

# St Dunstan's Review

February 2002



CONTENTS

ST DUNSTANERS  
ON TELEVISION

3

RNIB ON THE MOVE

4

YOUR REVIEW

5

BRaille  
REMEMBERED

8

OVINGDEAN NEWS

10

WELCOME

19

HONOUR FROM  
ANZIO

22

Cover picture:

*The Desert Bats stride  
again! Roraigh Ainslie  
leads St Dunstaner Jamie  
Cuthbertson through the  
West African desert.*

*Picture by Magali Delporte.*

Full details on page 11.

## From the Chairman



In line with the changes mentioned in Robert Leader's letter to you all last December, I am pleased to welcome Mr Charles Scott as Director of Finance and Information Technology.

I would also like to thank those who responded to Robert's letter regarding consultation with St Dunstaners, widows and widowers as to how we might re-present the image of St Dunstan's and the work we do to the outside world.

Whilst it is through your own efforts that you have achieved or succeeded, I know many of you are grateful for the role St Dunstan's has played in your lives and I am delighted that so many of you want to influence the way that we are perceived in the future.

Captain Michael Gordon-Lennox, RN



## NOTICE BOARD



### ST DUNSTAN'S Meridian TV Series

During the last three months, Ovingdean has been the scene of intensive filming on behalf of Meridian Television. The ITV company, who broadcast across Hampshire, Sussex and Kent, recently commissioned a series of six, half-hour programmes, entitled *St Dunstan's*, which started Monday nights at 10.50pm from January 28th 2002. The transmission time may vary from week to week.

In the words of the TV company, this series will be 'positive and inspirational' and demonstrates just how effective we are at Ovingdean in rebuilding the independence and confidence of St Dunstaners.

Each programme focuses on a particular theme and these will range from 'The Great South Run' through to training, care and Remembrance Sunday. There is also a special feature entitled, *Moving On* which will concentrate on the young Army cadet, Stephen Menary.

Video copies of each of the programmes will be available from the Fundraising and Communications department at Harcourt Street for anyone who lives outside the Meridian TV area or who finds that 10.50pm on a Monday evening represents an inconvenient time.

In conclusion, I can safely say that everyone enjoyed themselves immensely whilst the filming was taking place and I believe that the results justify their enthusiasm.

**Nick Ward**  
Director of Fundraising and Communications

### REDUCTION IN CHARGES FOR HOLIDAY STAYS AT NEVILL ROAD OR BEACON HILL

The charge for stays in St Dunstan's properties at Nevill Road or Beacon Hill has been reduced by 25 per cent to £15 per day, full board.

### NEW DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND IT

Charles Scott took up the post of Director of the Finance and IT department on January 2nd. He trained originally as a Master Brewer, working in one of Europe's biggest breweries based in Runcorn for ten years. He then retrained as a Chartered Accountant and worked in the IT and Rail industries before joining the staff of St Dunstan's.

Charles is married. He is a former rower but now concentrates on keeping fit and last September took part in the Great North Run.

If you considered our Chief Executive tall at 6ft. 7inches, then you will have to raise your sights one inch higher to address Charles!



### CHANGES AT HEADQUARTERS

The Public Relations department has now merged with Fundraising and Communications.

Ray Hazan (St Dunstaners liaison, PR Manager and Editor of the *Review*) and Simon Rogers (Editorial Assistant) should be contacted in all matters relating to the *Review*. Their extension numbers remain the same, 7930 and 7934 respectively.

Robbie Hazan and Margaret Habershon (extensions 7933 and 7935) are now part of the IT department and will deal with archive material, both past and present including photographs. Robbie will continue to deal with merchandise (sweatshirts, T-shirts, ties, etc).

### DEADLINES FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The final date for submitting items for publication in the March *Review* is February 11th 2002.

The final date for submitting items for publication in the April *Review* is March 11th 2002.

### RNIB MOVE TO KING'S CROSS

The Royal National Institute for the Blind has moved from its Portland Street offices to King's Cross. The new premises include a new low vision centre and resource centre, which will showcase new adaptive technology. Despite the move, telephone numbers remain the same. The main switchboard is 020 7388 1266 and there are two local rate lines, the helpline on 08457 669999 and RNIB Customer Services on 08457 023153.

The new address is RNIB, 105 Judd Street, London W1CH 9NE.

### 195 FREE DIRECTORY ENQUIRY SERVICE FOR VIPS

British Telecom's free 195 Directory Enquiry service is currently reorganising its database, a process they call data cleansing. Existing users will be sent a form during the next 18 months, which they are asked to return within a month. Current PINs will remain active during this process.

Visually impaired people using the service are given a personal identification number (PIN) and can call at anytime for free access to UK and International directory enquiry facilities. They will also connect the call if requested. New users can join the service by dialling 195 and ask for registration. It is also available to people who are not BT users.

### CUP FINAL TICKET DRAW

The FA Cup Final will take place at Cardiff on Saturday, May 4th 2002. It is possible that St Dunstan's will be allocated tickets. Any St Dunstaner wishing to go should send their name and address to Carole Woodgate at Headquarters by April 5th.

### BRIGHTON REUNION (III)

The third Brighton Reunion for 2002 will be held at Ovingdean on September 10th.

### CLEARER NAME FOR CLARITY

The General Welfare of the Blind has adopted the name Clarity – Employment for Blind People for their telesales operation. The charity produces toiletry, home cleaning products, mattresses and divans.

### NEW GOLF SEASON

Confirmed home dates for this season's golfing home games are as follows:

April 20th-21st	Training/Medal
May 25th-26th	Training/Medal
June 21st	Training
June 22nd	Invitation Day, Rusper Golf Club
July 13th-14th	Training/Medal
August 17th-18th	Training/Medal
September 14th-15th	Training/Medal

Away games are subject to confirmation and details will follow as soon as possible. All St Dunstaners who wish to join the Golf Club please contact the Secretary, Mike Tumilson, on 024 7646 0113 as soon as possible.

### DOLPHIN DROP-IN DAYS 2002

Janis Sharp has arranged the following dates for Dolphin Computer Access Ltd to hold their Drop-In Days at Ovingdean. It is a good opportunity to solve any existing problems you may have with any of their products or to learn about their computer access technology if you are thinking of buying. The days will be held on February 6th, July 3rd and November 13th. Contact Janis Sharp at St Dunstan's Ovingdean on 01273 307811 for details.

### WAY TO LEISURE

The benefits of leisure activities and how leisure providers, be they art galleries or sports venues, respond to visually impaired visitors is examined in a new booklet from the Royal National Institute for the Blind. *Your Way To Leisure – how to make the most of leisure venues if you are blind or partially sighted* makes particular reference to the Disability Discrimination Act. It is available in print, braille and on tape from the RNIB's Recreation and Lifestyles department by telephoning 020 7388 1266.

### THANK YOU FOR CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Members of staff throughout the country, both serving and retired, wish to thank all St Dunstaners, beneficiaries of the Diana Gubbay Trust, widows, widowers and their families for their cards and kind wishes received over the Christmas period. They reiterate their wishes for a healthy and happy 2002.

### MAKE IT YOUR REVIEW

*St Dunstan's Review* has been in publication in one form or another since 1915. The magazine is aimed at St Dunstaners, their wives, husbands, widows and widowers. It is also an important historical record of people and events within the organisation. We currently publish 11 issues per year in print, braille, on cassette, large print, computer disk and via e-mail.

The content has to satisfy a wide variety of ages, experience and interests. Will you please help to make sure we are covering what you want to read about.

Are you satisfied with current content? Are there other subjects of interest you would like included? Is the format suitable? Would you like more quizzes or puzzles, and if so, what types? Would you like features on people other than St Dunstaners?

We seek suggestions, contributions, either on a one-off or on a regular basis. Please send your responses to the Editor, by whichever means is most convenient to you, by writing to The Editor, *St Dunstan's Review*, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD or telephoning 020 7616 7930 or by e-mail to ray.hazan@st-dunstans.co.uk.

### THANKS FOR EQUIPMENT

Lesley Styche, Head of Rehabilitation and Training, would like to thank all those who responded to her request in the October issue of the *Review*, for surplus equipment. The Rehabilitation and Training department is always happy to receive items, such as mobility aids, CCTVs, low vision aids and magnifiers, which are surplus to requirements and may benefit others.

### BOMBER COMMAND SERVICE

A service of commemoration to honour the memory of those killed whilst serving in Bomber Command during World War II will be held at St Paul's Cathedral on April 24th at 11am. Entrance will be by ticket only. Anyone wishing to attend should apply for tickets, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope to BCA, RAF Museum, Hendon, London NW9 5LL by March 15th.

### NEW YEAR SHIRT SALE

A limited stock of St Dunstan's t-shirts and sweatshirts is available. The t-shirts (white and blue) cost £4, the sweatshirts (navy only) cost £8.00. There is no charge for P&P. Please contact Robbie on 020 7616 7933.

### OPTICAL MEMBER

Congratulations to St Dunstaner the Rev David Youngson of Billingham, Cleveland, who has been made a member of the General Optical Council for the next five years. This is a committee which reports directly to the Secretary of State on all optical matters.

David is also chairing the St Dunstan's Masonic Group, which will be meeting at Ovingdean on April 27th-28th.

### LOOKOUT SCREEN READER

Gaining access as a visually handicapped user to a personal computer can be an expensive task. Screen readers, the programs which read out loud what is on the screen, can cost typically upwards of £500. This is in addition to the price of the PC. A very much cheaper version of screen reader for those starting out or who have limited objectives is now available.

'LookOUT' is written by Paul Blenkhorn, who designed the original version of HAL, one of the most popular screen readers today. If you want to use a computer principally for writing and receiving e-mail and word processing, then LookOUT at £80 is a definite option (Visually disabled individuals pay zero VAT). The voice is intelligible and the programme has very reasonable functionality.

If you are interested, then please contact the Rehabilitation and Training department at Ovingdean for advice. The programme itself is available from: Choice Technology & Training, 7 The Rookery, Orton Wistow, Peterborough PE2 6YT. Tel: 01733 234441, Fax: 01733 370391. E-mail: info@screenreader.co.uk.

### GOODFEEL FOR GOOD SOUNDS

Goodfeel 2.5 Braille Music Translator can be used to transcribe music into braille notation. For a CD demonstrating the system, contact Techno-Vision Systems Ltd, 76 Bunting Road Industrial Estate, Northampton NN2 6EE. Tel: 01604 792777. E-mail: info@techno-vision.co.uk.

### FLIGHT PRICE WEBSITE

Deckchair lets you check the prices of a cross section of flight operators so you make sure you get the best deal from over 500 airlines. The site has a simple interface so using it is a pleasure.

Log on at [www.deckchair.com](http://www.deckchair.com).

## A TRIBUTE WITH HUMOUR

A new book, *Sticky Dewi* by Patricia Clements, relates amusing, coincidental and ironic incidents as told directly to the author by ex-Japanese prisoners of war. Every respect has been given to the much darker side of their incarceration and the material has been handled sensitively with those times in mind, though they do not form part of this work. It is not an historical record.

Contributors are from all parts of the world and from many different Services. There are maps to indicate the places mentioned, together with illustrations.

There have been many books on the subject of World War II but not one quite like this. It was considered that it would be a travesty if these incidents were not set down, especially now as many of those involved are approaching a great age. They have expressed their support and the same sentiments as the author.

This work is intended as a tribute to their courage and their ability to maintain a sense of humour when one would think it is impossible to do so. To laugh at the risk of being beaten, to play tricks, to get the better of their captors with the same risk and to manipulate many situations in order that they should rebound on the enemy, are qualities due an enormous respect. They have been recorded as an example to future generations on how to survive with courage and self-respect.

If you wish to order a copy of this book then please write to: Blackie & Company Publishers Ltd, Distribution Centre, PO Box 30, Ely, Cambs CB7 4WU. Please enclose a cheque or postal order payable to Blackie & Company Publishers Ltd for £8.99 which includes P&P.

## NEW FROM THE KEYBOARD GUIDE FOR COMPUTER BEGINNERS

The latest "From The Keyboard" guide - *VIPs Introduction to Computers* was recently released. This particular guide and tutorial has been produced as a physical demonstration on two C90 compact cassettes. It is aimed specifically at visually impaired people who are considering buying a computer for the first time, those who have only recently purchased a PC and are still getting to grips with the basics of Windows operating systems, and at those who are considering moving from a DOS-based

computer to Windows. *VIPs Introduction to Computers* is available for £12 per copy, including post and packaging. It is suitable for anyone who wants an information and user guide to establish whether or not computers are really for them, before committing themselves to considerable financial outlay. Those who want to quickly learn the basics of how to use a PC running Windows may also find it useful.

The guide contains a discussion of different types of computers, a detailed description of the inside and outside of a modern computer system box, an in-depth description of a modern Windows 95/98 keyboard, plus many peripherals of interest to VI people. This descriptive information covers the first hour of the guide. The remaining two hours provide a physical, step-by-step demonstration of the most basic and important concepts and utilities of Windows. The student can listen and follow along in a measured and easy manner. The guide is not a straight reading of text, but rather a demonstration with the learner hearing the narrator and also the JAWS for Windows, HAL for Windows and Window-Eyes screenreader speech.

For details please contact John Wilson by telephone on 0113 257 5957 or by e-mail: [jwjw@cwcom.net](mailto:jwjw@cwcom.net). Website: [web.wonetel.net.uk/~fromthekeyboard](http://web.wonetel.net.uk/~fromthekeyboard).

## TRISCOPE FOR TRAVEL

Triscope is a nationwide travel and transport information and advice service for disabled and elderly people. For details telephone 08457 585641.

## OBITUARIES:

### Colonel Philip Hislop

Colonel Philip Hislop of Sevenoaks, Kent died just before Christmas. He was a Governor of St Dunstan's, an association he enjoyed, particularly when organising activities for the Blind and Handless Group. Our sympathy goes to his widow Irene and all members of their family.

### Olive Taylor

Many St Dunstaners will be saddened to hear of the passing of Olive Taylor who died on November 24th. Olive joined St Dunstan's at Ovingdean in 1987 as a Laundry Assistant and was promoted to Assistant Housekeeper in 1990. She became Head of Housekeeping in 1992 and left the organisation in May 2000. Our sympathy goes to her husband.

## DON MINTER, EX-FLEET AIR ARM

It was with great sadness that I attended the funeral on January 4th of Don Minter who died in his sleep on December 21st at the very young age of 48. Don, as many St Dunstaners who have attended camps at HMS *Daedalus* and HMS *Sultan* will know, was a most faithful "dog" at these camps. This year will be my 30th camp and I really cannot remember one at which Don was absent. He was a gentle giant of a man and popular with everyone. He could take command without being aggressive, was discreet, efficient, reliable and most caring as his 'Master' Arthur Carter whose 'dog' he was for 26 years, can testify.



*Don Minter with Arthur Carter and Commodore Kidner during prize giving at HMS Sultan.*

To his great delight in 1991, Don became First Trainer of a most successful Fleet Air Arm Field Gun Crew.

As Marie, his wife of 18 years said at his funeral, he had a very close and loving family and three loves/careers; The Royal Navy, St Dunstan's and the Coast Guard. He was a shy man and tended to hide his light under a bushel, never pushing himself forward but happy to be quietly efficient in the background. He could be immensely funny with a great sense of humour.

The love and esteem in which he was held can be measured by the enormous number of folk who attended his funeral in Worthing. There must have been in the region of 300 people, of whom some 130 or more were Field Gun Crew - a sea of green blazers, plus a very large contingent of Coast Guard colleagues in their black uniforms. St Dunstaners present were Arthur Carter, Bill Shea, Nigel Whiteley and Cliff Ford, plus Camp helpers, friends and family.

Cliff Ford adds: "Don's brother, Steve, read the address and also read the thoughts and memories of Marie. I felt I was listening to a love letter to Don, and so I was! There was so much love in it, and Don's affection for Marie and his two daughters shone through."

A final and most touching salute to him came from the Coast Guard to their colleague when their helicopter flew at roof height three times round the chapel.

We send our deepest sympathy and love to Marie, Kelly & Nikola and all members of his family.

**Elsbeth Grant**

## SNOWDROP

Those who came to camp at HMS *Daedalus* will be sorry to learn that Eirlys Brittain, who was a helper at the camp from 1977 to 1991, died in April 2001, a few days after her 83rd birthday.

Eirlys who was affectionately known to us all as 'Snowdrop' could no longer come to camp as she suffered severely from arthritis and was unable to drive. She suffered a massive stroke in October 1999, which left her paralysed, and she was in hospital for six months. When she came home I used to call her but found it very difficult to talk to her and Eirlys loved talking! She was an ebullient personality, full of fun and intensely proud of being Welsh.

Eirlys was a trained nurse and acted as such at *Daedalus*. Her husband, Tom came to camp as our doctor several times as did their son Richard.

Eirlys was awarded the MBE for trying to save the lives of two men whose crane had fallen onto an electric pylon at a Welsh Agricultural show. They had been electrocuted in the incident. She worked tirelessly for the Red Cross and went all over the world as an escort collecting seriously ill patients and bringing them home to hospital and she had many very funny stories to tell about her travels. In 1963 when my sister Janet sent an SOS for help during the Zanzibar Revolution, the Red Cross sent Eirlys out to aid her. She was an enormous help, caring for casualties - which were horrific - and the prisoners. Jan and she became firm friends.

After Eirlys's death, Tom became very frail and died last August at the age of 88. I shall miss them, they were good friends.

**Elsbeth Grant**

# The World at our Finger Tips

by Ray Hazan

On January 6th, the world of the visually handicapped commemorated the 150th anniversary of the death of Louis Braille. His invention gave blind people access to the printed word and an intellectual freedom rivalled only recently by today's technological innovations.

Louis was born in Couvrai just to the east of Paris. He lost his sight at the age of three when playing with his father's tools, specifically, an awl for making holes in leather.

His crude introduction to the alphabet was via his father hammering nails into wood in the shape of letters. Later, as a teenager at school in Paris, he felt a system of 12 raised dots on paper devised by an Artillery Officer used for transmitting messages to the front line and obviating the need to shine a light and give away positions.

For two years, Louis worked on the 12-dot system, which used phonetics, and narrowed it down into the

six-dot system based on letters, which we know today. It was rejected at his school in the early days for here was a 'secret' code with which blind students could communicate to the exclusion of their teachers! Today, it is a universal system, multi-lingual, and multi-faceted in that music, mathematical or chemistry notation, phonetics and many more subjects can be written using the same permutation of the six dots.

Despite the fact that, thanks to technology, Braille is very simple to produce, even if you have no knowledge of the system, less visually handicapped are using the medium as reading machines and talking devices gain prominence. Braille still has a place for notes, prompts, studies, reading, marking items and the ability to read under the bedclothes on a cold night!

St Dunstaners who had little choice but to use Braille in the early days will no doubt spare a thought for this wonderful person and the freedom, dignity and intellectual scope that Louis Braille gave blind people.

---

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Letters to the Editor are always welcome.*

*Send a letter, tape or disk to 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD. Fax: 020 7262 6199.*

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

**From: Dave Poyner, Sale, Manchester**

Do you get fed up with receiving bills in an unreadable format? I have been having trouble with Orange mobile phones for refusing to send me my bills in a format of my choice. The format I required was either audio tape, computer disk or e-mail. After an 18 months dispute and help from The RNIB's legal department, I finally won. Orange agreed to settle out of court, and I was financially rewarded for my troubles. More importantly I got my bills in a readable format.

You may not realise but under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 you are legally entitled to receive items in a readable format. These options are braille, large print, e-mail, audio tape, computer disk. So if you need your bills in a suitable format, remember it is your right; and take these big companies on.

**From: John Cunningham, Ashford, Middlesex**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made donations upon the death of our mother, Edna V. Cope, last September. The monies received were sent to both the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the British Heart Foundation, in equal amounts. We would also like to thank all of the people Mum had the pleasure of calling "her friends", during her time of both working at St Dunstan's and also being a St Dunstaner's wife and widow.

**From: Eric Church, Exmouth, Devon**

I would like to thank everyone who sent their condolences after my wife Iris passed away. There were too many for me to reply individually, but your messages of sympathy were much appreciated by my family.

## A FRESH LOOK AT REGISTRATION

Department of Health start review of the identification and notification of people losing their sight

October 2001 saw the first meeting of the group set up by the Department of Health (DoH) to review the system of identification and notification of visually impaired people. The review covers England only. Scotland recently carried out its own review and representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have observer status on this new group.

This will be a thorough review of the present identification and registration arrangements, currently based on form BD8 as the certifying document. Although minor changes have taken place from time to time, the underlying mechanism has not significantly altered since 1948. The aim of this review is not just to tinker with the existing form, but take a fresh look at how those losing their sight are identified, and what methods of formal notification would now be most effective. There is compelling evidence to show that the present system fails to identify the majority of those who are eligible, and that identification does not always lead to fast enough social assessment and service provision, or straightforward entitlements to some benefits.

The review group includes visually impaired individuals, representatives of social services, health,

national and local voluntary organisations. The role of group members is to inform and seek the views of "stakeholders" they represent and bring these suggestions into the review. About half of the group are themselves visually impaired.

It is planned that the recommendations resulting from the consultation will be put to the Minister for Health next summer. You can keep up to date with developments through RNIB's journal *New Beacon* and the DoH are planning to set aside an area of their own website.

### HAVE YOUR SAY

If you have any specific comments you can write direct to either of the following:

The DoH VI Registration Review, c/o Janet Goodwin, Disability Policy Branch, Area 228, Department of Health, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG.  
E-mail: janet.goodwin@doh.gsi.gov.uk

DoH VI Registration Review, c/o Richard Cox, RNIB, 7 The Square, 111 Broad Street, Birmingham B15 1AS.  
E-mail: richard.cox@rnib.org.uk

---

## WORLD SIGHT DAY

by Colin Beaumont-Edmonds

Joyce and I were pleased to be at the service, organised by The Royal College of Ophthalmologists at Winchester Cathedral, to celebrate World Sight Day on October 11th. It was a most impressive occasion attended by The Duke of York and 700 representatives concerned, either personally or through their organisations, with the prevention of blindness, research into eye diseases, or with the care of the blind and partially sighted.

Apart from readings from the Bible there was an unusual and interesting extract from Helen Keller's Biography *The Story of My Life*, in which she describes delightful moments walking in a garden while the early morning dew is still on the ground,

time spent feeling and gathering fruit in an orchard.

The Bishop of Winchester, the Rt Rev Michael Scott-Joynt, gave the address, taking as his text "I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, in paths that they have not known," developing the meaning both literally and in their spiritual sense.

After the service we all walked through the town to The Great Hall, where tea and cakes were served. We were very sorry that our Chairman and his wife were unable to be with us, but his place was taken by the Vice-Chairman of St Dunstan's Council, Mr Michael Delmar-Morgan. We were accompanied by the Chief Executive and his wife, Mr and Mrs Robert Leader.

# Life and Times of Ovingdean

by Lyn Mullins



*New Year saw all the best in Fancy Dress.*



*Star turns! Cliff Ford and John Trent.*



*A quick word from Alice Gimbriere.*

Once again Christmas and New Year have been very busy at Ovingdean with the house literally full to overflowing. We have had some lovely entertainment and among the most popular were the children from Southover School Choir in Lewes who came into the house to perform a seasonal concert for us and the Salvation Army who provided some good old fashioned Christmas cheer on December 18th.

We were very fortunate this year to be able to purchase a professional karaoke machine for use in-house. This was made possible by a very generous donation from Bass Breweries. This is not the first time that the brewery has supported activities in Ovingdean and we are most grateful to them.

The karaoke machine came in very useful during this year's Christmas Concert on December 21st. All the staff who took part worked very hard to entertain everybody. (We hear that Jackie Greer may be leaving to become a professional compere!!)

On New Year's Eve we were entertained until 1am by Rick Bonner who kept everybody up dancing and counted the New Year in with us. The fancy dress competition was entered by many contestants and a great deal of work went into all of the costumes. Everybody deserved to be a winner but unfortunately there can be only one. Supreme winner this year was Alf Waters as a wizard from Harry Potter. Alf pipped the others at the post with his topical costume.

PBK provided an excellent New Year buffet which was enjoyed by all as was all their fare throughout the holiday period. Once again it is all over far too quickly but we all had some laughs and have some good memories.



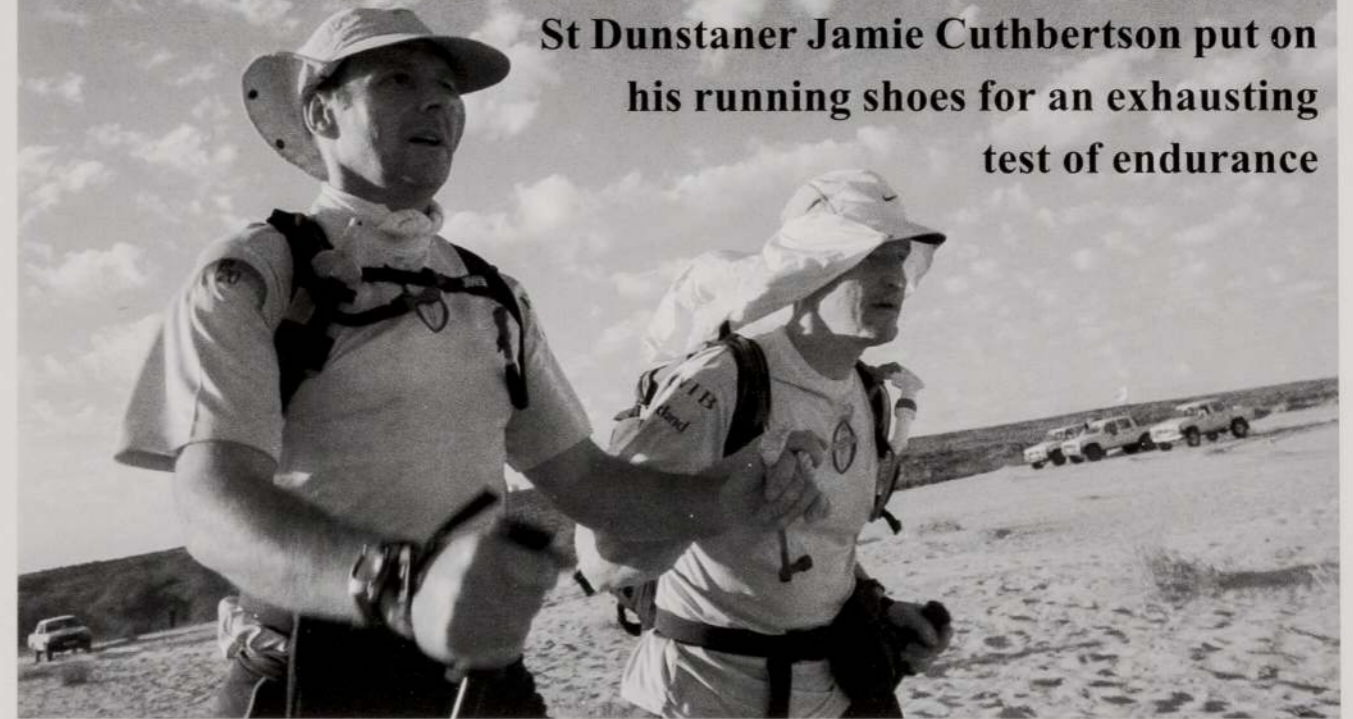
*Wizard win for Alf.*



*Dave Thomas on stage.*

# Doing the dune run run

St Dunstaner Jamie Cuthbertson put on his running shoes for an exhausting test of endurance



*The expanding desert of Mauritania lies ahead as Jamie and Roraigh set their pace in the Trans333.*

What again?" "Surely not!" "Didn't you have enough the last time?" "You're mad!" These questions were asked over the last few months both by family and friends and, strange as it may seem, by myself. I have just returned from my second desert race - the Trans333, which took place from December 9th to 17th. I completed my first, the Marathon des Sables (MDS), in April 2000. The following account details the highs and lows of the most recent trip which took place in Mauritania in Western Africa. For those who are like me, and have no clue where this might be, I suppose that the easiest way of describing it is that Mauritania is somewhere north of Senegal but south of Morocco and Western Sahara with a short Atlantic coastline and with vast areas of desolate desert stretching inland from there. Apparently it is one of the seven Holy States of Islam and was a country of major importance many centuries ago, but more of that later.

I'm not sure what it is in the nature of some people, and in this strange group I include myself, but there seems to be a need or inner desire for something out of the ordinary from time to time. Perhaps it is a desire for adventure, perhaps it is a need to push yourself beyond the boundaries of normal life or perhaps, and probably most likely, it is pure

## Pictures by Magali Delporte

madness. Whatever the reason, there is a kind of motivation that drives this type of person to be able to forget the pains, the stresses and physical exertion of an earlier experience and end up applying to enter yet another crazy event of a similar or tougher nature. This is sort of how it was for me when my good friend and 'guide dog' from the MDS, Roraigh Ainslie called me in early 2001 to tentatively suggest that it might be a 'good wheeze' to enter a relatively new desert race called the Trans333. I have to admit that, after probing for more details about the event, my desire to rush into a second desert race did not reveal itself immediately. Maybe the thought of miles of sand dunes or the memories of trashed feet from the last time were ringing warning bells in my cranium. I understand that there were several phone calls to my wife, Shauna, following the initial call and over the next day or so, although I am not sure quite how, I found myself agreeing to accompany Roraigh once again.

The 2001 Trans333 was, at that time, due to take place in Niger. As the name suggests, the race is a 333km race staged in desert conditions. The idea is that each year the race moves to a different country to give some variety in terms of the cultures and scenery experienced. What makes this event significantly different from the MDS is that it is a non-stop race rather than a staged race. This means that competitors have to choose when they run, eat and sleep and all the time the clock keeps ticking. The maximum time allowed for this race is 116 hours so there is little time for recuperation. In December the temperatures are usually well into the forties during the daytime and often below zero at night.

My diary for the trip follows.

### Friday December 7th

Headed off to work on the normal commuter train loaded up with my kit bag, walking pole and laptop - I must have looked rather odd I suspect. "Then again, what's new?" I hear them cry. I had a normal day at work and then set off straight from there for the airport to go to Roraigh's in Kent. My, how BA have tarted up their planes with leather seats all round and natty snack packs en route! Roraigh met me at Gatwick. We spent an action packed evening planning kit and food requirements and consuming a few wines on the way.

### Saturday December 8th

A horrendous morning! At least that was the assessment made by Rowan (Roraigh's youngest daughter). She had been dragged to the local supermarket by Roraigh and I to do our last minute food and kit shopping. This sounds fine until we started loading up the trolley - 32 cans of Coke, 32 pepperonis, 64 cheese strings, etc, etc. Poor Rowan had never had her street cred destroyed in such a blatant manner before! Strangely she then opted to stay in the car and read when we got to the next shop.

The whole of the afternoon was spent laying out what seemed like tons of provisions and other necessary items. Roraigh took to bagging nuts, nibbles and raisins and I marshalled the other food items into 16 neat little piles. We both had to make decisions as to which checkpoints in the race we wanted to see our

clean socks, underwear, shirts and spare batteries and pack everything into the relevant crop bags. The room appeared to have been ransacked by an army of chipmunks and Roraigh's wife Hazel had to simply resort to sighing heavily every time she glanced into her normally organised dining area. Dinner put a stop to the frantic activity and the door was closed to save Hazel's worries.

### Sunday December 9th

Having been 'ordered' by Hazel not to get up before 9am, I felt obliged to find some quiet occupation until then from 7:30am when I woke. This ended up being the start of the 'great packing' escapade. Early work before breakfast was straightforward but as the day progressed it became more and more messy. I must remind myself to buy new drink powder every year rather than make do with the old stuff from the previous year - I think that drink blocks would be a

more appropriate description! Bags were packed and unpacked and packed again until we were sure that everything had been properly accounted for. Chaos finally subsided in time for us to enjoy a most fabulous lamb roast and a few glasses of wine for lunch before our lift to the airport arrived.

At Gatwick the motley group of travellers began to assemble to

form the British contingent for the 2001 Trans333. Four weeks earlier we had learned that the race was now to be in Mauritania again and not in Niger as planned. Some problem with the runway in Niger had meant that the charter company was not prepared to land there. Mauritania had become the favourite alternative because the race had been held there last year. We met up with Celia, an amazing lady who had run from John O'Groats to Land's End in 18 days - quite mind-boggling! We also met James Henderson, the Brit organiser who took to his shepherding job immediately. Everyone made it on time and we were soon on our way to Marseilles to await our onward flight.

Marseilles turned out to be a very clean and modern airport but with a very poor choice of piped music. Throughout the evening and all through the night we tried to sleep to the wailing of a selection of 70's and 80's pop stars. Most of us camped out on the floor whilst others went off to find B&B accommodation

## We hear that we have already had two evictions of scorpions



Once more the desert beckons for Jamie and Roraigh. Could the spectator with the divining rods be providing a clue as to the dry conditions that will face them on their journey.

elsewhere. Just before we got to sleep we met Magali Delporte who was to be our photographer for the trip, arranged through St Dunstan's.

### Monday December 10th

A very early rise to catch the 6:30am flight to Atar in Mauritania. Oh joy! - the music is finally turned off, it obviously would be too much for the normal travellers!! Magali treats us to a croissant and coffee before the departure. On the plane we start to notice many more 'mad' adventurers who are the main party from France with a few other nationalities. We end up, perhaps appropriately, at the back of the plane next to the toilets. Magali gives Roraigh a quick lesson on how to use the mini disk recorder (for an audio diary) before the lack of knee room defeats her and she seeks solace elsewhere in the plane.

We arrive on time in Atar and are processed remarkably quickly through customs and passport control although we don't get our passports back immediately - the flapper in me begins to flap quietly. The temperature is very pleasant with a fair amount

of cloud cover - will it last? After reclaiming our bags we load on to what appears to be a truck with a converted 40ft container on the back to head into town. Atar is a pretty basic town with a few hotels and typical mixture of accommodation and shops. Breakfast consisting of bread, jam and coffee is served at one of the hotels. We experience our first use of the 'drop in a hole' loos which is quite a feat of sighted guiding for Roraigh which is definitely not in the text book!! Back on the trucks to then wait (for some time). Apparently although the vehicles had been booked, no-one at the transport company had thought it appropriate to fuel up the vehicles before we arrived! Eventually we are on our way and set off through vast areas of flat rocky desert. The route takes us up a very impressive escarpment which rises up from the desert floor onto a plateau which is equally flat and desolate. Minds begin to focus on the fact that we will have to come back along much of the route on foot over the next five days. It suddenly becomes a very daunting task as we drive for mile after mile after mile with no change of scenery. We have various stops on the way for toilet breaks and impromptu repairs to the fuel jerrycans which start



*Sand, sand and more sand. The footprints of the Trans333 runners cut across the rippling landscape.*

spilling their contents on the roof of the vehicle and dripping down on the passengers. It is acceptable getting wet by rain but flammable rain is a different issue! The repairs are successful and we eventually arrive at our night stop, the race start point at Ouadane.

On selecting our tent for the night, we hear that we have already had two evictions of scorpions and this sets my flap button off again - anything but snakes or scorpions!! Fortunately no more are seen for the rest of the week and this proves to be a bit of a salutary warning. Following a hot meal of goat and spaghetti, we receive various briefings from Alain Gestin, the French organiser and then most people get to sleep. At least we have received our passports back at last!

### **Tuesday December 11th**

A fairly lazy and relaxed morning. The sun has decided to come out properly today and the heat is 'impressive'. All competitors have to check in their medical documentation and attention to compulsory equipment is refreshingly relaxed. More goat and spaghetti for lunch - perhaps this is becoming a pattern here! Roraigh and I get some sponsor photos taken and we carry out our final kit checks during the early afternoon. As the race start approaches, Alain

Gestin insists on a lengthy briefing for all competitors in the heat of the day. James Henderson summarises in English in a couple of sentences.

Finally, just after 5pm we set off, still with some daylight and very warm. Many local children run beside us for several hundred metres but fade out eventually and return to the village. Magali sets-to with the camera. All the stages of the race are due to be around 20km and the first four stages are over sand both hard and soft with two stages out and the next two stages returning the same way. We make good headway over the first stage arriving at Checkpoint 1 (CP1) at 9pm. The field is already dispersing and the darkness has fallen. There is next to no moonlight but Roraigh's new head torch is excellent. We are eating well and begin to realise that we have probably over estimated the required amount of nibbles. Stage two turns out to be a very hard section with a good deal of very soft sand in the middle. We pass Alicia from Poland who is the lead runner and who eventually wins the event. She is awe-inspiring as she heads to CP3.

### **Wednesday December 12th**

We carry on throughout the night getting to CP2 at around 1am. Again we have a very quick turn round

and head back towards CP3. It makes a pleasant interlude to meet others still heading out to CP2. We walk with Simon for some time after we have crossed the very soft sand patch for the second time. I am beginning to feel quite achy in the joints but at least the blisters are still insignificant. At CP3 we take a little longer to sort ourselves out but we are back on the move again by just after 5am. Simon stays on longer and we meet up with Celia who is quietly getting on with the task at hand and prefers not to be too chatty. I begin to feel really rather sore despite the effects of Brufen. There has been very little to talk about during the night due to the darkness and the sparseness of other competitors.

As dawn breaks, Roraigh is able to start describing things around us. Despite this there is still next to nothing to describe other than sand, sand and more sand. Magali has re-appeared and follows us for some time taking a variety of shots. I begin to dream of the next checkpoint where we are due to get some hot food back at Ouadane. It really can't come soon enough. Roraigh spots a white water tower (or minarets) in the distance but it seems to never get any closer.

By this stage conversation is pretty sparse and uninspired despite Roraigh's best efforts to tell his repertoire of dreadful jokes. I am not sure quite why but I am really not feeling at all comfortable in this event and certainly not how I expected to feel after the first three to four stages. I suspect that this is mainly due to a lack of proper training for this kind of continuous event.

We finally reach Ouadane some time after 10am and get in out of the sun which is beginning to beat down. Fortunately there are no scorpions in our tent this time!! A spot of breakfast is most welcome and raises the spirits a bit.

We get back on the road around 11am and head out into a new section of the landscape. Now travelling on the road along which we had initially driven from Atar, the scenery is remarkably uninteresting. Very flat, very barren and nothing to see all around. The most interesting feature is a slight dog leg in the otherwise straight road. The sun is unrelenting and mainly from our left side - I surmise that we must be heading generally westwards. Despite trying to ignore my various aches and pains, my left knee is becoming very painful. Roraigh detects my lack of conversation and general chirpiness and we discuss

the various options as we continue to CP5. Despite the better going, our pace has now dropped and it takes us to 4:30pm to arrive there. We have made it well within the 30-hour limit and only just behind on our planned schedule. I decide to speak to the doctors for their advice. After much deliberation and a load of soul searching, I take the difficult decision to pull out from the race as we had still more than two-thirds of the distance to complete with at least 80km on sand dunes. The sense of disappointment is palpable and despite many words of sympathy from everyone, I spend some time wondering how much difference it would have made if I had trained differently or if I had prepared better in some way.

As there are other British competitors who have had to pull out also and who are prepared to act as my guide, Roraigh decides to continue. In the meantime I travel forward with Malcolm and another runner in James' '4x4'. He drops off at CP7 and Malcolm and I go on to CP8 which is situated at a similar auberge to the start point. We find a quiet corner in one of the tents and crash out for a while. Many of the lead runners have been in already and are on their way into the sand dunes with their camel mounted guides. It is truly awesome to realise the pace at which they must have been travelling! As the

night wears on we see the first British competitors filtering through in the shape of Richard and Celia. They seem to be going well and are pushing each other on well.

### **Thursday December 13th**

At some stage during the night we are joined by Roraigh. He has decided to pack it in after reaching CP6. I had hoped he would press on but there appear to have been a number of reasons contributing to his decision and, in a strange kind of way, it is nice to have the Desert Bats back together again.

Most of the day was then spent trying to keep our minds off the disappointments of yesterday. We had time to enjoy a clean up and even a shower! Malcolm turned out to be a very interesting character having been a shepherd, retailer and owner of a running shop amongst other things. We spent most of the morning chatting in the shade of a tent. Both Roraigh and I managed to do some recording for St Dunstan's and very much from our own perspectives. There had been a large gap after Richard and Celia before the next British competitors

## **The sun is unrelenting**



but they began to filter past throughout the day. From this checkpoint all runners headed out into the main sand dune section of the race. All competitors had to be accompanied by an Arab guide on camel.

Towards the end of the day all the people who had withdrawn from the race were moved forward to assist at checkpoints further up the course. We had a brief stop at CP9 which was set in an idyllic location in the middle of vast areas of dunes. It was the classic oasis situation with palm trees and dunes all around. Another very odd discovery was the existence of vast numbers of shells - half buried in what appeared to be dry silt or mud. These can only have been there for millions of years at some time in the past when the Sahara was under water! We only stopped here very briefly - Malcolm stayed to man the checkpoint and Roraigh and I went on to CP10.

Magali had also come forward with us and we spent some time playing the part of the film stars, posing on the top of the dunes as the sun went down!! Actually, it was apparently quite a fantastic sunset with the sun reflecting on the dunes, which seem to be a mixture of pinkish sand on some and more golden sand on others. I spent a while sitting on the sand playing my penny whistle as the sun disappeared. At the risk of sounding a bit mushy, it was a really wonderful feeling to be so far from normal civilisation in such total silence - I'm told that you could see so many stars that even Patrick Moore would have had trouble finding the North Star! Magali then headed off to seek other photo opportunities elsewhere for the night.

The checkpoint was being manned by a beautiful French girl called Sandrine and Roraigh and I were falling over ourselves to be helpful where possible. As the night wore on, it became very clear that there was not going to be 'room at the inn' as more and more runners came in wanting to sleep. Roraigh switched into Army mode and had everyone marshalled into straight lines but still to no avail. Finally the tent could take it no more and when Jeremy turned up looking for a bed, he was laid to sleep on a piece of cardboard and then wrapped in space blankets and whatever else we could find. He might have been justified in thinking that we were trying to roast him like a chicken as he was placed beside the fire, but he was so tired that I don't think he would have noticed. He then spent most of the

night snoring for Britain in a vain attempt to waken the French competitors who had beaten him to the tented accommodation. Alas it was all in vain - they were as tired as he was and heard nothing.

Roraigh started to get into full swing with the cups of tea and reckons he was brewing around ten cups per minute at one point (OK, so this is just a small exaggeration). I managed to sneak off from fire stoking duties having done my impersonation of an Arbroath Smokie and grabbed a few hours sleep in a corner of the tent once it had begun to empty. Roraigh worked on manfully with the tea and began kicking people out at the times they had specified.

### Friday December 14th

By the time the sun had come up, the tent was nearly totally empty. We got Jeremy up and moving and he headed off to the sound of a very poorly played *British Grenadier* - he did seem to have a spring in his step for at least 10m!! Some time later James Henderson arrived with the drop out British

competitors and whisked us away from the tender cares of chere Sandrine! In the full daylight, the dunes seemed to stretch out in all directions - some pink and some golden. I have to admit that at this stage I am rather glad to be

travelling in the back of a '4x4' and not on foot!! The heat is oppressive and we try to replenish any competitors we meet. We stop ahead of Jeremy having overtaken him for Magali to get some photos. He staggers up to the vehicle and says "I've pulled!" Everyone is stunned and shocked - how can he give up when he is going so well? Then it dawns on us that he is referring to the presence of a beautiful French girl called Sophie! Unfortunately I reckon the sun had got to his head as she was being escorted by three Frenchmen, one of which was her boyfriend! At least it appears to have kept him going for now anyway!

Our driver throughout most of the time is a friendly Arab called Cheer. He doesn't say much and he looks like a cross between Freddie Mercury and Marty Feldman but he is an excellent cross-country driver and has a very placid nature. Some of the other drivers appear to be far more volatile and surly so I reckon we did very well on that front. We drive on through CP11 and onto CP12 at the next sign of civilisation at Chinguetti. This town used to be the

capital of the area and has some major importance in the Islamic faith. It houses an ancient library in which all the books are written on goat skin parchments. Some of the other runners visited the library and were shown a 12th Century door with its original lock mechanism in working order - I'm told that the key is rather like a wooden toothbrush which is pushed into the lock, turned and pulled back to unlock the door.

Chinguetti marked the end of the dunes section of the race and Roraigh and I were then driven forward to CP14 with a brief stop at CP13 to drop off Rory (another of the British competitors). Here we also catch up with Richard and Celia who are really feeling tired and somewhat sore though glad to be out of the dunes. We raid our food supplies on their behalf and send them on their way with some cheese strings and other delights! We move on to CP14 where we are going to spend most of the rest of the race. It is being manned by another French girl called Perrine. Having had our experience of CP10, Roraigh wastes no time on being polite and, realising that the tent is somewhat shambolic in its organisation, he gets going like a true Sergeant Major to set it up with lines of beds, a medical area, a cooking area and short stay area. He then sets-to on organising Perrine herself, so that we have a booking in and out sheet and a bed layout, so runners can be allocated a bedspace and be reliably woken up at the time they request. Roraigh, your mother would have been proud of you! The wind has picked up and the surrounding desert is as barren as anything we have experienced so far. The runners are now very widely spread out and we only see a few at a time. Roraigh's cups of tea and general morale boosting appear to win over competitors from all the nations taking part. I try my best to help in the morale stakes with my attempts at playing various national anthems but lack of practice and knowledge of the tunes doesn't help much!

The "Hotel de Perrine" takes in many guests throughout the night but, to my embarrassment, I find myself snoozing in a corner and not waking till the next morning. Roraigh, on the other hand, gets very little sleep and continues to brew for Britain. Pâté de Foie Gras and a bottle of Fitou are not quite on the menu but it probably seemed like that to the tired and bedraggled runners.

### Saturday December 15th

We spend most of the day at CP14 with less and less to do. Various competitors trickle through but are now

very spread out and finding the tedium of the flat road almost worse than the distance itself. There is quite a lot of cloud cover today which is a blessing for the runners as is the stiff following breeze. However, this makes our attempts to do some recordings very difficult, probably unusable. We are visited by Alain Gestin with Alicia, the Polish woman who has already won the race in a hideously fast time between 63-64 hours!! It is really nice to see her travelling back to encourage the other runners.

Finally, after the darkness has fallen, we hear the familiar sound of the voice of Jack Denness. If there had been a prize for sheer dogged determination then this man would have been the winner without doubt. Despite extreme pain and only being able to move at a few kilometres per hour, he refuses to give up. He takes a well-earned pit stop and takes the weight off his feet for a while. In the meantime the last two competitors, two French girls, come in and take a brief rest and set off before Jack. Roraigh and I accompany Jack down the road playing a few tunes on the way. He staggers off into the darkness on his solitary fight against his own aches and pains. I find myself feeling very humble having set Jack on his way and, despite not being religious, find myself saying a few prayers on his behalf.

We then quickly pack up all the equipment in the tent and wait for our transport. There appears to have been some problem with some clothing going missing and one of the Arabs vehemently denies all knowledge to a rather tired and uninterested Perrine. Roraigh prepares for battle! It doesn't happen in the end and our transport arrives. We head off to the finish point at CP17, briefly stopping to encourage various runners as we pass. As we approach the area of the escarpment which we passed through on the way out on the first day, we pass through a rather odd feature for the middle of the desert - a police checkpoint! Call me stupid, but I suspect that on any normal night in that part of the desert, the chances of the constable being woken more than once or twice is truly remote, so why put him there at all??

We descend to the tented area at the finish point. We are allocated a tent space and crash out for the night. Rumours are beginning to spread about a problem with the return flight which prove to be true.

### Sunday December 16th

Now that our duties are over with regards helping at the checkpoints, our trip becomes very lazy. We

lounge around and have some breakfast - yet more bread, jam and coffee but very welcome. Periodically competitors trickle in and receive warmer and warmer welcomes. Many of the earlier competitors arrived in the middle of the night with no one to welcome them in. The whole day drifts past in a haze of banter and idleness. We manage to get some recording done during a quiet moment or two. Yet more Scottish ballads and tunes are forced out of me as is a fine performance in the Great Sahara Arm Wrestling competition. Richard and I set-to over some minor and quite irrelevant issue but I am then forced to take on a young local straight

afterwards. I have to summon all my powers of physical and mental strength to beat him. It's one thing to wimp out of the race but quite another to lose an arm wrestling bout to one of the locals!! I can almost feel Roraigh's eyes burning the back of my head saying: "You dare lose this one Jock and you're dead!!"

As the day draws to an end, a group of us drive out a way to meet Jack, the last runner, to spur him on over the last few miles. Roraigh, Alicia and Celia stay with him and walk back by his side. At around 4:30pm Alastair, Magali and I walk out to try to record Jack's arrival. In the end his posse manage to guide him in on an off-road route which bypasses us altogether. We manage to completely miss his return and triumph. I suppose that this only serves to crown my rather disastrous first attempt at the Trans 333.

We immediately load onto vehicles and head back to Atar which is quite close now. There is a bit of a mad scrum for accommodation and we end up with a bunch of Brits on the roof of one of the hotels. Frankly it doesn't matter as there are showers and plenty of hot water and flushing loos!! What joy! A somewhat sparkling and well-shaven bunch of bods begins to appear on the hotel roof - who are all these people? We hurry to make it for the gala dinner and then, in true Alain Gustin fashion, we wait and wait and wait.

The meal starts and, not surprisingly, is freezing having been on the kitchen floor for two hours. Oh well, when in Rome and all that. Prize giving followed shortly with a standing ovation for Jack as the last finisher. There was little polite talk that night as most people retired to their beds pretty quickly. We got to enjoy the delights of what sounded like *Duelling Banjos* music as we crashed out at the hotel. It was being broadcast from a tower in the centre of the town and you couldn't avoid it.

### Monday December 17th

A very early start and breakfast saw us trying, and largely succeeding, to beat the other tour party to the airport. The rumours of the flight being overbooked proved to be true and 27 poor souls didn't make it on. Fortunately we were near the front of the queue. It was, however, only when the plane took off that we felt sure that there were going to be no further problems.

What a strange feeling it is to climb onto a plane in a place like Atar and be able to transport yourself to a completely different country, economy and culture

within a few short hours!

Paris was very cold when we arrived but the beer and pizza was magnificent. A short stop over saw us on the onward flight to Gatwick.

The whole adventure came to a very sudden and slightly disappointing end. Everyone disappeared very quickly in a variety of directions. Roraigh had a lift organised for him and I headed to one of the local hotels for a peaceful but odd night in a thing called 'a bed'. Like a crazed man I scrambled for the TV channel changer and made some phone calls home - what a bizarre change from the previous week!

Since then the whole Christmas and New Year season has passed with barely a day going by without a thought of Mauritania and what might have been. Will I try it again sometime? Oh probably, but perhaps a little wiser and a bit better prepared if I do. For now, my thanks to Roraigh for his dedication and determination in getting me as far as we got and for not shoving my penny whistle down my throat after copious bum notes and poor renditions of *Silent Night*!!

---

## POET'S CORNER

### MY VALENTINE

My Valentine is by my side,  
She's full of aches and pains.  
She's been working in the garden  
And cleaning out the drains.  
At seventy-seven she's getting old,  
She's lost her Baywatch chassis,  
My wife, my friend, my guide-dog too,  
Sometimes I call her Lassie!

George W. Powell

# WELCOME TO ST DUNSTAN'S

### November 23rd

**Joseph Day** of Kings Heath, Birmingham served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1940 to 1946. He trained for the special boat battalion but was injured. Transferring to the RASC as a driver mechanic he served in Iraq, the Western Desert and with the American Army in Italy. He was injured at Salerno. After the war he raced motorcycles.

**James Empson** of London served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1939 to 1946. He was deployed as a vehicle mechanic, serving in Nottingham, Kent and Shrewsbury. After the war he became a bench fitter. He is married to Freda.

**Harold Ireland** of Throckley, Newcastle-upon-Tyne served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946. Trained as an engine fitter, he was diverted to Bombay after the fall of Singapore. He served in East Bengal and the Burmese border. He returned to the UK to become an air flight engineer at Bedford. In civilian life he worked as a landscape gardener before becoming a consultant with the Community Service Scheme. His interests include DIY. He and his wife Elsie have a son.

**Stanley Lewis** of Knowle, Bristol served in the Somerset Light Infantry from 1939 to 1940, the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1940 and the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps from 1940 to 1946. He served in the UK, France and Germany. After the war he returned to clerical work with Bristol Tramways which became the Commercial Vehicles Department. He enjoyed sports and used to play chess. He and his wife Violet have five daughters, two sons, 18 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

**Charles Paxton** of Radford, Coventry served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946. After training he was posted to Combined Operations and became a crewman on an LCT Landing Craft. He was in Falmouth in support of the D-Day landings. After the war he delivered cars, later buying a garage where he repaired and sold second hand cars. He is an avid Leeds supporter. Mr Paxton has a son.

**Elsie Scullion, MBE** served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1945. As a Personnel Directorate Tester she conducted aptitude and intelligence tests on applicants to the Army and Royal Air Force. She runs a macular degeneration help group in Horsham and was awarded the MBE this year for her services in this field. She has one son and two grandchildren.

**Anna Shepherd** of Crondall, Surrey served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Pay Corps from 1941 to 1946. She served in Glasgow and Kenya. After the war she worked for the Co-op before she and her late husband moved to Nyassaland where they ran a tobacco plantation. Her interests have included bowling, tapestry and knitting. She has a son and two grandsons.

**Francis Smith** of Egham, Surrey served in the East Yorkshire Regiment from 1935 to 1939, the Royal Armoured Corps from 1941 to 1942, he returned to the East Yorkshires from 1942 to 1945, and served in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment from 1945 to 1946. He was posted to India, serving on the North West Frontier and later in Assam in support of the Burma campaign. He took part in the D-Day Landings and was wounded in Normandy and Holland. After leaving the army he became a painter/decorator working on film sets and advertising production at Shepperton, Twickenham and Pinewood. He and his wife Rachelle have two daughters, one son, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

**Arthur Thomson** of Mill Hill, London served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946. He trained as a pilot but switched to air gunner. He served at Wheaton Camp with Halifax Bombers, Bomber Command and anti-radar units. At the end of the war he was serving with a Royal Signals depot in Bombay. In later years he worked for the GLC. He is a keen bowler and has coached for 26 years. He and his wife Doris have two daughters and a son.

**Willie Warren** of Truro, Cornwall served in the Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment, the Middlesex Regiment and No9 Commando between

1942 and 1946. He served in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Leaving the service he worked as a fitter in a local garage, later moving into car hire. His interests have included caravanning and camping. He is married to Jean.

#### December 7th

**Robert Beswick** of Southgate, London served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1939 to 1944. He supported an anti-aircraft unit during the Battle of Britain and trained medical orderlies before being posted to West Africa. He served in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Burma and Gibraltar. After the war he became a rating inspector and then a chartered surveyor. He used to enjoy badminton and tennis. Mr Beswick has two daughters and four grandchildren.

**Archibald David** of Northam, Bideford, Devon served in the Royal Engineers from 1942 to 1945. He was called up in 1941 and after training spent a period with the Devon and Dorset Regiment. During the advance landing on D-Day, he was blown up while clearing mines. His left arm had been blown off but was still attached. After seven hours he had received no treatment and removed the damaged part of his arm himself. After the war he worked as an inspector for hackney carriages, petroleum storage and car parks. He and his wife Joyce have a son, three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

**Marise Falkingham** of Worthing, West Sussex served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1936 to 1946. After volunteering, she was posted to Clyde and became a stoker/mechanic looking after the maintenance of generators on landing craft. She was then posted to Portsmouth where she trained on torpedoes before being posted to Roedean where they ran training on night sights. After D-Day she joined the Fleet Air Arm. In civilian life she became a teacher, retiring as a headmistress. Her interests include gardening and swimming. She has two daughters.

**Ernest Parker** of Westergate, West Sussex served in the Royal Navy from 1937 to 1961. He joined as a boy artificer and went on to serve on ships including HMS *Nelson*, *Indomitable* and *King George V*. He was in the Far East when the war ended. After the war he served in Ceylon, Northern Ireland and Malta. He left the service as a Chief Engine Room Artificer and then joined General Accident as a survey

engineer. His interests include classical music, opera, ballet and history. He and his wife Vera have a son, twin daughters, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

**Major Hugh Rance** of Rottingdean, East Sussex served in the 2nd Battalion 1st (Indian Army) Gurkha Rifles from 1932 to 1949. Commissioned in 1932, he served a year with the British Regiment before joining the Gurkha Rifles on the North West Frontier. He later joined the Shere Regiment in the Nepalese Army as an instructor and then became a Political Officer on the Persian Border commanding 650 men, 192 camels and four horses. After the war he joined the Colonial Office and then worked for the Central African Church before becoming secretary of Chichester Diocese. His interests include bowling. He and his wife Jane have a son, daughter and six grandchildren.

**John Swafer** of Harpenden, Hertfordshire served in the Royal Navy from 1941 to 1946. After training as an ordnance mechanic, he joined HMS *Quadrant*. They sailed on convoy duty to South Africa. After stops at Mombassa, Bombay and Ceylon, they escorted USS *Saratoga* in the Far East before sailing to Australia. In civilian life he worked as a magazine and brochure printer. His interests include bowls. He has a daughter, Beverley.

#### December 14th

**Ernest Firth** of Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland served in the Royal Signals from 1942 to 1947. He deployed to Normandy on D-Day +1 and fought through Europe to Neumunster where he had to construct a telephone exchange. After the war he returned to the telephone service, retiring as an inspector. He is married to Gladys.

**David Harrower** of Whetstone, London served in the Royal Artillery from 1939 to 1946. A boy soldier with the TA, he completed training at Dunfermline and was then posted to an ack ack unit. He served in North Africa and Italy, including Cassino and Milan. In civilian life he worked for Max Factor, Cellotape and Lombard. He used to enjoy gardening and running a football team for 8-16 year olds and is a keen bowler. Mr Harrower has two sons.

**Francis Imrie** of Morpeth, Northumberland served in the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry (RAC) from

1940 to 1945. In civilian life he ran a village shop. His interests included carpentry and painting. He has a son and daughter.

**Gerry Mitchell** of Liverpool, Merseyside served in the King's Regiment, the South Lancashire Regiment and the Army Air Corps (Parachute Regiment) between 1942 and 1944. He parachuted on D-Day and was wounded by an anti-personnel mine, losing his right eye. He was taken prisoner and moved to Paris. In civilian life he worked in the Liverpool area.

**Anthony Trout** of Feltham, Middlesex served with the Royal Military Police from 1960 to 1963. He was posted to Germany and was based at Munster and Winterberg. In civilian life he worked as a carpenter and shop fitter before joining the Metropolitan Police Force. His interests include fishing and golf. He and his wife have a son and daughter and two grandchildren.

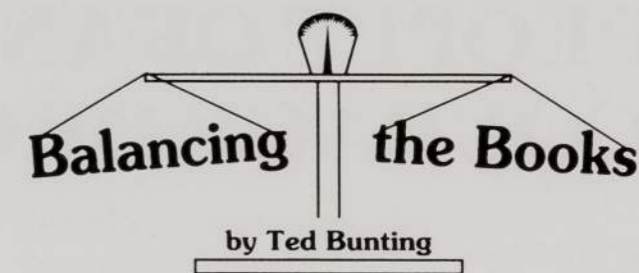
## Angling supporters



Members of Wimborn BL Pisces Angling Club cast their rods in a charity match and managed to reel in £710 for St Dunstan's. We are very grateful for the Club's continued support over the years.

## 50 YEARS AGO

St Dunstaners paid their respects to King George VI who had passed away. "Service men admired his knowledge of their craft and his high sense of duty," said Ian Fraser. "Ex-Servicemen admired his understanding of their problems and the disabled were warmed by his compassion and his example."



### The Secret File of The Duke of Windsor

Author: Michael Bloch  
Reader: Derek Chandler  
Duration: 14 hours  
Catalogue No: 7563

Anyone familiar with the story of the Duke of Windsor will know that he failed completely to understand and anticipate the reactions of Parliament, the British public, and his own family circle when he renounced the British throne and married a twice-divorced American woman called Bessie Wallis Simpson.

Surely the Prince of Wales of all people should have known such a dereliction of duty wouldn't be forgiven. But he did it! He ran away to live safely in the Bahamas during the Second World War and subsequently spent a life of luxury in France.

And yet, as this book makes abundantly clear, neither the Duke nor his Duchess ceased to complain of being harshly treated. The Duke bickered endlessly over money and his wife's status in society, and the Duchess moaned in her correspondence that the Duke's "great talents" were not being employed.

And the surprising thing to me is that the author of this book agrees with them wholeheartedly. Were he one of the Windsor's pampered pugs he couldn't be more blindly loyal to them. He never asks, for example, what the Duke's "great talents" were supposed to be. Oh true, the Duke had been a moderate tennis player and a fair ballroom dancer in his youth and once or twice he'd said, "Something should be done" when he observed people in poverty, but I've yet to meet the historian who can point me in the direction of any of his mythical abilities.

So I was doubly disappointed with *The Secret File of The Duke of Windsor*, first because it taught me nothing new (I already knew he was a selfish little man who disgraced his family and high office) and secondly, because in my quest for the truth I had stumbled across a sycophant posing as a history writer.

# PEOPLE OF ANZIO HONOUR COURAGE OF GEORGE

St Dunstaner George Powell of Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire has been presented with a Certificate of Honour by The City of Anzio. He is amongst British Servicemen who are being feted by the people of Anzio for their bravery while attacking the beachhead in 1944.

The Certificate reads "To those who fought so valiantly, without fearing for their own lives, on the beachhead during the Battle of Anzio. Lest We Forget." It includes a picture of Allied troops disembarking from a Landing Craft.

The Italian city has set up The Anzio Beachhead Research and Documentation Centre, which has a permanent exhibition commemorating the Battle of Anzio. It marks a period of the war that started in January 1944 when The British 8th Army advanced from Taranto in an attempt to break the Gustav Line. The German counter offensive kept them at the Anzio beachhead for another four months.

For George, who served in The Queen's Royal Regiment, the battle represented a personal turning point. He modestly points out that his role in the conflict was cut short when he was blinded while setting up a machine gun.

"We had decided to attack at night, which was the same time the Germans had decided to make a counter attack. They must have decimated almost 50 per cent of the platoon."

Around dawn George and a comrade were setting up a bren gun in anticipation of returning fire. They selected a tree as a reference point for a 200 yard sweep against the oncoming foe.

"I was using specs – just glass and metal frames – I obviously stuck my head out too far and like a fool I'd forgot to take the specs off. The bullet didn't touch me but it shattered the glass and drove the frames into my eyes."

George was taken prisoner and he found himself hospitalised for the next three months. "I was one of 34 Allied prisoners and I do mean Allied. You name



Tribute from Anzio.

them, they were there. There was a Sardinian, an Australian, a South African Army Pilot Officer and some Free French Fighters from Algeria."

The wounds he had received meant that doctors had to remove his right eye. "There were no supplies getting through so there was no anaesthetic. That must have been the longest 20 minutes of my life. They told me it would take six to eight minutes but it took longer because the metal frame had spiked through. They had two people to hold me down, but I wasn't going to move because this chap had a scalpel in his hand."

George was eventually transferred to Bad Soden, Germany where Lord Normanby's braille school had been relocated. He recalls his fellow Prisoners of War with affection and respect.

## Led by many a sailor that was blind by sun

In these days of satellite positioning systems and radar, it is curious to note that pioneering seamen were frequently travelling blind.

Sailors of old had good cause to cheer explorer John Davis, the first European to see the Falkland Islands. When he first took to the sea, it was common practice for the Master of the Ship to fix its position by staring directly into the sun. After a few years they would invariably lose sight in one eye.

Davis solved this discomfort when he devised the backstaff or Jacob's Staff in 1595, which allowed an indirect and harmless view to be taken.

### Quick Quiz

1) Who composed the *Moonlight Sonata*? 2) Which Master of the King's Music had a low opinion of folk dancing? 3) Who recorded *Pet Sounds*? 4) Who founded the London Philharmonic Orchestra? 5) Who originally performed *Yesterday*?

## FAMILY NEWS

### BIRTH

#### Congratulations on the birth of:

Madison Daisy on December 20th. She is the great-granddaughter of *Tom Hart* of Sandwich, Kent.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

#### Many happy returns to:

Marie Williams of Fishbourne, Chichester, West Sussex who celebrated her 104th birthday on January 15th. Her late brother St Dunstaner *Lt Cmdr Douglas Williams* served in the Royal Navy during both World Wars.

### WEDDING

#### Congratulations to:

Paul and Emma Wyder who married on December 15th. Paul is the grandson of Margaret Smith of Lancing, Worthing, West Sussex and the late *Leslie Smith*.

### SILVER ANNIVERSARY

#### Congratulations to:

*Michael and Margaret Kelbie* of Portsoy, Banffshire on December 28th.

### DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

#### Congratulations to:

*Tom and Doris Adams* of Kingsteignton, Newton Abbot, Devon on January 4th.

### SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY

#### Congratulations to:

*Gwenllian and Ernest Obern* of Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan who celebrated 62 years of marriage on December 23rd.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

#### Congratulations to:

*Jan Gutowski* who obtained a PhD in Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University in July 2001. He is the son of *Mary Gutowski* of Formby, Merseyside and the late *Bloweslaw Gutowski*.

*Kelly Russell* on passing her BSc(Hons) in Midwifery. She is the granddaughter of *Gloria Conroy* of Marton, Middlesborough, Cleveland and the late *James Conroy*.

### DEATHS

#### We regret to announce the death of:

*Iris Church* on December 4th. She was the wife of *Eric Church* of Exmouth, Devon.

*Doris Bissenden* on December 16th. She was the wife of *Desmond Bissenden* of Putney, London.

*Marjorie Bagwell* on December 18th. She was the wife of *Philip Bagwell* of Salisbury, Wiltshire.

*Sally Bilcliffe* on December 28th. She was the wife of *Guy Bilcliffe* of Lichfield, Staffordshire.

*Eleanor Jennings* of Arundel, West Sussex on October 2nd. She was the widow of *David Jennings*.

*Olive Simmon* of Llangollen, Denbighshire on November 20th. She was the widow of *Tom Simmon*.

*Kathleen Colgan* of Forres, Grampian on December 22nd. She was the widow of *Joseph Colgan*.

*Joan Quinn* of Ryde, Isle of Wight on December 26th. She was the widow of *John Quinn*.

*Phyllis Millard* of Warminster, Wiltshire on January 4th. She was the widow of *Harry Millard*.

**Hilda Jackson** of St Albans, Hertfordshire on January 8th. She was the widow of *Henry Jackson*.

**Fiona Lowry** on January 4th. She was the daughter of Vera Lowry of Shoreham Beach, West Sussex and the late *Patrick Lowry*.

**Our sympathy goes to their families and friends.**

---

## IN MEMORY

**It is with deep regret that we have to record the deaths of the following St Dunstaners and we offer our deepest sympathy to their widows, family and friends.**

### **Florian Weiler**

*Midland Regiment*

"Dick" Florian Edward Weiler of Palmerston, Ontario, Canada died in October, aged 84. He was a mechanic who joined the Midland Regiment in 1942. He served in Canada, England, Holland and Germany before being blinded in 1945. Our sympathy goes to his widow Genevieve and all other members of the family.

### **William Buck**

*Royal Army Ordnance Corps*

William Ross Buck of Abingdon, Oxfordshire died on October 30th, aged 81. He served in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers before volunteering for the Maritime Royal Artillery. As a Corporal he served as an ack ack gunner on merchant vessels in India, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Egypt. He later transferred to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps as a Storeman. After leaving the service he worked for Esso Petroleum. Our sympathy goes to his widow Florence and all other members of his family.

### **Leslie Frayling**

*Army Catering Corps*

Leslie Frayling of Batheaston, Bath, Somerset died on November 25th, aged 81. He served in the Somerset and then Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry from 1940 to 1946. In 1946 he joined the Army Catering Corps until his discharge. He took part in the D-Day landings on D+5 and fought in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. After the war he worked as a Master Butcher until his

retirement in 1990. Mr Frayling used to enjoy market gardening, rearing cattle and shooting. Our sympathy goes to his daughter Wilma and all of his family.

### **Lt John Carmichael**

*Royal Air Force*

Flight Lieutenant John David Carmichael of Wallingford, Oxfordshire died on December 1st, aged 86. He had been a St Dunstaner since 1975. Having served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1942 he worked as an economist and journalist. His interests included gardening and politics. Our sympathy goes to his daughter Anne and all other members of the family.

### **Lt Cdr Arthur Beavis**

*Royal Navy*

Lieutenant Commander Arthur Edward Beavis of Romsey, Hampshire died on December 3rd, aged 90. He joined the Royal Navy in 1937 as an Acting Engine Room Artificer. In 1944 he was commissioned as one of the last Warrant Engineers. He was Mentioned in Dispatches for gallantry in 1945 and retired from the service in 1961. Our sympathy goes to his sons John and Christopher and all the family.

### **David Bird**

*Royal Army Medical Corps*

David Harry Bird of Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside died on December 17th, aged 50. In 1966, at the age of 15, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Junior Tradesman. He was discharged in 1972 and worked as a pharmaceutical salesman before moving to Botswana to join a computer company. After returning to the UK he was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis. Mr Bird was membership secretary for the local MS Society and involved in fundraising for The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Our sympathy goes to his widow Caron and all other members of the family.

### **Frank Barsby**

*Royal Air Force*

Frank William Frederick Barsby of Plymouth, Devon died on December 29th, aged 84. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal fitter from 1940 to 1946. In civilian life he was a test driver for Jaguar. His interests included painting in oils and gardening. Our sympathy goes to his widow Kathleen, daughter Linda and all other members of the family.