

The Birkonian

newsletter

ISSUE 5 - Spring 2019

Marathon approaches!

The countdown is close for Headmaster, Paul Vicars, who will run the London Marathon on Sunday 28th April 2019, in aid of Claire House.

If you would like to support him, please visit:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/paul-vicars

Welcome!

I hope that you find our second newsletter of the year of interest as we look back on many varied visits to School from OBs, and see what others have been up to around the world.

We also look forward to an ever-increasing number of events for Old Birkonians to get involved with, including new features such as drinks in London, wine tasting, and reunions. The full 'Dates for the Diary' list is on the back page; we thank you for your support at these events and look forward to seeing you there.

Please do pass on this newsletter to those who may not be receiving our communications and encourage them to get in touch. If you have any news of your own or would like to organise an event, let us know.

Carol Keegan *Alumni Officer, Birkenhead School*

carol.keegan@birkenheadschool.co.uk

www.obs.org.uk



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Old Birkonians

First Sea Lord returns to School

On 5th March, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Philip Jones was welcomed back to Birkenhead School, where he attended as a pupil in the 1970s.

Sir Philip ('71-'78) spoke to a gathered audience in Bushell Hall about his role as the professional head of the United Kingdom's Royal Navy and the challenges and opportunities it faces.

Sir Philip's engaging talk also included the opportunity for the audience to pose questions, which he answered willingly.

The audience included many Old Birkonian Society members, and former staff, who remembered him from his time as a student at School.

Members of Birkenhead Sea Cadets and 4th Heswall Sea Scouts also attended and had the opportunity to meet and converse with Sir Philip, who thanked them for their service.

During the event, Sir Philip presented prizes to two of the winning teams from Birkenhead School in the national RN Engineering Competition.

The evening was hosted in conjunction with Wirral Hospice St John's and raised £720 for the charity.



Careers Conference

Thank you to all of the Old Birkonians who offered advice at the Engineering, Design and Technology Careers Conference in January.

Representing Iceland was Food Technologist Kirsten Stewart ('02-'04), who is also a member of the OBS Council; School Governor Mike Furniss ('72-'79) who is former Programme Manager at Booking.com and Head of IT at MoneySuperMarket.com; Caroline Van Ingen ('00-'02) is a Lifecycle Engineering Team Lead for Rolls Royce; Deputy Chief Nuclear Inspector for the Office of Nuclear Regulation

Michael Finnerty ('76-'83); and Rodney Gilmour ('73-'80), who is a Process Engineering Consultant and Expert Advisor/Witness, who addressed the audience and talked about his education and career following School.

The OBs were joined by a host of parents, education and apprentice providers and other local and national professionals who had given of their time to come and talk to students about their futures.

The next conference is focussed on Media and Arts and takes place on Monday 29th April from 5.30pm in Bushell Hall.

Writing inspiration

OB Fergus Magennis ('96-'03) recently came back to School to talk to Senior students as part of World Book Day activities in March.

Fergus has recently published his first novel *Kings and Criminals* and shared with the students about how he turned the idea from concept to a

published reality whilst also working in the City for a management consultancy.

Fergus, who publishes under the name 'Mungo Magennis' talked about the writing and publishing process and shared some of the challenges he faced along the way.



Headmaster Paul Vicars, Fergus Magennis and Head of English Helen Ballantyne

Sydney reunion

Trevor Owen and Roger Allison-Jones met up in October in the Sydney suburbs along with their respective partners for a very select reunion event for 1956-63 former Birkenhead School pupils.

On this occasion they visited Auburn Botanic Gardens where they were able to exercise their skills in photographing the spring flowers and scenery.

Unfortunately, none was able to take a shot of the red-bellied black snake (highly poisonous) which shot across

their path at one point on their tour.

They then retired for lunch at a nearby Vietnamese establishment.



Trevor and Roger

Behind the scenes at Oxford

A select group of aspiring scientists from Birkenhead School were treated to a bespoke tour of the University of Oxford's Chemistry Department by OB Professor Graham Richards ('51-'58).

The group, aged between 14 and 17, toured several Chemistry labs, teaching and research facilities that the University has to offer, proudly one of the biggest in the Western World, thanks largely to Prof Richards' contributions and endeavours as Head of Chemistry while at the institution.

Graham also studied at Oxford himself, at Brasenose College, where he then became a Tutor. He also gave the group a tour of Brasenose where they marvelled at its architecture and agreed with one of their signs stating it was 'the happiest college at Oxford'.

It was also of great pride to be noticed by locals who had connections with Birkenhead School, either being from the Wirral themselves, or who have

friends whose children were at the School. Especially fortuitous was meeting OB John Walsby-Tickle ('03-'10), now Mass Spectrometry Service Manager for the Chemistry Research Laboratory at Oxford, who noticed the group and also stopped to say hello.



Graham Richards with Birkenhead School students

West Side Story

Thank you to all Old Birkonians who supported the recent School production of West Side Story. The special OB Sunday Lunch and Show on 24th March was well attended and received rave reviews for both the meal and the musical!

Also thanks to OB Matthew Oulton who came back to play the trumpet in the orchestra and support his two younger siblings who were performing on stage.

It was wonderful to see so many young alumni coming back to support the show and reminisce about the times when they themselves were involved.

Previous Headmasters, John Clark and David Edmunds, were members of the audience during the show's run and were very impressed to see how their former students have been getting on with their dramatic interests.



The Jets from West Side Story

Movie glam at Prep lecture

As well as lectures for the Sixth Form, the Bournemouth Lecture Series is specially for Years 5 and 6 in the Prep and has so far covered a wide range of topics from history, the environment, and - most recently - marketing in the entertainment industry.

OB Chris Rice ('94-'03) visited Prep Hall on 5th April to talk to the children about the work he does for [Zero Degrees West](#), a creative marketing agency where he specialises in advertising campaigns for new films and entertainment products.

The room was buzzing with excitement as he showed the ten- and eleven-year-olds his video adverts for *Spiderman* and the *Lego Movie*, and talked about how he got to meet Wonder Woman herself, Gal Gadot, among other celebrities.



Chris Rice with Prep Prefects

Sixth Form Lectures

In January, John Vater ('82-'89), QC, Barrister and Arbitrator, gave an inspirational lecture to Sixth Form students about the importance of resilience, courage, effort, determination, as well as hard work, as part of their weekly Nicholls Lecture Series.

The lecture opened with a story of his start in life at Birkenhead School before embarking on his journey to receiving a place from Oxford. He explained the importance of being able to take knocks and to have determination as well as working hard to help set you apart from others.

On 1st February, James Boumphrey ('00-'07) was welcomed back to the School and gave a lecture about his career as an 'ethical hacker', which involved working closely with the company Maersk, responsible for 15% of all world shipping. James, who works for Deloitte, explained how the company oversaw Maersk's malware attack, which massively impacted the business.

Also in February, John Egan ('83-'90), Speciality Carbons Operations and Product Line Director from the Cabot Corporation, came in to speak on 'Engineering = Ingenuity'. John spoke to students and staff about his career as a chemical engineer.

As part of his job managing the production of carbon black, he explained the difficulties in making a product that fits the needs of the many industries that use it, and the challenges of adapting as a company to cater for new business requirements.

Also this term was a lecture from Paul Parrish ('76-'82), who is Director of Fundraising and Marketing at Aspire, which supports people with spinal injuries. Paul has also successfully completed the infamous 'Arch to Arc', the world's hardest triathlon. He was the oldest man in 2014 to take part in the London to Paris challenge where participants run to Dover, swim the Channel and cycle to Paris.

Finally, Mark Malcomson ('75-'82), Principal and CEO of City Lit, Europe's largest adult education college, and previously Director of Executive Education at London Business School, spoke to the Sixth Form in March. Mark has taught all over the world and is a strong advocate for education continue throughout a lifetime. Our congratulations to Mark for also recently receiving a CBE for services to adult education.

If you can offer your time to share advice and knowledge at either the Prep or Sixth Form Lectures, or for careers and university support, please contact Carol Keegan via carol.keegan@birkenheadschool.co.uk or on 0151 651 3098.

University Challenge Semi-final!

It has been very exciting to watch OB Siân Round progress through the recent series of *University Challenge* on BBC2, with her Durham team.

They made it through to the semi-finals, only being narrowly beaten by Edinburgh in the programme aired on 8th April.

Congratulations to Siân on a great achievement!



Dates for the Diary

Rick Lytollis Retirement Rugby Match
Wednesday 17th April, 7pm KO
Birkenhead Park Rugby Club

London Drinks
Wednesday 1st May, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
Tattershall Pub, Victoria Embankment

Liverpool Drinks
Thursday 23rd May, 6pm to 8pm
Love Lane Brewery, Liverpool

Wine Tasting with Tanners Wine Merchants
Wednesday 19th June, 7pm to 9.30pm
Birkenhead School, £20pp

1994 25 Year Reunion
Saturday 24th August, Birkenhead School,
day tours and evening dinner, £35pp

OBS Weekend
7th - 8th September
Further details to follow.

For more information click on each title or email
carol.keegan@birkenheadschool.co.uk