



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)

No 6

July 2008

Fourth Reunion

The attached note gives further information on this year's event. As requested, please let Ted Hayward know whether you plan to attend, so that the usual list plus name badges can be prepared for issue on the day.

Website

At its meeting on 9 May the Management Committee approved the purchase of additional space, to enable the remaining two films – 1957 (relevant extracts) and 1997, made by Alan Kurtz and Ron Bernstein – to be added to the site, alongside that taken by Arthur West in c1949. They can now be viewed by clicking on "Films" on the main menu.

Anyone for Chichester?

A number of OTs, primarily of course from among those were evacuated to Chichester, have been in touch with Terry Sharp to express interest in a joint meeting, probably at the High School, with Old Cicestrians. More information to follow when available.

Reminiscences

From Peter Lawson (1936-41): Further thoughts on pre-war days: arriving in the morning. spick and span, walking over the cobble-stone entrance, peering into the stables where class chums parked their bikes (sixth-former Campbell with his motorcycle), under the supervision of Fields, one of the school-keepers, in the delightful, rich atmosphere of horse urine deposited over the man previous decades. Further on, round the stable block, past the Portland stone (horse-)mounting block, along the passageway, through the gate, and thence into South Lodge garden: a central large lawn dominated by an 80ft plane tree on the east side and a glorious beech at the far end, with a surrounding enclosure of trees and shrubs. Walking along the paths, on either side of the lawn, past the fives courts on the west side, past the Doric-columned "temple" garden shelter, thence, in autumn, with the bonfire smoke aroma, into the tennis courts, which was a general assembly area for meetings before descending to the lower terrace for [entry to] the school.

School was a busy period, starting with morning assembly, looking up (as juniors) to the "high" stage, with a beautifully carved, oak lectern on which the selected prefect read the sermon for the day and the Head – Evans – took Prayers, Songs of Praise, we referring, where necessary, to our grubby Hymns, A[ncient] & M[odern], which we carried everywhere, with names written across the exposed page edges. This was followed by the Roman Catholic and Jewish boys joining the assembly.

Looking back, something rubbed off from the King James Bible, of which modern youth has been deprived, even if we didn't fully understand the text; the underlying morals, the cadence and quality English expressed – it still stayed with you. Then we had reports of the House activities and the results of the Saturday games against the South London schools which were in our league.

Then to school "proper" along the upper and lower corridors to the class-rooms, laboratories for Chemistry or Physics, or to the Carpentry workshop, run by a brilliant craftsman, Rawlings.

At the end of the lower corridor wall was a carved plywood map of the world, on which the adopted P & O liner – the *name escapes me – journeyed to the Far East; we used to correspond with the crew. It became a wartime troop ship and was, I believe, sunk off Africa in 1943. [*RMS Ceramic. *The summer term 1938 issue of The Thorntonian reported that Captain H C Elford visited the school on 30 June that year and gave a talk on his life at sea. Ed]*

Natural Science, in the lower forms, taken by Read, was a most enjoyable period, since the last ten minutes of each class was devoted to his relating "wild life" days of his youth, spent away from urban and parental control, such as making gunpowder and sealing it in tin cans to explode in the local river to catch stunned fish, which were wrapped and then cooked in the embers and hot stones of a wood fire. His imagination, and particularly ours, just ran riot on

this Peter Pan-like journey, which, incredibly, we were able to experience following the evacuation [to Chichester] – a “full-board”, “public-school” life away from the strictures of home and what they today call Health and Safety!

Houses, which cut across the age barriers of Forms – I was in Wilberforce, colour orange, as I remember – played a great part in school life, with after-hours meetings for different interests: stamp collecting, photography, art, etc. Plus dramatics (Shakespeare, French plays), the choir, and also the orchestra.

Two debates I particularly remember were “The National Need to Build Motor Road similar to Autobahns” and “The Need for Re-armaments”. Both motions were heavily defeated. We had a British Union of Fascists – with about three members – and they were always trounced by the Conservative/Liberal and Labour parties.

The gym lesson was a great period each week, under Bramble, with exciting antics on the ropes, wall-bars and box [vaulting] horse, with mat work, diving over seven or eight crouched/kneeling pupils and finishing with a front roll. Bramble always said that one day we would look back and appreciate what we were learning then. I found this so in my Service days and today when I do my daily exercises to keep trim!

My two years at Chichester, as previously mentioned, were virtually complete freedom from organised, stereotypical authority. The only master-arranged, extramural event was a 1939 Christmas dance with Streatham High School for Girls, who were residing with the Chichester High School for Girls and held it in their assembly hall. It was a fiasco, since we were ill-equipped to deal with social graces or bold enough to take the lead without some form of guidance and direction. I do not recall any master or prefect being present! The other occasion was choral singing during the 1940 spring term in the local South Street cinema with [girls from] Streatham High, which I am certain they organised.

The School Certificate examinations were over, and the results were to be available three or four weeks after the end of term. Two of us made a morning visit on the appointed day. The school was deserted, but we happened to see one of the masters, who took us into the office to see the results, congratulated us on passing and wished us a good holiday. NO mention of future plans or opportunities!

Being interested in art and not knowing how to set about the right approach for entering a completely unexplored world to me, I decided to go to the fountain head, ie, County Hall [London]. The Blitz was over and the building was deserted, but I managed to find a uniformed official, to whom I explained my presence. He said: “It sounds to me like the Education Committee for London...They happen to be sitting today... through those double doors.” It seemed like a vast chamber, with a long, crescent-shaped table and about 20 occupants. I suppose that, being wartime, they didn’t have much business on their agenda, as they appeared genuinely delighted to see me! After I’d explained my position, advice flowed from all directions, and I was urged to use my scholarship by taking the RIBA Architectural Course at the School of Architecture (Regent Street Polytechnic). I later discovered it was a full-time diploma course over seven years, and a new world opened up. It was broken by emergency service, as it was called, in the Indian Army – a university of life, never to be forgotten – and then back to “long-sweat” Finals, receiving the RIBA Diploma in Architecture.

Once again, a new life opened up.

From Derek Yandell (1945-52): Air Training Corps Squadron 1351: September 1947-July 1952. My choice of dates is fairly obvious: they represent the period during which I was a member.

I had no desire of my own to join, having no interest in aeroplanes and no interest for drill and other after-school activities. However, my main friend at HTS had been, and remained so for some years, a boy with very strong ideas. He was keen to join, and I meekly followed. My near-contemporaries might remember Richard Illsley. We were together until our first term at King’s College, London, when he changed courses.

My first discovery on joining was an unexpected bonus: I found that drill, taken by Mr Bramble on the playground, was during the last period on Friday afternoons. This meant missing an art lesson, and as I (like probably many others) was in awe of Mr Dix, the art teacher, that was very good news.

I have been rather puzzled by Bramble’s rôle in the ATC. It appears that he was responsible for starting the Flight, as it was originally known, and yet he gradually faded from the scene, apart from the extra PT lessons included in the ATC programme. He never attended camp and, at some point, I took over the drill instruction – in retrospect, much to my surprise. By that stage I was the senior NCO, probably as there were no boys senior to me in the school who were also in the ATC. At that point Richard, who had persuaded me to join, was a corporal.

I have a vague memory of Richard and me winning a “signals” competition. I subsequently helped Mr Howell with signal instruction (and I still know the Morse Code).

The first camp I attended was at Manston, in Kent. We had quite a large group there for the first week and a smaller group for a second week, which included myself and Richard; both of us were corporals at the time. If I remember correctly, the senior NCO was Keegan, but he stayed for only the first week; a rather charismatic sergeant called

Thompson was in charge for the other week. I found out, many years later, from another OT and ex-ATC member, that Thompson had had a very successful career in the RAF.

All the other camps I attended have somewhat blurred together. Mr Williams was always in charge, assisted by Mr Read, the Chemistry teacher, and Mr Wilson (History), who stayed only a short time at HTS. Wilson must have joined in September 1948 and left in July 1951; he's not in either the 1948 or 1952 school photograph. However, he carried on with the ATC and turned up each Friday. He was one of the nicest people I have known: friendly, courteous and fair. We became quite good friends, and I gathered that he was fairly unhappy at his new school. However, I was delighted to hear from another member at the [2007] reunion that he had met Wilson again at camp and he was then in charge of the ATC group from Battersea Grammar School (not the school he joined after leaving HTS).

There are several photographs around, some possibly on the [Association] website. The one with a Lancaster bomber has myself and Richard at either end. Also present is Mr Owen, although I have no recollection of his being involved with the ATC.

Because of a trip to Canada (perhaps more about that another time) I missed the last camp I should have attended, in 1952.

Overall, the experience was useful, and it introduced me to teaching, albeit of a somewhat limited nature. As I later spent over 40 years teaching, perhaps there is a connection. It also gave me some function within the school and made me better known.

The final irony was that I failed the National Service medical.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Autumn 1962:

VALETE

The retirement of Mr. W. J. Cooper, who joined the staff in 1928, severs our last link with the old school in Latchmere Road. Mr. Cooper came to us from Rutlish School to become Classics Master, and later he became responsible for the Advanced Course in Arts. For many years he was Form Master of the Upper Sixth.

He is a man of many interests. When he first joined the School he helped with the music and taught the School Song when it was introduced. During World War II, while the School was at Chichester, he ran the School garden and helped with the billeting of the boys. He was also editor of the School Magazine for twelve years.

In the years before the war his excellent coaching in Fives resulted in the School's winning the Marchant Cup more frequently than any other school, and for many years he was secretary of the Marchant Cup Committee. A keen and very able tennis player, he has always taken part in the annual match between the boys and the staff [he makes a brief appearance, for example, in Alan Kurtz's 1957 film. Ed]; his performance this year was as vigorous as ever.

He has been a very active and well-known figure in connection with the Inter-School Sixth Form Society, which promotes closer contact between the Sixth Forms of the Grammar schools in South West London.

We wish him a long and very happy retirement in which to enjoy to the full the pleasures of gardening, of following the progress of our leading tennis players and of seeing the best soccer England can provide.

Mr. Cooper will, we are pleased to say, still be amongst us as he will be continuing to teach at Henry Thornton part-time.

Summer 1938:

MACAULAY

Zachary Merton was born on the 2nd May, 1768. His father was a minister and is mentioned in Boswell's account of Johnson's "Tour of the Hebrides" in 1773. Zachary was sent out to Jamaica at the age of sixteen to become bookkeeper upon an estate of which he became manager. He was deeply impressed with the miseries of the slave population and gave up his position in disgust, returning to England in 1792.

The Sierra Leone Company had been founded in 1791 by Wilberforce, Henry Thornton (who became chairman) and others to form a colony of liberated slaves. Henry Thornton heard of Macaulay and obtained his appointment as second member of the Sierra Leone council. Macaulay sailed in 1793, and soon after reaching the Colony became Governor. The colonists were a rabble of ignorant freedmen and barbarous tribes demoralized by the slave-trade. Macaulay, with the help of a single colleague, had to be governor, councillor, paymaster, judge and clerk, to preach sermons and celebrate marriages. He set up schools and put down a threatened insurrection.

His health broke down, and he left the Colony in 1795, taking a passage to the West Indies, in a slave ship, at some personal risk, to obtain first-hand information about the horrors of the “middle passage”. His health improved and he returned to the Colony, and in spite of many difficulties raised it to a tolerable state of prosperity. He resigned his post in 1799 and, upon returning to England, was appointed secretary to the Company with a salary of £500 a year. He held this position until, in 1808, the Colony was transferred to the Crown.

In 1799 Macaulay married Miss Mills, whom he had first met at the house of Hannah More at Cowslip Green; she was the daughter of a Quaker bookseller at Bristol. He lived first in Lambeth and then settled in the High Street of Clapham. Here Macaulay became deeply interested in the labours which were the main interest of his life. He was editor of the “Christian Observer”, the organ of the Clapham sect from 1802 to 1816. It was especially devoted to the abolition of the British slave-trade, and afterwards to the destruction of the slave trade abroad. Macaulay’s intimate knowledge of the facts gave him special authority among the abolitionists, and he worked with the most unremitting zeal. [*See also the item on the Clapham Sect in issue no 2, May 2007. Ed*]

He co-operated in forming the “Anti-Slavery Society” in 1823, and wrote most of the monthly reports issued by it. He often sat up night after night imbibing blue-books and reports, and, though he was neither a speaker nor a writer under his own name, he supplied the popular leaders with facts and arguments. When information was required, Wilberforce would say, “Let us look it out in Macaulay.” He was bitterly attacked by the opposite party, especially in the “John Bull”, and was made the subject of calumnies which he never condescended to expose.

Macaulay’s health and eyesight began to fail about 1894, and he had to give up active work at the Anti-Slavery Society. He visited France, where he was made honorary President of the French Society for the Abolition of Slavery and contributed to its publications some papers upon Hayti [*sic*] and the French colonies. He returned to England in the winter of 1836 and never after left his home, and scarcely his couch. He died on the 13th May, 1838, and was buried in the now disused ground at Mecklenburg Square.

At a meeting held in July, 1838, it was agreed to erect a memorial to him in Westminster Abbey. A bust was accordingly erected and an inscription written by (Sir) James Stephen. The inscription commemorates his share in the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, and adds that “he meekly endured the toil, the privation and the reproach, resigning to others the praise and the reward”. For obvious reasons another inscription was substituted in the Abbey. Macaulay left nine children, of whom the eldest, Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, was the best known.

Macaulay’s services towards abolishing one of the great wrongs of his time can hardly be over-praised, and few men have devoted themselves so entirely and unselfishly to a cause. He found time to take an active part in other benevolent movements of the day, and he was one of the principal founders of London University; although strongly in favour of religious education, he thought that the university should provide education for all.

In spite of a defective education, he had read much general literature, and was acquainted not only with the English politicians of his day but with such distinguished foreigners as Chateaubriand, Madam de Staël and Dumont. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society. His works were anonymous, as he thought the publication of his name would be injurious rather than beneficial to his cause, and consisted chiefly of papers issued by the societies to which he belonged.

J. Hart-Smith

Where Are They Now?

Following up Eric Wilson’s enquiry in the previous issue, Mike Overton (1945-50) reports that **Alan Jones** now lives in Hertfordshire. Contact Ted Hayward if you’d like to have the full address and telephone number. More generally, let Ted know if you have any information on the whereabouts of former staff or their relatives.

Clapham Common – Wartime Deep Shelters

Alyson Wilson, of The Clapham Society, would like to hear from any OTs (or their friends/relatives) who used the shelters during or after WW2; their memories may be included in a talk on the subject being given to Society members in September. If you can help please contact Alyson by 31 August: alysonwilson.sw4@virgin.net.net; 020 7622 6360; 22 Crescent Grove, London, Sw4 7AH.

Appendices

As promised in issue no 4, here’s a selection of photographs (with thanks to Jeff Green for producing the hard copies being circulated to members without e-mail addresses). The other enclosure, apart from the reunion notice mentioned on page 1, is from the Souvenir Programme for the Clapham Exhibition held at the school on 31 March and 1 April 1939 (Ted Hayward has a full copy).

The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or e-mail them to Ted Hayward, 31 Linfields, Little Chalfont, Amersham, Bucks HP7 9QH; ted.hayward@btinternet.com