



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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Coronavirus

Message to all Association members from Jeff Green, Chairman of the Management Committee:

"I am mindful that this newsletter comes at an extraordinary time for our members and our society, as we confront the uncertainty of the coming weeks and months. As 'self-isolation' becomes the unfortunate buzzword of 2020, it is easy to see this as a time of separation and to feel keenly the loss of opportunities for socialisation and reunion. And yet this difficulty can be matched by a growing awareness that physical distance does not inevitably mean loneliness or absence. Instead we have seen numerous examples, from the applause for the NHS to neighbourhood volunteering, of communities connecting across the prescribed 2-metre gap. Indeed, if any of our members not in the 'at risk' category felt sufficiently able and motivated they might consider enquiring if a neighbour would be glad of assistance, thereby reviving the spirit encompassed in the first line of the school song! Recent photographs of Clapham Common in the newspaper brought to mind childhood memories of the allotment my family tended there during another period of great uncertainty and challenges in 1940s London. Such thoughts are a timely reminder that difficulty passes, communities are resilient and innovative ways can often be found to bring comfort to those around us. It is in this spirit, helped by the healthy signs of spring on my government-mandated dog walk that I look forward with optimism to our Association reunion in November. I hope that in the meantime we can remain in touch to support one another. My very best wishes to all our members and their families at this time."

Annual General Meeting 2020

As advised in Ted Hayward's email of 7 March, this meeting, scheduled for 21 March, was postponed owing to the then increasing concerns over the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The Management Committee has agreed that, subject to confirmation nearer the time, it will now be held on **Tuesday 3 November**, at The Windmill, as an adjunct to the annual reunion. Would members therefore please retain the papers already issued and, if planning to attend, bring them to the meeting? (The Secretary will have a few spare copies available.)

Obituary

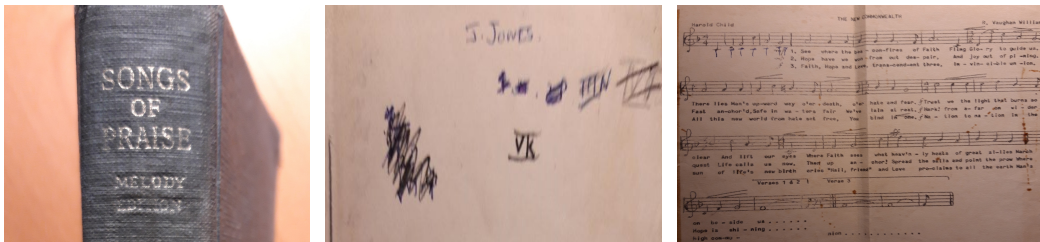
H J (Harry) Spence (1940-4, including 1943-4 at Clapham): died 10 October 2019. He won an Exhibition to London University at Queen Mary's College in French and German, and graduated in 1951 with a BA degree from Oxford University; the latter is commemorated on the honours boards displayed at Lambeth College, South Side.

His son Martin writes: "I know how much he enjoyed keeping in touch and attending reunions of Old Thorntonians in recent years. He was immensely grateful

for the education he received and the friendships he made both in Clapham and in Chichester.” Martin has kindly provided further information (appended) about Harry’s post-HTS career. He has also been able to ascertain that during his time in Chichester his father stayed with a Mr and Mrs A J Bridle; she was known to the evacuation boys as Aunt Ann. The address was 50 Highland Road, Summersdale, Chichester. (The house number, changed since the war years, is now 54.)

Reminiscences

From **John Jones** (1963-70) “Here are three snaps of my old school hymnal, which has been sitting on a shelf in my downstairs guest room for about 30 years!



The interesting thing is, my years are marked and crossed through on the inside cover (also of interest is that we used Roman numerals for the class year), but VK (Five K) is not crossed through. Did we not use the hymn book after my fifth year? Was participation in Assembly not obligatory for Lower and Upper Sixth boys? I seem to think it was. Was Assembly abolished? No, I don't think so! The other 'interesting' thing in the inside cover is a copy of *The New Commonwealth*, by Vaughn-Williams. Did earlier generations of boys sing that too? I think they probably did, but I don't know. The original Sellotape by which it was stuck is also still there, though it's no longer sticking anything. Just a half-century old remnant!”

Editor’s note: let me know if you’re able to help in resolving any (or even all) of John’s queries. I’m reasonably certain that, during my own years (1950-7), members of both the both Lower and Upper Sixth routinely attended morning assembly and – as a mark of their seniority – were privileged to occupy the balcony at the rear of the hall.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Summer 1936:

A MODERN WITCHES’ CAULDRON

(Vide “Macbeth”, Act 4, Sc,1)

By Members of IVa and IVc

First Witch:

Round about the cauldron go,
In the foul ingredients throw;
Tongues of those who scandal make,
Fillet of school dinner steak:
Germs that cause the dreaded cold,
Sunday’s join that’s two days old:
Then the tongue of club-room bore.
And tongues that say: “I told you so!”
Boil them, that they speak no more!

All: Double, double, toil and trouble,
Beer is best, but mine’s a double!

Second Witch:

Larynx of the nearest crooner,
The tiger that I missed near Poona;
Cat next door with midnight wail,
A copy of the "Daily Mail":
Add hereto our tom-cat's claws
And both of Mussolini's jaws;
Moustache of Hitler next obtain,
Part of vile war-monger's brain:
Now throw into the charmed pot,
Nose from Nosey Parker got:
Add for a charm of powerful trouble,
To make our hell-broth boil and bubble,
Head of villain, vile beyond words,
Who blinds and cages singing birds:
Mangled body of road-hog,
Killed while speeding through thick fog.

All: Double, double, toil and trouble,
Beer is best, but mine's a double!

Third Witch:

Make the gruel thick and slab,
With things that help to make life drab.
Throw in noose of hangman's rope,
A heap of confiscated dope:
Next door neighbour's superhet,
All exam. tests ever set!
Versailles Treaty based on wrong,
Words and music of School Song:
And pints and pints of castor oil,
And thus conclude our gruesome toil.

1958 School Inspection

Here are initial extracts from the report of the HMI inspection undertaken between 3 and 6 June.

Nature and Scope

The boys who enter this county grammar school come from a large number of primary schools in South-West London. As in all schools maintained by the London County Council, ten per cent are admitted to Governors' places and the remainder qualify through the Authority's junior leaving examination. Both entries are much in demand, and it is expected that all the boys who join the school next September will have made it their first choice. A few boys are admitted from neighbouring secondary schools for sixth form work or at some earlier stage in the course.

Compared with 1949 (the date of the last report) the school roll has increased from 431 to 462 and the Sixth Form from 37 to a total of 46 last September, and a strength in recent years consistently between 45 and 55. Nearly two-thirds of the members of the present Sixth Form are specialising in science subjects and about half the whole form hopes to proceed to the university. The number of boys remaining at school after their seventeenth birthdays is almost exactly the national average. In the last three years 23 boys have left for universities and 14 for other forms of full-time education; and there has been a tendency for boys to seek employment in industry rather than in offices. In these same three years two State Scholarships and 13 County Major Awards have been won by members of the school.

Governing Body

The school shares a Governing Body with Aristotle County Secondary School. Several of the Governors are Old Thorntonians. The Governors meet at the two schools alternately, each Headmaster attending only for the part of the agenda that concerns him.

Premises and Equipment

The school continues to occupy the pleasant quiet buildings that have been described in the last two reports. The only major addition since 1949 has been a useful biology laboratory which may, however, soon prove too small for the Sixth Form biologists. By partitioning, and by enclosing corridor space, minor improvements such as a balance room and a medical room have been provided. The cost of the new stage equipment was partly met through the school's own efforts. The buildings are well cared for, but the copse that separates the playground from the lawn needs attention.

South Lodge, which stands some 200 yards from the main building, now contains the kitchen and dining room, a Sixth Form common room, the headquarters of the Principal of the South-West London Institute, the school keeper's flat and the school library. If the library is to play its full part in the life of the school, it is most desirable that it should be transferred to the main building; the Headmaster hopes to use South Lodge increasingly for teaching the divisions of the Sixth Form, for which purpose it would appear very suitable. The other main difficulty concerning premises is the restricted accommodation for science and particularly for the recently established course in mechanical science which requires for its proper development its own laboratory and good facilities for technical drawing. The Governors and the Authority are hopeful that a major addition to the main building will soon be practicable. The geography room is congested.

On the whole the school is well supplied with teaching equipment and materials. The regular income of the library is out of keeping with modern book prices. Several classrooms need display boarding and a number of the desks seem to be unsuitable in design and size for the boys using them.

The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or email them to:
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