

Edlines

the newsletter of **Stourbridge Old Edwardian Club**
No. 13 Spring 2014

Here's the latest issue of **Edlines** which is full of information about Club news and events. We aim to make it as complete as we can but by the nature of things something currently unplanned could be arranged in the next couple of months well before the next mailing. For the latest information, the best course is to call in and check the notice board and monthly calendar but for those of you who don't get into Stourbridge on a regular basis the Club's website is updated almost daily and is a rich source of information on upcoming events and other news. Go to www.oldedclub.org

Many members receive notices by email but we shall continue to use both paper and electronic as long as required.

A letter from the President, Steve Branson

Dear Member,

The General Committee have been discussing and formulating proposals for the future development of the Club in order to ensure its continued viability.

As members are aware, the Club membership is falling and the utilisation of the facilities is much lower than in the past, particularly in the early part of the week. Your committee has been advised that from a financial point of view the minimum membership for continued viability is around 300 and in the past year this has fallen to 290. This is primarily a consequence of the ageing of our current membership and the small numbers of new members from our traditional source, King Edward VI College. Students are only there now for about 20 months and then usually move on to university, so they do not build up the attachment to the College and the Club as with the Grammar School in the past.

We are thus faced with the need to find ways of increasing membership or additional streams of revenue or a combination of the two. Your committee has been working on this matter for the past few years and has been successful in increasing the revenue of the Club by the use of our facilities by external parties for pre-booked functions. The most recent initiative has been entering an SOEC team in the Stourbridge snooker league, which has been very successful (see report) and has positively increased bar takings for home matches and snooker table receipts generally over the winter months.

However, none of this income is guaranteed and the need to increase membership is becoming increasingly critical for our long term future. In any case an influx of new blood is necessary for the Club's health. Your committee is acutely aware that any steps it may propose to take should have the minimum possible effect on the ethos and character of the Club but feels that we must look at some alternatives to ensure the future of the Club that we all enjoy.

The committee is considering a number of proposals and ideas to address the problem and we would very much welcome your feedback whilst these are still being developed. Some ideas under consideration are:-

- 1. Creating another membership category for non Old Edwardians who are like-minded and conform to the values and ethos of the Club.*
- 2. Extending the snooker initiative to allow league players to use the Club facilities for practising snooker in the first half of the week, when the Club is quiet. Whether this is on the basis as "pay-as-you-go" or subject to an annual fee is yet to be decided.*
- 3. Extending the existing membership to include spouses or partners of existing members who may then enter the Club in their own right.*
- 4. Contact as many King Edward VI Foundation schools as possible to advise that alumni of these schools may become members of the Club.*

We intend to arrange Members' Forums to allow discussion of all proposals prior to any formal proposition for their incorporation into the Rules of the Club. Details will be advised in due course. I look forward to discussions with members and I am confident that we can introduce measures that will help the Club and maintain the exclusivity that we enjoy.

There is also something that all members can do to help. Use of the Club and its facilities is just as important as recruiting more members, so if you haven't come in to the club lately please do so, and if you, friends or family are looking for an exclusive venue for a party or dinner you could not do any better than to contact Tim or Tracey and arrange your function at the Club.

From the returns of the survey at the end of last year, it was apparent that some members were not aware of the relaxation in the Club's dress code. Shorts, track suits, trainers etc. are still not acceptable, but providing that your appearance is smart, or "not scruffy" that is OK. For example, providing that they are clean and not "distressed", jeans may be worn.

It is hoped that this will encourage members to come into the club after shopping in the town, for example.

We have also purchased a drinks machine, which will be introduced soon and which will dispense different coffees, hot chocolate, tea etc.

If members wish to contact me to discuss any of the above, my details are below.

I look forward to speaking to you or better still seeing you in the Club in the near future.

Steve Branson

President

Tel: 01384 390744

email: steve.branson123@btinternet.com

2013 Questionnaire

A big thank-you to all members who returned completed questionnaire forms at the end of last year. The feedback is still being analysed and will help to inform the Development Committee in its deliberations.

Some interesting stats emerged e.g. for members living less than three miles from the Club, 49% only visit the Club monthly or less but the carpark was cited by 80% of this group as one of the most important aspects of membership although the bar, catering, the exclusive nature of the Club and the ability to stay in touch with friends were also rated as important by more than 40% of respondents.

For members living more than ten miles away nostalgia was indicated by 90% of replies as a prime reason for membership but exclusivity, staying in touch, social events and catering were all indicated as important by over 40% of responders.

Slightly concerning are the number of misconceptions prevalent with some members. For example the dress code is already more relaxed and has been for years. Also spouses/partners have been welcome in all parts of the Club since the rule change admitting female Old Edwardians.

There was some understandable comment about ever increasing subscriptions/barrier fees but members must appreciate that this will be inevitable unless everyone increases their support for the bar and the various social activities.

Ideally we would like more members to call in for a drink on a regular basis even if only once a month. This would have a real and significant effect and it would be good to see you.

Whilst the Club is not in any immediate danger, the message is clear - use it or lose it.

The Fifty Club

Many thanks to all members who already contribute to the Club's lottery. It plays an important roll in the financial health of the Club which we all love.

However, Clive Bowen-Davies who organises the monthly draw, is appealing for new contributors as well as urging existing members to increase their monthly stakes.

The standard monthly stake is £5 which brings the chance of prizes of £100, £50 or £30 each month. Doubling the monthly stake to £10 is still a modest outlay, equivalent to less than the cost of just 1 pint of beer per week, but to the Club the support would be invaluable.

Clive's ambition ultimately, if there's a good response to the appeal, is to be able to increase the value of the prizes. This will hopefully create more excitement and anticipation at the monthly draws which normally take place on the penultimate Thursday each month.

Your support is really appreciated and long may it continue. To join the Fifty Club or to increase your stake please contact Clive (01562 886207) and ask for a standing order form.

Social Round-up

Chinese New Year Banquet

As a change from the traditional Scottish Burns Night, we tried a "first" for SOEC by holding a Chinese Banquet on Saturday 1st February to coincide with the Chinese New Year. The event was comfortably held in the main lounge with tables of eight diners, once again exemplifying the flexibility of the Club premises. Eight courses were enjoyed through the evening. For a full report and photos go to our website www.olderclub.org

St David's Day Dinner

Always sold out well in advance, this year's event on Monday 3rd March didn't disappoint. The St David's Day dinner is one of the most popular events of the year encompassing a splendid meal interleaved with readings and singing of appropriately chosen material. For full report and photos go to our website www.olderclub.org

Breakfast Club

This twice a year event is getting even more popular. A full-spread breakfast with morning papers and the odd comic or two will sustain even the stoutest of members until evening dinner. For dates of the next Breakfast contact the Stewards.

St. George's Day Dinner

This now traditional Club event took place on Wednesday 23rd April with a pleasing increase in attendees. The whole evening is a celebration of England and everything English including a delightful meal with appropriately chosen courses. Ten members read an eclectic but linked selection of prose and poems ranging from Shakespeare, Tennyson, Sir Edward Grey, JB Priestley and Bill Bryson.

A full report with photos can be viewed on the website www.olderclub.org

Wining and Dining

The catering offer at the Club is now a significant component of our income and has also been instrumental in increasing the use of the facilities by members and partners.

The introduction last year of Fish & Steak nights has been particularly successful. These no frills two course dinners with a main course of either Fish or Steak for around £12/head are held on selected Friday nights throughout the year. Advance bookings only - check the noticeboard or speak to Tim or Tracey, 01384 395635 for dates and availability.

We would like to see more lunchtime diners. A simple standard menu has been available for a couple of years which offers a good selection of sandwiches, soup, toasties, omelettes etc. to walk-in members and guests. Occasionally "Moules et Frites" lunches are held on selected Fridays.

The lunchtime menu could be extended if demand was demonstrated but expectations need to be tempered with realism of what is economically viable. The website and Club noticeboards advertise upcoming specials.

Self-service Coffee and Tea are available throughout the day, even outside bar opening hours.

SOEC Joins Stourbridge & District Snooker League

Following enquiries by some of our youngest members about playing competitive snooker, Tim Purslow got in touch with the Stourbridge and District Snooker League, and last July he and Arwyn Thomas attended their AGM to enter a team in Division 2 for the new season starting in September. A total of 16 members put their names forward for registration, and of these 11 actually played during the season. The main participants, however, were Chris Cowley, Ed Davies, Gavin Dunn, and Harry Hall. Chris skippered the team, and had the highest break in the Division with a 56. The standard of play overall was high and very competitive especially for a relatively inexperienced team, and they ended the season in a creditable 8th place out of 11 with 60 points. This position was only just behind the teams in 5th, 6th, and 7th places and well ahead of the teams below them. You can keep up with the team's progress on the Club website, or on www.leaguesnooker.co.uk

The team now sports burgundy coloured Polo-shirts with embroidered Tudor crest. There is a small number available to general members, priced £15 each on application to the Stewards.

Dates for the Diary (2014)

May

- Wednesday 7th - College Concert (Contact reception for tickets – details page 8)
- Wednesday 14th - Norman Allen Reunion lunch
- Saturday 17th - Skiffle & Folk Evening

June

- Tuesday 3rd - Club visit to Cosford Air Museum
- Thursday 19th - Ascot Ladies Day lunch
- Charter Day Service, 19.00, St Mary's Old Swinford
- Saturday 21st - Charter Day lunch
- Monday 30th - Centenary Founders & Appeals Dinner

July

- Wednesday 2nd - Charter Day Cricket Match

September

- Saturday 13th - President's Evening featuring Bev Pegg.

October

- Friday 3rd - SOEC Annual Dinner
- Tuesday 21st - Trafalgar Dinner

November

- Monday 3rd - Past Presidents' Dinner
- Tuesday 11th - Remembrance observance at College (all welcome at 10.45)
- Monday 17th - Committee Dinner

December

- Monday 1st - SOEC AGM
- Wednesday 3rd - Turkey handicap snooker competition
- Tuesday 23rd - Boar's Head Supper

For further information please contact the Stewards or refer to the main notice-board about a month before an event for announcements/booking details. Also see the Club website www.olderclub.org.uk
Owing to demand College events need to be booked direct (01384 398100 option 4).

The First World War

As was to be expected there has been much interest in the media in all things connected with the First World War in this centenary year of the start of hostilities.

No less than 526 Old Boys served in HM Forces during the first World War, 57 making the supreme sacrifice and 116 being wounded. The names of the fallen, listed below, are enshrined in the School Memorial Hall, built in 1931, when a stained glass window and commemorative tablets were erected to their memory.

The Headmaster, JE Boyt, began compiling the Record of War Service in 1914 soon after the war started and the first list was made on 9th September 1914 and by Christmas a Roll of Honour with 121 names was printed. The names of the fallen reading left to right are:-

Arthur Victor Alden	Leslie Charles Jackson Barlow	Albert Bennett
George Hubert Benton	Douglas Bethell	Bertie Biggar
James Blakeway	Robert Bowcott	George Francis Bridge
Arthur Clifford Bridgwater	Henry James Cliff	Hans H.A. Cooke
Neville Joseph Cooper	Donald Ernest Cooper	Herbert R Cornford
William Courtney	Charles Thomas Dawson	Charles Dudley
Howard J Edwards	Ralph Elcock	Hugh Lancelot Evers
Arthur Simpson Fellows	Frederick W Giles	Robert H Grazebrook
John A Stanton Hand	Albert Charles Hitchings	D. Llewellyn Holland
Fred Holloway	Harry Percival Hughes	Wilfred Henry John
Gwilym A Tegid Jones	Malcolm Keys	Arthur Henry Lambert
Chris Donald Lowe	Dudley Marshall	Arthur K Millwood
Albert Phillips Oliver	Maurice Parfitt	Sidney Herbert Penn
Wilf Lawson Perks	Thomas Price	Horace A Priest
John Francis Reading	James Philip Round	Harry Oliver Selway
Reg Alfred Squires	D'Arcy Granville St. Clair Roberts	Harry Stevens
Clarence E Stevens	Harry Stubbings	Charles Reginald Voce
Wm Art. Bayford Kirwan Ward	Sydney Archer Wilkes	Owen Edgar Williams
Harry Williams	Frederick Worton	Arnold Wynne

If you are related to any of the above we would like to hear from you. The Club would very much like to know the individual histories of all Old Edwardians who served in the war so if you can help with stories or memorabilia please get in contact.

If you've not been before you may like to consider attending the remembrance observance at King Edward's on 11th November.

SOEC Website – www.olderclub.org

The website contains a wealth of information for you to browse including historic material, news and details of past events and those to come. There are a number of downloadable items including membership application forms. This and future editions of ~~Edlines~~ *Edlines* will also be included together with an archive of (electronically produced) past issues, all of which are available as pdf downloads.

On the subject of electronic communications, most of our members have supplied us with an email address for routine contact purposes and this provides, of course, a tremendous cost saving in the face of ever-rising postage costs.

If you have email facilities but have not yet let us have your email address, may we ask you to pass it on to us at info@olderclub.org or at subscription renewal time. It will only be used for Club purposes and will not be passed on to third parties. The same email address may be used for general enquiries.

The Club has had **wifi** for some time now and although mostly used for business meetings is also free to members with laptops/iphones etc., who can access the internet when at the Club.

Refurbishment Work

Over the last twelve months more work has been undertaken to complete the update to the décor in the Memorial Room, main bar and snooker room. This has been welcomed both by members and by our numerous “paying guests” to whom we make Club facilities available for commercial meetings, functions etc., and who provide another source of income vital in helping us to balance the books.

As reported in the previous newsletter both the Memorial Room and the Main Lounge have been redecorated and much of the soft furnishings replaced in a more modern, but elegant, style. Improvements to the bar area and snooker room are complete now so if you’ve not visited the Club recently, why not pop in to see the makeover for yourself.

We were able to proceed with these works thanks to generous bequests by former members, notably from the late John Sanders. We also have new branded placemats provided by the bequest from the late Bert Thatcher. We record our gratitude to them and their families for remembering the Club in this way.

Club Colours

The range of Club Colours currently in stock is detailed in the list below. Items may be purchased via the Steward or on application with remittance to the Honorary Secretary (for collection). All items of clothing are polyester in ‘**Club member**’ pattern. So if your family don’t know what to buy you for that next special event, these items would make very acceptable presents.

Ties	£ 12.00 each
Bow Ties (ready tied)	£ 12.00 each
Bow Ties (self tie)	£ 12.00 each
Cummerbunds (Regular)	£ 16.00 each
Cummerbunds (extra deep)	£ 18.00 each

Recently we have replenished the stock of “Old Edwardian” ties which may be worn by any Old Edwardian. These are priced at £12 each (postage extra) and are available on request to the Hon Sec or the Stewards.

We are currently out of stock of cuff links (Tudor crest) but hope to have some available later in the year.

A small number of Polo shirts (burgundy) as worn by the snooker team are currently available to the general membership priced £15 each. More can be sourced (possibly in other colours too) if demand is sufficient. Contact the Stewards for details.

Post Scriptum

Assuming that you’ve read this far we do hope that you’ve found this edition of ~~Edlines~~ **Edlines** interesting and useful.

If you are one of those members we haven’t seen for some time, we also hope that it may inspire you to call in at the Club when next in town or on an evening. Bring a friend, bring your wife (or partner – we don’t mind), just sign them in as a guest and begin to rediscover the refreshed Club over a pint or a glass of wine.

We have a unique Club but it needs everyone’s support.

Valete

Contact details

General enquiries and bookings: the Stewards, Tim and Tracey

Club Telephone: 01384 395635 (11.30 - 14.30, 17.30 - 11.00) Outside these hours there is a message facility.

Email: info@oldedclub.org

President:

Steve Branson

Tel: 01384 390744

email: steve.branson123@btinternet.com

Fifty Club: Clive Bowen-Davies (01562 886207)