



Royal Russell School Old Russellians

Newsletter Spring 2019

Adrian Edwards, OR Committee Chair (At School 1969-1976)



At long last the third and final instalment of the 'Three Artists' concludes with Simon Bull's fascinating description of life at RRS and then his following career as a very successful artist. Many of us, when wandering around the school buildings will have seen a number of paintings by Simon adorning the walls and admired his great use of colour which distinguishes his work from many other pieces. This can particularly be seen in the exceptional portrait of Ron Balaam, RRS Headmaster between 1980 – 1996 and hanging in the Great Hall.

I would also like to thank Tom Wright for his 'Three Artists' piece in the last Newsletter. This gave an interesting insight into his career as an architect and in the development of 'fascinating architecture' as he puts it!

If any former pupil would like to contribute an article regarding their time at RRS and their subsequent life/career, then please do not hesitate in contacting the OR Secretary Vicky Rees : vrees@royalrussell.co.uk

At the end of last year we also had a very successful OR Reunion for leavers from the 80's following on from the 70's event of 2016. We are currently planning a 90's Reunion for November 2020 which will again take place at The Croydon Park Hotel. There will be more information about this later, however should any leavers from this period be interested in assisting the committee organise this event, then once again please contact Vicky Rees with your details.

We have a few exciting OR events coming up this year and these are listed in the Newsletter. So, pop the dates down in your diaries and I do hope we shall have the pleasure of your company at some of them.

I hope you enjoy this Newsletter and many thanks to all who have made contributions to it.

VISITS FROM FORMER PUPILS



Matthew Quine (at RR 1976-1982)
Cambridge House

Matthew was at school in the late 1970s and 80s and as he was in the area decided to come and have a look round his old school. He was amazed at the changes in buildings and pitches since he was here. He remembers clearly being in the Art Room with Mr Starkey, the Art teacher striding round ensuring that everyone was following his directions exactly, those that didn't felt the effect of the cane that he always carried with him. Matthew also remembers making cheese straws in the Home Economics Room and then selling them to other boys for extra pocket money. Since leaving school Matthew has worked in sales, been a head chef and run his own business, he is now retired.

John Piggin and Ian O'Brien enjoyed dinner with Amit Sampat (1991-1995) and Devang Sampat (1991-1998) on their visit to Oman in March.



1980S REUNION



School reunions are a gilt-edged opportunity for the Devil and his net. The night last October when Old Russellians from the 1980s at “Shant”, as many of this particular generation still fondly refer to Royal Russell, came together again offered rich pickings. After an evening of revelry at the Croydon Park Hotel, Lucifer had even more reason to be poised. Yet the charmed existence at school that those from this era largely enjoyed – not only McDonalds but also the option of Wimpy, days uninterrupted by social media, cassettes, the Walkman, Opal Fruits (rather than Starbursts), broadsheet newspapers, grants instead of university fees; I could go on – meant safety in numbers just about prevailed again.



Those from the Golden Decade (as we like to self-style ourselves) came from far and wide for the evening; America, Africa, Ireland, and Scotland. Even Caterham. A preponderance of geographers made the trek with, considering their skill sets, unsurprising success. Perhaps it was the draw of Graham Moseley. Les Antrobus no doubt pulled in a few keen to brush up on their French ahead of applying for EU citizenship to defy the isolation of Brexit. Julia Powell was also to hand, and John Piggin, this being an historic night (and he being the father behind the idea of a reunion). Of these two favourites, the former was able to reflect on the largely chiseled, toned gaits present. In so, so, so

many cases, her work is indeed done.

Certainly Ron Balaam's most welcome presence swelled numbers. Recommended is Ron's book, *From Court Martial to Peerage*, about the tumultuous backstory to his time as headmaster when governors and Principal were at loggerheads (a situation apparently news on publication even to Ron's daughter, Charlotte, also a very welcome attendee at Croydon Park). None who had enjoyed the seminal text ahead of the reunion were at all surprised that Ron drew on the composure he showed in office to deliver an off-the-cuff speech with only a heartbeat to prepare. Those gathered broke the habits of their lifetimes and listened avidly to nostalgic sentiments.





All that was perhaps missing was the summoning of Clunes, Horrocks, and Montague to the headmaster's study at 9am, with Mr. Foot, resigned expression on his face, rocking gently forward on his feet, hands behind his back in signature pose.

An overture to evening proceedings was an afternoon tour and tea at the school, an invitation taken up by many, some of whom would never have so much as set foot on the Quad until this moment. Those in Cambridge House back in the day saw that their old digs had been raised to the ground ahead of building work to replace this notable landmark. Gentlemen; the work you started all those years ago is now also done.

St. Andrews does at least remain but has long since ceased to be a boarding house and suitable place to lay your hat. 'Twas ever thus. Meanwhile Oxford continues to represent a fortress central to school life, with cloisters still surely a prime location for wind turbines. As for the site's many pre-fab buildings such as Hope Morley, and the North and South houses, full heritage status cannot be far off for these structures on the back of how they have defied all architectural predictions for longevity in such flat-roofed structures. For proceedings at Croydon Park, traditional fare sustained the 40/50-Somethings throughout the night so more nutritious than the toast that was central to diets of those in St Andrew who once called that place home. A free drink on the bar's



opening ensured many early birds. Amid chat that turned back time, plenty reflected on school days in a pre-Internet era, inbetween taking pictures of each other on Smart phones. At the same time, some old dogs have in the interim indeed managed to master new tricks, which meant Akintunde Sawyer (RRS 1977 - 1981) joined proceedings from Africa via his sister, Aderonke (RRS 1977 - 1984) or Ronke (as she was known)'s mobile and Skype app. The signal to Libya was less reliable, which meant Jalal El Gallal did not add to the sight of him we all celebrated on *Sky News* against a back drop of Gaddafi's toppling. For many years at school, Jalal struggled for a visa to go home to his native land. For this occasion, he couldn't manage the paperwork to leave Libya.

When he assumes total control of his natural domain, one hopes a diplomatic passport will guarantee a saloon passage. To a degree, Jalal and many other Old Russellians were present beyond the near century in attendance. At one end of the room set aside for the night was a display of school photos covering the 1980s, enlarged to reflect the eyesights today of those in them. Of course, most captured for posterity haven't changed a bit. At least that was the agreed consensus of all at hand. As for those who had genuinely seemed to have defied the years, what must be in their attics is best left up there and well out of reach.



To ensure even fewer absent friends next time, plenty of notice will preface future reunions when the pre-Web generation will meet again. Those who might opt to be present in the future only remotely need to reflect that the hotel Wi-Fi is erratic and all who attended this meet-up would vouch that flesh and blood trumps anything virtual. For all the apparent merits of *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, *Instagram* and the like (*Friends Reunited*, anyone?) what represented face time back in the 1980s remains hard to top even after all these years. The evening was undoubtedly more of the best of times, universally, with even the worst made better by a moment of shared reflection.



RETIREMENT

Mo Willis - Catering Manager

Since the Old Russellians have run both their committee meetings and Biennial Reunions on a regular basis Mo has been a great support in providing an excellent service at all times. We would like to thank her for all her encouragement and help and wish her well in her training and future career in Wales. I shall certainly miss her flapjacks!

Julia





ORGS

OLD RUSSELLIANS GOLF DAY



FRIDAY 5th JULY 2019

TO BE HELD AT :
FARLEIGH GOLF CLUB
OLD FARLEIGH ROAD
WARLINGHAM
SURREY

www.farleighfox.co.uk

The venue is situated close to the M25 (Jct 6)
Bacon Roll and Coffee on arrival at 12.00pm
Golf and shared Buggy
One course meal after the match

Cost £55 (discount for walkers £12.50)

First tee time 1.00pm

Prizes for First and Second Place,
Longest Drive and Nearest the Pin



PLEASE CONTACT
ADRIAN EDWARDS : EDWARDSA@ROYALRUSSELL.CO.UK

NEW MEMBERS ARE VERY WELCOME

Old Russellian (2009-2012) and Club Professional at Farleigh Alex Allbut
will join each group for 2-3 holes during the day.

Simon Bull



Left to Right : Simon Bull, Murdo Urquhart, Adrian Edwards, Simon Meldrum and Tom Wright.

and winding paths.

The housemaster in Transition was Mr O'Brien, a fitness fanatic who taught us to push through the pain barrier every time we went on cross country. Then came The Reverend Clements who drove a blue convertible Triumph Herald and was instrumental in helping weave together two powerful strands in the thread of my life: art and religion. He would host evenings in his room where we sat about discussing reincarnation, resurrection, or a painting he had recently acquired from someone in Selsdon.



Simon and Joanna Bull

woodwork, so when I had to decide between art and woodwork for "O" levels it was problematic. I chose art. Thus began my time with Colonel Starkey's Saturday morning drawing lessons. The Colonel, as we called him was a larger than life figure whose bark was famously worse than his bite. During the week his teaching method for the general non-artists who had to sit through his lessons often consisted of telling the class to paint a fairground or Roman slave market. Adrian Edwards, Tom Wright and myself would sometimes be surreptitiously asked by our struggling classmates, who were lacking the necessary mental faculty of conjuring up a slave market, to help them out by sketching outlines for them behind the Colonel's back. However, when the weekend came around and the budding artists filed into the art room for drawing class, the Colonel came alive.

My parents chose Royal Russell for two principal reasons: it was coeducational and it was reasonably near to Heathrow. We were living in Paderborn, Germany at the time and in the autumn of 1969 they dropped us off; my sister Rosemary at the junior school, my older brother Andrew and I on the doorsteps of Cambridge and Transition House.

Soon after unpacking my bags I remember rushing out to explore the woods. Those woods were to become my own private domain for the next seven years and I would come to know and love their bracken slopes, michaelmas daisies, blackberry bushes, badger sets

After a year in Transition, I joined Andrew in Cambridge, where Mr. Kefford, Latin Master and athlete ruled with Mr. Green, who was in turn, a mild-mannered disciplinarian and cross country overlord. I can't remember all my crimes from those early years, but they must have been many, perhaps talking after lights-out or something, because I ended up in the housemaster's study on too many occasions for a good hiding with a faded tartan slipper; all whilst admiring a glorious print of an otter by the wildlife artist Archibald Thorburn that hung above his desk. I loved that picture, and staring at it was worth all the necessary correction my wayward teenage soul required. Perhaps one day I would be to be able to paint something like it myself.

The only subject I ever came top in was



**Portrait of Headmaster Ronald Balaam
painted by Simon Bull**

He was patient, attentive and inspirational. Whether we were sketching a pile of chairs or a fourth former in a Shant shift, we were all walked through the rudiments of observational drawing that serve as the backbone of all visual art. Today, this teaching method is rare. Mr Starkey learned his technique at Camberwell School of Art and passed it on to us as a sacred trust. We sat at donkeys in a circle around our subject and were taught to draw what we saw, not what we thought we saw. He would come round to each student in rotation and write on our drawings things like; 'Check', 'Measure', 'Angles', etc. The result was that we all learned to draw and I will be forever grateful for that foundation.

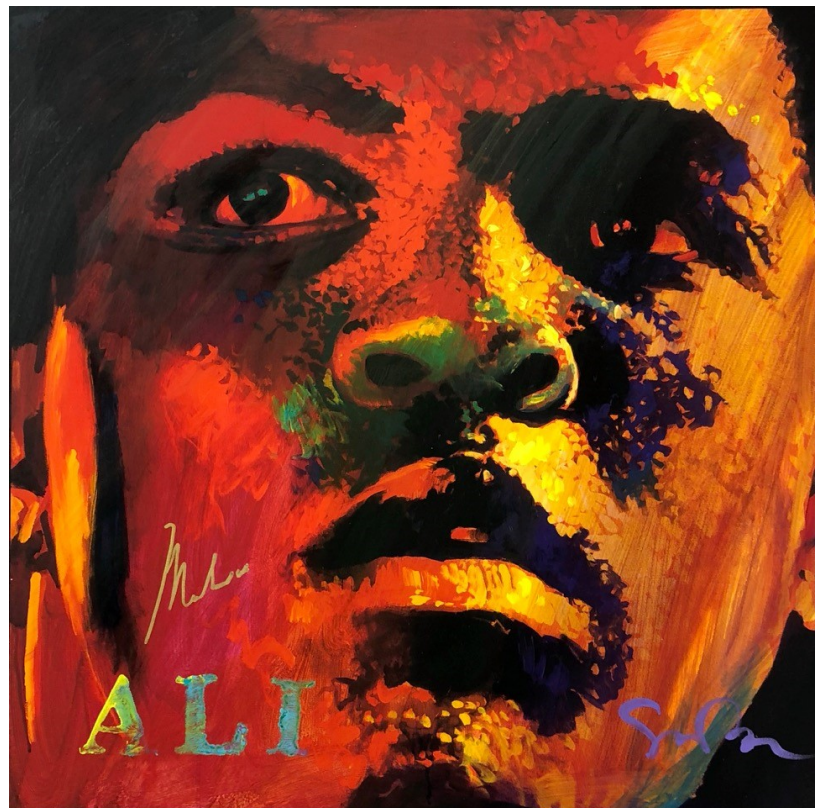
Since he had once been an actual Colonel in the Parachute Regiment, it was natural for Mr. Starkey to head up the Cadets Corps. However, in those days, when long hair and hippies were the rage, short back and sides and the Combined Cadet Force were not the fastest path to coolness for teenage boys. Thus it was that when I made

myself sick by drinking salt water in order to try to avoid going to camp one summer, that the Colonel promptly made a deal with me. Instead of sending me to detention and putting me on trench digging duties, he lured me to camp by offering me the position of Platoon Photographer and rewarded my rebellion by sending me up in a helicopter to take aerial photographs of the camp positions.

When I was fourteen my folks moved to Hong Kong and in those days camera equipment was cheap out there, so I saved up my pocket money for two terms and splurged on a Zenith E camera and 400mm telephoto lens. If the woods and art room had been my domains, now the dark room was added to the list of creative havens. I was soon selling my photographs of the badgers and fox cubs that peopled the woods to the staff common room at 10p for a 10x8 print. I used some of these photographs as the basis for a series of wildlife paintings as I sought to emulate the great Thorburn and raised my prices accordingly. I would go down to the school laundry and scrounge old sheets that I pasted to hardboard in order to make canvas panels for my early oil painting efforts and I am proud to say, that most of those early attempts are still hanging on the walls of retired teacher's houses to this day.

If the woods were my Narnia, the art room was where I learned to look at what I saw, not what I thought I saw, and the dark room was where I learned to turn my ideas into a business, but it was at the school chapel where I learned to make sense of it all.

I sang in the choir and served communion under the guidance of Rev. Clements, finally graduating to ringing the bell for Sunday evensong along with Joanna Scott who handed out the hymn books. Joanna was in the year above me and was therefore way out of my league, but as chance would have it, at one fated Halloween dance, she asked me to dance with her. I was fifteen, she was sixteen and that was forty five years, four children and five grandchildren ago. When she left school ahead of me, I spent my upper sixth selling as much art as I could in order to afford the train fare to visit her, and so began my fledgling art business.



I haven't even mentioned yet, Peter and Christine King, who, from their Cottage in the Wood provided a home away from home and became almost second parents to me. Or the kestrel that Richard Thompson and I kept in their shed; or teacher David Orange who bought my first oil painting for £15.00. Nor is there time to talk about the midnight swimming; or the times when I was given permission to stay out all night in the summer to follow my passion for badger watching. What an experience that was! Wandering around the dump at 3:00 am under a full moon. I did of course find time to study sometimes, just enough to get my three A Levels and progress to college.

After leaving school in 1976, I immediately flew to Hong Kong where my enterprising brother was staging my first ever one-man art show at the Hong Kong Hotel. It was a success, but education beckoned. First a foundation course at Gloucestershire College of Art and Design, where I ended up after being rejected by Chelsea School of art and Bath Academy of Art. Then to Leeds Poly (Now Leeds Metropolitan University) where, after three years I graduated with a BA (Hons.) in Fine Art.

The rest is a long, long story, but I have been truly blessed to extend the adventures of my schooldays throughout my whole life. I have exhibited worldwide and have tens of thousands of collectors waking up to a little piece of my art every morning. I have been helped and encouraged by many truly gifted individuals without whom I would be nowhere. I was honoured to be asked to paint Headmaster Ron Balaam, whose colourful portrait now graces the walls of the Great Hall. I progressed from that, to eventually chronicling the life of Muhammad Ali. I spent many hours traveling with him and speaking at major events in the US, including one on the eve of the inauguration of President Obama, whose portrait Muhammad commissioned me to paint.

I now live next to the beach on a nature reserve at the mouth of the Carmel river on California's Central Coast. I still enjoy stalking wildlife with my camera for a hobby. Joanna and I welcome our expanding family for their beach holidays every year and we try to get back to the old country as often as we can, to visit grand children, my youngest sister Georgina, and Rosemary who is now a vicar at Windsor. Whilst not forgetting to visit Shanghai to see Andrew who has been living out his own illustrious career in the Far East now for over forty years.





ROYAL RUSSELL SCHOOL

Old Russellians - Biennial Reunion



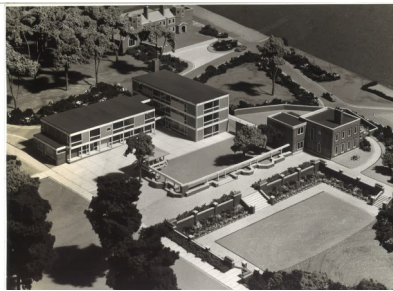
Saturday 11th May 2019
Venue: Royal Russell School



Morning coffee, a short Chapel Service, Pre-lunch drinks, School lunch, afternoon tours of the school including a tour of the New

Oxford and Cambridge Houses, Scholars' performances in Music and Drama and plenty of time to chat.

Finally, tea and cake before leaving.



Reply Slip - Biennial Reunion

Please return to Julia Powell, Royal Russell School, Coombe Lane, Croydon, CR9 5BX or complete the online booking form: <http://www.royalrussell.co.uk/ORfutureevents> by Friday 19 April 2019.

I/We would like to attend the Biennial Reunion

Name(s): _____ (PLEASE PRINT)

Email Address _____ (PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY)

Number in Family Party including Old Russellian: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 Please circle as applicable

School Dates From: _____ To: _____

Any Special Dietary Requirements Yes/No

If Yes please indicate here: _____

Do you require disabled access? Yes/No

EXEAT TO MILTON KEYNES DONS VIA BLETCHLEY

In March Adrian Edwards and I decided to support Royal Russell U18's against Millfield School in the Boodles ISFA Cup final. En route we visited Bletchley Park, the one-time Top Secret home of the World War 2 Code breakers of the German Enigma code.

Not long into the visit I noticed a name which I recognized, Stuart Milner-Barry. He was a British Chess player of some Renown (associated with 4 chess opening variations) but, perhaps more interestingly, he worked at Bletchley during the war. He was one of four leading code breakers, and was Head of "Hut 6", which was responsible for deciphering messages which had been encrypted by the German Enigma machine. After the War he was Under Secretary in the Treasury from 1954 – 66.

Later, in 1981, Sir Stuart Milner-Barry OBE, CB, KCBO was invited to be a member of the Royal Russell School Board of Governors, on which he served until 1989. His wife, Lady Thelma Milner-Barry, then replaced him to become the first female governor of the School. On Royal Russell Day 1998 she unveiled the plaque at the official Opening of the Sports Hall.

Back to the Football! Two excellent counter attacking goals gave Royal Russell a well-deserved 2-0 lead at half time. However, Millfield came back strongly in the second half and dominated possession and it was no surprise when they quickly reduced the deficit. Millfield continued to press hard for the equalizer but magnificent and resolute defending, supported by some outstanding goalkeeping by Sam Long, resulted in a very well deserved 2-1 victory. The U18's were ISFA National Champions for the second time in three years, which is undoubtedly a fantastic achievement.

Congratulations from the Old Russellians.

PS I highly recommend a visit to Bletchley Park!

John Piggin



OLD RUSSELLIANS RIVERSIDE REUNION



**FRIDAY 21ST JUNE 2019
FROM 7PM**

This year we are changing the venue to take advantage of the facilities offered at the Southbank Centre. Transport links are all very close with Waterloo, Charing Cross and London Bridge mainline stations nearby along with the Embankment Tube just across the river. There is the possibility that the rooftop bar, up the yellow staircase, could be available, but we will only be able to confirm that two weeks prior to the event which will be Friday 21st June. If the rooftop bar is unavailable we will meet on the balcony below it. Complimentary first drinks for all ORs on arrival.

Southbank Centre, 337-338 Belvedere Rd, London SE1 8XX

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Saturday 11 May 2019 | - | Old Russellian Biennial Reunion |
| Friday 21 June 2019 | - | Old Russellian Riverside Reunion |
| Friday 5 July 2019 | - | Old Russellian Golf Day |
| Saturday 6 July 2019 | - | Reception for the Royal Russell Asia Pacific Community |

Click [here](#) for full details of all events