

MICHAELHOUSE OLD BOYS' NEWS



July 2019

Warm Greetings from a cool and dry Balgowan.

Winter has made a few tentative starts this month, but appears to be losing the battle against climate change. Do you recall ever seeing flies or mosquitoes at Michaelhouse in July?

The term has started with the usual bang and we've already forgotten that June holiday. Four houses hiked to Inhlozane on the week-end, maintaining this rite of passage. Weather was crisp, but clear and the boys walked beneath star-filled skies and a full moon for the first leg of the route.

The major focus in the Co-Curricular Office is planning for the C Block Journey, D Block Hike (from Melouney's farm back to school) and the E Block Camp in the Nature reserve, which take place at the end of term.

The second Astroturf is taking shape, as are the new dorms in Baines and Ralfe houses. The gym refurbishment is underway.

We enjoyed a surprise visit from **Ian Fincken (Founders, 1947 - 1950)**, who also joined us for the Wednesday Chapel service. What a wonderful coincidence that the excellent sermon was preached by Dean Forword the current Housemaster of Founders.

The Old Boys' Office has been supporting preparations for the Johannesburg Dinner and AGM and I look forward to seeing many familiar faces up there this week.

Thank-you for the positive feedback from the first newsletter. JCT and the piano seem to have stirred most interest. Chris Waldburger delved more deeply into this history and has written another wonderful article about the pretty dire circumstances in which the school found itself, in those early years as well as Todd's post Michaelhouse journey.

Once again we focus on OM's making a difference out there and your stories are abundant. Young and older guys cycling in the Karroo (and looking the part), running Comrades, in business and caring for the planet. This edition also shares news of Simon Francis, Head of School 1966. Arthur Purbrick inspired junior officers, recently passed out from Sandhurst, with the values of a significant man. A letter written by Dale Benkenstein provides an example of true character for all our boys.

If your years at Michaelhouse were part of this positive character development, then we are on the right track.

PAST HEADS OF SCHOOL: Where are they now?

Simon Francis (Tatham, 1962 – 1965)

Head of School: 1966

Currently residing in Hilton, Kwazulu Natal

Married to Wendy, father to Mark (Mackenzie, 1995 – 1999), Diana and Camilla and grandfather to Jonathan.



With Frederick Spence Tatham (whose portrait adorns the senior hall) as his maternal great grandfather, we were keen to learn more about this month's Head of School, Simon Francis.

Since leaving school I undertook a year in the Army Gym 1967, studied for a BA at Natal University (Pietermaritzburg) 1968 - 1970, followed by a LLB part time with law articles in Durban, 1971 - 1973. I worked as an attorney at Clemmans and Johnston in 1974 and after a year of travel, I joined my late father's firm, Tomlinson Francis of Pietermaritzburg in 1976 and was a partner there for 10 years. In 1989, OM Simon Roberts (Farfield, 1940 – 1942) and I joined forces with Venn Nemeth & Hart of PMB (now Venn's Attorneys).

I practised commercial, trust and property law there until I became a consultant five or six years ago.

I have contributed to the broader community by being an original member of the Natal Indaba committee, an organization which tried to promote a more enlightened political dispensation for Natal, pre-1994. I have been a supporter and donor of LIV Village near Durban since its inception.

After becoming involved in ultra-distance running, I founded and chaired (during the initial years and with help from club members), the Midlands Meander Marathon - a scenic 42km run from Nottingham Road via Fort Nottingham to the Lions River Club.

More recently, I have become involved in the Michaelhouse initiated **Partners for Possibility** program encompassing eight disadvantaged, local Midlands schools near Michaelhouse.

Under this program, each of us eight so-called 'business leaders', partner with a designated school principal to provide support, encouragement and practical assistance for the improvement of their school's educational effort.

(This last after being energized by Ross Armstrong's excellent President's letter to Old Boys dated 31 October 2018).

I served on and chaired the Athlone Primary School committee for several years when my children were there and after. I also served on the Clifton (Nottingham Road) School Board for some four years.

I consider the most significant thing I have done to be to father, raise and educate three competent, capable yet diverse children, with Christian values and morality, with the prospect of making some positive mark on society.

Sporting and/or other activities? In years long gone, I played rugby on the wing for Natal (after Natal Schools and U20 sides) and later became involved in ultra-distance running - 14 Comrades, one 100 miler and numerous Two Oceans culminating in 'knee retirement' in 2004.

I then turned to cycling and last year completed my 10th Sani2C and Freedom Challenge's 6-day Race to Rhodes. Also completed numerous Berg & Bush and Imana Wild Coast stage races.

One thing I learnt at school, which I draw on quite often: As 12 or 14 cacks coming together into a boarding school environment - one house and year - the support and benefit of working together as a team. And really forming a close bond.

The open minded 'liberal' ethos of the school at that time, especially when compared to the other schools we visited regarding sport etc. You didn't HAVE to be a first team rugby player to be recognized. We had some wonderful liberal minded teachers. The great Geoff Lange (history) comes to mind.

The need to keep your head down and make the most of every opportunity that came your way.

.....MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Keith Begg (Baines, 1985 - 1988)



Keith Begg (Baines, 1985 - 1988) along with Colleen and their home-schooled children Ella & Finn, currently live alongside the Lugenda River in a simple tented camp in the Niassa National Reserve, Northern Mozambique. Before this, Keith spent 12 years as a filmmaker and honey badger researcher and conservationist in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. He successfully established the "*Badger Friendly*" campaign in South Africa to help beekeepers protect hives from badgers and developed incentives through marketing honey.

They have lived in Niassa for the past 17 years, mentoring and leading a team of over a100 Mozambican conservationists involved in the Niassa Carnivore Project (www.niassalion.org). Twice the size of Kruger, this reserve is one of Africa's largest. It protects globally important populations of wildlife but is afflicted by illegal wildlife trade and mining.

Passionate about securing African wilderness areas by inspiring conservation actions that are transparent, collaborative and directly include local people who live in the area, the Begg's work is funded by their South African Not-for-profit Foundation.

In Niassa, they help the Mozambican government monitor and protect large carnivores (lion, wild dog, hyaena and leopard) and focus on finding ways for people and wildlife to live together and thrive. One of their programs is managing a 580 km² concession in partnership with Mbamba Village (population

of 2000) who live inside the reserve through a “conservation contract” that provides work and revenue from conservation.

Keith uses his skills as a pilot to monitor wildlife populations and support anti-poaching efforts while the Mariri Environmental Centre provides an opportunity for school children and teachers who live inside the reserve to come on bush visits, gain new skills in alternative livelihoods such as carpentry, construction, crafts and beekeeping. Their first conservation tourism camp opened this year, “Mpopo Trails Experience” and is designed to generate a sustainable future for Mbamba village.

Old Boys at Christian Focus Week

It was great to welcome a dynamic group of young OM’s back to Michaelhouse for the Christian Focus Week, during the last week of the second quarter. These young men really connected with the boys and it was felt that their input was most effective in making a huge impact on the lives of the boys. What a pleasure to have young Old Boys, many of whom were prefects, available as older mentors of boys currently in leadership roles at school.



Back Row, Left to Right: Matthew Kiln (Farfield, 2012 – 2016) James Kiln (Farfield, 2014 – 2018), Luke Taylor (Tatham, 2014-2018), Richard Friend (Tatham, 2012 – 2016), Stewart Grant (Mackenzie, 2011 – 2015)

Middle Row, Left to Right: Brian Karithi (West, 2007 – 2011), Daniel Karithi (West, 2014 – 2018), Dane Fisher (Mackenzie, 2014 – 2018), Matthew Ash (Mackenzie 2001 – 2005), Mr Paul Fleischack.

Front Row, Left to Right: Menzi Mbuyazi (Founder, 2014 – 2018), Callum Houston (Founders, 2014 – 2018), Nicholas Forster (East, 2013 – 2017), Dominic Leslie (Founders, 2014 - 2018), James Redfern (Tatham, 2012 - 2016). Matt Watson (West, 2012 - 2016).

Missing from photo is Qaks Mehlwana (West, 2014 – 2018)

Arthur Purbrick (Mackenzie, 2001 – 2005)

Arthur is currently in the British Army and on receipt of the recently distributed 2018 St Michael's Chronicle, forwarded us the following:

"I have taken the liberty of briefing the "A Significant Man is ..." to our junior troop leaders who have just finished Sandhurst and are under training at The Armour Centre in Dorset. An excellent creed for them to take forward as much as it is for a young Michaelhouse boy. I look forward to the next Old Boy Reunion and hopefully seeing the School again soon."

A full copy of **The Michaelhouse Way**, can be found under Resources on the APP or by clicking [HERE](#)

.... IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

Paul Dingley (Farfield, 1984 – 1987)

Congratulations to Paul who was recently featured in a Biographical piece in the CEO Magazine, as the Managing Director of JEB Asia.

Read the full article online [HERE](#)



OUT THERE

.... On the Road



Comrades Runners

Congratulations to the following Old Boys who completed the Comrades Marathon this year.

Great Silver run, Guy Allen and a very near miss for Greg Chaplin.

Name	House	Years	Time
Matthew "Tucky" Tatham	Farfield	2000 – 2004	09:58:34
Michael "Chalky" White	Founders	2000 - 2004	11:42:08
Jac Aldous	Mackenzie	2004 – 2008	10:44:34
Wes Green	Tatham	2001 – 2005	10:28:00
Greg Chaplin	Founders	1998 – 2002	07:36:00
Dave Denbury	Farfield	1998 – 2001	10:19:00
Cedric Campher	Baines	2001 – 2005	10:42:00
Tim Lee	Baines	2008 – 2012	08:52:29
Gary Laue – 20 th Comrades!	Baines	1996	08:40:04
Guy Allen	West	1994 – 1997	07:27:00
Stephen Phillips	Baines	1996	08:55:00
Duncan Goosen	East	1998 – 2002	08:55:36
Rory Pelsler	Mackenzie	2005 – 2009	09:45:38
James Le Cordeur	Founders	1993 – 1996	10:22:07
Tim Cradock	Pascoe	1984 – 1987	08:51:32
Thabo Dloti	Baines	1987	08:21:27
Arnie Aldous	Mackenzie	2001 – 2005	09:08:02
Conrad Walters	Pascoe	1997	10:51:55
Stephen Swanepoel	West	2000 – 2004	09:43:43

.... On Bikes

Ride the Karoo



Three of our Old Boys, Alastair Nairn (East, 1979 - 1982), Mike Harker (Farfield, 1978 - 1981) and Jason Wesson (East, 1991) completed the gruelling 160km one day **Ride the Karoo** Event. What an incredible accomplishment!

“Earlier this year I joined two Old Boys on a mountain bike race from Rhodes to Cradock as novices. We needed to cover 575km without route markers or GPS, and unsupported except for gracious farmers along the way. We used good old maps and local narratives. The journey was epic, brutally challenging, thought provoking, and emotionally charging. It took us four days to reach Cradock. We all came from very different backgrounds and were at the school at different times, but we finished with friendships forged forever on rural South Africa’s wagon tracks, mountain trails, and district roads. We came away with an understanding of the resilience which lies within each of us. Be strong. Quit ye like men!”

ARRIVALS, MARRIAGES AND DEPARTURES

Arrivals

Patrick (Founders, 2004 – 2008) and Kate Lambie on the birth of their son, Jackson.
Matthew (Baines, 1995 – 1999) and Justine McCormick on the birth of their son, Lincoln.
Matthew (Founders, 1997 – 2000) and Tina Le Cordeur on the birth of their daughter, Helen Nora.

Marriages

President Elect, Wayne Witherspoon, on his recent marriage to Michelle on the 13 July 2019.

Departures

Prof Leslie Peters – Honorary Old Boy (Board of Governors)

Michael Seymour – known as Kelly (West, 1950 – 1953)

Peter Clucas (Founders, 1948 – 1951)

David Moon – Past Member of Staff (1966 – 1976)

OLD BOY EVENTS

Hilton/Michaelhouse Golf Day – Sunday 23 June 2019

On 23 June 13 Old Boys (5 MHS and 8 HC) gathered at the picturesque Silvermere Golf Course, outside London, for the annual Hilton/Michaelhouse Golf Tournament.

Both teams won one game each, so the match was tied.

With no overall winner, Hilton retain the prized Captain's Putter, but we'll return next year to take this off them. The day was much enjoyed by all and we thank the Hilton UK Branch for all of their work arranging this event.



UPCOMING EVENTS / OLD BOYS CALENDAR

Johannesburg Old Boys Dinner

A reminder of the Johannesburg Old Boys Branch Annual Dinner taking place on 1 August 2019 at the Bryanston Country Club.

Cost: R550 per person - RSVP date is 30 July so be sure to book your ticket today!

Note: This function is open to all Old Boys, as well as past, present and prospective fathers. Full event details can be found on the Old Boys APP under **Events** or by clicking [HERE](#)

Durban Old Boys Golf Day



The poster for Michaelhouse Old Boys' Golf Day features a red header with the event title in white. Below the title, the date and location are listed: 13 August 2019 at Durban Country Club, with a 11h00 Shot Gun Start. The price is R600pp, which includes prize giving and refreshments. The main image shows a golf club on a green with a golf ball. At the bottom, it mentions a 4 Ball Alliance Competition and provides the RSVP email address: mhsobdbn@gmail.com. A small circular logo for Michaelhouse Old Boys Club is also present. Fine print at the bottom states: Price excludes 1/2 Wag, Caddy / Cart - If you need carts, book at the DCC Pro Shop: 031 3131 777 | Limited to 30 4Balls.

Cape Town Old Boys Events

- Thursday 22 August 2019 – Stellenbosch Function (Details to be confirmed)
- Friday 23 August 2019 – Dinner

This year will see the Cape Town Old Boys Dinner taking place at Villagers Rugby Club.

The Branch would like to see as many Cape Town Old Boys at the upcoming Branch Dinner as possible and have worked hard to secure a great venue at a very reasonable cost of R300 per person.

Full event details can be found on the Old Boys APP under **Events** or by clicking [HERE](#)

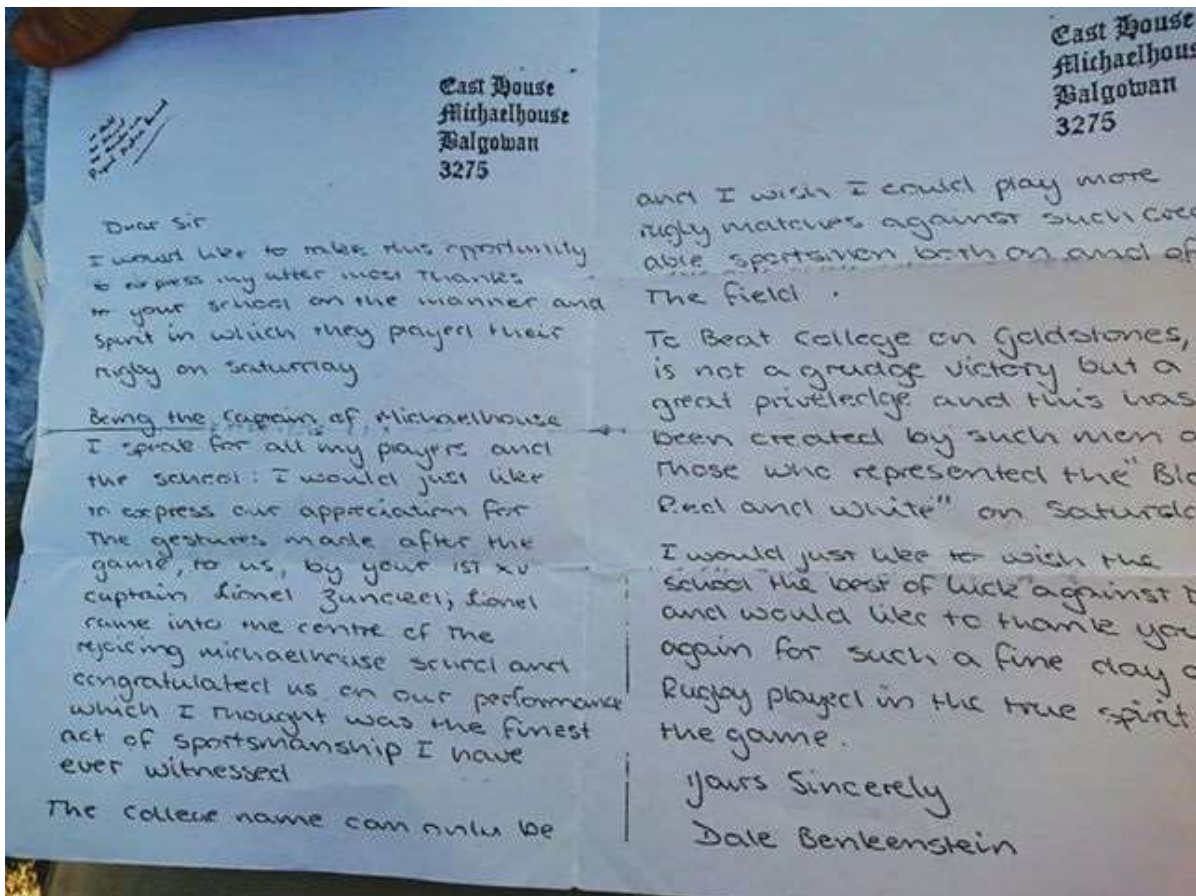
- Sunday 25 August 2019 - Chapel Service

There will once again be a Michaelhouse Old Boys Chapel Service at Brooke Chapel, Bishops Diocesan College at 10h00. All are welcome to attend, including families.



A SNIPPET FROM THE ARCHIVE

We loved receiving a copy of this letter via OM Branson Bowman-Edgar, (Farfield, 1993 – 1996) written by **Dale Benkenstein (Baines, 1989 – 1992)** and addressed to the Maritzburg College sports coach at the time.



James Cameron Todd and the mystery of the piano...

By Chris Waldburger

In a previous newsletter, I reviewed the great magnum opus of Todd’s theological and classical studies, *Politics and Religion in Ancient Israel*, in which he recounted that while each generation is bound to fail to live up to their highest values, it remains possible still to form “some two or three dozen men of towering intellectual and moral excellence.”

To paraphrase Todd, these are undoubtedly the men of understanding, thought, and culture, whose tone, moral and spiritual, as well as intellectual, is largely determined for life by his school. It was to this end he founded St Michael’s Diocesan College.

Yet Todd was writing of these “two or three dozen men” having left his supreme legacy – Michaelhouse – under truly disheartening circumstances.

According to Barrett’s work of Michaelhouse history up to 1968, the school was in serious financial difficulties by 1902. New staff accommodation could not be built, even though they managed to add a wood and iron dormitory and a master’s room.

Members of the Board promised £500 each, and tried to obtain loans, but were not able to raise enough capital to do the required building.

So they took out a collateral notarial bond on the furniture of the school, and, instead of paying their donations over five years, as they had promised, the governors agreed to pay immediately when there was no other way of meeting the bills for the building. Then they decided to raise the fees.

As a result, the Board became very concerned and involved in any expenses incurred by the school, and indeed became very critical of Todd’s financial management of them. According to the annals, Todd failed to supply the secretary to the governors with a list of parents to be notified of the rise in fees and incurred the governors’ displeasure.

Todd was also feeling disgruntled – the Board had refused to let Mrs Jackson pay a reduced fee for her son. Mrs Jackson, a founding member of the staff, was much loved by the students as a friend and confidante. She had taken charge of the sanatorium, the kitchen, the dormitories and the laundry. Two days after the school opened in Balgowan there was an outbreak of mumps, but there was no sick bay. Mrs Jackson, the matron, took it in her stride. After the mumps, she would bake bread daily, look after the vegetable gardens and continue tending to the sick boys.

The governors were also dissatisfied that Mrs Dobrée was given free board. She was the wife of Mr Dobrée, one of the first two teachers appointed by Todd, and the only married teacher at the school in the early years at Balgowan.

Over and above these points of conflict, Todd had also been prepared to accept livestock in lieu of money for fees, if it would help keep boys at school.

The Board thus watched every expense and made Todd cancel an order for a piano, but it was too late, and the piano was delivered. The bad feeling led to Todd handing his resignation on the 4th April 1903.

Relations had deteriorated so badly that the board simply accepted the resignation. The staff and students expressed their genuine regret. On the last day of term, they presented him with a photo of a silver tray and tea and coffee service which awaited his arrival in England. The staff, Old Boys, and boys had subscribed to it, but the governors had not.

Todd would not return. A popular preacher in London, he would go on to found two prep schools in England (one of which was named after the great scientist, Lord Kelvin, who had taught Todd at the University of Glasgow). Todd would fall in love with Aileen Gallaher, a young Irish teacher at one of the schools, and have two daughters, until his long-term health problems would overwhelm him in 1915. Aileen ran the second of the schools for another 20 years, retiring in 1935.

As Apple would do to Steve Jobs many decades later, Todd would depart the institution of his vision and passion under acrimonious circumstances. But, unlike Jobs, Todd never returned. Despite this, the great man has never been forgotten. Nor has the piano incident.

Database Reminder...

In order for us to keep in touch, we need your updated details! Old Boys are able to do this themselves via the website [HERE](#).

Best wishes to you all

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul". The signature is enclosed in a thin, light-colored rectangular border. Below the name, there is a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that serves as a decorative flourish or underline.

**PAUL FLEISCHACK
OLD BOYS CLUB SECRETARY**