address: Jamie Cuthbertson, 27 West Chapelton Crescent, Bearsden, Glasgow G61 2DE.

Thank you in advance for your support.

NOTES ON RUNNING THE MARATHON DES SABLES AS A BLIND ATHLETE

The aim of this document is to provide any visually impaired athlete, who is contemplating taking part in the Marathon des Sables, with some pointers which may make their participation more comfortable and pleasurable. It has been written from my own perspective as a totally blind athlete and is, therefore, only my own ideas and thoughts. It is not intended as anything other than a guide. It does cover some aspects of the event which are useful for any competitor but I have tried to concentrate on those issues which relate to a visually impaired athlete in particular.

The information below is broken into sections covering training, equipment, guiding techniques, personal administration and some other general comments. I hope you find it of some use.

1. Training

The nature of this event is such that you can complete the course within the allocated timescales either by running or by walking at a good steady pace. Unless you are extremely fit, it is likely that you will find yourself walking on large sections of the race either because of the rough ground or in order to conserve your strength. As a result of this it is very important to train for both running and for walking for long periods of time. For many visually impaired athletes, there is a need to arrange suitable times when a guide runner can take you out. With the uncertain weather conditions in this country and the difficulty of arranging a guide on a very regular basis, I would strongly recommend that you consider getting a good electric treadmill, with a gradient, to have at your home location. If this is not feasible, you should make investigations with local health clubs about access to their treadmills on a regular basis.

You should probably be aiming to train at least 5-6 times per week as you get closer to the event. I believe it is better to train regularly for shorter distances than less frequently over longer distances. You should

however be aiming to run/walk a number of longer sessions as you get closer to the event. You should be aiming to do at least one long run per week for the last 10-12 weeks before the event. The more you can train with your guide the better, particularly over rough terrain. Use your training to decide on the best guiding technique for you and your guide. With around 12 weeks to go to the event, it is vital to start carrying your race pack. You should gradually build up the weight you are carrying to around the race weight. You should be aiming to be starting the race with around 10kgs or less (including water).

Try to train with the shoes and pack you intend to use in the race. You will find the good and bad points about them such as where they rub and so on and this will give you the opportunity to make adjustments.

Ideally do a good deal of training on sand dunes. If this is not possible make sure you do exercises to strengthen your thighs and calf muscles as this will be a major benefit when you try to tackle the big dunes, particularly in the heat.

2. Equipment

Even if you are supremely fit, you will find that there are large sections of ground to be covered which are very rocky and hence you inevitably will have to pick your way through these sections fairly slowly. As a result of this and the fact that you will be out in the sun for long periods, I would recommend you pay particular attention to the following pieces of equipment.

Footwear

You must find a solid pair of off road training shoes. Do not get shoes with inflatable liners as there are many rocks and thorns which will shred this kind of shoe. You should aim to buy shoes which are at least one and a half to two times your normal shoe size as your feet are likely to swell over the event.

You should try to find a method of stopping the sand from getting into your shoes. I used Porelle waterproof socks and sand gaiters made from parachute silk stuck to the outside of my shoes. This generally worked very well although my feet did get very warm.

Rucksack

A good running sack of around 35litre capacity is vital. It should allow easy access to your drinking system for drinking and for refilling it. Easily

accessed pockets on the waistband are very useful as is a separate zipper pouch on the top of the sack.

Drinking system

I used the Camelbak Classic system. This is a 2litre pouch with a hose and bite nipple to drink from. We rarely filled it to capacity but did on one or two occasions so I would advise this size of bladder. I would not recommend the Platypus system as I had several fail on me during training and several people in the race also had bad experiences. The Camelbak is a good bit more expensive but well worth the extra money in my opinion. I kept it with the neoprene case it came with – it was great to get mouthfuls of slightly cooler water as you pushed on through the heat of the day. It costs around £35.

Sleeping Mat

A good deal of time is spent sitting or lying around in the tent. Unless you have a very sturdy rear end, it is well worth investing in a three-quarter length Thermarest mat. A word of caution though, many of the bivouac sites have sharp rocks and thorns all over the ground. Always check where you are putting the mat down before you put any weight on it. This will cost around £50.

Walking Pole

In my book, for a visually impaired person, this is an absolutely vital piece of equipment. On flat sections you will find you do not need the pole, however, on uneven terrain, rocky sections and in the sand dunes it is a necessity. Cost is around £30.

Headwear

Due to the speed you are likely to travel, you will be out in the heat of the day on most days for some time. Ensure you have a suitable hat to keep the sun off your head and neck. I wore a baseball kind of hat with a sun drape sewn on all round the back and sides.

Medical Equipment

Apart from the compulsory items the following are worth taking with you. A good quantity of Brufen is a sensible precaution to minimise inflammation and reduce pain. Zantac may be necessary to avoid an upset stomach and Immodium is always worth having as a precaution. If you are a light sleeper, it may be worth taking some form of sleeping tablets to ensure you get as much sleep as possible.

I would highly recommend taking a quantity of Compeed pads so you are able to carry out your own foot repairs. You should also take plenty of zinc

oxide tape. Compeed has a habit of ruining socks if you do not use tape on top of it. You should also consider taking a scalpel and some disinfectant for your own use as it is probably unwise to share this kind of item with others. Unless you are very lucky, you will get blisters which will need daily attention. If you can do this yourself or with your guide, it will save several hours of queuing to get official medical attention.

Sun protection

I used a sun protection product called P20. It is applied once at the start of the day around 60-90 minutes before being exposed to the sun. It does not sweat out of your skin and the fact that I had no real burning to speak of is testimony to its effectiveness. Your lips are likely to chap greatly. Make sure you take plenty of Vaseline or chap stick. Vaseline is also essential for other parts of your body which are prone to friction rubs - most runners will know what I am talking about here!

3. Guiding Techniques

Everyone will have their own preferred method of being guided in these rough terrain situations. We found that there were very few times when the route was too narrow for us to run side by side and so our preferred method was to do exactly that. My guide and I held a short length of rope, with a knot in each end, between us. This meant that we could chat easily as we ran or walked and we found that my guide was able to very easily steer me around larger obstacles such as rocks and thorn bushes. He aimed to keep me in wheel ruts created by the support vehicles although at times this was harder to follow than simply walking/running on the normal surrounding terrain. It also meant that he was able to gauge my level of tiredness with a quick glance at my face - particularly when I had gone quiet on him.

When the terrain became very uneven or rocky, I generally found my walking pole an invaluable extra support. Additionally, on occasions, I would hold my guides forearm or elbow for extra support in difficult situations. During some of the dune sections we also found that it was easier to walk in single file to avoid tumbling down a steep slope. Strangely, in this situation, we found it easier for my guide to walk behind me and steer me using nudges of my pack to the left or right in conjunction with verbal instructions. This way he could see exactly what I was doing and keep me on a straight line. Fortunately this only happened during the large dune section.



This is exhaustion! Jamie takes a much needed break from his desert run.

On several flat sections of the race it was also a welcome relief to be completely free from my guide and to give my arms and shoulders a rest from being in the normal position. Unfortunately these opportunities were not as common as we would have liked.

4. Personal Administration

For everyone on this race the issue of keeping control of one's personal administration is vital. Such things as eating correctly, washing and keeping tags on all your equipment means that you should have a more pleasant time on the race than if you let these things get out of control.

We ate all freeze-dried rations from a company in USA called REI and ordered from the Internet. The food was the Mountain House range and was really quite tasty considering. Generally my guide took charge of the gathering of fuel and cooking. It would be perfectly possible to not cook at all during the race and simply make do with re-hydrating of food with cold water, however, it is a real morale booster to get hot food and a sweet cup of tea after the days efforts.

On the long day we found that it was worth keeping some food available in press seal bags. We aimed to re-hydrate a small bag of food at one stop and eat it at the next stop. In actual fact, because of the heat of the day, the food was moderately warm by the time it was ready to be eaten and this was a great lift.

Go prepared to have a good wipe down with a flannel every day. There is nothing better than getting into your sleeping-bag feeling moderately clean and refreshed. Make the effort to get your guide to take you a little way from the tent to give you some privacy to get properly cleaned. However, do not expect a shower room!

Toilet facilities are rudimentary/non existent. If total privacy is what you demand, be prepared to walk some distance from most campsites or wait until after dark. This is generally not feasible and most people accept that 'a man has to do what a man has to do' at the time it is required. Practising one's squatting position is a useful extra in your training regime! I would also advise taking plenty of toilet paper and a small packet of wet wipes.

Try to keep all your equipment in polythene bags. This helps keep out the sand and rain (if you are lucky enough to be rained on!). You should try to keep similar items together. For example, keep clothing in one bag, sleeping-bag in another, your safety equipment such as pen knife, whistle etc in another and so on. Bag all your food separately for each meal and keep several days food together in a larger bag. Mark each meal with a note (in braille if you wish) to tell you exactly which meal it is. This saves you having to think what to eat when you are tired and hungry.

Prepare your kit the night before, on a daily basis. Put power bars, snacks and drinks powders in a handy location, such as your top pouch on your sack, so you can get to them easily during the race. Keep pain killers at the ready and do not bury them in your sack. We found that taking Brufen on a regular basis throughout the race was essential.

The better you are prepared for each day, the less time you waste looking for items during the race. You do not have to do all your preparation the night before as you do get a fair bit of time in the mornings. I found that this time was generally best used to attend to strapping your feet, final packing and application of sun lotion rather than nitty gritty things which could have been done the night before.

Whatever way you decide to tackle these issues, you must ensure that you always know exactly where all your equipment is. There are eight others in your tent and if you are not organised with your own kit, it is very easy to get mixed up with other people's.

5. Other General Advice

Make sure that you get on very well with your guide and most particularly when you are both getting tired and irritable. It is ideal to find a guide who is a good bit fitter than yourself so that he/she is not holding you back at times when the terrain allows you to go faster. This would be extremely frustrating. If possible try to enter the race as a team (this requires three people minimum) because this would mean that if one guide wanted a break or was injured, they would be able to swap without you having also to give up.

I generally found it interesting to ask my guide to describe the scenery as we progressed through the race. At times, however, there is simply mile upon mile of nothing. Because of this it is useful to have plenty of things to keep your mind active. This might be jokes, mind puzzles, songs and so on. We also kept an eye out for unusual things such as desert graves, camel bones, wildlife, fossils and interesting stones. My guide was constantly looking at his feet in order to guide me safely and often found unusual objects that other people had missed.

Try to avoid the temptation to ask your guide to estimate distances to the next checkpoint. It is very hard to do this with the inevitable heat haze and undulating terrain. It is far better to believe that it is some distance away and then be pleasantly surprised when it is quite close, rather than to be told it is nearer than it actually is.

Finally, try to maintain a sense of humour – there are many sections of the race when you feel fit enough to go faster but the terrain simply does not allow it. If you allow this to frustrate you, you will soon be at the end of your tether. You will often be extremely tired and ready to sit down and go no further. Always try to press on whenever you can. The comfort of your bed at the end of each day is worth it!

If you would like any further information then please do not hesitate to get in touch with me on 0141 570 1814 or by E-mail at jamie.cuthbertson@net.ntl.com.

Neil Swan provides his regular report on fund raising activities

A PENNY FOR LUCK ADDS UP



Mary Saunders promoting St Dunstan's.

Mary Saunders first began raising funds for St Dunstan's on the Isle of Wight during 1999. Since then she has raised the considerable sum of £5,000.01 (the 1p for luck as she put it). By any standards this is a remarkable achievement by a truly exceptional person who has been a committed fund raiser for sometime.

How did she raise the money for St Dunstan's? Twice weekly Mary made her way to Osborne House, the former residence of Queen Victoria, where she set up her patriotic little corner, complete with its Union Jack and St Dunstan's poster. Mrs Linda Smith, the Deputy Custodian at Osborne House very kindly made this arrangement possible and we are most indebted to her.

Mary speaks modestly of her achievements. "It was lovely basking in the sunshine and meeting and talking to thousands of people who would often say 'Ah yes St Dunstan's, I must support them, as their request for funds have been turned down by both the Lottery and the Government'."

Support for the Ken Moss MGF sports car free draw competition has exceeded all expectation. Although the entries list closed on April 30th, the actual draw for the winner had to be postponed for a further two weeks to allow time to process the large number of last minute entries. We will bring you the result in the next issue of the *Review*.



Ken was recently presented with a donation from the Police Property Disposal Fund. He is pictured with David Kenworthy, QPM, Chief Constable of the North Yorkshire Police and Lady Harris, DL, Chairman of the North Yorkshire Police Authority.



More recently Reg Geary, the publican of *The Traders Inn*, Church Street, Marylebone, and his daughter Julie collected a grand total of £564.70 for St Dunstan's. Curious customers wanting to know the meaning of the puzzle above the bar would be let into the secret on condition that they first placed a donation in their St Dunstan's collecting box - and curiosity always got the better of them! Ray Hazan received the final cheque on May 2nd - sadly the Inn's last day before closure.

THIS ARTICLE IS NOT FOR THOSE EASILY OFFENDED

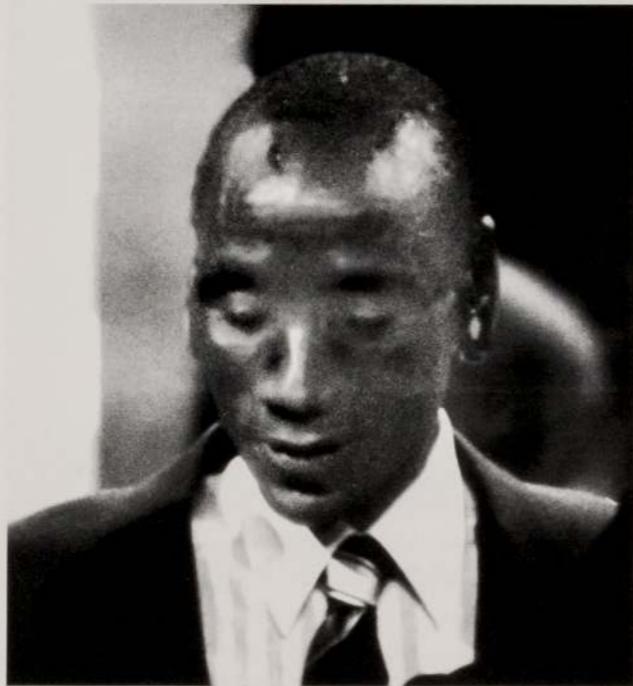
From Nomad to Soldier, a Wonderful Life

by Mike Tetley

Last week I received an e-mail from the middle of the desert in the N.F.D (Northern Frontier District) of Kenya. It was from Regiton, my former batman who 46 years ago had stood alone over me after I was shot through the head. He killed all seven Mau Mau as they charged from 25 yards to cut me up with their long cane knives. He was the last person I expected to contact me by e-mail as he had grown up in such primitive conditions. Regiton was a member of the nomadic Samburu tribe, an offshoot of the fierce Masai, who inhabited the semi-desert where there was an annual rainfall of only four inches a year. Since crops could not be grown, they herded cattle and camels. They survived by throwing a cow to the ground, piercing its jugular vein, drawing off a pint of blood, going to the back of the animal, milking it, mixing the blood and milk, drinking the mixture and that was breakfast.

As a youngster Regiton's job was to defend the herd of animals from lions and other tribes who would raid and carry off both animals and women. His possessions would total three in number; a spear, a blanket and a small wooden stool which at night acted as a head rest to keep his head out of the driving sand. Life was tough with little water to drink and bush craft like tracking was essential. Sir Michael Wood, the inaugurator of the Flying Doctor service in Kenya, records that half of a hospital ward at Wajir was filled with those who had been bitten by a hyena or an old lion when asleep in the open. Faces were often badly mutilated and if the person could not keep up with the tribe they were often left to die in the bush.

The three big events in a tribesman's life were birth, the circumcision ceremony (when he became an adult) and marriage. In the early part of the last century a man had to prove that he was a full adult by presenting to his bride genitals that he had removed from a neighbouring tribesman, whom he had killed on a raid, as well as pay a dowry to her



Regiton, when he joined Mike on This is Your Life.

father. The British tried to stop this practice so the custom was changed. The man had to kill a lion single-handed by making the lion so angry that it charged him. He would then stick his spear into the ground and lower it as the lion sprang thus impaling it. As late as 1960 the late Ray Nightingale of the Kenya Regiment and Colonel of the SAS saw a lone man in the desert acting suspiciously wearing only a sporran and carrying a spear, blanket and stool. Ray examined the contents of his sporran and found the genitals of a man. He arrested him and charged him with being in possession of certain articles which the owner had not given him permission to remove.

The son of a chief, Regiton started as a Private in the Army and won a reputation as a great tracker. He could not track with his boots on, so he took them off and hung them round his neck. Once we came to

an area of several square miles of barren rock and I asked him "How can you tell where they have gone now?" He turned to me and said "Can't you see the air is disturbed?" I do not know what this means but I suspect he tracks at times using telepathy. The SAS used him in Aden for tracking.

When I left Kenya I gave him a £100 which pleased him as he could now buy some corrugated iron sheeting to build a roof which the white ants could not eat. He was in England to take part in the Royal Tournament in 1957 and came to my wedding and at that time I asked him "What is the best thing you have seen in England?" He replied that there were only three good things in civilisation, the Raleigh bicycle, aspirin and the transistor radio." Somewhat taken aback I asked him what was the worst thing he had seen in England. "That is simple Bwana, blocks of flats." "Why?" I asked. "Because Bwana when you take men away from the land they lose their sense of values and you have nothing but trouble." Quite an observation for a so-called noble savage.

Regiton came again to England when Eamon Andrews brought him across for "This is your Life". They gave him £100 and again life was great because he had a corrugated roof and now he could buy a cement floor. He retired from the Army as a CSM returning to the bush.

So now you may be as surprised as I was to receive an e-mail from him, letting me know that at the age of 67 he was fit and was looked after by his three old wives and 24 children. He still had cattle, which he had to protect from Somali and Ethiopian raiders. Polygamy is essential in that part of the world as a woman on her own cannot defend herself against lion and as men get killed by marauding tribesmen there would be many women on their own. The tribal custom is that if your brother is killed you then take on his wife and look after her children in return for her favours and there are no frustrated women. The custom of having many children to look after you in your old age is shortly going to cause massive starvation in Africa. This is already happening.

The Conquest of Glastonbury Tor

by Woody "Everest Windows" Oakes

The unknown explorer and adventurer Woody "Everest Windows" Oakes has conquered the summit of that well-known West Country landmark, Glastonbury Tor.

Base camp was established in the bar of the Britannia Inn, Wells at a distance of some five or six miles from the Tor. Transport came in the form of a rusty sink unit vaguely resembling a VW Campervan, so antediluvian it is MOTd by the Antiques Road Show. Supplied and painted by "The Hairy One".

Woody "Everest Windows" Oakes was equipped with breathing apparatus, goggles, 58 pat web belt and kidney pouches from the Army Surplus Supply Co Ltd, Brighton. Wearing his legendary Coat of Many Pockets, ex-British Rail Porter's cap and PPKs (purple passion killers).

From the start of the ascent Woody "Everest Windows" Oakes struggled against thin air and adverse weather conditions. At times crawling on hands and knees through discarded Yorkie Bar wrappers, used unmentionables and sheep droppings.

Leaving his faithful Nepalese Hippy guide, who became trapped in a swamp of bubblegum, Woody "Everest Windows" Oakes pressed on alone until finally and triumphal he stood on the summit of Glastonbury Tor.

Having ceremoniously raised the hand knitted Union Jack with the City of Wells coat of arms on it, Woody "Everest Windows" Oakes in the time honoured tradition of a true Brit promptly collapsed and had to be rescued by the NAAFI air ambulance. He was flown to a nearby mental hospital and certified...

Editor's note: We are pleased to report that after a dose of the proverbial NAAFI rock cakes and tea, Woody made a full recovery!"

May Quiz Answers

1) *The Glums*; Q2) Tommy Handley was the *ITMA* king; Q3) Ted Heath; Q4) The Ovaltineys sang about their favourite beverage on Radio Luxembourg.

St Dunstan's ex-Prisoners of War Reunion

by Tom Hart



St Dunstan's ex-Prisoners of War with their wives and friends such as Sir John Gingell and Mary Frith.

The Blue Room at St Dunstan's Ovingdean became a meeting point for the ex-Prisoners of War during their reunion over the weekend of April 14th to 17th. From the chatter and laughter that one could hear, it was the ideal venue for the opening get-together.

As you know, it is a most comfortable room and quite near to the bar. I must thank Dawn and the Lounge staff for their help in moving some tables in so that the drinks could be near at hand. PBK provided an excellent buffet, so what more could one want?

On Saturday morning our President Air Chief Marshal Sir John Gingell, GBE, KCB, KCVO warmly greeted all the members to the Annual General Meeting and, after he sadly mentioned that five of our members had passed away during the year, we got down to the business of the meeting. Unfortunately, several of our members had to cancel at the last minute owing to ill health. Amongst them was our Honorary Treasurer Alf Lockhart.

The meeting went well presided over by Sir John. Our Chairman Billy Griffiths mentioned in his report that he had had a very busy week attending the Annual General Meeting of The Royal British Legion, Ladies' Section, to which he had been invited as a guest. Alf Lockhart's Treasury Report was read out by Beryl Gardner our Assistant Secretary and a very good report it was. Thanks Alf. Tom Hart mentioned in his Secretarial Report that there were 70 ex-Prisoners of War in the UK St Dunstan's and this

could be boosted by at least ten more new St Dunstan ex-Prisoners of War, one of whom, Mr Len Barber, attended the reunion for the first time. A letter of thanks had been sent to Mrs Jeanne Neal, the daughter of Alf Lockhart for the lovely Millennium Dinner invitation cards she had printed on her computer.

The Committee was re-elected en bloc and a vote of thanks was given especially to Beryl Gardner for her help with the minutes and other duties.

The reunion dinner was held in the Winter Gardens and Paul James and Trevor Richardson excelled themselves. Our compliments must go to the chefs, the food was very good indeed and of course the atmosphere was outstanding. Our guests included Colonel and Mrs Peter Howard-Harwood, MBE, DL. As our guest speaker Colonel Peter, who is Chairman of the War Pensions Committee, Sussex, was in good form. After explaining to the FEPOWs that their claim for compensation was not a lost cause, he compensated by telling some lovely stories. Mr Gerard Frost and Mrs Pam Durie were given token presents for, as we know, they will be leaving us in the near future. After dinner we returned to the bar, finishing the evening in good fellowship.

Sunday, the final day of our reunion was begun by a church service in the Chapel conducted by Reverend David Williams and indeed it was a lovely service attended by a large number of the ex-POWs and their guests. The service ended with Mrs Vivienne Straiton singing lovely arias.

Finally, in the evening the Coastline Harmony Chorus gave us a country and western concert with a short break for them to go off and return as cowboys and cowgirls. Fortunately, they left their horses hanging up outside as they were Mustangs. Our thanks go to Lyn Neville, the Activities Coordinator for arranging our entertainment.

Billy Griffiths our Chairman finished the evening and the reunion by thanking the Chorus and wishing the ex-POWs and their guests a safe and happy journey home.

May I add thanks to all those who helped make it a lovely and friendly reunion, Susan Harrison and staff for their hospitality, PBK and Dining room staff for feeding us and the drivers and other staff for their help.

The dates for the reunion in 2001 will be April 20th-23rd. Please remember a reunion can be planned but it is the members who create the atmosphere, so please make the effort and come, for it is only by meeting up like this that we can remember our friends who have gone before us.

WELCOME

We welcome the following and hope they will settle down happily as members of our family.

Mr Marcel Julier of Hove, East Sussex joined St Dunstan's on April 1st. Now aged 82, he served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1940 to 1945. He was in the Middle East, Cyprus and British North Africa Force. After this he resumed training as a patisserie chef, working at the Houses of Parliament, hotels in Mayfair, Piccadilly and the Connaught Rooms. A keen bowls player he also enjoys swimming and gardening. Mr Julier and his wife Sylvia have a son and daughter, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Mr Clifford Ford of Woodingdean, Brighton joined St Dunstan's on April 10th. Now aged 77, he served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946 as an engineer. During this time he supported Spitfires, Harriers, Tempest and Typhoon aircraft. In 1943 he was posted to Australia and celebrated VJ Day in Sydney. After the war he continued with engineering in a civilian capacity. His interests include fishing, gardening, cricket and cooking. Mr Ford has a son Glen and daughter Lynn.

Mr Malcolm Hadley of Edgeware, Middlesex joined St Dunstan's on April 10th. Now aged 72, he served in the Royal Engineers from 1946 to 1948. Initially seconded to a POW camp for Germans in Oxfordshire, he was stationed at the Military Railway Centre, Longmoor before being posted to Singapore to help repair the city water system. Mr Hadley then worked for the forerunner of GEC. After losing his sight he retrained as an audio typist, working in BT's Telecoms Development department. He is married to Violet.

Mr Ronald Layer of Goring-by-Sea, Worthing, West Sussex joined St Dunstan's on April 10th. He served in the Army from 1939 to 1946, initially joining the Royal Artillery. He then transferred to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. After the war he worked for BOAC, Croydon Airport and the REME as a civilian before joining the Ministry of Supply (Defence). He was involved in the Black Arrow and Blue Streak programmes, spending time at Woomera missile range in Australia and Cape Canaveral, Florida.

Mr Roy Mager of Pontshill, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire joined St Dunstan's on April 10th. Now aged 84, he served in the Royal Air Force from 1931 to 1962. He initially trained as a wireless operator/air gunner serving in the UK, Singapore, India, Australia, Southern Rhodesia and Malta. During this time he was seconded to the Royal Naval Maintenance Yard and Fleet Air Arm. After leaving the service he worked for Standard Cable and then an insurance firm. His interests include aircraft, railways and listening to tapes. He and his wife have two daughters and two grandchildren.

Mr Walter Sparksman of Rottingdean, Brighton joined St Dunstan's on April 10th. Now aged 75, he served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946. As an electrical artificer he served in Dover, Roedean, Australia and Hong Kong. After the war he worked as an electrical engineer and then joined Pye Records becoming their sales manager. He worked in a similar capacity for CBS and RCA before joining Hambros as an investment advisor. Mr Sparksman and his wife Doreen have two daughters, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

RUNNING TO THE MAX

Lynda Stringer reports on a capital performance

Sunday, April 16th, 06:00 and an apprehensive St Dunstan's London Marathon Team mustered in the hotel restaurant for an early breakfast. A year of training was shortly to be put to the test and an air of anxiety mixed with excitement filled the room.

There was an eerie silence on the streets outside, broken only by the scattered groups of marathon runners making their way to the tube station, Flora marathon bags slung proudly over their shoulders.

After a very wet and dreary Saturday we were all pleased to see the sun break through the cloud as we made our way to the station along with 32,000 other runners, and I think they were all on our train.

We were soon to realise how easy it is to become separated amongst a sea of running vests and our plans to start together as a team were dashed after placing our Flora bags on the designated trucks and losing contact with one another.

As the gun sounded at 09:30am an estimated 32,000 runners shuffled their way across the start line at Greenwich, everyone glowing with excitement. Among the runners were rhinos, clowns, a group of policemen and women in squad formation wearing stockings and suspenders and wielding their truncheons, five huge wombles, a bus, a ship and every type of fancy dress you could imagine.

The crowds lined the streets and there seemed to be a mutual respect and admiration from both runners and spectators. Brass bands, discos, dancers and all



We've done it! Bob Venn with an exhausted Lynda Stringer and Dave Powell.



Grant Cooper (centre) running through South Quay.

kinds of entertainers offered their encouragement to the mass of runners.

The many hours of training were beginning to prove worthwhile, and at the halfway stage everyone was running well, if a little slower than expected.

Andrew Mahoney had shot away at the start and was on course for a sub-3 hour marathon. Don "The Plodder" Planner was making his way through the field having been tripped up by a spectator earlier in the race. Dave Powell, feeling more comfortable, had left his guides Dave Goldsmith and Mike Godden, and was striding out on his own.

Lynda Stringer was having a cat and mouse race with Lionel Scott's friend, Bob Venn, who was running in aid of St Dunstan's. Lynda got the better towards the final stages.

The enjoyment and banter with the crowds began to dwindle as, one by one, we hit the proverbial wall. No training can prepare you for such pain, and finishing the race becomes a mental ordeal as much as physical.

After 26.2 gruelling miles the finish line was a welcome sight and emotions were running high as we all crossed the line to receive our medals in this very special millennium marathon year.

As a team we hope to have raised approximately £5,500, but throughout the year, in the many races

that we have run in, we have raised a lot of positive awareness of St Dunstan's.

Many thanks to all of those people who have supported and sponsored the Marathon Team, and raised so much money for disabled sports equipment and the Adventure Activities Club.

St Dunstaner Gerry Jones was also out running for his local blind association. As usual he acquitted himself with style.

Final official running times for the 2000 Flora London Marathon were:

Andy Mahoney	2 hours 54 minutes 49 seconds
Gerry Jones	4 hours 21 minutes 56 seconds
Grant Cooper	4 hours 31 minutes 43 seconds
Dave Powell	4 hours 55 minutes 31 seconds
Don Planner	5 hours 27 minutes 6 seconds
Lynda Stringer	5 hours 27 minutes 22 seconds
Mike Godden	6 hours 3 minutes 38 seconds
Dave Goldsmith	6 hours 3 minutes 39 seconds

Also running for St Dunstan's:

D. Williams	4 hours 13 minutes 23 seconds
Linda Holtby	5 hours 5 minutes 50 seconds
Bob Venn	5 hours 28 minutes 36 seconds
Lee Fleming	5 hours 45 minutes 14 seconds

To the St Dunstan's London Marathon Team:

Many many congratulations.

An amazing effort by the staff of the Rehabilitation and Training Team: Grant Cooper, Mike Godden, Dave Goldsmith and last, but by no means least, Lynda Stringer, Training Coordinator.

Over the last year they have put a huge effort into their training programme, training in lunch times and both before and after work and at weekends doing additional races.

They have shown a huge commitment to St Dunstan's and I cannot praise them highly enough, there wouldn't be a Sports and Recreation department without their massive efforts.

Watch out for news of the London to Brighton Bike Ride in future editions.

Lesley Styche
Head of Rehabilitation and Training



The Dream Traders

Author: E.V. Thompson
Reader: Joanna Mackie
Duration: 15 Hours 27 minutes
Catalogue No: 7540

The first opium war between Britain and China, which provides the background to this novel may be summarised thus:

In the early 19th century British traders were illegally importing opium from India to China and trying to increase trade in general. In 1839 the Chinese government confiscated some 20,000 chests of opium from British warehouses in Guangzhou (Canton).

In response, in 1840 the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, sent a force of 16 British warships, which besieged Guangzhou and threatened Nanjing and communications with the capital. Because Britannia ruled the waves the result was predictable and unfortunately the storyline in his book is much the same, almost everything I thought would happen did happen.

The Dream Traders is not a true historical novel either; it's more of a romance and a pretty weak one at that in my view. Or perhaps it's just me and my dislike of heroes who are virtuously whiter-than-white and dialogue dripping with sentimental syrup. There is adventure of a sort though, and violence too, including rape, but nothing, for all that, you wouldn't like your maiden aunt to hear and that, I'm afraid robs the story of its reality.

Another serious fault, I think, is that the author invests several putative 19th century characters with modern ethical and moral standards and the result just doesn't ring true. It's like having a county squire of yesteryear opposed to fox-hunting or Henry VIII in favour of women's lib.

As ever of course, I invite others to form their opinions by listening for themselves but sadly it gets the thumbs down from me.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TRANSMISSIONS

ST DUNSTAN'S AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY
Annual General Meeting March 17th-24th 2000

by Arthur Taylor (Short Wave Listener)

It seems that everyone is complaining about how quickly time passes these days. The wiseacres will tell you that this is a sign of Anno Domini, but that is cold comfort to the majority of us. Yet here we were, back at Ovingdean for the first meeting of the 21st Century with the events of the 1999 AGM still fresh on our minds. But, as always, it was good to meet up with old friends once again and we were all looking forward to a happy and successful week together.

The meeting got under way with the Chairman, Bill Shea (G4AUJ), extending a welcome to everyone and thanking all those who had sent him "Get Well" messages during his recent stay in hospital. Happily, on this occasion, he did not have the sad duty of having to announce the names of any "silent keys" since our last meeting.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on October 9th 1999 were read. These included a reference to the Memorial Service to His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan (JY1) that was held at St Paul's Cathedral on July 5th 1999, and attended by Bill Shea and Ted John in their capacities of Chairman and Secretary of the Society. They were both thanked personally by Prince Raj (the late King's uncle) for their presence there.

The year 2001 will mark the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Society and to celebrate the occasion it was proposed to hold a celebration dinner or luncheon, to which we would hope to invite old friends and supporters of the Society. The matter is now in its planning stage.

Captain Michael Gordon-Lennox, our new President, attended the October meeting and received a very warm welcome from the members. He commended the Society and hoped that we would continue to promote the name of St Dunstan's worldwide and to encourage St Dunstaners, both old and young, to take up the hobby. He ended by



Bill Shea presented the G3MOW Trophy to Eddie Wilson (GØECW) in recognition of his support.

saying that he felt proud and privileged to have taken over the Presidency from Sir Henry Leach. In point of fact, whenever a contact is made, with either a home station or one abroad, we always give them details of the work carried out by St Dunstan's, and from the responses that we receive it is quite obvious from their interest that they have been suitably impressed.

Bill Shea paid tribute to all of the local dedicated supporters who gave their time and effort to the Society in order to ensure that the equipment in the Shack functioned perfectly whenever it was required. He pointed out that it was not much fun for them to have to climb up on to the roof in all weathers in order to service the aerials. It was with this thought in mind that we tried to show our appreciation to them. It gave Bill great pleasure, therefore, to award the G3MOW Trophy to Eddie Wilson (GØECW). Eddie stepped forward amidst loud applause to receive the award. It was obviously a popular presentation and he could not have been more surprised if it had been Michael Aspel popping up with his famous red book.

With that, the meeting closed and the next item was an excellent lunch in the Winter Garden. PBK demonstrated their usual skill and ability to please everyone. Later, it became a case of "All Systems Go" up in the Radio Shack as the members scoured the airwaves in order to find some interesting contacts from around the world.

On successive evenings, Ted John (G3SEJ) made contact with Japan and spoke to a man named Tori. He tried to contact him again on the third evening but without any luck. However, a voice with a very cultured English accent said "If you cannot get Japan, will Kuwait do?" This was Jemal! Ted was soon chatting merrily to him.

It seemed that whilst Ted was trying to contact Japan, Jemal must have been studying his own records because he said that he had spoken to us three years ago. He had also recently visited Brighton and was very proud of the fact that he had eaten fish and chips during his stay there. As well as many contacts with the USA, Canada and several European countries, there were some very interesting places like Lagos, Sri Lanka, Java and the Philippines that were now appearing in our records for the very first time. On a personal note, I was scanning around the band looking for a likely customer, when I heard Hans who said that he was living on the Island of Mors off the North West coast of Denmark. Ted told him that with the addition of the letter 'e' to the name of the island, it would be a very apt name for an Amateur Radio base! Hans explained that there were around 400 named islands around the Danish coastline and another 200 that had never been named. He lived in a forest that beside himself contained nine other inhabitants. His hobbies were hunting and fishing. Listening to this, it all sounded like a very idyllic life, but Ted was curious to know what he did for a night out. Despite his knowledge of English this was an expression that was new to Hans and it had to be translated into basic language for him. The nearest town, he said, was 23 kilometres away and he hated it. He much preferred to chase game in the forest or be out in his boat fishing. The local store satisfied all his needs and he made it quite plain that the urban environment was not for him.

Later on I found out exactly how Captain Cook felt because I discovered Australia! This was Bruce in Brisbane who was telling his contact that he was now going "to pull the plug." It must have then been around 8am their time, so no doubt he was about to

leave for work. However, Ted dived in quickly and pleaded with him not to disappear and spare him a few minutes of his time. Bruce agreed and he was highly delighted with the call, especially when he learned who we were.

Conditions throughout the whole week were excellent. In fact the signal from Brisbane was so strong that one could be forgiven for thinking that Bruce was up there in the Shack with us. It was generally agreed that much of the credit for this should go to John Houlihan (G4BLJ) for the adaptations that he had made to the very badly damaged antenna. A suggestion was put forward to John that he should get his system patented. Good luck to him if he does.

And so we came to the end of a very happy and successful week, but it did finish on a note of high drama. On the last day, Arthur Holmes (GØINE), having felt unwell the evening before, was found to be extremely ill and was rushed to hospital where he underwent an immediate surgical operation. We departed from Ovingdean on that afternoon, not knowing how things had gone, but the daily bulletins that we began to get were almost beyond belief. After seven days he was discharged from hospital and, at the time of writing, he is recovering in the Nursing Unit at Ovingdean where he continues to make good progress.

In conclusion, I will add this note to somebody who has proved himself to be a real fighter and it is this:

"Arthur, if this is being read to you or you are listening on tape, then we would like you to know that everyone at St D's is rooting for you and we all wish you all the best of good luck for a speedy recovery. See you in October and, in the meantime, MIND THE DOORS!"

Please Note: The next Radio Society Meeting will be held on October 6th, 7th and 8th. Members are reminded that they should make their bookings not later than four weeks before the meeting.

Advertising Blunders

FOR SALE, a bulldog. Will eat anything. Very fond of children.

FOR SALE, a piano, by a lady, in elegant walnut case on carved supports.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Some 20 St Dunstaners and their escorts spent a week at Clacton-on-Sea as guests of Billy Butlin. The happy campers, veterans of both world wars, started their holiday with a celebrity send-off at Hyde Park before being driven to the coast.

St Dunstaner Gerry Brereton was feted in the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* as the North's leading vocalist.

FAMILY NEWS

BIRTHS

Congratulations on the birth of:

Harrison Smith on December 20th. He is the 13th grandchild of *Bill and Ruth Smith* of Worcester, Hereford & Worcester.

Zak David Osmon on March 20th. He is the first great-grandson of *Ernest and Jean Price* of Birmingham.

Freya Natasha on April 27th. She is the great-granddaughter of Mrs Murial Womack of Leicester, Leicestershire, widow of *Cyril Womack*.

Joel Adam Hopkins on May 2nd. He is the third grandchild of *Norman and Mary Hopkins* of Cardiff.

RUBY ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to:

Clive and Yvonne Woods of Southampton, Hampshire on April 18th.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to:

Philip and Marjorie Bagwell of Salisbury, Wiltshire on May 6th.

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to:

Hollis and Cissie Capon of Borough Green, Kent on April 20th.

DEATHS

We regret to announce the death of:

Mrs Hilda Collins of Heath, Cardiff on April 6th. She was the widow of *John Collins*.

Mrs Alice Faulkner of Norwich, Cheshire on April 22nd. She was the widow of *Leonard Faulkner*.

Mrs Marjorie Riley of Hove, East Sussex on April 25th. She was the widow of *William Riley*.

Mrs Nora Knight, also known as Nora Swinburne, of Chelsea, London on May 1st. She was the widow of *Esmond Knight*.

Mrs Elsie Blake-Taylor of Banff, Grampian on April 23rd. She was the niece of the late *Alex McKie*.

Mr Rodney Harding on April 28th. He was the youngest son of Mrs Jean Harding of Blackpool, Lancashire and the late *Henry Harding*.

Our sympathy goes to their families and friends.

IN MEMORY

It is with deep regret that we have to record the death of the following St Dunstaner and we offer our deepest sympathy to his widow, family and friends.

Sobhi Khabbazi

Pioneer Corps

Sobhi Khabbazi of Upper Tooting, London died on April 25th, aged 77. He had been a St Dunstaner since 1947. Originally a silk weaver, he joined the Pioneer Corps in 1943 and was wounded by a landmine. He was discharged in 1945 and after training at St Dunstan's worked in industry. Our sympathy goes to his widow Samira, sons Ramsey, Jamel, Barry, Daniel and Samuel and all of the family.

The Diana Gubbay Trust for the Blind

Michael Sutcliffe

Royal Air Force

Michael John Sutcliffe of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on March 30th, aged 67. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1954. Stationed in the UK and in Egypt, he reached the rank of Senior Aircraftman. After leaving the service Mr Sutcliffe returned to his civilian occupation, eventually becoming manager of the Paragon Laundry. He later worked as an insurance broker. His interests included swimming. Our sympathy goes to his widow Margaret and all members of the family.