



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 44

September 2019

Annual Reunion 2019

Further information on this year's event, on **Tuesday 5 November**, with menu selections for the buffet lunch, is attached. Please respond by the closing date given if you plan to attend.

"The Thorntonian Thirties"

A light-hearted contribution from **Peter Benson** (1932-8):

My school life began in nineteen thirty two.
My form master was *Pops*, Mr. Spofforth to you.
We had Fortnightly Orders, sometimes a disaster.
Bottom boy in each form had to see the headmaster.
I remember *Ma Earp* giving me fifty lines,
Don't ask me "What for?". I was asleep at the time.
Composition, perspective and balance and shade,
Art master Dix was so strict and so staid.
Epidiascope, books of remote foreign parts,
Lenny Bundle was my favourite Master of Arts.
Mr. Cooper taught Latin in a flowing black cloak,
But all I remember is hic, haec and hoc.
Cellist Jeremy donned his historian hat,
To dish dates by the dozen, ten six six and all that.
We were kept fit by Bramble, a gymnast of course,
Upside down on the ropes after vaulting the horse.
And *Plugs* taught us woodcraft, precise tenon joints.
Much later this earned me good D.I.Y. points.
Moggy Morgan taught English, you may think it worse,
That he gave me good guidelines for writing in verse.
My school chum Bassani at mischief excelled;
His deeds displeased *Taffy* then he got expelled..
Wiggs enjoyed a good scratch teaching Heat, Light and Sound.
His class dubbed him "Ballsitch". Bad manners all round!
Wilf Finbow's a big boy. Respect him we do.
Why should one kow-tow? Well, he's bigger than you!
The Head Boy at this time, a fellow called Dennis,
Had skills unequalled at cricket and tennis.
Myself at lacrosse little talent I showed,
I preferred to play football at Dover House Road.

Staff Personae

Pops

Mr. J.A.H. Spofforth (English, History)

Ma Earp

Mrs. M.A. Earp (Mathematics)

Lenny Bundle	Mr. Leonard B. Cundall (Geography)
Dix	Mr. G.W. Dix (Art)
Cooper	Mr W.J. Cooper (Latin)
Jeremy	Mr. C.E.G. Jeremy (History)
Bramble	Mr. R.S. Bramble (P.T.)
Moggy Morgan	Mr. W. Morgan (English)
Taffy	Mr. W.D. Evans (Head Master)
Wiggs	Mr. H.W. Wigley (General Science)
Plugs	Mr. W.S. Williamson (Handicraft)

Obituaries

Derek Yandell (1945-52): died 8 June 2019. Derek was a pupil of many parts: School Captain 1951-2, and prefect; House prefect (Wilberforce); Flight-Sergeant (and senior NCO), ATC. He was awarded an LCC Major Scholarship and went on to graduate from London University with a BSc degree in 1955 (his entry is on the honours boards displayed at the Henry Thornton Building at Lambeth College, South Side, SW4). He subsequently entered the teaching profession, specialising in mathematics and physics. He was a prolific contributor to this publication: his reminiscences on varied subjects, including Rose Hill, the ATC squadron, and members of staff such as Mr Dix and Mr Gaskin, appeared in the following issues: 4 (January 2008); 6 (July 2008); 8 (February 2009); 13 (July/August 2010); 18 (November 2011); 21 (November 2012); and 23 (August 2013). He joined the Association in October 2016 and attended most of the annual reunions until a year or so ago, when his failing eyesight (a long-term problem) and other, more recent health complications obliged him to discontinue his support for this event, whilst retaining his membership.

Howard Desforges (1951-6): died December 2018.

Contact the Editor if you have any special memories of Derek or Howard which you'd like to share with other OTs.

Reminiscences

Recent joiner **Colin Sedgwick** (1958-65) writes: "I left HT in 1965 and went up to Keble College, Oxford to read theology with a view to becoming a Baptist minister (which I have been now for some 50 years). When I graduated from Keble in '68 I felt I needed a break from study before undertaking ministerial training and had the idea of heading off to Israel to work on a kibbutz.

Only problem: no money. So I needed to find some work. Somehow I discovered that the Inner London Education Authority (or whatever it was called in those days) was looking for teachers, so I approached them. They pointed me in the direction of various schools - one of which was HT! - now reborn as one of the first London comprehensives. So, despite having no teaching qualifications, I spent two terms there as a kind of dogsbody member of staff.

Two main memories: spending hours on buses travelling from site to site, now that the school had been joined with a couple of others; and the state of utter chaos that prevailed, both in admin matters and, even more, in the classroom. And it was an interesting experience to be sharing the same staff room as some of the teachers who had taught me.

To finish my tale... I headed off to Galilee for three months and got back in time to return to Oxford and the Baptist college, misleadingly called Regent's

Park. I was there for two years and began my ministry in Scunthorpe, north Lincs, where I stayed for nearly 20 years, married and had two sons. Then back to London, this time the Brent/Harrow area for just over twenty years. Since 2012 we have lived in Nottingham.”

***1949 School Inspection**

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION

LATIN

The same Master [*Mr W J Cooper*] who was in charge at the time of the last Inspection is still responsible for all the teaching of Latin. He is an experienced and capable teacher, so familiar with the problems of teaching Latin in a school such as this that he has perhaps allowed himself to become a little discouraged by them.

Latin is begun in the second year by one set and carried through by the majority to the School Certificate stage, though a certain number drop out at the beginning of the fifth year. This year about 15 out of a total of 70 boys in the Fifth Forms are offering the subject for examination and a similar or slightly higher number is expected next year; in the two previous years the proportion of entries was rather higher.

The method by which the boys are selected to begin Latin is a curious one. Latin is alternative to German in all the A and B Forms and the masters concerned make the choice at the beginning of the second year by the simple expedient of reading down the order list from the previous year and allocating boys alternately to Latin and German sets. This system has two serious practical disadvantages: the resultant sets contain boys of a relatively wide range of ability and the progress of both able and less able is hampered by their having to be taught together; and, secondly, it not infrequently happens that able boys who go up the School in the German set find themselves obliged to cram Latin hastily into an already over-full Sixth Form time-table in order to satisfy University requirements. But, quite apart from these disadvantages, the method is hard to defend in principle, since it appears to take absolutely no account of the interests of the boys themselves; unless it is assumed that so far as educational values are concerned Latin and German perform exactly similar functions – an assumption which is at least highly controvertible. It is strongly urged that the whole question of options at this stage should be reconsidered and that the content of each boy's curriculum should be determined solely by his own needs and interests and not by any necessity for reconciling competing claims of specialist teachers.

A sound syllabus has been drawn up. Good provision is made for the thorough learning and possible revision of accidence, for the reading of connected Latin from the very beginning and for early transition to authentic Latin texts; correct Latin quantities are carefully insisted on and boys are trained to tackle translation from Latin in the Latin word order, a technique which often calls for a more intelligent understanding of the significance of inflections than the conventional analytic methods. All this results in quite a satisfactory standard of work at the Fifth Form level. Where the teaching falls short a little at present is that the pace is apt to be slow; this makes the approach to translation rather piecemeal and boys do not always see clearly enough the sense of a passage as a whole or get sufficient practice in translating into fluent connected English. Nor is the aim quite ambitious enough. Since “real” Latin is tackled so commendably early it would be much better to give time in the Fourth Form to widening the boys'

experience of Latin authors rather than to beginning next year's set books; and, since the syllabus of syntax in the Main School has been pruned of so many unessential refinements, time might be found in the Fifth Form for some beginning, by the abler boys at least, of continuous Latin prose, even if it were not offered for examination at this stage.

The same suggestions apply with ever greater force to the Sixth Form. Here eleven boys, seven in their first year and four in their second, are preparing to take Latin as a main subject in the Higher Certificate examination. The time allowance of six weekly periods is inadequate for the combined group and the work, although perfectly sound and satisfactory so far as it goes, is strictly limited by the requirements of the external examination. Composition is restricted to isolated sentences from an elementary manual or from old examination papers; reading over the whole two years does not go beyond the two texts prescribed by the examiners. It is fully realised that this state of affairs is largely the result of difficult conditions in the recent past which have no yet been greatly ameliorated. But, if time allowances in the Sixth are increased and better methods of selection adopted lower down the School, the scope of the work should become a great deal more ambitious, so that boys who leave after six or seven years of Latin will have been introduced to a representative range of Latin literature and will have attempted prose compositions sufficiently advanced to be of value in its own right. Such an objective is well within the power of Master and boys in this school.

Some useful modern "background" books have recently been acquired for the Library. They are kept in the Sixth Form room and are said to be extensively borrowed. But, judged by the standards of any good school library, the collection of classical books both for read in and reference is negligible, and it is strongly urged that substantial additions should be made to the classical section and that the books should be properly housed and kept.

*The remaining extracts – Organisation, Curriculum and Standard of Work, and General Conclusions – will be included in no 45. Future newsletters will feature corresponding sections from the report of the subsequent HMI inspection carried out between 3 and 6 June 1958. Ed

Magazine Advertisements

From the December 1944 issue:



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