



# THORNTONIAN DAYS

Newsletter of The Old Thorntonians Association (Clapham)

*"Education is the leading of human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them."* John Ruskin (1819-1900)

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No 26

April 2014

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## **AGM**

The Association's seventh AGM was held at Lambeth Academy, Elms Road, SW4, on Saturday 22 March; 12 members were present. The main items discussed or reported were:

- Jimmy Hill OBE was re-elected as President for a further year. The other Committee members elected to serve until 31 March 2015 are:

Chairman: Jeff Green  
Vice-Chairman: Brian Bloice  
Secretary: Ted Hayward  
Treasurer: Terry Lawlor

Entry-year representatives:  
1930s/1940s: Brian Robinson  
1950s: Chris Bishop  
1960s: Peter Greenwood  
(1970s/1980s: Vacancy).

- Co-opted: Mike Surridge (as local representative)
- Vice-President: on the recommendation of the Management Committee, Michael Caplan QC (1964-71) was unanimously elected as the Association's first Vice-President from 1 April 2014. See also next item.
- The statement of account for the year ended 31 December 2013, prepared by Terry Lawlor, Treasurer, and examined by Bob Hay, was adopted. (Copy attached.)

## **Message from Vice-President**

"It is a great honour and pleasure to be invited to be the Association's first Vice-President. I was at Henry Thornton from 1964-1971 and have so many fond memories. I do believe it shaped my future. There was always a great camaraderie; my sadness is that I was unable to continue some of the friendships; it is so important that we try to do so through the Association and I would particularly like to pay tribute to the officers and the Committee for all the work they do for the Association.

I remember vividly the Old School, South Lodge, the new building, and the trips to Rose Hill for sport – I never particularly liked the road running when the games fields were out of action and I regularly came last or next to last. I also remember

the battering playing in goal at Lacrosse. Those were the days when you were given free milk at morning break time. These are all great memories for me.

We should not forget the great reputation the School always enjoyed and all the good work it did locally.

Some years after leaving I happened to meet Jimmy Hill when he was a well-known and highly respected broadcaster. I mentioned the School and he took time to have a chat with me. He is now not in the best of health. I am sure we would all like to send our best wishes to him and his family at this difficult time."

## Obituaries

**Ronald Percival Beynon Lawrence** (1931-6): died 7 June 1984. He was awarded a certificate (in lieu of a form 1S prize) at the ceremony held on 13 January 1933. The following further information has been provided by his daughter, Patricia Goddard: "My father was very proud of Henry Thornton School. It gave him a good education which, being from a poor background, he would not otherwise have had, and from there success in the business world. After leaving school my father pursued a career in Engineering, working for Leyland, Henry Meadows, Petters, English Electric and GEC mainly as Overseas Manager. His final years were spent running his own business, Impex Consult. He belonged to the Lavender Hill Lodge, and was an ardent Chelsea supporter and a keen gardener in his free time." Patricia adds that, whilst recently clearing out her late mother's house, she came across various school-related memorabilia belonging to Ronald, including a number of letters from "Jim", who was in fact E. H. (Ernest Henry) Garrod, also a pupil from 1931 to 1936; his name appears on the Second World War memorial rededicated in October 2009 at a service held at Lambeth College, South Side, Clapham Common.

**Robert Edward (Bob) Larbey** (?1946-53): died 31 March 2014. Born in Clapham in 1934 and a scholarship boy, Bob and fellow OT John Esmonde (obituary in issue no 7, November 2008) collaborated on a number of TV comedy series, notably *The Good Life*. Let the Editor know if you'd like to share any memories of him, particularly his schooldays.

**Alan Willis** (1951-6): died 5 January 2014. Bob Hay, 1950-6, writes: "We were friends before attending HT, being at the same primary school, The Reay, between Stockwell and the Oval. We were in the Scouts together (8th Lambeth), and played in a skiffle group together for the couple of years that skiffle was all the rage. Me on T-chest bass and Alan on guitar and vocals. At school he was a quiet chap and not really into sport. Literature and poetry were more his thing. He appeared in two Dramatic Society productions, *The Devil's Disciple* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*. [He also played the part of Mrs Roberts in the December 1954 production of John Galsworthy's *Strife*. Ed]

After leaving school he took various jobs, and then enrolled at London School of Economics as a mature student in the late 60s. During this time he took up cross-country running and ran competitively for Herne Hill Harriers.

He married in 1969 and had a son and a daughter. His wife, Annie, was originally from Scotland, so eventually they settled in Elgin, Banffshire; he absolutely adored it. He retired as Head of Criminal Justice Social Work Service in Moray and subsequently spent 2½ years working part-time for the Schizophrenia Fellowship.

I hadn't seen Alan since I moved away from Stockwell in 1960 but got back in touch about 15 years ago and exchanged news each year. A sad loss of a good friend in my early years." Ted Hayward, 1950-7, adds: I don't specifically recall Alan during my own time at HTS as I was a year ahead of him, but we did exchange e-mails back in 2004/5 as he mentioned that in the 1940s and 1950s he had lived, like me, in the Stockwell area of South London. He was in Hackford Road and I was with my parents in nearby Manor House Road – long since vanished from the SW9 map – which linked Stockwell Road and Aytoun Road. We both remembered the Brixton Odeon cinema, where Alan, then aged 14, saw his first A-rated film: turning up his coat collar he asked for 'One, please' in as deep a voice as he could manage. The ruse worked, and he 'enjoyed the illicit pleasures of *From Here to Eternity*'. On Saturday mornings we also patronised the Ritz cinema, at the other end of Stockwell Road where it joins Clapham Road, and close to the Swan pub."

## **Membership**

To date 67 members have renewed their subscriptions for the current year. For those who haven't yet done so but would like to remain in membership, please note that the Management Committee has agreed that the deadline for receipt of renewal payments is **1 June 2014**. Contact Ted Hayward if you'd like another copy of the reminder slip issued with the previous newsletter.

## **Crossword**

The first correct solution received by the closing date (28 February) was submitted by Alan Kurtz (1951-8). A copy is attached.

## **From the Pages of *The Thorntonian***

Autumn 1952:

### **HEAD MASTER'S LETTER**

To the Editors of *The Thorntonian*:

Sirs,

Two documents are lying on my desk as I write. One is your request for a letter for publication, the other is a copy of the School magazine for November, 1927. The reason why these two are together is a simple one, for it was in 1927 that my predecessor, Mr. Evans, made his first contribution to the magazine, as I am making mine. It is interesting to turn over these pages, printed a quarter of a century ago, to see what changes have taken place and what has remained unaltered.

First of all, the School has changed both its home and its name. In 1927 Mr. Evans wrote that the new buildings had just begun, and that everyone was looking forward to surroundings where "instead of the incessant din of motor traffic, and playground noise, we shall enjoy the quiet of a secluded garden". Well, we are not much troubled with motor traffic, but I have not noticed any lack of playground noises, and. While the garden may be secluded, it is often far from quiet. But it is good to be reminded how pleasant our situation is compared both with our former surroundings and with the surroundings in which most London schools have to live.

In those days, the School was known as Battersea County School; it was only after the move to new buildings that it took the present name. It is of particular interest that our guest of honour at Speech Day this term was Mr. E.M Forster, one of the greatest living writers, who is a direct descendant of the Henry Thornton after whom we are named.

The Magazine itself was called "The Bat", and a large bat spread its menacing wings across the front cover, surmounted by the head of the goddess of learning, and flanked by

pictures of an eagle, a swift, a hawk and a hornet, the emblems of the five houses. [*An image of the front cover of the December 1928 issue can be found on the website, displayed in the Magazines gallery. Ed*]

But as we read on, we find the School has not really changed very much. Many of the same activities were carried on then as now. Even some of the names are familiar. Mr. Jeremy was Chairman of the Old Boys' Association and also in charge of the Chess Club; Mr. Gribble was President of the Football Club; and Mr Bennetton was not only President of the Lacrosse Club but also a regular member of the team. I do not know if Mr. Gribble played for the football team, but, if so, he must have been a formidable barrier to its opponents.

The boys who were at school in 1927 are now scattered – perhaps their sons have come here and left in their turn – but many of them still take an interest in the School. To all Old boys and present boys, to staff, governors, parents and friends, I send my greetings in the belief that the School will continue to be as happy and successful in the future as it has been in the past

D.B. GASKIN

### **Were You a 1955 Entrant?**

If so, Roger Govus (1955-61) would like to hear from you:

For this year's annual reunion, mainly of the 1955 intake to the school, eighteen of us attended a 'Reaching 70' celebratory lunch on Wednesday 2 April 2014. The reunion group was originally drawn together in 2009 by Bob Kettlewell to celebrate 'Being 65'. Previous meetings have all been at The Gun in Spitalfields, but for sentimental reasons we met this time at The Windmill, where the Panel Room was reserved for us.

The venue and food were excellent as, of course, was the company. What a pity the same cannot be said for the a cappella rendition of the School Song, although Tony Kelley stayed in tune and held it together well.

After much reminiscing and other genial chat the gathering broke up at around 6pm. People had made long journeys for this special occasion, from Canada, South of France, Wales, Shropshire and Devon, as well as London and the Home Counties.

We would welcome others who started at the school in 1955 to join us for next year's reunion (date and venue to be confirmed). \*Just let any of us know the contact details and information will be circulated nearer the time."

\*Roger's e-mail address is: [roger.govus@btinternet.com](mailto:roger.govus@btinternet.com) Also, Ted Hayward would be glad to relay any enquiries to him if required.

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The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or e-mail them to:  
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