



St Dunstan's Review

June 2001

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Cover picture:

*Maria Bullingham and
Lynda Stringer pass
Buckingham Palace on the
final leg of the London
Marathon. They are
flanked by an Elvis
impersonator.*

Full details on page 12.

From the Chairman



It is devastating enough to lose your sight at any age. But the more tender the years, the more tragic it may seem. St Dunstan's is no stranger to young admissions and several have become St Dunstaners in their mid-teens. Stephen Menary was only 14 when he was blinded, deafened and lost a hand as a result of a booby trap device at the London TA Centre, where he was an Army Cadet. St Dunstan's will be fulfilling its role and Stephen started training at Ovingdean in May. This is a special challenge, as we shall have to consider his educational needs and the support he will require from his parents.

I never cease to be impressed at the sight of thousands of runners pounding the streets in the London Marathon. This year St Dunstan's had a large group of St Dunstaners, which included the wife of a St Dunstaner together with several members of staff from the Ovingdean Training and Rehabilitation department, every single one of them finished the race. I am also delighted to hear of another St Dunstaner who successfully completed his 18th tandem bike marathon. On behalf of all, I congratulate them on their endurance and achievement.

I am pleased to welcome Nick Ward, who took up the position of Director of Fund Raising on May 14th. More details will be published in the July issue.

Captain Michael Gordon-Lennox, RN



NOTICE BOARD



HOLIDAY/CLUB/REUNION BOOKINGS AT OVINGDEAN

St Dunstan's Ovingdean would like to remind St Dunstaners, wives/husbands, widows/widowers and their visitors that provisional bookings cannot be made more than six months prior to the dates required.

These will be confirmed two months prior to the holiday request. Rooms booked for club events will be held until one month before the event and if unwanted, will be released to holidaymakers. Due to some periods throughout the year being heavily booked, we have to advise people that other facilities outside Ovingdean will be offered. St Dunstaners will always have priority at St Dunstan's Ovingdean.

EX-POW REUNION 2002

It was recently proposed that St Dunstan's ex-Prisoners of War Reunion for 2002 will be held over the weekend on April 19th-23rd. This date is subject to confirmation.

Some people sometimes send subscriptions or contributions through the mail, usually to Tom Hart. The most convenient way is to make the cheques payable to St Dunstan's ex-POWs and address them to A.W. Lockhart, 30 Wren Gardens, Dagenham, Essex RM9 5YH.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

A new stock of Christmas cards sold in aid of St Dunstan's will be available shortly to all readers and members of the public. If you would like an order form which describes the cards and prices please contact the Public Relations department on 020 7723 5021. We look forward to hearing from you.

PLEASE NOTE

The postcode for St Dunstan's in Harcourt Street has been changed to W1H 4HD.

ST DUNSTAN'S SHIRTS FOR SALE

New stock of St Dunstan's T-shirts, polo shirts and sweatshirts are now available in medium, large and extra large sizes. The logo is of St Dunstan's badge with the wording "Caring for blind ex-Service men and women" underneath.

Prices as follows:

White T-shirt 100% cotton with blue left-hand chest logo £4.30

Navy T-shirt 100% cotton with yellow left-hand chest logo £4.30

Navy polo shirt 100% cotton with yellow left-hand chest logo £8.30

White polo shirt 100% cotton with blue left-hand chest logo £8.30

Navy sweatshirt 70% cotton/30% polyester with yellow left-hand chest logo £9.00

Postage & packing will be added which will depend on the quantity ordered. You will be notified of this charge on your payment request.

To order please telephone the Public Relations department (Shirts) on 020 7723 5021 or send in a written order to PR Dept (Shirts), 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD.

PHOTOGRAPHY FOR BLIND

London's Victoria and Albert Museum are running a course on photography for blind and partially sighted people on August 22nd. Equipment is provided and the course is structured for beginner and experienced alike. For details call Imogen Stuart on 020 7942 2192 or e-mail bookings.office@vam.ac.uk. The course and entry to the Museum is free to disabled people and one carer. Guide dogs are welcome.

DEADLINES FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The final date for submitting items for publication in the August Review is June 29th.

The final date for submitting items for publication in the September Review is July 30th.

Old comrades join Tom for book launch



St Dunstaner Tom Taylor (second from right) at the launch of his autobiography.

Tom Taylor was reunited with colleagues from the Second Battalion, The Border Regiment who joined him for the launch of his book. The man who is shaking hands with Tom was at his side when he received his gunshot wound in January 1945. The tall man in the middle of the photo is one of the stretcher-bearers who picked Tom up from the battlefield several days after the battle.

Tom's book *Through the Hole in my Head*, tells the remarkable story of how he was shot in the head and blinded by a Japanese sniper's bullet during the Burma Campaign in WWII. It is available from the Methodist Publishing House on 01733 332202 and costs £8.95 plus £1.35 postage & packing.

OBITUARIES:

John Willard



John Willard with a helping hand for Albert Grimshaw during a Christmas Show at Ovingdean.

We regret to announce the death of Kenneth (John) Willard on April 5th. John was known by many, especially the lady St Dunstaners, who will remember John as an escort and a dancing partner at their weekly dances in the past. Many of you will recall the visits by John to the late St Dunstaner Albert Grimshaw. In July 1994 John was made a member of St Dunstan's and he regularly attended the AGMs at Headquarters. We send our deepest sympathy to his widow, Ann.

Sir Harry Secombe

Sir Harry Secombe, CBE passed away on April 11th, aged 79. He served in the Royal Artillery as a Lance Bombardier during World War II but is best known as an all-round entertainer. From an audacious start on *The Goon Show*, he went on to work in all areas of radio, film, television and theatre.

As the host of the television programme *Highway* he visited St Dunstan's Ovingdean and Pearson House in December 1990. It was the 300th episode of the programme and featured profiles of St Dunstaners in various walks of life. In the course of the programme he chatted to Colin Beaumont-Edmonds, Martin McCrorie, Tom Hart, Bill Griffiths, Fred Hobbs, Des Chandler and Gwen Obern.

In more recent years Sir Harry renewed his acquaintance with St Dunstan's when he joined us on Remembrance Sunday. He escorted Stan Grimsey and Ron Cattell during the parade. The day was also Stan's 80th birthday and Sir Harry later sent him a bottle of whisky to mark the occasion.

Our condolences go to Sir Harry's widow Myra and all members of their family.

JOSEPH COPAS

We apologise to Mrs Eileen Copas for incorrectly publishing her late husband Joseph's age as 72 in the April *Review*. Although he looked that young, he was in fact 80 years of age.

TYRED AND DEFLATED

by Mark Noble



Mark and Liz pedal forth on the BOLD Tulip Tandem Marathon.

The BOLD Tulip Tandem Marathon takes place in April annually in Spalding, Lincolnshire. BOLD (Blind Outdoor Leisure Development) has organised this event for the past 19 years, of which I have participated in all but the first.

The course is 26 miles of open countryside. Being in Lincolnshire the roads are very flat, however this is made up for by the strong winds.

I had trained and intended to ride this year with front rider, Doug Jarvis, 17st 2lb, 6ft 2in. However, due to last minute illness, I had to ride with my reserve rider (my partner), Liz Mitchell, 7st 8lb, 5ft 1in. Due to the extreme differences in sizes I had to loan and modify a tandem that was much smaller. In the week before the event with the help of a friend the garden shed was turned into 'the Tour de France' pit stop!

We had to swap everything except the frame and in this way we ended up with a bike on which Liz could almost reach the pedals and with the wide quarter raise handlebars Liz could just about keep the bike on the road, despite myself being four stone heavier!

After all alterations were completed, Liz and I took the mean racing machine out for a test run for only two miles, this being the total of her training.

On the morning of the race we had a good full English breakfast to give us strength and set off to the booking-in tent.

We were start position 57 out of 63 as Doug and I in the previous year came in 12th out of a field of 90. The weather was quite windy but still dry. We

unpacked the tandem and waited for numbers 50-60 to be called. Once called we were waiting in a queue to be escorted to the start. At that very moment the heavens opened.

Fortunately by the start it had stopped raining and we set off well and seemed to be making good progress at around 20 miles an hour until at about 10 miles ... We had a puncture - Liz noticed the front tyre was deflating fast. We juddered to a halt for roadside repairs.

Managed to change the inner tube and set off again only to find after a further 5 miles we had a second puncture, this time we had to use a puncture repair kit. Undeterred we set off again, however that deflated feeling came over us again and we realised our repair had not been successful. Despite a second attempt at sealing the tube we continued to deflate.

We did manage to finish the race but had to stop every two to three miles to pump up the tyre.

We juddered over the finish line in a time of two hours fifteen minutes with only a few friends still waiting to cheer us over the finish. Quite close behind the winners finishing in 58 minutes despite heavy head winds!

Despite all, we were pleased to finish and receive our medals. We have not been deterred and we are hoping to purchase a tandem of the correct dimensions to enable to do better next year.

With all our frequent stops we were not too tired to enjoy the evening celebrations and buffet! No prize for endurance!

Life and Times of Ovingdean

by Lyn Neville



Bonnie bonnets! Marjorie Humphrey, Eileen Bramley, Alice Mayberry and Pat Collins on parade.

Spring is here at last and hopefully here to stay.

Ovingdean has had many events to celebrate. We welcomed the ex-Prisoners of War, who reminisced with each other. Radio Days entertained us with songs and poetry from the war years. Everyone had a good time and there is a fuller report on page 15.

Widows' Week was very successful. The widows enjoyed a shopping trip to Bluewater, a trip to the theatre and a wonderful day out in Canterbury. Their week was cram packed with numerous events to keep them entertained. At the end of their holiday they went home relaxed and with a lighter purse after all that shopping!

PBK once again excelled themselves with a wonderful St George's Day luncheon that tantalised our palettes.

The traditional making of Easter Bonnets was guided by Care Assistant Jan Nash and a parade on Easter Monday gave us a winner. We congratulate Gwen Hannant for her talent in bonnet making. After the parade we continued the fun dancing to Andrew Varley. An Easter Egg hunt proved successful and the winners are probably a few pounds heavier!

The Masonic Weekend proved to be as successful as ever. Temple Lodge Brethren joined the St Dunstaners for a most enjoyable luncheon. Two new St Dunstaners were welcomed to the gathering.



Brothers Freer and Youngson with their guests at St Dunstan's Masonic Group dinner.



A SONG TO REMEMBER!

St Dunstaners Herbie Downard and Arthur Whittington were in the front row at The 'Not Forgotten' Association Concert at Ovingdean.

GOING OUT IN A BLAZE OF GLORY

Liz Hutchison made a distinctive departure from St Dunstan's when she retired at the end of April. Her retirement party was attended by a London Fire Brigade crew from Manchester Square. They were summoned when a fire alarm was triggered at Harcourt Street. Everyone at Headquarters had to evacuate the building, but fortunately it proved to be a false alarm and they were soon able to resume wishing Liz all the best for the future.



Message from the Head of Fund Raising



Maria Bullingham and Lynda Stringer run past the gates of the Royal Naval College in Greenwich.

Although the London Marathon will be long since past by the time this *Review* is published, I should like to mention one member of the Fund Raising department who competed in this event. In spite of a pulled tendon, Maria Bullingham's personal determination won through and on the day she completed the course. Maria was accompanied by Lynda Stringer who was nursing a knee injury. They ran the first ten miles, ran and walked the next six and walked thereafter, but sprinted the final 400 metres. It was a great display of courage and endurance on both their parts. We would like to congratulate them and all the others, for their courageous efforts on behalf of St Dunstan's.

IN SUPPORT OF ST DUNSTAN'S

Recent and future fund raising sponsorship events include an individual who is climbing Ben Nevis for us, another who is biking from Hockley to Southend and a third person who is going from mid Ulster to the Somme. A 25-mile cross-country run is being arranged by the Police and others are taking part in a multi-terrain event and a parachute jump. RAF Sealand has adopted St Dunstan's as its Charity for 2001 and will be carrying out a number of fund raising events for us during the year.

VIDEOS FOR LEGION

Copies of *Night or Day..?* have recently been made widely available to Royal British Legion Clubs to

help give them a better understanding of the work of St Dunstan's. It will enable them to inform their members of the support that the Charity is now able to offer to all significantly visually-impaired ex-Service Men and Women, regardless of the cause of their blindness.

GUINNESS ENTRY

Ken Moss's accompanied and unaccompanied World Land Speed records for the blind of 154mph and 131mph respectively, which have been officially recognised by the *Guinness Book of Records*, should appear as an entry in the next and all future editions of the publication.

IN MEMORY OF A FEPOW

Our special thanks to Mrs Wright who has written a book entitled *Just a Soldier* about her late father's wartime experiences. She is donating proceeds from the sales to St Dunstan's. Her father, Francis Jones, was a staunch supporter of the Charity until his death on April 9th 2000. He had endured the horrors of war as a prisoner in the Far East. Mrs Wright asks readers of her book to remember The Forgotten Army. It is a very interesting book and if anyone would like a copy, please get in touch with the Fund Raising department.

Pat Moore-Searson

REUNION ROUND-UP

Reunions continued at Norwich on April 18th when 15 St Dunstaners, eight widows and one member of the Gubbay Trust gathered at the Swallow Nelson Hotel. Timothy Bacon was the Member of St Dunstan's Council presiding.

There were 19 St Dunstaners and 18 widows at the Shaftesbury Reunion on April 25th. Michael Delmar-Morgan, Vice-Chairman of St Dunstan's presiding reminded those present that it was ANZAC Day. It was originally established to honour the men of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corp who died at Gallipoli during World War I.

FLYING AGAINST THE ODDS

The Lancaster Bomber took to the sky for the first time in June 1941. Simon Rogers spoke to two St Dunstaners who flew the plane on bombing missions

Sixty years ago this month one of the finest examples of British ingenuity in the field of aeronautical engineering took to the air for the very first time. The Lancaster Bomber was developed by A. V. Roe & Co Ltd, more commonly referred to as Avro, in an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of their twin-engined Manchester bomber.

The Manchester had disappointed Bomber Command because it lacked the raw power to carry heavy bombs to Berlin. The solution devised by Avro designer Roy Chadwick was to increase wingspan to 102ft and add another two Rolls-Royce Merlin engines.



Flight Lieutenant Navigator Stewart Harris kitted out for a sortie into enemy territory.

This new configuration was named the Lancaster. Nearly 70ft long, it could carry a crew of up to eight men with a 22,000lb bomb load. It could achieve speeds of 287mph at a height of 11,500ft and had a range exceeding 1,000 miles.

Test-flights in June 1941 were encouraging but it would be another ten months before Bomber Command was able to take delivery and put the plane into active service. However, in the years that followed, the Lancaster would take the fight back to Hitler's Germany with devastating and precise effect.

Lancaster crews took part in every major night attack on Germany and were utilised by 61 RAF squadrons before the end of the war in 1945. Most famously they were used in the Dam Buster raids that used the "Bouncing Bomb" to destroy the Mohne and Eder dams in May 1943.

Two St Dunstaners whose lives depended on the superiority of the Lancaster were Stewart Harris and Wilfred Sharman. They both recall the plane with affection. "It was a wonderful aircraft, the Lancaster, it felt good to be flying them. We felt we were part of something special," said Stewart.

"There is one problem with it," he added. "People keep shooting at it!" An old joke but it echoes the conditions under which the Lancaster took to the air.

Stewart was 18 years old when he first signed on. He was working for the GPO, a reserved occupation. "I quite fancied the idea of flying but I didn't get called back until August 1941 when I was 19 and a half. Peacetime training goes on for ever, it takes a long time, we had to do things quickly, we had to learn as much as an experienced officer who had joined years before in less time. We had to pack a lot in."

As a navigator Stewart had to spend a few weeks training on the Manchester as a prelude to the improved Lancaster.

His first flight was less than smooth, the plane was rocking and started to lose height. "Our pilot's oxygen had become detached, once it was

reconnected he soon recovered. I did not think it was the most auspicious start."

This prompted Stewart to recall another occasion when oxygen became an issue for one of his comrades. The crew had been told to take the Lancaster to the highest point they could. "The thing about flying at that kind of height is that you are on oxygen but different people needed different amounts of oxygen," said Stewart. "I could go quite high without needing any, but our bomb aimer needed it at about 8,000ft."

In this case the highest point proved to be 28,000ft. Avro place the flight ceiling for the Lancaster at 24,500ft. Stewart and his comrades were very much pushing the envelope of what the plane might be expected to do.

Having completed his Air Force training in South Africa, completing courses in navigation and air gunnery Stewart joined 50 Squadron, flying out of Skellingthorpe, near Lincoln.

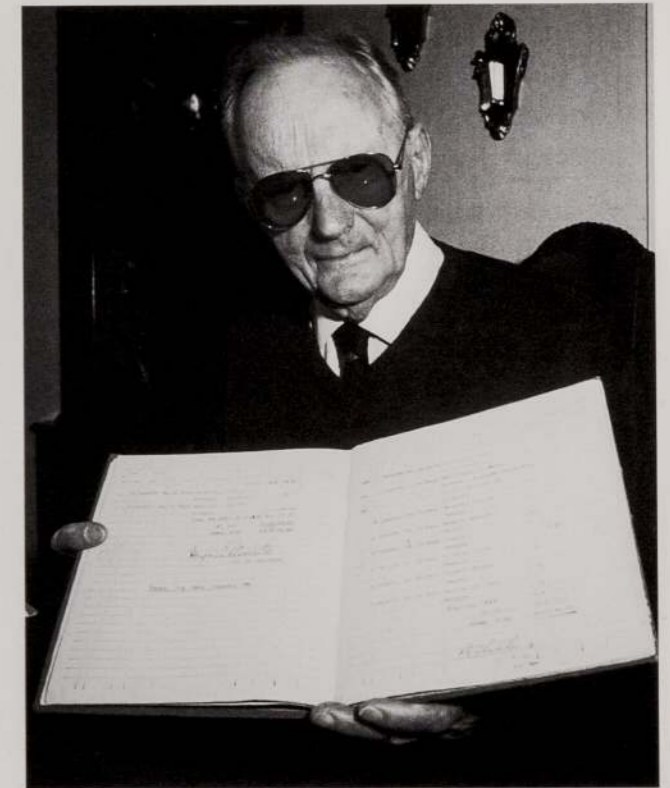
"There was an exodus of crews from 50 Squadron, some of them went to form 617 Squadron, which became known as the Dambusters. Several of our friends died on that first mission. I still remember some of the faces."

Stewart found himself helping to set up 619 Squadron, which initially started with four crews. The move saw them launched into a new programme of training with a new aircraft. With their new Squadron they set off on what was their 13th bombing mission. It was proverbially unlucky.

"The first attack came from underneath where there was a blind spot. It did terrible damage on that first attack. It shot up the airscrews, putting them into fine pitch, which meant that the propellers weren't biting into the air. It made a hell of a din. That was my first reaction to the attack.



Under fire! A Lancaster flies through the flak during a night-time mission. Attacks such as this were a regular occurrence for RAF St Dunstaners Stewart and Wilfred.



Stewart still has his log book which records his training on the Manchester and subsequent flights on Lancasters.

"We had three engines on fire we managed to extinguish two, but the third, the starboard outer just got brighter and brighter."

Stewart explained that because the flight was intended to be a short one, the plane had left without a full tank. However the half-empty tanks were vulnerable to explosion.

"We had a wizard gunner, Ronnie Chisolm. The second attack came from behind. During an attack the gunners had to leave their microphones on so that we could hear what was going on. The cry came up, our gunner had hit it and it had gone down. It's just as well because we couldn't have taken any drastic evasive action."

The crew baled out into occupied Belgium. Stewart, now 21, spent the next five weeks on the run before he was captured. The conditions he endured meant that he was unable to resume his RAF career and would ultimately lead to him becoming a St Dunstaner.

Like Stewart, Wilfred Sharman was in a reserved occupation, working the mines when he applied to join the Royal Air Force. "The only thing you could

St Dunstaner Wilfred Sharman when he was a Tail-Gunner on a Lancaster.



get into were the air crews, so I volunteered. I was 17 but told them I was 18."

Wilfred joined a Lancaster crew in 106 Squadron as a tail-gunner. They flew from RAF Metheringham, near Coninsby, Lincolnshire. "I think it was an amazing aircraft, we all did! I did 31 flights as a tail-gunner which is pretty amazing."

This is not an idle boast. It echoes a point that Stewart made about the odds stacked against the flying crews. For Wilfred those dangers and the demands they placed on individuals in Service are exemplified by the fate of a comrade, Flight-Sergeant George Thompson. He pulled his crewmates from the burning fuselage of a downed Lancaster. This action cost Thompson his life and he was posthumously awarded the VC.

"I had one scare, which was a bit of a trifle really," said Wilfred. "We were up there over the target and there were the fighters and the flak and something hit me on the helmet! I was very frightened, I was scared to move my head, I thought I had been hit with all this flak out there."

Wilfred checked for signs of injury, an exercise restricted by the gloves he was wearing. "I rubbed my head but couldn't find any blood. I couldn't for the life of me figure out what had hit me. It turned out to be the axe, which was to hack your way out if you got stuck in the cockpit, it had got knocked off and hit me."

Daytime missions had little appeal. "We did five or six daylight missions when the invasion started. I wasn't keen on them, you could see too much. We weren't really equipped for them, we only had two brownings."

When the Lancaster came into service, Bomber Command's CO, Sir Arthur Harris (no relation to Stewart) had hoped to fit the planes with heavier guns. Ironically, these plans were dashed by America's entry into the war. The heavier ordnance was allocated exclusively to American planes.

Wilfred found that fortune turned when his crew flew in a new aircraft. "This was during the invasion of Europe, we got shot up over the target. The skipper gave us a choice he said 'Do you want to bale out or should we try and crash land this thing.' We decided to try and crash it, so we crashed in France at an

American Aerodrome. We hit a couple of Lightnings which didn't please the Americans too much when we put them out of action."

Both Stewart Harris and Wilfred Sharman place great strength in the unity of their respective crews. It is a bond that persists to this day; both keep in contact with the men who served with them on the Lancasters.

Stewart remains philosophical about the conflict that united them. "I look at my grandchildren growing up now, and I didn't think of it this way back then, but now I think what an awful thing to ask a 21-year-old to do. There was a lot of bravado attached to what we did, but the odds were stacked against us."



St Dunstaner Wilfred Sharman (second from right) with other members of his 106 Squadron crew.

Bullseye in the foot-and-mouth zone

by Barbara Degenhardt

St Dunstan's Archery Club spent a few days at Lyne Akres in Devon in preparation for the British Blind nationals in June. Despite being in the midst of the foot-and-mouth area, we fortunately were not affected by the outbreak.

After a comfortable journey down from Ovingdean we were welcomed by Dave and Sally Moss, the owners of the Centre, and of course, Sox, their affectionate and well-behaved Staffordshire bull terrier. The rooms are well furnished and very comfortable and the catering is magnificent. Dave is a qualified chef and the meals reflect this. Quality is well matched with quantity – no nouvelle cuisine for Dave!

Several members went straight to the range to set up for the next day, while the rest settled down in front of a roaring log fire. Dave is a regional archery judge and a fund of anecdotes from days gone by.

We awoke on Tuesday morning to teeming rain. Unhappily Eric Bradshaw was unwell, but nothing was too much trouble for Sally to ensure his and Gwen's comfort. Colin's planned cycle ride was re-routed to several circuits round the range but at least he didn't get lost.

An argument arose as to who should get Eric's breakfast. Goodness knows why as there was so much no one could have managed any more. The rest of the day was devoted to coaching and practice, but the evening was spent at a local pub full of

curiosities. Of course the archers felt obliged to sample the local brews and reluctantly had to avoid causing offence to the resident ghost by repeating their orders several times.

Wednesday was a visit to the Eden Project – an experience not to be missed. The hangovers could not have been too bad as everyone made it to the top of the waterfall in the tropical bio-dome.

Thursday saw us back in the indoor range, preparing to shoot the Burntwood round. This is a special round which has been shot at Ovingdean before it was officially adopted by the BBS. The snack lunch provided nearly did for the shooters but they bravely struggled on and acquitted themselves well.

John Lilley was top St Dunstaner with 652, Bert Wood 440, and Nigel Whiteley with 269. The coaches' scores were Colin Dickinson, 1164, Sue Habgood, 864, and Enid Andrews 625.

Dave and Sally served us with sherry and nibbles before dinner and the day finished with a spirited game of skittles in the sports hall.

Once again, a most enjoyable break! Thanks to David Habgood for organising, to Brian Muggeridge for his driving and to everyone for being such good company.

John Lilley has been selected to shoot for England in France next month. We wish him the very best of luck.

KEEP ON RUNNING!

St Dunstan's Sports & Recreation Supervisor Grant Cooper, MILAM, Dip recalls spirited success in the Flora London Marathon 2001



St Dunstan's team all ready for the 21st London Marathon. Andy Mahoney (top left) and Pete Walker (third top left) would set the pace. The start in Greenwich Park is a short walk away from St Dunstan's former Blackheath annexe.

An injury struck and an apprehensive St Dunstan's Marathon team met on Saturday afternoon at the Union Jack Club, London. Tomorrow, April 22nd was the big day and several of our runners were worried about finishing this year's London Marathon let alone putting in a good time. The intense training of the last few months had taken its toll and niggling injuries had been hard to shake off. A year of terrible weather, flooding and the outbreak of foot and mouth disease had seen several of our big training runs cancelled.

The team retired to bed by 21:30 having satisfied themselves with a large carbohydrate supper. It was to be an early start and not a single member of the team was able to sleep as nerves began to creep in. At 05:00 phones began ringing and early calls were received. At breakfast it was great to see other Servicemen staying at the Union Jack Club running in aid of St Dunstan's, proudly displaying the St Dunstan's T-shirts.

Early preparation was of paramount importance if we were to get around the course in some form of masochistic comfort. Electronic tags fitted to trainers, numbers pinned to vests and, of course, the

proverbial greasing, not missing any nook or cranny, and the strategic placing of plasters over nipples to prevent rub was a must. The smell of Deep Heat and Algipan wafted down the corridors of the Union Jack Club, all adding to the anticipation of the day.

The trains were crowded as we battled our way to Greenwich Station, a record number of 32,000 runners would be taking part in this year's event. As we settled at Greenwich Park, a short distance from the red start line (one of three) we passed several of the rhinos that are now famous icons within the London Marathon.

Whilst penned in at the start line we jostled for position with the likes of Elvis, rhinos, Bob the Builder, ships, buses, clowns and camels, all eagerly awaiting the starting horn. Free-fall parachutists fell from the sky as the start horn sounded. We never saw Andy Mahoney from that point, he had sprinted away, finished the race and was heading back to Scotland whilst several of us were still stomping the course.

Grant Cooper and St Dunstaner, Billy Baxter jostled their way through the crowds, tempers fraying and patience being pushed to the utmost limits, as Billy tripped over and crashed into one person after another, it was just simply unavoidable. St Dunstaner Iain Millard and guide Mike Godden played a cat



Billy and Grant hit the streets of Shadwell.

and mouse game with Billy and Grant whilst Gary Lomas accompanied Lynda Stringer and Maria Bullingham. St Dunstaner Pete Walker had set off at a good pace and was well ahead of most of us, as had ROVI, Ian Hebborn.

Tower Bridge and the halfway mark were soon upon us and the course was beginning to take its toll; Lynda's knee had blown up and she dropped back to encourage Maria who was struggling with an ankle injury. Gary Lomas had bravely pushed on alone, bumping into every good-looking girl that he passed! Billy was becoming frustrated with the constant pain, trips, pulls and falls that he was experiencing, and Iain and Mike were in a similar situation. Don Planner was into his stride, but running slower than in past years.

Morale was lifted as we reached Docklands to be greeted by Janis Sharp and April Hadert, who had come along to support the team. Ian Hebborn of the Rehabilitation & Training department was looking good for a sub-four hour run at this point, but things were to sadly change for him as well. We had all carried mobile phones and it was comforting to know the progress and distress of other team members.

Lynda's husband, John, who has accompanied the team on several of the runs, and her son Paul were shouting words of encouragement from amongst the vast crowds of spectators. As were Billy's and Ian Hebborn's parents and Mike Godden's mum Julie, who is going to do the Great South run with the St Dunstan's team later this year.

The cobblestones at the Tower of London were the 22-mile mark and many of the team had reached a walk-jog routine by this point. The finish line was a welcome sight for Billy (his tobacco was in his bag!). It was an emotional finish for both Grant and Billy as they crossed the line shortly after Don Planner in 5 hours 55 minutes.

Iain Millard and Mike Godden were next to finish in 6 hours 8 minutes. Three replica Mini coopers crossed the finish line as Lynda and Maria turned the corner into the Mall, chasing a pair of Elvis Presleys and being hotly pursued by the oldest man in the Marathon – a 90 year old. The two girls had courageously struggled around the 26.2 miles, both with painful injuries, to cross the finish line in 6 hours 53 minutes.

It was a fantastic weekend, enjoyed by all of the team and we are all eagerly awaiting next year's run.



Gary Lomas makes good time along Trafalgar Road quickly passing the National Maritime Museum.

The combined efforts of the St Dunstan's Marathon Team has helped raise a fantastic £8,000 approximately for the St Dunstan's Sports and Activities fund. Congratulations to all who took part and many thanks to those who travelled to London to support us on the day.

The final results and times were as follows:

| | Time | Position |
|--------------|---------|----------|
| Andy Mahoney | 3:01:27 | 1051 |
| Ian Hebborn | 4:31:42 | 14546 |
| Pete Walker | 4:55:36 | 18144 |
| Gary Lomas | 5:26:43 | 20920 |
| Don Planner | 5:35:32 | 21430 |
| Grant Cooper | 5:55:24 | 22237 |
| Billy Baxter | 5:55:24 | 22238 |
| Iain Millard | 6:08:18 | 22578 |
| Mike Godden | 6:08:20 | 22580 |

Women's section

| | | |
|------------------|---------|------|
| Maria Bullingham | 6:53:09 | 6607 |
| Lynda Stringer | 6:53:09 | 6608 |

There were 31,000 finishers in this year's marathon.

New perspectives in disorientation

Mike Godden on the challenges faced by VIP athletes



Mind how you go! Mike intervenes to ensure that a jogging fireman doesn't collide with Iain.

Mike Godden from St Dunstan's Training and Rehabilitation department paid tribute to the St Dunstaners taking part in this year's London marathon. Accompanying Iain Millard on the 26 mile run opened a new perspective for Mike on how the event is experienced by visually impaired athletes.

"The main thing is the disorientation! At different points, you've got the crowd cheering, bands playing, when you are used to using sounds to guide yourself down a familiar corridor, it's overwhelming, going into something that physical when you've also got that mental challenge of orientating yourself in all that noise."

Mike adds that he gained an appreciation of how the conditions of the race obliterate all points of reference for the blind runner, how that increases the physical and mental challenge that Iain and his fellow St Dunstaners had embarked upon.

"It was seeing how tiring it could be for Iain. You had people banging in to him. People were patting him on the back and at the 15 mile mark something that was meant as encouragement started turning into something that was irritating."

The prospect of relief at a drink station presented similar tribulations. "Iain was reliant on me to get him

something. You have to push through, tempers tend to get frayed. There was a lot of energy taken from Iain in those moments."

The emphasis on landmarks and other visual terms became all too apparent for Mike. "There's a technique where you look at the fourth lamp-post ahead and when you reach it you put on a spurt for the next fourth lamp-post. Little tricks like that, confidence-boosting stuff is denied to you if you are a visually impaired runner."

Running through some of the most scenic areas of our capital just served to underline this point. "Iain had obviously seen the London Marathon on television before losing his sight and here he was, being in London but not knowing where he was. You've got all the familiar landmarks such as London Bridge and the *Cutty Sark*, but it's difficult when you are not seeing them and have to keep asking 'Are we there yet?'. There was a point where I am sure that Iain got bored with asking me where we were."

Mike concludes that the event, tough as it is, can be twice as hard on visually impaired runners. His own attempt to run with his eyes shut was quickly abandoned. "I wondered what it must have been like for Jamie Cuthbertson in the Marathon des Sables, running over such a distance and not knowing when the end is in sight. I can look at the 20 mile marker and think 'Not long now' but a runner with a visual impairment cannot do that."

Pat Moore-Searson

Pat joined the then newly-created Fund Raising department in August 1995. She was responsible for approaching Trusts, Foundations and other organisations and St Dunstan's received generous contributions as a result of her efforts. Pat's skill in writing appeal letters was put to effective use in St Dunstan's various fund raising campaigns. In March, Pat took on the role of Head of Department until the recent new appointment.

Pat left St Dunstan's at the end of May to undertake other challenges as a Fund Raising Consultant. We wish her the best of luck.

FAR AWAY WE WERE ...

Alf Lockhart reports on the ex-Prisoners of War Reunion



Alf Lockhart presents Mary Stenning with a token of the ex-POWs appreciation.

The weekend April 20th-22nd was the occasion of St Dunstan's ex-Prisoners of War Reunion. Sir John Gingell, GBE, KCB, KCVO (although not an ex-POW himself) acts as our President and was accompanied by Lady Gingell. The Guests were, the Chairman of St Dunstan's, Captain Michael Gordon-Lennox, RN and Mrs Gordon-Lennox, the new Chief Executive Mr Robert Leader and Mrs Leader. Our Guest Speaker, Group Captain Paul Terrett, OBE sent his apologies for being unable to attend due to family matters.

On Friday, the ex-POWs met for a "get-together" and buffet in the Bar/Blue Room. There was a very good attendance. Some of us, bemoaned the fact that there was no dancing. Others countered by saying that this was a good thing as it left more time for drinking and talking. The buffet was excellent and everyone was in good spirits and this augured well for a successful reunion.

The AGM was held on Saturday at 10.30am with Sir John Gingell presiding and William Griffiths, MBE in the Chair. After the Exhortation and the apologies for absence, the meeting ran through its business smoothly and the Committee were re-elected "en bloc".

After the meeting, Alice Griffiths suggested that a "memorabilia" cabinet should be set up, in which to

put souvenirs from Prison Camp days. I think she got the idea from a newspaper reporter who interviewed some of the ex-POWs on Friday afternoon. Alice asked that any memorabilia should be sent to her address, 695 New South Promenade, Blackpool, Lancs FY4 1SY. Alice asks that only material that will go through a normal letter-box should be sent.

Bill Griffiths also mentioned St Lawrence Jewry, Next-Guildhall, I think it is actually in Gresham Street, next to the Guildhall. Each year they hold a Memorial Service for all who served in the Far East. He attended a Service in December 2000 and said that a plaque had been placed in the Commonwealth Chapel dedicated to all who served in the Far East. The inscription on the plaque reads:

"FAR AWAY YOU WERE BUT EVER NEAR
YOUR DEEDS WILL NEVER DIE
FOR THOSE WHO WORSHIP HERE"

If you are ever in or near the City of London, why not drop in and see it. The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of London Alderman David Howard was unable to be at this particular Service owing to Parliamentary duties but sent this letter to be read out:



Rev David Williams delivered a Naval Grace, which permits those dining to remain seated. He also opted to do it in Welsh - a jaunty burst of song!



A day of good cheer for ex-POW St Dunstaners Ken Walker and Jim Fraser.

"To the Veterans of the Far East Campaigns of World War II, on this special day of your service and reunion, I send my heartfelt greetings and welcome.

"I have so many friends who fought and suffered in the Far East, some of who have passed on, and some who, at great age now, still live with the horrors of that time. And there were so many more who never returned.

"To my generation the experiences of those who fought, and of those who suffered, are scarcely imaginable. The deprivation and the dreadful suffering led to a momentous victory. But we who have inherited that victory cannot and must not forget the price that was paid for it.

"Our peace and freedom were bought so dearly. While, today, you reflect on the bitter struggle, the hardships and the friends you have lost, we must reflect on the sacrifices which gave us our peace and freedom.

"We owe you so much. And we will not forget."

The Chairman then brought the meeting to a close and we went our various ways to prepare for the dinner.

After a most excellent dinner which was provided by PBK, Captain Gordon-Lennox spoke about St Dunstan's work for the war blinded. Even now, he said, people are still being blinded by the enemies of England. He mentioned the young boy Cadet who recently lost a hand and an eye through a "torch" bomb. Sadly this young lad had already lost the sight in his other eye. At the age of 15, he must be our youngest ever St Dunstaner. The previous youngest, I think was Jim Padley who was blinded whilst on "fire-watch" duty in March 1941. When will we ever learn?

Betty Ford then took the microphone and read out a letter that Ernie had received from The Queen Mother on his 85th birthday. We all joined in congratulations and best wishes for him.

We were all delighted to see our old friend Mary Stenning who has been at every reunion dinner since the start. She was always a great organiser and a help to Mrs Elizabeth Dacre. After dinner we moved down to the bar and had a real right time.

Some of the ex-POWs were visited by their sons and daughters, so within the ex-POW gathering there were also several family reunions. It all blended into one huge family party ... It was lovely!!!

The Sunday morning Church Service was conducted by the Rev David Williams. Alf Lockhart read the Lesson and Tom Hart gave the Exhortation from Lawrence Binyon. We then went back to the lounge for coffee. The Rev Williams and his fiancée stayed on for lunch and were quite good company.



Sir John Gingell introduces Betty Ford who read a letter of congratulations from The Queen Mother to her husband, St Dunstaner Ernie.



St Dunstan's ex-POWs get in on the act! Classic radio stars such as Max Miller were re-created.

The Sunday evening concert was given by Vanguard Radio Productions. It was a marvellous show. My wife and I have been regular theatre-goers in the west of London and also the London Music Halls for over 50 years and I would have no hesitation in putting the Vanguard Radio Productions in my top bracket of choices for entertainment. They put on programmes like *ITMA*, *Gert & Daisy*, *Max Miller*, *Flanagan & Allen*. I only wish I could have seen them.

THANK YOU ALL

Now, these reunions cannot be organised without a great deal of help from others. Paul and Trevor of PBK, apart from producing a most excellent dinner are invaluable in arranging the table seating, and the presentation of bouquets, etc. Without their professionalism I am sure we would finish up in chaos.

Our President Sir John Gingell puts in a lot of time for us, enabling our Committee to contact the right people. And the lady who is our mainstay for actually getting things done is the Assistant Hon. Secretary, Mrs Beryl Gardner. So many thanks to Sir John and Beryl!

Bill Griffiths, our Chairman and Tom Hart, the Hon. Secretary, work very hard for this reunion. Indeed it is almost a fulltime job. But they like it! They are deserving of the highest praise and our thanks for the wonderful job they do.

Susan Harrison and her Staff certainly deserve our thanks for the way they cope with the influx of ex-POWs and their wives; there must have been 60 extra people in the House over the weekend.

RADIO MIKE

Congratulations to St Dunstaner Mike Tetley of St Albans, Hertfordshire on obtaining his Novice Licence A and amateur radio callsign, 2E0MRM.

Balancing the Books

by Ted Bunting

Backlash

Author: Paula Gosling

Reader: Franceen Brodtkin

Catalogue number: 8133

Duration: 6 Hours 45 minutes

American crime writers and Hollywood have made the tough city cop as familiar to us as the bobby on the beat. But with ludicrous plots and ridiculous red herrings or (bum steers) they have also often made stories about him a byword for trash and garbage.

But not this time I'm happy to say, for *Backlash* is a thriller in the best possible tradition. This search for a serial killer is action packed from the outset and compelling to the end. Personally, however, like the fat man with his sports car, I found it a little difficult to get into, but once I became comfortable with the setting and the characters, I thoroughly enjoyed the ride. I imagine most people would enjoy it too - provided that they can tolerate a bit of blood, strong language and violence.

50 YEARS AGO

The Football League decided to prohibit live broadcasts of football matches. Sir Ian Fraser wrote to the BBC asking them to consider playing recordings. They responded by saying this lacked the immediacy of live commentary and would not be acceptable to listeners.

Jimmy "Pa Glum" Edwards was the starter at the race for the Farmer Cup. The winner was Tommy Gaygan, followed by C. Williamson and W. Miller.

St Dunstaner Reg Goding was awarded a prize for his braille reading in a competition organised by the national Library for the Blind.

Grenadier Guards St Dunstaner G.H. Richards met Col Gordon-Lennox, Colonel of the Regiment and Lord Derby at a Guards Reunion.

Welcome to St Dunstan's

April 11th

John Bell of Market Drayton, Shropshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946. He served at UK stations including Chigwell, Waddington and the Shetlands. Part of Bomber Command, he trained as a ground wireless operator, maintaining links with aircraft. He then switched to mobile operations in the UK. After D-Day they moved to Europe in support of forward airfields. After the war he worked as an electrician, including nine years with the RAF. His interests have included photography and motor rallying. He and his wife Joan have two daughters.

Bernard Dixon of Brighton served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1939 to 1940 and the Royal Engineers from 1940 to 1945. He deployed to France with the BEF as an advanced driver. He was evacuated the day the French surrendered. Having transferred to the Royal Engineers as a carpenter, he was later deployed to join the 8th Army for mine clearing duties. Mr Dixon was wounded during the D-Day landings and evacuated after his right leg was amputated. After the war he returned to work building railway carriage interiors, which he did for 30 years. He then worked for West Engineering.

Constance Halford-Thompson of London served in the Women's Auxiliary Service (BURMA) in 1945. She deployed into Burma running a mobile canteen/shop for the advancing army. After the war she returned to the UK and married an Army officer. She was a painter specialising in racing and sailing. She has a son and daughter, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Edward Pretty of Brighton served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1947. Having volunteered at 16, he was selected for officer training and posted as Midshipman to HMS *Dolphin* where he began training on midget submarines. He was transferred to a Landing Craft Obstacle Clearing Unit in preparation for D-Day. At the end of the war he was posted to Mombassa to organise shipping to repatriate Italian POWs. After the war he took a degree in economics and politics before joining a large textile company as a salesman. He has four daughters, a son and ten grandchildren.

April 25th

Douglas Agar of Sheffield served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1939 to 1942. He then served with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers until his discharge in 1946. He went France as part of the British Expeditionary Force and was posted as missing presumed dead at Dunkirk. In civilian life he worked as a clerk/storeman before breaking out on his own as an insurance and credit broker. He later ran his own taxi firm. His interests have included mechanics, motorcycle scrambling, rallying and he also learnt to fly. He was an active member of the Dunkirk Veterans Association before it closed last year.

Stephen Menary of London is a 15 year old member of the Army Cadet Force who was injured by an explosive device left outside the TA Centre at Shepherd's Bush. When it went off he was blinded and had to undergo the amputation of his left hand.

Edward Bizzell of North Tawnton, Devon served in the Royal Navy from 1921 to 1945, serving in the Gunnery Division on many different ships. He served with Admiral Sir Henry Leach on HMS *Rodney* and HMS *Duke of York* during the war. He was Mentioned in Despatches in 1942 and was involved in the battle with the *Scharnhorst*. After retiring as Chief Petty Officer in 1945 he joined the Coastguard and ran a fish and chip shop for 14 years. Later he opened a business supplying fishing tackle. He is married to Sarah.

Alfred Chadwell of Blackburn served in the Fleet Air Arm from 1940 to 1945. He deployed to North Africa as a radar mechanic responsible for the installation and maintenance of radar on aircraft such as Swordfish and Walrus. After leaving the service he worked as a radio mechanic, later setting up his own workshop. He is now Vice President of the Engineering Society who build, maintain and run model steam locomotives that give rides to children. He has a son and daughter.

Kenneth Fricker of Staple Hill, Bristol served in the Royal Engineers from 1944 to 1948. He served in Germany, helping to clear minefields. When the war

ended he was redirected to Egypt and then Palestine. After leaving the army he became a lorry driver, later becoming a TV repair man. He and his wife Betty have a daughter and seven grandchildren.

Thomas Moody of Downham Market, Norfolk served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1942 and the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1948. He volunteered for the RAF and joined a Mosquito night flight squadron. After hospital treatment he was discharged and joined the Royal Navy qualifying as a Petty Officer radio mechanic instructor. In civilian life he joined EMI as a technical author. He has three sons.

HELP FOR SEA FESTIVAL

We urgently need some products to sell in the International Festival of the Sea, in Portsmouth on August 24th-27th. Any items with a maritime or marine connection such as sea creatures, pirates, boats/ships, Naval personnel (knitted preferably) are greatly appreciated.

Please send them to:
Robbie Hazan, Public Relations Department,
St Dunstan's, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H 4HD. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 020 7723 5021.

Reflections at a Halfway House

I have reached a milestone, which many St Dunstaners passed a long time ago. It provides an excuse for reflection. I have now been blind half my life. I wish it could have been the first half! The fact that it was inevitably the other way round, has led me to wonder if I have ever seen sometimes, for life as a visually handicapped person has now become so much the normal.

Fortunately, the question "why me?" has not raised its useless head for many a year. The reply cannot alter the basic facts, so don't waste time asking unanswerable questions. Nor do I feel bitterness against the perpetrators of my blindness. Neither revenge nor anger restore sight, so better to spend the energy on more enjoyable and positive activities.

Would life have been that much different had blindness not occurred? As sighted people, we took so much of our lives for granted. Rarely did we use our senses to the full. I believe life as a blind person can be likened to eating an orange. Sighted or blind, you can get at its flesh. Indeed, as a blind person, in order to ensure you have derived every benefit from the orange, you squeeze the peel that much harder to ensure you have extracted every last drop of juice.

Of course, a blind person is missing something; he or she cannot appreciate the deep, rich sheen and colour of the orange skin. But is the peel merely the trappings of life? It is the inside which counts and from which they are not barred.

How often I find myself on long journeys when stimulation is lacking or when lying awake in the dead of night, dreaming of how different life would

be if I could now see. But reality is soon restored when I ask myself, "Well, did you do that when you could see?" 'Hindsight', or should it be 'blindsight' is a wonderful illusion!

Underneath, I would hope I am still the same person. But blindness does lead to inevitable consequences with regard to relationships, responsibilities, independence and self-respect. Above all, there is a high degree of frustration both physical and mental. The lack of physical exercise due to poor mobility or difficulties in travelling and finding escorts hinder the 'letting off of steam'. The deprivation of independence is the hardest cross to bear for it can sap you of dignity and self-confidence.

Is it harder to have seen and know what you are missing? I am grateful for the 28 years I did have, which now enable me to have some idea of what people are describing, especially in terms of colour. Dreams are visual and therefore, most enjoyable in the main. As for the chestnut about whether it is better to be blind or deaf - well, neither, naturally!

But I regard myself truly fortunate to have joined such a family as St Dunstan's. Life would have been very different without its support. In St Dunstan's, there is no feeling sorry for yourself and only humour, encouragement and true comradeship to be harvested. In so many cases, adversity has brought out traits and abilities, which previously lay dormant and unchallenged. But let no sighted person believe we revel in our lack of sight or should be regarded as 'super human' in any way. I would truly give my right hand to watch a sunset, a field of flowers, the magnificence of a mountain scene, or simply to see my wife and children!

THE FALL OF WOODY'S BEARD

by Colin (Woody) Oakes

For many years Woody's long hair and full beard were well known on the Cribbage League circuit. The beard had changed from short and dark to being long. At a pre-season drinking session, in a moment of temporary insanity, Woody said that if the team won for the third consecutive time he would get a hair cut. With 11 teams in the league and time out for Christmas, Easter and Knockout contests it would be a very long season anything could happen.

From the start of the season the team were well placed in the league tables and by the halfway stage had built up a substantial lead. Soon Woody's agreement with the team became common knowledge. He then suspected a conspiracy when they won a match 9/0 against an equally strong opposition; questions were asked in both Houses.

The Friends of Woody's Beard were quick to act and campaigned to have the Beard declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest as the natural habitat of an endangered species known as Butcombe Piste Newt.

When that stratagem failed, they tried to have it preserved as a historical monument. That also failed as there was no documentary evidence to support the claim.

When all legal attempts failed other methods were considered such as bribing the barber with a year's supply of cat food but none of the Friends of Woody's Beard were fishermen. An attempted kidnapping of Woody failed when they sent him back with the ransom note.

There was however one glimmer of hope, none of the barbers or hairdressers in town would commit themselves to the task. The son of Chin the Barber found a sheep shearer and was promptly struck off Woody's Christmas card list.

Finals Night Sunday, April 29th 2001 Woody walked calmly to the chair and in front of witnesses the hair fell to the floor. It was quickly gathered up and preserved in a pickled onion jar. Woody survived the ordeal but suffered delayed shock when the Landlords gave him a double whisky free gratis and for nothing!

FAMILY NEWS

BIRTHS

Congratulations on the birth of:

Mikayla Hope on January 29th in America. She is the first great grand-daughter of May Morrish of Peacehaven, East Sussex and the late *Jim Morrish*.

Luke and Daniel on March 14th. The twins are the great-grandsons of Ethel Jenrick of Wallington, Surrey and the late *George Jenrick*.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to:

George and Pamela Mortimer of Hove, East Sussex on April 21st.

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to:

Hollis and Cissie Capon of Borough Green, Kent who celebrated 61 years of marriage on April 20th.

DEATHS

We regret to announce the death of:

Thomas Nimmins on April 21st. He was the husband of *Nancy Nimmins* of Consett, Co. Durham.

Eileen Owens of Elstree, Hertfordshire on April 6th. She was the widow of *George Owens*.

Hilda Evans of Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire on April 14th. She was the widow of *Wilfred Evans*.

Alice Morgan of York, North Yorkshire on April 22nd. She was the widow of *Arthur Morgan*.

Joyce Slater of Leyland, Preston, Lancashire on May 1st. She was the widow of *Eric Slater*.

Gladys Jeanmonod of Pinner, Middlesex on May 3rd. She was the widow of *Frank Jeanmonod*.

Jean Lee of Barton on Sea, New Milton, Hampshire on May 7th. She was the widow of *William Lee*.

Our sympathy goes to their families and friends.