



THE OLD TAUNTONIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Edition No: 4

November 2024

Letter from the Chairman

Welcome to the latest edition of the OTA newsletter.

I was very disappointed not to be able to attend the Summer Reunion Lunch in July, but understand it went well and was much enjoyed. There is an article in this Newsletter with some further details, but I would like to take the opportunity to thank those involved in making it happen - Brian Osman, Stu Wilson and Annelise Miller. When our late friend Tony Robinson took over the organisation of the lunch, a few years ago, his stated goal was 50 attendees. This year 44 booked, up on last year's 36. The date for next year's lunch is Thursday July 17th. It would be a fitting testimonial to Tony, if we can achieve his goal.

At the College, the new Principal, Andy Grant, has joined as Executive Principal, overseeing both RTC and St Vincents Gosport. Both Colleges are part of the Lighthouse Learning Trust. We sent a letter of congratulations and welcome and received a very pleasant and encouraging reply. We hope to have a meeting with him very shortly to try and rebuild a closer relationship.

Best wishes *Roger Parsons*

Row for Joy!



When asked what my motivation was for a parachute jump last year and a row with HMS OARDACIOUS this year (with abseiling down the Spinnaker Tower scheduled for next September) I explain that my wife, Jean, has been coping with Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia for ten years. Watching a steady decline (which no-one can yet heal) is heart-breaking, but what must it be like to endure it oneself? The scary thing is that it is forecast that 50% of the population will be affected by dementia, either as victims or carers, unless a cure is found. That's 33,500,000 people in the UK alone, and billions elsewhere. Look around. Which 50% will suffer? A sobering thought.

Dementia is a hideous thing for those affected and a cruel thing for their loved ones, but there is a more cheerful aspect. I have seen so much love, care and empathy in relatives and professional carers, that my spirits are lifted, lending strength to carry on to the best of my ability in supporting Jean with daily visits and in supporting Alzheimer's Research UK.

Please consider making a donation towards the research that strives to find an answer. Let it be what you can afford, because it all contributes, however small or large (from £5 to £1,000 so far) and pass this message on to your contacts. Visit [JustGiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) and search Charles Wylie to find a simple process.

Where did my altruism come from? 1944 to 1948 at Taunton's with Hoppy Hemmings, followed by 39 years in the Royal Navy. Dementia? Let's crack it!

Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Royal Navy

Charles Wylie

Leading Seaman Jack Mantle VC, MID

Jack Foreman Mantle VC, was born on 12 April 1917 and was killed in action on 4 July 1940. He was born in Wandsworth, London, on 12 April 1917 and educated at Taunton's School in Southampton. Jack joined the Royal Navy when he was 16 years old. He is the only member of the Royal Navy who was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in the United Kingdom. He was also mentioned in dispatches for shooting down an enemy aircraft.

British harbours were targets for enemy aircraft based in France during the Second World War. When France capitulated in mid-1940 this allowed the German Luftwaffe the use of closer airfields. On 4th July 1940, twenty Stuka dive bombers attacked Portland Harbour. Part of the protecting force was the armed merchant cruiser HMS Foylebank and one of its 40mm rapid-fire pom-pom guns was manned by 23 year old Leading Seaman Jack Mantle. At the time of the attack Jack Mantle had already seen action as a naval gunner on convoy protection duty and had shot down a German raider with a Lewis light machine gun while serving on a French ship and for this feat had been Mentioned in Despatches. He was on duty when the German aircraft attacked with machine guns bombs. His exemplary gallantry under fire was witnessed by HMS Foylebank's Captain, P.J. Wilson. HMS Foylebank was sunk by the enemy and Jack Mantle lost his life. His citation for the Victoria Cross tells the story.



"Leading Seaman Jack Mantle was in charge of the Starboard pom-pom when HMS Foylebank was attacked by enemy aircraft on the 4th of July, 1940. Early in the action his left leg was shattered by a bomb, but he stood fast at his gun and went on firing with hand-gear only; for the ship's electric power had failed. Almost at once he was wounded again in many places. Between his bursts of fire he had time to reflect on the grievous injuries of which he was soon to die; but his great courage bore him up till the end of the fight, when he fell by the gun he had so valiantly served."

Two other crew members, Leading Seamen Thomas Couzins and George Willis Gould were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for their participation in the defence of the harbour. Acting Chief Petty Officer John Sansome and Leading Seaman Arthur Glanville Otley were Mentioned in Dispatches.

The recommendation for the award of the Victoria Cross was approved by Admiral Sir William James, the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth. His VC was presented to his parents, John and Jeannie Mantle, by King George VI at Buckingham Palace in June 1941. This was the only occasion that the Victoria Cross has been awarded for action in British territorial waters. Jack Mantle is buried at the Royal Naval Cemetery on the Isle of Portland, in the Church of England Section, Grave 672. In his memory the Yeovil Sea Cadet unit bears his name "T. S. Mantle V. C." in his honour. There is a brass memorial to the left of the main entrance doors of the Southampton Maritime Museum. It used to be in 'Jack's Corner' at the City's Central Sports Centre. A children's play area is named after him where it was originally situated. Jack Mantle's VC and other medals are on loan to the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth. There is also an inscribed stone tablet in memory of Jack Mantle at the Nothe Fort in Weymouth which was unveiled in June 1987 at the 11th reunion of the Foylebank Association. In 2021, Mantle was remembered in the form of a new, permanent Portland stone memorial plinth, plaque and bench, overlooking Chesil Beach. This is situated opposite the Heights Hotel, Portland, Dorset.



Victoria Cross, 1939-45

Alan Leigh Strowger (4th August 1939 - 6th August 2024)

Alan was an outstanding member of the 1950-1958 year group at Taunton's, a natural leader, and an exceptional sportsman. While at Taunton's, he played hockey for Hampshire and England schoolboys, captained the school's 1st hockey team, was a key member of Taunton's very successful tennis squad, and excelled in athletics and cross-country running. As Harry Spooner wrote in his great History of Taunton's School (1968 page 355), "If the age (of Challacombe) had an outstanding athlete and games player, it must be Alan Strowger.... A leader who inspired by example and a boy gifted with determination beyond the average". Nonetheless, Alan also found time to engage in school drama and opera, was Prefect, House Captain, and School Captain, and in that year won a place to read geography at St Catherine's College, Cambridge University.

At Cambridge, Alan excelled in hockey for his College, and in University cross-country and long distance running. He took part for example in an undergraduate charity team running non-stop from John O'Groats to Lands End, a precursor of many long-distance runs later in life, including six London Marathons! After graduating with an Honours Degree in Geography, periods teaching in Cyprus and producing wild-life programmes for the BBC Natural History unit in Bristol, he settled in Devon, trained as a lawyer and became a highly-respected solicitor in Beers, the leading local solicitors in South Hams. Living successively in Ivybridge and Modbury, he enjoyed running across Dartmoor.

In 1964, Alan married Linda (nee Godfey), whom he had met as a teenager when she was a pupil at Southampton Grammar School for Girls, and who retrained to become a solicitor with him in Devon after qualifying as a barrister in London. Their marriage and his family of two daughters, Anna and Vanessa, were the bedrock of Alan's life, and he and Linda celebrated their Diamond Wedding in May this year.

In later life, Alan's abilities and experience led to his appointment as an Immigration and Asylum Judge, presiding over numerous asylum hearings in Hatton Cross, London, and Surbiton, where his geographical knowledge proved useful! In retirement, he and Linda moved to Putney where he continued singing in London choirs, playing tennis, kayaking on the Thames, and tilling his beloved allotment.

His generous friendship, out-going personality, and exceptional leadership abilities ensure that he is greatly missed by his family and friends.

David Keeble

Peter Hunt (20th September 1927 - 10th July 2022)

Peter Hunt was born on 20th September 1927. He attended Taunton's from 1939 - 1944 including the evacuation years in Bournemouth. At Taunton's he formed a lifelong friendship with George Pledger who pre-deceased him by a few months. Peter was an active attendee of the Reunion Dinners and chaired the Dinner in 1997.

Peter spent much of his career in the drinks industry, specialising in public relations. In 1958 he was the first public relations appointment for Coca-Cola in London. During his career, Peter was honoured to serve as President of the Institute of Public Relations.

Further details of Peter's life can be found on the OT website

Deaths

James Frost	(1937 - 1943)
Terry Harding	(1952 - 1960)
Alan Harding	(ex staff)
Ray Masters	(1953 - 1961)
Tom Noyce	(1944 - 1949)
Alan Strowger	(1951 - 1958)

The 100 Club

Recent Winners

April 2024	£20
<i>Gordon Birch (1953 - 1958)</i>	
May 2024	£20
<i>Jeff Hayden (1955 - 1960)</i>	
June 2024	£20
<i>Tony Burbidge (1945 - 1952)</i>	
July 2024	£20
<i>David Neale (1960 - 1967)</i>	
August 2024	£20
<i>John Martin (1944 - 1950)</i>	
September 2024	£20
<i>Bob Newell (1965 - 1971)</i>	
October 2024	£20
<i>Chris Owen (1962 - 1969)</i>	
November 2024	£250
<i>Jeff Hayden (1955 - 1960)</i>	
November 2024	£100
<i>John Russell (1955 - 1963)</i>	
November 2024	£50
<i>Brian Carter (1950 - 1958)</i>	

Committee Members

Chairman *Roger Parsons*
(1964 - 1966)
rogerparsons@btinternet.com

Secretary *Graham Jones*
(1963 - 1970)
honsecota1@gmail.com

Treasurer *Brian Osman*
(1951 - 1958)
pambri2@outlook.com

David Defty (1956 - 1960)

John Martin (1944 - 1950)

Annelise Miller (staff 1981-2017)

Chris Riley (1975 - 1977)

Stuart Wilson (1955 - 1960)

Summer Reunion Lunch - 18th July 2024



On a gloriously sunny day we held our annual Summer Lunch at the Ampfield Golf Club. We have used this venue for the last few years and, as always, they excelled themselves with the quality of food, terrific service and general attention to detail. 43 guests were present (the best turnout yet) to enjoy a delicious three course lunch with wine and all the trimmings in a room overlooking the golf course. There were a selection of sporting trophies on display together with various items of Old Tauntonians' memorabilia which created great interest.

A raffle was held for a print of the old Taunton's School in Highfield, won by Tom Noyce who sadly passed away a few weeks ago.

I would urge you to put a note in your diary for Thursday **17th July** next year at the same venue so that you can see old friends and renew acquaintances in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Stuart Wilson



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ADDENDUM - OBITUARY PETER HUNT (1939-44)

Peter Hunt 20th September 1927 - 10th July 2022

Peter's work at one point embraced 35 countries from Greenland to Bangladesh. He travelled extensively to the States, Japan, his beloved India and often to Europe. In his spare time he collected inkwells and other writing equipment, he enjoyed art, photography and the garden he shared with his wife Betty; he also loved good conversation.

Born in Southampton, Peter was evacuated to the temporary Taunton's in Bournemouth at the outbreak of war. Here he formed a lifelong friendship with George Pledger and was incredibly saddened by George's passing shortly before his own. Peter was a keen member of the OTA and an active attendee of the annual reunion dinners.

At the age of 16, Peter became a reporter on the Southern Daily Echo, taking time out for National Service with the RAF in India before becoming the paper's air correspondent. He moved to London in 1954 to work for a PR agency, handling accounts such as Mercedes-Benz. Four years later, he became Coca-Cola's first public relations man in London; subsequently embarking on a three-month tour of America to learn the business. His work with Coke allowed him to initiate numerous sponsorships, including cooking competitions for the Scout Association, International Athletics meetings at Crystal Palace and the Dolphin Trophy, which helped countless children learn to swim.

Peter was involved with the International Centre for Eye Health and the International Equestrian Federation, he initiated films on football training and served on a sports sponsorship enquiry for the Central Council for Physical Recreation. With the Tree Council, he helped set up its Tree Warden volunteer scheme.

Around this time, Peter had the idea for Olympic Harmony, a unique and international film that captured the emotion and excitement of the Olympics. Screened by the BBC, it won an award from the Moscow Olympic Games Committee, and resulted in Peter being presented with an Olympic medal by the President of Austria.

An advocate for greater professionalism within PR practice, he served as President of the Institute of Public Relations before his career took a new direction in 1985 when he became Director of Government and Industry Affairs for Coca Cola Northern Europe. One of his most ambitious projects was the Coca Cola-Civil Service programme that he ran for 25 years, bringing together some 530 senior civil servants and leading business and industry executives.

In 1988 Peter was awarded the MBE, became President of the British Soft Drinks Association and retired from Coke - although he remained a very active consultant in the company until the age of 80.

Roger Hunt