

FROM THE PORCH

The end-of-year newsletter from the outgoing Deputy Headmaster (Boarding) at Maritzburg College



Dear good people of the College BE

It has now been a full six days since the proud Men of College departed their school for the last time in 2019, for a well-deserved summer break. I hope that you are enjoying having them at home, and that they're behaving themselves. I bumped into a couple of boarders yesterday and, having been at the South Coast for a few days, they were tanned and had a mischievous twinkle!

It has been another strong, successful and eventful year for the College BE, and, as I look back on this past year specifically and on my six-year tenure as the head of the BE, I have much to be grateful for. Thank you especially to all you wonderful parents out there, who love and support your sons, encourage them, "be there" for them, and support them as well as the BE and the school.

On the note of my departure as the head of the BE, there is nothing dramatic to it.

Simply FYI, when it became clear about eight months ago that Mr Guise-Brown was going to retire after 39 years' distinguished service to College, and that his portfolio on EXCO of admissions / disciplinary hearings would become vacant, I asked the headmaster to consider a sideways shift for me. I have had a stimulating and challenging six-year stint at the head of the BE, and I felt strongly – as I surveyed the fine young men just below me in the BE pecking order – that there were a no. of very able candidates to replace me. In the end, my old job has been given to my good friend and colleague, Mr Ryan Kyle, a proud, upstanding OC, who – and I believe this view is shared by many people who have interacted with him – represents the very best of College and its values.

I will be staying on in the BE, so this is not "Farewell", but I have suggested to Mr Kyle that I be re-appointed as a duty boarder master only from about mid-year 2020 onwards. I am sensitive to the housemasters having to deal with me, a crusty greybeard, as a subordinate from as soon as January, and I believe that a few months' break will do us all some good. However, I will of course

continue to serve the BE in other ways from January onwards, and, for example, I have had a meeting of substance with Mrs S Upfold about the need to continue to vigorously push out the great "College message" to all parts of KZN and other parts of SA. I am very keen to help market College generally and its BE specifically – and I do see myself as a College missionary (to use Mr Skonk Nicholson's description), "bringing light to places of darkness". Of course, dear old Skonkie used to merrily apply that description to himself, a former head prefect of Durban High School, as he plied his teaching trade *at College* (the said "place of darkness")!

This, then, is my final *From the Porch*, so (as the headmaster has made very clear to me) I had better make it a memorable one.

I am going to use the next few pages to highlight certain events and developments of 2019, and especially to highlight some of the many contributions made by parents (Joe Culverwell and his Boarder Parents' Committee spring immediately to mind), staff and boys.

At the end of this newsletter, I have also added a summary of some of the more important dates for the start of 2020.

I end off by wishing the College boarding community a happy, restful and joyous Christmas and New Year.

Matthew Marwick



Using genuine artefacts from the 1870s, my two blokes cheekily re-enact a certain emblem.

And yes, they're on the porch.

Project Madevu is wrapped up

During the course of 2019, the College BE, which is already by some margin the largest public school boarding establishment in the country, expanded further, with the addition of 14 single rooms for the Form 6 boarders in Elliott House.

That addition took the capacity of Elliott's to 82 beds, which meant that, with the retention of at least 20 prefect beds in the other four boarding houses, the BE is now comfortably able to accommodate the 102-strong 2016 Nathan House intake, who are no doubt jostling to return to school as the Form 6 Class of 2020.

In November of this year, the Langley Wing to Elliott's was opened, honouring the legendary Mr AS "Madevu" Langley, and this final addition to Elliott's meant that, finally, the five-year (aptly-named) "Project Madevu", which was the expansion of the BE to 500 boys, was complete.



Before and after!



A hearty "Bravo!" goes to the team from Hilton Construction, as well as Mr Ken Hackland and his estates staff, for completing the extension not just on time but under budget too.

In 2020, there will be 502 boarders in residence at College – a record – and I am very proud to have played a small part in hopefully ensuring that the influence and importance of the boarders, who are such vital cogs in the great Maritzburg College engine, have been secured at this school for another generation.



Naming of the Keith Guise-Brown Dining Hall ("KGB headquarters")

Unquestionably one of my personal highlights of the year was the surprise (to many) naming of the Keith Guise-Brown Dining Hall on break-up day, immediately after Prize-giving.



“KGB” – as well as the vast majority of the attendees – had no inkling of the honour that was about to be bestowed on him, and it was very satisfying to see his eyes bulge, as he innocently approached what must have appeared to be an odd collection of colleagues and friends lurking outside the dining hall!



The idea of naming the dining hall after KGB had been mooted by the Archives Committee well over a year ago, and, having got the go-ahead from the headmaster and EXCO also over a year ago, we kept our powder dry and our lips tightly sealed from then onwards until a week ago.



As I mentioned to someone last week, the secrecy – and quiet satisfaction of having things go according to plan – reminded me of my furtive yet ultimately successful efforts to propose to my (then) girlfriend, all those years ago.



As Col. Hannibal Smith of the A-team would say, puffing on a stogie, “I love it when a plan comes together!”

BE Staffing

The staffing in the boarding establishment in 2019 remained fairly constant, although we were sorry to have a few departures by the end of the year.



The acclaimed rugby referee, **Mr Vusi Msibi** (Hudson’s) (*photo above*), returned to civilian life (he is a teacher at St Nicholas); **Mr Dylan Coombes** (Nathan’s), after a short stay, will be emigrating to Melbourne, Australia,

in January with his young family; and former First XV vice-captain, **Mr Lukas Booyesen** (Clark's) (*photo below, on Reunion Day, 2013*), has decided to expand his teaching experience with a stint in China. We thank all these gentlemen for their contributions to the BE and wish them well.



A newcomer to the boarding staff in 2019 was **Sr Nikki Price**, who joined us from an old age home in town. (Happily, she was only employed there – she wasn't an inmate.) With her enthusiasm and positivity, and caring and warm nature, Sr Nikki has been a wonderful addition to the sanatorium. Earlier in the year, we bade farewell to **Sr Jean Saurombe**, and we thank her too for her contribution to the BE during her short stint.

In November, **Nurse Debbie Ralfe** – who hails from a family with extensive connections to College – was appointed as the staff nurse in the sanatorium, and we wish her well for 2020 and beyond.



To the relief of many, that passionate, ever-loyal OC **Mr Ndumiso Makhathini** (*photo above*) withdrew his resignation, and will in December take up residence in Shepstone's, where he will from 2020 onwards be allowed to focus especially on his role with the College prefects and house leaders. His position as the ever-vigilant deputy housemaster of Clark's has been taken up by similarly passionate OC, **Mr Shaun Sinclair** (*photo below, as a player in the First XI*), while Mr Ryan Kyle's elevation to the lofty rank of deputy headmaster at College meant that his position as the deputy housemaster of Shepstone's became vacant too. That has been filled by yet another loyal and busy OC, **Mr Ngcebo Thembela** – who doubles up his day job by being the Vice-president of the Old Boys' Association.

We wish all three fine men all of the best, as they assume their new roles in 2020.



We have a record SEVEN new members of staff joining the BE in January 2020. They are all young, enthusiastic and sporty types, and, while finding them accommodation for January has posed some headaches of late for Mr Kyle and me, we are quite sure that they will all be valuable additions to the BE team.

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On behaviour and mis-behaviour / Antics

Given that the BE roll exceeded 490 boys this year – and that those boys were invariably of the robust, strong-willed and independent-minded variety – it did not come as a surprise to me that issues of behaviour and discipline loomed large for me, personally, this year.

At times – especially in the tricky third term, when the lull in sport meant that more boarders were, shall we say, a tad “distracted” – the issue overshadowed my other BE-related duties, and I at times did harbour a rising concern that too much of my time was spent dealing with such discipline-related matters – especially the managing, sorting, and arranging of disciplinary hearings (both formal and informal).

Alas, a number of boarders had to take extended (at times permanent) holidays from the BE, and the efforts of the BE staff to ensure that the boys generally behaved within certain parameters were ongoing and remorseless.

Photos: The antics of the Form 6 boys in the 2nd week of the final term stretched everyone’s humour and tolerance.



From the BE masters’ points of view, what was the most frustrating was the unwillingness of some boys to adhere to “the small things” (a universal issue with teenage boys!), like the dress code, skipping cricket on Saturday afternoons, tardiness, shaggy haircuts, missing bolts, skipping breakfast, wearing the wrong footwear, being unshaved etc.

These small issues become the bane of many a boarder-master’s life, and the housemasters and duty staff had to again and again remind the boys to adhere to the rules, Code of Conduct etc.

But then, as I have already conceded, such is the way of a teenage boy – you parents will of course know all about that too.

In the last term, in the very build-up to the examinations, the housemasters and I were especially disappointed to have two groups each of six boarders venture into the dark night in search of adventure – one to a house party in Bisley and the other to a rather infamous establishment of youthful revelry in Hilton. However, the addition of cameras in the BE has meant that the chances of a group of boys getting caught are rather higher than “back in the day”, a decade or two ago, when a boarder looking for a few distractions on a Saturday night could nonchalantly saunter out of Clark’s, climb through the wire fence on College Road and flag down a passing car, for a quick ride to the Locker Room. Once again, the boys in these two groups also had to enjoy a temporary vacation away from the BE for a period of a week.



The amount of talking, warning, investigating, hearings, paperwork etc. has at times been exasperating, but a source of quiet pride this year was certainly the sense that the BE made real progress in the ongoing and never-ending battle against drug use

by our boys. Over the last two years especially I think a very strong message has been sent out to the boarders especially by the school and the disciplinary committee of the SGB.

The issue of keeping those boys who are termly boarders, who are “in” over many weekends, more profitably and enjoyably occupied will certainly be something for Mr Kyle and his team to address in 2020.

The Boarder Parents’ Committee – the eyes and ears of the parents

The termly meetings of the BPC were well attended and the discussions that ensued were fruitful. It is always important to get the views of one’s clients, and I am very grateful to Mr Joe Culverwell and his committee for their generosity, time and commitment throughout the year again. A number of committee “veterans” had to leave at the end of the year, as their sons similarly had come to the end of their time at College, and I’d like to especially thank the two likeable South Coasters, Messrs Andrew “Paddy” Patterson and Andrew Jamieson, and Mrs Fiona Westerdyk, for their collective contributions to the BPC over many years. I well remember meeting the two Andrews for the first time, at the New Boarder Parents’ Cocktail Party in the December before their sons entered College, and such was the memorably jovial interaction that night that we have – despite some friendly disagreements along the way – remained firm friends ever since. Go well, good people.

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The recent BE survey – a summary

As you should recall, in November an anonymous survey was sent out to all the boarder parents, asking for their feedback on a whole host of questions.

In the end, we received feedback from 170 parents. We would have preferred more replies, but least the sample size – a key ingredient if one wants the feedback to be an accurate reflection of parents’ opinions – was decent.

Here is an unvarnished summary of the results which, much to my relief and occasional surprise (!), were overwhelmingly positive:

Question	% of replies that were either positive or <u>very</u> positive:
I believe that the BE provides a positive, stimulating and safe environment for my son.	96.23
I believe in the hierarchical system that applies in the BE.	91.35
I believe that the Deputy Headmaster: Boarding communicates effectively with the BE community (including the parents).	91.25
I believe that junior boys in the College BE are reasonably treated.	91.85
I believe that the relationships between junior and senior boys in the BE are healthy.	83.69
I feel that the BE has met my expectations.	89.78
I would recommend the “College boarding experience” to the grade 7 sons of my friends.	96.26
From what I know or from what I have seen, generally speaking, my son:	
• Is a happy boarder at College.	94.7
• Believes that the good things about being a College boarder outweigh the not-so-good things.	97.65
• Lives in a safe environment (i.e. safe from outside threats, e.g. robbery or fire).	95.88
• Has formed strong friendships as a College boarder.	98.22
• Has learned valuable life lessons as a College boarder.	96.45
• Would not want to be at another school.	94.71
• Thinks that bullying in the BE is under control.	86.83
• Lives in an environment that recognises the basic rights of all boarders.	92.35
• Understands the difference between moral courage and physical courage.	98.24
• Has learnt life lessons about tolerance and respect for others.	97.65
• Lives in a boarding house that is clean and hygienic.	90.53
• Is satisfied with the quality of the food he receives in the BE.	82.84
• Is happy with the portions of food he receives.	79.29
• Believes that he is well cared for by the ladies in the Sanatorium.	98.23
• Is satisfied with the service he receives from the College laundry	81.18

In / My son's boarding house:	
• Is a happy place with a high morale.	93.41
• The tone of the place – the discipline, respect, punishment, behaviour etc. – is a healthy one.	88.69
• Is a place in which the housemaster has a strong and positive influence on the boys.	92.90
• The housemaster is a role model for the boys.	93.41
• I receive effective feedback from the housemaster and/or the house staff.	91.77
• The housemaster is accessible to parents.	97.64
• The housemaster is approachable to the boys.	93.42
• The duty staff generally are professional and positive.	97.59
• The duty staff offer an acceptable level of mentoring to the boarders.	91.51
• There are friendly and positive interactions amongst the boys.	98.81
• The role of the prefects (in Elliott's, the members of the House Committee) is a positive one.	93.16

In the survey, there was space for parents to provide us with general, self-penned feedback on –

- Aspects of life in the BE that require urgent remedy
- General comments

I'll be honest and say that although there were some common threads – like requests to re-look at the punishment system, the fact that seniors have too much authority or (in the opinions of others) far too much, comments about the nutritional value of some meals (a certain infamous salad roll served on a Sunday evening last term featured more than most), the need to upgrade certain facilities, and theft – the statistics above evidently paint a generally satisfied picture.

Of course, if I am mistaken, and unhappiness is rife and revolution is in the air, then do please bombard Mr Kyle with your queries and complaints in the New Year!

Catering

At the brief, final BPC meeting of the year, I for the first time in a long time dealt with queries specifically about food, which was surprising, given that I eat a no. of meals in the dining hall each week and am invariably delighted with the standard of the fare. I gathered that

there have been a comments passed by some parents of late about catering (these were repeated at the meeting), and, as I mentioned earlier, there were a handful of comments made in the recent BE survey about the food – from curries, to chips, to oily food to that infamous salad roll! But, once again, the overall feedback from parents was positive, and, as I have stressed to boys and parents when I've had my ear bent on the subject, there is zero difference between what we, the staff, eat, and what the boys eat – and we love it. Anyhow, that will be another ongoing matter for Mr Kyle to address from 2020 onwards (skip pass – crash ball).



Looking back at the RCL

The Boarders' Representative Council of Learners (RCL) continued to meet regularly throughout the year, under the stewardship of the Senior Boarder Prefect, **K Raw**.

I very much appreciated the assistance and presence of my good friend and colleague, Mr Brandon Swart, who has a long history of working in the College BE and has not just an admirable appreciation for the workings of the mind of a College boarder but a real connection to many of them. The meetings were productive and a number of issues were discussed, bandied about, debated and argued, and I think generally speaking the boys felt that a number of items were dealt with successfully.

Here, simply FYI, is an extract from the agenda of but one of the meetings this year:

- Overview of the recent compulsory attendance (registration etc.)
- Upcoming long, free weekend

- Boarding outings to the Mall: comments and feedback?
- Closed public holidays and other closed days: lack of volunteers from amongst the boys to manage activities (e.g. touch rugby, soccer etc.)
- M.C.O.B.A. “engagement” #2: possibly to take place in the last week of the term
- Drugs / liquor / cigarettes: comments re. recent events
- Friday Night Shout: confirmation of arrangements on Goldstone’s for Open rugby players
- Sign-out on a Saturday morning in winter by sportsmen at, say, Northwood: return to Maritzburg?
- Maritzburg United soccer matches – any interest in attending?
- Boarders who ask for early departures – including this week: should they be docked a Friday night at home?
- Examinations routine
- Boarder Reds – are they the fashion statement we really want to be making?
- House shirts from 2017 and 2018 – why the lack of interest?

At the final meeting of the year, the outgoing chairman, Raw, was thanked for his contribution and presented with a small gift.



The chairman of the 2020 committee is **T Mbatha** (Shepstone’s) (2nd left above, with the other Heads of House for 2020), who is also the Senior Boarder Prefect for next year. Messrs Kyle and Swart were also present at the inaugural meeting of the 2020 committee, and I have every faith that, under their guidance, the committee will continue to serve an important role next year and beyond.

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The final “Boarder of the Month” for 2019

Congratulations to Elliott House’s **S Maphanga**, who is the first College boy ever to have been awarded a prestigious Jakes Gerwel Fellowship to study at a tertiary institution from 2020.

This initiative stems from the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation’s endowment, and is committed to supporting our best students to become our best teachers. As expert teachers, Jakes Gerwel Fellows are also encouraged to follow leadership and entrepreneurial paths within the teaching field, and work collaboratively towards solving some of the biggest obstacles that currently characterise our education system.



As part of the award, in addition to the Jakes Gerwel Fellowship Programme, Siphophelo will also receive the full cost of his undergraduate academic studies at university (Tuks is on the cards), a book allowance, full cost of residence, either on-campus or off-campus, and a cost of living stipend.

Well done, young man – the BE is proud of you!

Pro Aris et Focis

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Introducing #CollegeCulture

After various chats and discussions with Old Boys in late 2017 and into 2018 (notably Messrs D Mundell, L Zunckel, R Kyle and B Swart), I over the course of 2019 drafted a document that attempted to answer the question, “What does it mean to be a College boy?”

I think we can all get a sense of what a College boy is all about, but how does one put that into words?!

The process of formulating what it means to be a College boy included obtaining feedback from the College boys themselves (via the 50 mentor classes) and from certain prominent Old Collegians, and it is hoped that their comments, quoted verbatim in parts, will add a more “authentic” feel to the document.

After a few drafts, this document on College’s culture will be released at a special assembly at the beginning of 2020, and all the boys will attest to “The Maritzburg College Pledge”, the wording to which simply FYI is the following:

The Maritzburg College Pledge

I, as scholar at Maritzburg College, vow –

- To live out the Core Values of the school and its #CollegeCulture.
- To always remain loyal and true to my school and our Band of Brothers.
- To live out the school’s Core Traditions of –
 - A College boy is loyal to his friends, his school and his country.
 - A College boy does not lie, steal or cheat.
 - A College boy thinks of others first.
 - A College boy always gives of his best and never gives up.

- A College boy is respectful to and of others.
- A College boy always owns up.
- A College boy is always immaculately turned out and displays good manners at all times.

This I pledge in front of the headmaster and staff, and all my College brothers.

Pro Aris et Focis

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Below: Festive scenes from the BE staff braai, held on the final Sunday of the year.



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Mr Barbour and his boys from Clark's had some fun trying to emulate (above) a certain vintage "look", inspired by Mr AS "Madegu" Langley and his First XV from 1908 (below).



A fond farewell

As a former day scholar (or "dayfart", as my old nemesis, Mr Selby Williamson would playfully yet scornfully describe us), I was very mindful of the tremendous role played at College by its boarders, and it has been a great honour to have served the BE, the boys and their parents over the last six years.

I wish my successor, Mr Kyle, every success and I know that he will do a terrific job.

I'd like to warmly thank all the people who put their faith in me at the end of 2013, from the headmaster to Mr Guise-Brown (on both of whose advice I've often relied), the housemasters with whom I have had the pleasure of working, as well the boarding staff themselves.

Like their schoolboy counterparts, they, the BE staff, certainly are the great backbone of the school.

I have worked with so many fine men who work in and inhabit that memorable place, and to them all go my sincere thanks for their collegiality and friendship. I have many memorable memories to cherish, including my dealings with various likeable schoolboy rogues along the way – as well as some not-so-unforgettable or at least pleasant memories, having had my fair share of clashes with many a disagreeable parent too!

But these have all been part of the colour and rich background to my 15-year journey, so far, at this great school.



Above: Before and after photos of this year's Form 2 boys from Merchiston. (Source: Mrs J Pope, Facebook).

Christmas spirit and my thanks to many

The Christmas dinner held two weeks ago was a memorable affair and enabled us, the BE staff, to pay tribute to and thank the boarders for their efforts this year. I was also, as the outgoing head of the BE, allowed to say some words in tribute to the boarders themselves, and to also *in absentia* offer thanks to the Boarder Parents' Committee, led so ably in 2019 by Mr Joe Culverwell, that passionate, loyal farmer from Bergville.

I'd like to again pay tribute generally to the College boarder parents, who in 2019 yet again were so supportive in so many of the initiatives and issues faced by the mighty BE. It was inevitable that the odd feud cropped up, but, whatever the outcome, we almost always walked away after a sincere handshake.



Above: A welcome guest at the Nathan House end-of-year dinner was the popular former Nathan House boarder-master (and Nathan's prefect, in his day), **Mr Buntu "Smiley" Mdutyana**. In the above photo, he is seen presenting an award to top academic, M van Rooyen, who was the highest-placed boarder in Form 2.

The great strength of the BE

But as always, I simply must pay tribute to the average College boarder, who goes about his business, does his prep, plays his sport, participates with his friends, and generally has a massively positive time in the Maritzburg College boarding establishment. Such young men are the very backbone of our great school.

I end off this newsletter with the words to my brief toast from the Christmas dinner, which I echo now:

"Long live the College BE and all who live and work there!"



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DATES TO MAKE A NOTE OF:

- Friday, 10 Jan: Nathan's prefects return
- Saturday, 11 Jan: Form 2 boys arrive
- Sunday, 12 Jan: Form 2 excursion to UShaka
- Sunday, 12 Jan: All other prefects return
- Monday, 13 Jan: Borver Week starts
- Tuesday, 14 Jan:
 - 07h00: House leaders return
 - 15h00: Tea in the Clark's Quad for Forms 3 & 6 boarders
 - 17h30: Form 6 Information Evening (APMH)
 - 19h00: All other boarders return
- Friday, 17 Jan: Virtus Challenge
- **Weekend #1** (18-19 Jan):
 - Closed weekend for all boarders (activities)
- Monday, 20 Jan: End of Borver Week
- Tuesday, 21 Jan: Boarders' RCL meeting #1
- Wednesday, 22 Jan: Isandlwana Day
- **Weekend #2** (25-26 Jan):
 - Closed weekend for all new boarders
- Friday, 31 Jan: GB by-elections (**#1**)
- Sunday, 2 Feb: Nathan House picnic
- Friday, 7 Feb: New parents' cocktail party
- Saturday, 8 Feb: New boarder sleepover
- Sunday, 9 Feb: Fun excursion
- Sunday, 9 Feb: Midmar Mile
- Friday, 14 Feb: BPC meeting #1 for 2020
- Friday, 14 Feb: GB by-elections (**#2**)
- **Weekend #5** (15-16 Feb): Free Weekend

