



# Jesus Old Members' Group 1959-64

## Newsletter



Hilary  
2002

Editor:  
Chris Butterfield  
2 Towersey Drive  
Thame, Oxon OX9 3NP  
01844 213969

Desk Top Publishing:  
Peter Silverman

## Editorial

**T**his term's editorial must begin with an apology. A most unfortunate editorial blunder on my part led to the omission from the Michaelmas Term newsletter of the obituary on John Lewis. A number of readers contacted me on noticing this error of mine and I supplied them with a copy, but the text is of course now printed in this edition.

The AGM will include a discussion of what should be included in the new directory of members which George Reah is compiling and this will almost certainly include e-mail addresses, but in the meantime I have been keeping a list of such addresses for those who contact me via the Ethernet. If you would like your address to be included, and you have not already corresponded with me in that way, then do let me know, as I am intending to publish a list with next term's newsletter as an interim measure until the full directory is available.

The AGM is one of the dates for your diary which are announced here; it will be at 9.30 on the morning following the Association dinner, and more details will be available at the Lodge on arrival in the College, although a copy of the accounts is enclosed here. If you have not received your copy of the Record (and many have not, as the College has been let down badly by the distributors) and would like to attend the dinner, then please write to the College Officers' Secretary with a cheque payable to the College for £29.50. Another date for the diary is a most promising visit to Caerleon which Max Perkins is kindly organising; full details are within. And yet another is the Old Member's Day, mentioned briefly in the last issue, for which there is a second insert which includes the usual booking form.

Finally, may I thank Richard Davies for the article he has contributed. I endeavour to make the newsletter something which can make an enjoyable read over a leisurely cup of coffee, and his account of the family's latest home make-over suits that purpose perfectly. It concludes with an invitation that you may like to accept!

Max Perkins sends the following programme for the visit to Caerleon on Saturday 11 May.

He suggests meeting for lunch at the Priory Hotel on the High Street at 12.30; two courses cost £5.95. The afternoon will offer visits to three sites from the Roman era. The local archaeologist Howard Pell will introduce us to Roman Caerleon, the headquarters of the Second Augustan Legion, where the barracks and the amphitheatre can be seen. Then we can see the baths and the museum. Entry to the museum is free, but there is a small charge at the baths, and each of us will be invited to make a small contribution to cover our guide's fee and his lunch. (*continued on next page*)

## Inside This Issue

- **Mad Brit Disease - Richard Davies**
- **Diary Dates**
- **John Lewis**
- **Bainteasers - Peter Silverman**
- **Group Accounts**
- **Old Members' Day Booking Form**

At around 4.30 Dr Russell Rhys, owner of the Ffwrrwm will give a talk on Caerleon's links with King Arthur. The Ffwrrwm contains a sculpture park and an arts and crafts centre, and here tea has been arranged for about £3 per person.

If those attending find they have time for a drink before leaving, then Max and his wife Jenny will be pleased to welcome them to their riverside home a few minutes' walk away.

It promises to be a very pleasant and informative day. If you think you would like to attend, please let Max know as soon as possible, even if only on a provisional basis, so he can advise the guides of how many they might expect. The phone number is 01633 421047, the e-mail contact is MPerk88983@aol.com and the postal address is Nailery Cottage, 2 Riverside, Caerleon, Newport, Gwent, NP18 1BQ.

## Mad Brit Disease

**A**midst all the sound and fury about Mad Cow Disease in France last year an outbreak of Mad Brit Disease went largely unnoticed by the world's media. As far as we know neither Prue nor I have a history of madness in our families but a year ago we did something completely barmy. We sold the nice, comfortable, centrally-heated Dordogne farmhouse that we had restored over the previous nine years and moved to permanently in June 1998, moved into our second house, a nice, comfortable, but unheated *gite*, in the middle of winter, bought a ramshackle farm of 50 acres not far away and embarked on yet another renovation project at a time of life when more sensible people are taking world tours, devoting themselves to their grandchildren or settling down to writing their memoirs. Greater evidence of congenital madness would be hard to find!

Why? To be honest I am not sure. We love doing up houses and having 'done' La Guibaudie and The Long House we were somewhat at a loose end. Also we had created a holiday home, not one for permanent living, so there were aspects about living at La Guibaudie that irritated us. It was pointless spending more money correcting defects, so selling up and starting again became a viable option. Also our Parisian neighbours, who were doing up their barn as a holiday home, intruded by deciding to move to the Dordogne and by suburbanising their part of the hamlet by planting a Leylandii hedge. Finally I think that having to put down our beloved dog destabilised us terribly and took some of the charm away from a place we had loved for years. Added to all this is the fact that we discovered that could get a jolly good price for our house which meant that we would be able to afford to do up a new place properly.

Not that it was that easy to find somewhere suitable. We looked hard but kept coming up with the sort of factor that the unwary might fail to take into account: busy roads nearby, bad restoration which would cost as much again to undo before you could start your own renovation and so forth. Then when an estate agent told us of a farm with a lake and a vineyard and 20 hectares of land - something he said was '*très rare*' - we jumped.

So what did we buy? La Grange was an old stone farmhouse with two big barns attached, standing like a bulls-eye in the middle of a ring of fields which were in turn surrounded by a ring of woods. There was a lake, a run-down vineyard and a delightful row of stone-built piggeries plus two separate barns and two hideous tobacco-drying sheds that would have to come down. The whole thing was run-down and ramshackle but one day, after a lot of work and a great deal of money, it would clearly make a most wonderful home. The fields were let to the neighbouring peasant farmer, a simple-minded man in his 50s with a penchant for the bottle, who we were aware could prove to be a problem as he didn't appear actually to do any proper farming. The woods had been decimated by the tempest that struck South West France on 27 December 1999 and needed years of tender loving care if they were to be restored to their former glory. Anyone in their right mind would have walked away: we bought it!

So having got our property, what were we going to do to it? The first task was to clear out the mountains of rubbish in both house and barns. The place has been empty for fourteen years and nothing had been touched since. The old couple who lived there moved to the



place in 1931 and had installed electricity, water and a phone over the years but continued to live *la vie paysanne* when it came to modern conveniences. The plumbing consists of one cold tap and a bucket, so you can guess at the primitive state in which they lived. I asked their daughter, from whom we bought the place, about drains and lavatories. She just smiled and pointed vaguely in the direction of the woods! Anything wooden was riddled with wood-worm and had to be burned; every nook and cranny was filled with stuff: bottles - mostly empty but some full of horrid homemade wine and *eau de vie* that would make good paint-stripper - broken buckets, bits of old iron and empty tin cans: they threw nothing away. We had to have a huge bonfire each day for weeks and we virtually wore a groove in the road to the local *déchetterie* where we dumped tons of scrap metal. The barns were full of mouldy hay that had to be cleared and burnt, a dusty, nasty task. Sadly we have found few treasures: apart from some old family photos that we returned to the family, the nicest things have been masses of little leather children's boots with studded wooden soles, which look charming but which must have been hell to wear.

Once we cleared out the place the builders could start to do all those things that we could not or dared not do ourselves: the architect's plans were drawn; planning permission was obtained and have signed up masons, plumbers, electricians and carpenters, we ordered a swimming pool (an essential for the Dordogne summer) and work commenced. We had to move out of our *gite* by mid-May 2001 as our letting season began on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and so we camped at La Grange amid a veritable army of *ouvriers* in a landscape that at times resembled the aftermath of the Battle of The Somme!

It is now mid-January 2002 and the third phase of the renovation has just begun. The roof has been renewed, windows and external doors are in place. It is now time for internal walls, plumbing, electricity, central heating and tiling of floors. Our goal is to see the back of the workmen by Easter and to be able to live in what was once barns by 19 May, the first anniversary of our move. It remains to be seen whether we shall make it. While we wait, we are hard at work outside creating a garden and taming the wild woods. I am reminded of the old Chinese tale of the foolish old man who moved a mountain: whether we will have the time and the energy to move our 'mountain' remains to be seen.

When it is finished we shall have a large house with five bedrooms, studies for each of us, a huge kitchen, dining room, sitting room and a splendid hideaway in what used to be *la cave* where they bottled their wine, which will double as library and somewhere to watch television. In addition the original house will become a *maison d'amis*, complete with its own kitchen and sitting room for guests who stay for more than the 'fish' period. Outside there will be the pool, plenty of space to create a garden and ten years hard labour getting the woodland in order. It will challenge us, fulfil us, and keep us very fit. It will certainly be the last such project we tackle, so we shall take it slowly and try to get it right this time.

Richard and Monique Paice saw the place in the raw, as it were, in November 2000. They will see a difference now! If any other member of our Jesus Old Members group should happen to be in The Dordogne do give us a call and come and see what we have been up to, (e-mail: richardd@ctanet.fr ; tel/fax: (0033)553-03-22-95). We promise not to make you cut down trees or something like that - unless, of course you would like to do so!

Diary Dates 2002	
5th April	Association Dinner
6th April	AGM
11th May	Caerleon visit (Max Perkins)
29th June	Old Members' Day



## John Lewis

John Lewis died on 22nd May. It was a second bout of cancer that took him, having survived the first, after an operation, followed by chemo and radio therapy last year. He had an enormously full and successful life, an outstanding sportsman at school and university, he missed his cricket blue by suffering a dislocated shoulder while fielding during the critical trials, but wore his Vincent's tie with appropriate pride. After a stint at the Sunday Times, and with George Weidenfeld, of Weidenfeld and Nicholson, he founded a children's publishing house, Wayland, which subsequently grew into one of the most important companies in the field, producing up to 200 new titles each year. This involved considerable travel to all the English speaking world, and even into Russia in the early '90's. His friendships covered many fields as was evidenced by the Sussex church overflowing at his funeral. He leaves a wife, Chrissie, and children Jonathan and Katie. A particularly pleasing stroke of fortune was that he was able to give his radiant daughter away in February this year.

### Brainteasers

Last term's teaser submitted by **Michael Ferguson** was indeed a real challenge. Special congratulations are therefore due to **David Morris**, **George Reah** and **Roger Paice** for submitting the correct answers. As this one foxed me totally I simply going to reproduce Roger's answer and analysis:

*The answer is that only the gems whose numbers are a square cannot be taken. Thus, numbers 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, 36, 49, 64, 81 and 100 are cursed. That leaves a total of 90 that can be safely taken. Why is this? Any prime number will be cursed twice - with the first curse, and the number itself. Any number that is not prime will either be an exact square, in which case it will be cursed by the 1, by the square root, and by the number itself, making 3 curse, or it will be have more factors, which will lead to an even number of curses.*

*But I confess that I worked it out the hard way, and only developed a reasoning afterwards!*

Here is one for this term that does not require a D Phil in Maths:

***After a heavy drinking session Charlie staggered out of his club. At that precise time there was a power failure affecting the area for miles around. All the lights went out and stayed out for the next 2 hours. With his brain confused by alcohol he headed in the wrong direction, he stumbled across a field and fell over a fence down a railway embankment ending up sprawled across the single track line totally unconscious.***

***A minute later an express train came round a bend in the track heading at full tilt towards him. Charlie was dressed in dark clothing and dark footwear. He had dark hair and was facing away from the train. The moon had not yet risen. The train had no headlights.***

***How did he manage to survive?***

Answers as usual to [jesusbrainteaser@petersilverman.com](mailto:jesusbrainteaser@petersilverman.com)

