



## OD UNION CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT AGM 2015

**BRIAN ROBERTSON**

**11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2015**

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It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the OD Union Committee to present the 119<sup>th</sup> OD Union Annual Report.

This report catalogues the significant events that occurred during the course of 2014. There are many others recorded in our quarterly magazine, our weekly newsletter, our Facebook page and on our website under 'News'.

The activities recorded in this report were undertaken in pursuit of achieving the Union's mission.

To give context to this report, it is important to remind ourselves of what our mission is; *"The mission of the Union is to bring together members of the Union, to keep them in touch with Bishops and the present students, to promote the interest and welfare of Bishops and to establish and administer a fund to provide financial assistance for the descendants of present and past members of the Union (hereinafter referred to as "ODs") to be educated at Bishops."*

As was the format of previous reports, this report is presented under the headings of the four objectives contained in the Mission.

Before I move onto the detailed report I think it important at this stage to place on record a matter involving the OD Union and Carolyn and Tim Hamilton-Smith. The matter was dealt with at a Special General Meeting (SGM) called by the committee on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014 where ODs mandated the committee to follow a process of reconciliation between the Union and the Hamilton-Smiths. This was achieved on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2014 where a joint agreement was signed by the parties. The minutes of the SGM and the agreement, along with Justice O'Regan's note on the matter, are all available at our offices and on our website. Following the successful resolution of this conflict we have been delighted to welcome the Hamilton-Smiths back to a number of Bishops and OD Union functions. Accordingly, we regard the matter as having been successfully resolved and do not intend to revisit it.

### **1. TO BRING TOGETHER MEMBERS OF THE UNION**

- **REUNIONS**

The following classes held reunions during 2014:

- Class of 1954 (60 year), 7-9 March: Peter Steyn & Ian Brown

- Class of 1989 (25 years), 7-9 March: Duncan de Groot
- Class of 1974 (40 year), 7-9 March: James Gardener
- Class of 1984 (30 year), 7-9 March: Paul Burton
- Class of 1959 (55 year), 13-16 March: Chet Sainsbury
- Class of 2004 (10 year), 29<sup>th</sup> August: Matt Douglas
- Class of 1954 (60 year), 29<sup>th</sup> August: Rohan Voss
- Class of 1994 (20 year), 12<sup>th</sup> December: James Durrant
- Class of 2009 (5 year), Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August: Matt Hawinkels
- During the course of the year a number of classes met regularly for lunch at the OD Union Offices. These groups included Colin Boyes' 1965 group, Alan Ramsay and Syd Cullis' 1960 group, and Don Rowand's 1955 group. The class of 1979 meet annually for lunch on the Friday before the final Rondebosch rugby match. These informal gatherings are proving to be popular and we encourage ODs to do more of them. Now that we have our own premises, we plan to organise more of these functions including regular business breakfasts.
- **LONDON COCKTAIL PARTY:** held on the 23rd January 2014 at the RAF Club in Piccadilly. Newly appointed President Raymond Ackerman (1948) addressed the gathering.
- **OD DINNER:** held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at Kelvin Grove. This is a highlight of the OD Union calendar. Young OD representative on the OD Union committee, Anton Taylor (2005), was once again a most entertaining Master of Ceremonies. Guest speaker, Thabang Skwambane's (1993), address on identity and the challenge of change was informative, thought-provoking and relevant to us as an organisation. When we ask the question, "Who am I?" we go to the source of our identity. When someone says "I am an Old Diocesan", it will have different meanings to different ODs. Thabang explored this and asked that we have an inclusive identity based on values of excellence (not elitism), of mutual respect and humility as well as a sense of responsibility to impact positively on our communities and society. This is an issue your committee is currently exploring in our strategy session.
- **FOUNDERS DAY:** held on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March. At the Founders Day Chapel Service, the OD Union Chairman addressed the school on

the topic “Man is above all a spiritual being.” A copy of this address can be found on the OD Union website under ‘News’.

- Shooting: Phil Calothi’s (1968) team of ODs won the Sir Wilfred Robinson Trophy by 40 points.
- Cricket: 1<sup>st</sup> X1 captained by Andy Gilder (2001) drew (251/7 – school 121/9)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 captained by Craig Mckenzie (2006) won, as did the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> X1s. Such is the interest in cricket that we will be looking to field eight teams in future years.
- Other activities in which ODs participated included the Avenue Mile, water polo, debating, tennis and basketball.
- **STARLIGHT CLASSICS & CHRISTMAS CAROLS:** The Starlight Classics concert was held once again on the 1<sup>ST</sup> of March at Vergelegen in Somerset West. Richard Cock (1967) kindly provided the OD Union with an enclosure for fifty guests. The OD Union purchased the tickets and resold them to ODs who have previously attended. Later in the year, Christmas Carols with Richard Cock was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December in the Memorial Chapel. It was a wonderful evening, with an excellent atmosphere and a full Chapel. Wines at interval were donated by Brian Robertson of Avondale Estate and the mince-pies by Jonathan Ackerman (1984) of Pick n Pay. The collection is donated to the OD Union Bursary fund and was generously “topped-up” by Richard to an amount of R10 000.
- **TULLYALLEN TROPHY:** The inaugural event took place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February in 2014. The purpose of the event is to create an event particularly for young ODs. The event is held early in the year during orientation week to attract ODs who have recently left Bishops. The second objective is to build on our positive relationship with our traditional rivals RBHSOB. The ODs lost the inaugural event and won the second convincingly.
- **OD v OA SUNDAY:** held on Sunday 15th March. Cricket fanatic Greg Boyes (1995) organised a competitive team that went down narrowly to the Old Andreans. A spit-braai was held at the Oaks Pavilion for the ODs and their guests.
- **GEOFF BRYANT CRICKET MATCH:** held on the 5<sup>TH</sup> April at the Johannesburg Country Club. Organised by Andrew Eaton (1992).

- **OD LONDON LUNCH:** held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April at the RAF Club in Piccadilly. The guest speaker David Walsh spoke about the role played by private schools (including Bishops) in the First World War.
- **OD “INTERHOUSE” 7s:** held on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September at Lutgensvale. The event is based on the traditional Interhouse 7s with a league phase. The two teams topping the league then play one another in the final. Founders House successfully defended their title and are now unbeaten since the inception of the tournament. Anton Taylor and Dugald Robertson organised the event with assistance from Angus Firth (1984) and Nick Durrant (1991). Shaun Cowell (2005) kindly provided the music whilst Anton Taylor and Dugald Robertson were the Masters of Ceremony.
- **OD VS SCHOOL HOCKEY:** held on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. In a high scoring match the ODs lost 5-4 to the 1<sup>st</sup> X1. Laurie Gardener (1974) and Nick Olds (2009) have been instrumental in organising a number of hockey fixtures for ODs against our traditional Southern Suburb rivals. These matches take place after the main hockey fixtures on a Friday evening and are well attended. Currently the standard of hockey at Bishops is excellent and the quality of these matches are of a very high standard.
- **OD BOLAND FUNCTION:** organised by Michael Foxcroft (2011) and Martin Versveld Jnr (2010). This event was very popular with the ODs currently studying at Stellenbosch University. Held at the Brampton Wine Bar in Stellenbosch, over fifty ODs attended. Anton Taylor explain the importance and benefits of students being involved in the OD Union.
- **OD LONDON DINNER:** held on the 27<sup>TH</sup> June at the RAF Club in Piccadilly. Branch Secretary Nicky Bicket (1973) welcomed some 100 ODs and their partners. After watching a video of their old school, the youngest OD present, Joe Kahn (2013), said Grace followed by Steve Hofmeyr QC (1973) who read the lament. President Raymond Ackerman spoke on behalf of the OD Union before Guest Speaker and Principal Guy Pearson addressed ODs on the current state of Bishops – which ODs agreed is very impressive indeed.

- **LONDON OD CHRISTMAS DRINKS:** held at the House of Lords on the 12<sup>th</sup> December. ODs gathered were given a guided tour of the House of Lords followed by an address by Lord Anthony St John (1974).
- **WALKER CUP:** the 32nd Walker Cup was held at Royal Cape on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March. For the first time in many years the ODs won by 18.5 - 7.5. Thanks go to Brian de Kock (1952 - Vice-President) and Brian Barends (1945) for organising this event.
- **OLD QUAD GOLF DAY:** held on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September at Royal Cape Golf Club. The ODs were joint winners with WBHSOB. We now hold both golf trophies.
- **OD STAFF FUNCTION:** held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October at the OD Union Offices. Section 7.6 of our constitution makes provision for members of Bishops staff with ten years' service to become honorary members of the OD Union. This function provides an opportunity for us to welcome them to the OD Union as well as to provide them with updates regarding the activities of the Union.
- **OD PATRON, PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT FUNCTION:** held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December this event is held after our final committee meeting for the year and is the final event of the year for the OD Union Committee. The Chairman thanked the office bearers for their advice and support during the year.

## 2. TO KEEP MEMBERS IN TOUCH WITH BISHOPS AND THE PRESENT STUDENTS

In 2014 we kept ODs connected with one another and with the school in the following ways:

- **MAGAZINE:** The Old Diocesan section appears at the back of the quarterly Bishops Magazine. The OD section is compiled by Office Administrator, Delré O'Rourke, with support from the Editor, Rose Wilke. The format has been simplified with fewer headings: Roll of Honour, Notes from OD Union Office, Social Register (reunions, visitors, births, engagements, marriages), Obituaries, News of ODs, and Museum & Archives. We have also included more pictures and included a number of music, art and drama articles.

The advent of the internet and digital media have provided us with a number of new opportunities. Notably, we receive information from around the world on a constant basis, information that we are able to relay to our members rapidly. This means that the purpose of the magazine as an historical record and a conduit for keeping ODs in contact with one another and the school can be reviewed and supplemented with electronic versions and weekly newsletters. The art of assembling and disseminating information, keeping our members informed without overloading them with information, is a delicate one, which we are constantly reviewing.

One of the ironies of the postal strike was that ODs received the December 2014 digital version of the magazine before their September one arrived in the post.

The committee is aware that the rapid growth in digital media can be unnerving and whilst we constantly measure ourselves against our ability to achieve our mission, we try to ensure that any changes are done in a sensitive and responsible manner.

- **ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THE MAGAZINE:** this version has not yet been perfected and is in the process of being improved upon. The benefit is that one receives it weeks, and in some instances months, before the posted version making the news immediate and relevant. The second benefit is that it saves the OD Union vast sums of money on postage. Money (in excess of R400, 000) which could be redirected to the bursary fund.
- **WEEKLY NEWSLETTER:** since July 2014 we have been distributing a weekly newsletter. The reason is to use technology to assimilate relevant information timeously. The newsletter contains information forwarded to us from ODs which we then share. This has started a dialogue with ODs worldwide as well as connected a number of ODs who had lost contact. It has also helped improve our database. An example of just how successful the newsletter has been is encapsulated in the correspondence from a senior OD who no longer buys the newspaper. He read about the passing and details regarding the funeral of a former classmate and was able to attend the funeral and visit the family who

are longstanding friends. We are also able to provide information regarding activities at the school – sports events, cultural events and more. The newsletter is our most effective way of achieving much of our mission.

- **WEBSITE:** we are continually looking at ways to improve the website which is currently not as user-friendly nor useful as we would like it to be. We are currently looking at ways we can link the website to LinkedIn and create functional groups for ODs. This along with a directory, would be most useful.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA (INCLUDING TWITTER AND FACEBOOK):** it was comforting to hear the comments of an OD currently doing an internship in the Bishops marketing department. He was of the opinion that our Facebook page is one of the most active and useful of all the academic institutions he had researched. ODs are encouraged to “like” these pages in order to receive OD Union news, photographs and graphics swiftly and conveniently.
- **ODs INTERACTING WITH CURRENT STUDENTS:** During the course of the year many ODs have kindly offered to address the boys. During 2014 President Raymond Ackerman, Professor Haroon Borat (2004), David Grier (1977), Professor Tim Noakes (1966), Peter Steyn (1954), Brindley Uytendogaardt (1996), James Selfe (1972) and Dr Will Bolus (1982) addressed various societies. Whilst a number of ODs were involved in assisting with the Bishops Pops and the Christmas Carols.

### **3. TO PROMOTE THE INTEREST AND WELFARE OF BISHOPS:**

This loosely worded objective is sufficiently broad to render it open to interpretation depending on what one perceives to be in the best interests and welfare of Bishops. For who is the arbiter as to what is in the best interests and welfare of Bishops? Many of the issues are subjective and personal: cadets/ no cadets, corporal punishment/no corporal punishment, football/no football, prefects/leaders, newboys/first-years and many more issues. The broad church of ODs consisting of different ages, different races, languages, cultures and experiences will have a wide range of responses to any number of issues affecting Bishops. This is good and healthy, yet we need to ensure that

the wide variety of thoughts are channelled in a positive and effective manner to the benefit of the OD Union and Bishops.

As a result of events that culminated in the Special General Meeting last year, the committee have given a lot of thought to how we can prevent such a situation from happening again. It simply must not, as it is in no-one's interest or welfare. In order to ensure that the situation does not happen again, we have taken the following steps (Van Zyl Slabbert once said that it is one of South Africa's least endearing traits that we believe that once we have apportioned blame, we've solved the matter, whilst the real challenge of leadership is to address the matter and ensure that it does not happen again). To this end we have established a dispute resolution procedure which enables disputes to be managed in a progressive and structured manner, swiftly and without incurring great costs. Secondly we have worked closely with the school to establish a process to deal with any grievances relating to their time at school, which ODs may raise in the future. To this end, the Bishops Cares programme has been drafted by professionals with experience in such matters. Should a similar incident arise in the future, I am confident that the school is well prepared to handle it. This programme sets in place processes that care for potential past problems and prevent current ones.

If there is one thing this committee is convinced of, it is that Bishops 2015 is a far wiser, stronger, skilled and caring environment.

This matter was a real test of how various arms of Bishops would react under pressure and I am pleased to say that our relationship with the school is stronger than ever. Much of this is due to the leadership of the Principal, Mr Guy Pearson, who has had an extremely positive and inclusive approach to the OD Union. Thank you sir.

Likewise our relationship with the College Council is as strong as I recall it in recent years. In 2009 I was involved with my first strategic planning session. At this stage the committee felt that ODs were under-represented on Council. We had the OD Union Chairman as an observer and one OD as a representative. We have worked at increasing our representation and currently our presence on Council is the strongest it

has been in recent years with 5 ODs serving as councillors. I have always maintained that you cannot have a prosperous OD Union and an impoverished school. Likewise you cannot have a prosperous school without the support of a committed and supportive OD Union. We are fortunate that both are vibrant, active, effective and efficient bodies, which is a credit to this great institution. At the same time we realise that there is what former President John Arenhold termed "*an invisible boundary*" that is to be respected by both parties. These are determined by the various constitutions. We are acutely aware of them and will continue to act in the best interests of the OD Union and Bishops, in accordance with our constitution.

Another example of just how well these various bodies are able to interact and perform has come in the form of our joint project with the school. Some five years ago the school approached us needing more space for the school shop, the travel agency and most importantly the sanatorium where it wanted to house doctors' consulting room with a physiotherapist, x-ray facilities and a 24 hour nursing service for the boys. The school also wanted to get rid of the pre-fabs that housed the Development Office. At this stage we had been looking at properties on the periphery of the school to establish a home for ODs as our location in the school made it increasingly difficult to host events where alcohol is served. The new liquor laws relating to schools made it very difficult for us to hold events where alcohol is served in the centre of the school. With this in mind, and the fact that investment markets had run hard, it seemed sensible to take some of the gains and invest them in new facilities for the Union that were also able to generate a revenue stream in perpetuity by creating world class facilities that can be used by the Union, as well as being hired out. We consulted the constitution and in particular S4.5.7.2 which states that "*the union has the specific powers to provide school buildings or equipment on land owned... by a school*". A strategy was developed and is currently being implemented, as all of you present today are able to see. Once we have the facilities fully functioning, our marketing strategy promoting the venue will be implemented.

What we intend (amongst other events) is to have monthly business breakfasts with guest speakers, a wine appreciation society which gives our forty-seven wine producers the opportunity to showcase their wares, sherry evenings and book clubs where ODs can launch books, an investors club and a conference facility which is on a par with the best in Cape Town.

Our new memorabilia range, which has been standardised and the quality improved will be launched shortly. This includes striped blazer material which we have managed to source from a small mill in Scotland. This building has been five years in the planning and I suspect 165 years in the waiting and this committee is extremely excited about all the possibilities that exist for us to offer a better service to ODs.

**4. TO ESTABLISH AND ADMINISTER A FUND TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DESCENDANTS OF PRESENT AND PAST MEMBERS OF THE UNION (HERINAFTER REFERED TO AS ODS) TO BE EDUCATED AT BISHOPS:**

The Chairman of the OD Union Committee represents the OD Union on the Scholarship and Bursaries Committee. His function is to ensure that the OD Union Bursary policy is implemented.

The Bursary Fund, which is invested separately and banked separately to the OD Union Endowment Fund currently stands at an amount of over R11 million.

In 2014 we allocated an amount of R500 000 for bursaries, this allowed us to assist thirty-five sons of ODs who would not otherwise have been able to attend Bishops following in their father's footsteps. As the numbers of ODs requiring assistance increases, so too it is becoming necessary for us to actively look for funding on behalf of these ODs.

ODs considering making a request for assistance from the Bursary Fund must please consult the OD Union website for information.

**DONATIONS:**

**During the past year the OD Union received donations from the following donors, for which we are very grateful:**

- **The Wilmott Trust**
- **David Kirkness**
- **Craig Howie**
- **Class of 1955**
- **Pallet Supply Company**
- **Tim Allsop**
- **The Noel Noble Trust**

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you to all of you have taken the time and made the effort to attend this evening. In a sense it makes it worthwhile for us volunteers to report back on and share the many activities that we are involved in, in an endeavour to serve our members better.

On that note I would like to thank your committee in particular, for the hard work and sacrifices they made during 2014. I am quite sure that at the start of the year none of them expected the year to be quite so difficult and time consuming. In particular the new members, Jonathan Steytler and Simon Peile who responded to our advertisement to fill Dave Burton's Legal portfolio and Jan Newman's Finance portfolio have had to deal with a matter that originated in 2011. I should also mention our President who was inadvertently drawn into a matter which we believed had been resolved well over two years before he took office. His willingness to engage positively and to support the Union has been valuable and greatly appreciated.

The OD Union is extremely fortunate to be able to draw on men of the calibre of this committee who willingly and freely volunteer to serve you.

I don't think ODs can even begin to imagine just how difficult it is to get people to serve on this committee. When a vacancy arises, we draft a job description and advertise the post. We very rarely, if ever, get a response. We were encouraged with our last two positions where for the legal portfolio we received two responses and for the financial one three. The CVs are then circulated among committee members, we debate the various merits before settling on the most appropriate candidate. I am aware that there has been criticism that a number of the

committee members were my own contemporaries at school (for the record there are three members out of twelve who matriculated along with me in 1979). That should actually not be a surprise. One finds that there is a narrow window of opportunity where ODs are at stage of their careers where they have the experience and expertise to be valuable to the committee, whilst also having sons at or about to join the school, which makes them more willing to contribute and make the sacrifices required to serve on the committee. Often, once their children leave, they are lost to us again.

We continuously seek fresh input into the committee and I would beseech each one of you that believes that he has a contribution to make to consider, when a vacancy arises, to join the committee or one of our sub-committees and serve the Union.

This school encourages and prepares men to lead, it also encourages them to serve. The best of them, at the top of their professional careers, serve you on this committee. And I want to acknowledge them for that this evening.

Thank you for affording us the privilege of serving you.