



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 5

April 2008

Annual General Meeting

The Association's first AGM was held at The Windmill on Saturday 22 March 2008. Ten OTs attended – a respectable number, given the inclement weather, associated travel problems and the choice of date (over the Easter holiday weekend). Main items discussed or reported were:

- Jimmy Hill OBE was re-elected as President for a further year. The other Committee members elected (or automatically eligible) to serve until 31 March 2009 are:

Chairman: Jeff Green
Vice-Chairman: Brian Bloice
Secretary: Ted Hayward
Treasurer: Terry Lawlor
Co-opted: Mike Surridge

Entry-year representatives:
1930s/1940s – Brian Robinson
1950s – Chris Bishop
1960s – Peter Greenwood
1970s/1980s – Krishna Siva.

- The audited statement of account for the period 23 September-31 December 2007 was adopted (copy attached).
- Annual subscriptions: on the recommendation of the Management Committee, to be retained at £10 for Full and £6 for Associate members for the current year (to 31.12.08). Also agreed that, from and including 2008, 31 May would be the formal deadline for renewal of subscriptions.
- War memorial appeal: the design, location and estimated cost of the replacement plaque were approved; and the proposal from the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer for an appeal in the first instance to Association members, and other OTs for whom the Secretary has contact details, was endorsed. More information to follow after the next Committee meeting (9 May).

Membership

There are currently 98 members, including one Associate. A summary list (names and years) is attached, for information.

Website

Recent additions: current membership list (as previous item); obituaries page; recording (piano) of the school song – see link at the foot of the relevant page; and, on the Home page, links to other sites of likely interest to OTs.

1966 School Photo

This photograph is posted on the website, but, unlike those for other years, it has not yet been possible to split it into more readily viewable segments. If anyone has a hard copy which they are able to lend him, Ted Hayward would be able to scan the photograph and replace it on the site with the individual sections.

Anyone for Chichester?

If any OTs are interested in having a joint meeting, in Chichester, with members of the Old Cicestrians (former pupils of Chichester High School for Boys) Terry Sharp (1938-45), one of the HTS pupils evacuated there during the 1939-43 period, would be happy to act as informal "liaison officer", but please contact Ted Hayward in the first instance.

Obituary

Jim Harrison (1944-51): died 6 February 2008. Jim, who joined the Association in December 2006, was a keen chess player (he provided a number of team photographs for the website). Also, he kindly sent Ted Hayward a DVD copy of Arthur West's 1949 film, which it's hoped to make more widely available, via a website link, together with the other films of the school taken in 1957 and 1998.

Reminiscences

From Eric Smith (1938-43): I joined the school in September 1938. The Head Master was "Taffy" Evans, a thin, almost emaciated figure, wrinkled face, not much in the way of humour. I always felt he hated wretched first-formers! I can't recall too many of the masters of that period, but they include: Baldwin (English); Lambert (French); Bramble (PT) – he had a false leg, having lost his real leg during the First World War; Wrigley (Maths) – I found him sarcastic, and he used to like riling me over my third Christian name, Gloster, eg, "How is the Duke today?", and so forth; Rawlings (Woodwork) – not averse to throwing bits of wood at one for not paying attention or chattering; and Dix (Art) – very good, I enjoyed his classes. I believe he continued at the Emergency School.

I believe the pre-war School Captain was Hope, and recall two other boys: Goatman (?), and Andrews, who was also with us during the early years of the Emergency School, and then went into the Army, the Scots Greys, and had a good war record.

I learned to play lacrosse, which I enjoyed very much, and football, which we played in the field behind the school. I think Jimmy Hill was there at the time.

After the outbreak of war in September 1939 I was evacuated to my father's family in Brighton, which I hated. I saved up my pocket money and came home. I recall the day I arrived: the battle of the River Plate had taken place, with the *Graf Spee*, the German pocket battleship, forced by three British cruisers into Montevideo, Uruguay, and being scuttled on Hitler's orders.

Following an Act of Parliament Henry Thornton School became one of a number of emergency schools in London to cater for those children who were not evacuated. I started [at SWLESS, Clapham] in 1940. Our Head Master was now [W R] John. He had immense responsibilities, looking after the safety of us pupils, especially during the air-raids; I personally had great respect for him and considered him stern but fair.

Masters, again: Toyne (English) and Johnstone (History). I respected both, and enjoyed their lessons. Also, Yates (Physics) Powell (?Science); Collins (Geography); Cassels (Maths); Miss Taylor (Latin) – also Johnstone's girl-friend. If we played up she would send for the knightly Johnstone! Nightingale (also Maths) could get quite nasty if we didn't attend.

My particular companions were John Watson (died) and Tony Rimmer, who remained a lifelong friend. Our children played together. Sadly, he died a few years ago. We had three other chaps who were not British: Enrico Sassi, born in London of Italian parents (when Italy came into the war he initially had a rough time but was generally liked and accepted); André, who with his (very attractive) sister and parents sought refuge in London from Belgium after the Germans attacked; and Jenkins – I think that was his name – an Australian, who stayed in London because of the war.

The war affected all our lives. Our house faced Clapham Common, which had a battery of six heavy ack-ack guns that at the height of the Blitz blasted off every night as well as a noisy searchlight unit.

The walls of the cloakrooms were bricked up and served as our air-raid shelters. I think some of the boys were killed, in their homes, during the raids. One terrible night, during a very heavy raid in April 1941, the house behind us, at the top of Stormont Road (on the left side as one came from the direction of the Common), received a direct hit, killing seven of the eight occupants. The bodies were laid out in our garden awaiting collection.

In 1944, by which time I had joined the Army at 17, a flying bomb hit Sisters Avenue further along North Side. Almost the whole of the Avenue side of the Common was dug up into allotments. One wondered every morning whether the school was still standing. Next door, what is now the Notre Dame Estate had been a girls' school before the war; it later became the HQ of the Free French Navy. You couldn't walk across the Common without tripping over French sailors and their girl-friends, sometimes in broad daylight!

Amazingly, throughout this period we were provided with good school dinners, costing, I think, about 1s 3d. Somehow we carried on with our sports – football, cricket, fives. I enjoyed the 100- and 200-yard sprints and played football, but during my time in the Army Cadets I was converted to rugby, which I continued to play until the age of 24.

I left the school in 1943, and the following year joined the Army. In 1946 I was commissioned into an infantry regiment, and went on to serve in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Germany (including the Berlin airlift) and Nigeria, and finally in the 1952-3 Korean War.

I subsequently worked in the silver business for almost 40 years, the last 18 in charge of the silver department of Phillips, the Fine Art Auctioneers in New Bond Street, London. I retired in 1992. I'm a Freeman of the Goldsmiths Company and of the City of London, and spend my time writing about and researching the lives and work of London goldsmiths.

From Steve Kingshott (1951-5): I hated school full stop. I went to H.T. because my childhood friend John Esmonde went there, and I was probably as absent as frequently as I attended. I did set two school records: failing all eight "O" levels, and having the lowest mark ever (9%) in German, although I subsequently managed to work in two German bars without a problem.

On the plus side I did learn to play chess (John E taught me one evening when I was supposed to be doing homework) and fives (John again). I should have won the school championship but it was awarded to Lesley, whom I had beaten as well as Morgan, the other favourite. I was in detention on final assembly, so didn't even get a proper goodbye!

I did become friends with the cyclists – Dyer, Smith and others – and went on to race, with varying degrees of failure.

I remember Solly May and the nose pinch [*see Eric Wilson's contribution, in the previous issue. Ed*]. Also Bob Bramble, the PT master; Flt-Lt Williams (Maths and ATC) – he used to put his pocket-watch on his desk; Linden and Aufrecht, the German masters; Noah, the left-wing Economics teacher; Davies (French); Gribble (French); Read; Phillips; and Huntley (Art), but I don't remember any of my class-mates. At the [2007] reunion there were three OBs who could recite the class register: my mind boggled!

I did enter all sports every year to get House points, and once had to "throw" a fight against Galbraith. After I'd knocked him down in round one my second pointed out that I would be facing Williams in the next round, so I thought better of it. Just as well, as Williams nearly killed his opponent.

Rose Hill was a great skive – Tizer and bread and jam, not to mention lots of mud.

I had to go back to the school in the 1960s to perform in Gorky's *Petit-Bourgeois* in the school hall, and later Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* in the theatre built on the site of the old cycle sheds. Saw lots of pupils during rehearsals and thought, what a lot of jobs! I remember lunch in South Lodge and playing chess matches there.

When John Esmonde and Bob Larbey wrote *Please Sir!* you could identify the masters and the Derek Guyler part with those you remembered.

In conclusion: my time at school was an experience, but I was glad when it was over. Sad, really, because the school, other buildings and grounds were quite nice. I just hated school.

From John Simmons (1945-9): It was in the mid-1940s when my grandmother and I set off from North Side, Clapham Common, to the school. She joined me on this occasion as I had not been awarded a scholarship from the elementary school I attended (Wix's Lane), only a free place to Sir Walter St John's. Gran knew my heart was set on going to Henry Thornton, and she was determined to see I got there to sit the entrance exam, which I passed with flying colours. Our journey was interrupted by a V1 flying bomb. Its engine cut out immediately above us, but a strong gust of wind sent it elsewhere.

I was placed in Form 1A and stayed in the A form throughout my time at the grammar school. Before leaving the school in 1949 I obtained all the masters' signatures on a sheet of paper.. I still have it. It was a joy to be taught by such eloquent masters, especially Cooper, Gribble (French) and Yorke. Mr Hillman (English) took the class when the V2 rocket landed in Poynders Road. He told us to dive under our desks, there having been a blinding flash in the sky.

Another event worth recording was school dinners at South Lodge. My recollection was that they were simply awful. [*Compared with Eric Smith's experience! Ed*] Mr John, the Deputy Head, used to stand over us to ensure that we ate the meal. Little did he know that most of the date pudding finished up in the drawers of the desks where we sat!

Another amusing incident: Mr Jeremy (History) asked a member of the class to write an essay on the cause of the potato famine in Ireland. The lad wrote that it was caused by the Irish eating biscuits in bed! *Sacré bleu* – detention!

I lived just over a mile from the school, and my Raleigh Lenton took me to and fro. I did go home to lunch after the South Lodge fiasco.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at HTS, and the weekly trips to the playing fields at Rose Hill helped me to record bus and tram numbers. Those were the days! (I'm still a railway enthusiast. "What railways?" some may ask!)

[Owing to pressure on space I have held over two further contributions received to date, from Derek Yandell(1945-52) and Peter Lawson (1936-41). They will appear in the next issue. Ed]

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Summer, 1939:

AN ATTEMPT AT AN ANECDOTE

Alas! Alfredo, an astute ambitious African ambassador, after acclaiming an aged anæmic Afridi archer as accurate as an ancient anonaceous article, accomplishes an alibi; and astonishes all arrogant authorities, appearing as an aquatic acephalous asp; and acknowledges applause after an audacious act.

Afterwards arrayed as an archæozoic antelope, Alfredo arranges artichokes and aspic as an avenaceous asparagus.

D. Ames, IIIB

Autumn, 1943:

THE HENRY THORNTON SCHOOL FLIGHT

One of the recent innovations on the school's return from Chichester was the foundation of the school A.T.C. Flight, under the command of Mr. R. S. Bramble. This Flight was addressed on its first meeting by the Commanding Officer of 1351 Clapham Squadron, when he welcomed us most cordially into the A.T.C.

The school may be interested to know that since the formation of the flight our chaps have shown a fine spirit in all their work, and have taken to 1351 Squadron like ducks to water. One instance of this is that some of our number have already played in the Squadron football team. The Flight contains promising material, and soon we hope to find ourselves second to none in the Squadron.

This is but the beginning of the Henry Thornton School Flight, which will no doubt increase in both size and efficiency during the coming months.

M.J.C.

[Derek Yandell's piece, which will appear in the next issue, reflects on his time in the ATC between September 1947 and July 1952. Ed]

Autumn 1962:

IN MEMORIAM

MR. D.C. WILLIAMS, B.Sc.

The news of the death of Mr. Williams on Thursday, 5th July, came as a great shock to the School even though all had known of the serious nature of his illness.

Mr. Williams joined the Staff in September, 1946, having previously been on the Staff of the Elliott School for many years. He quickly made his mark in the School, both in the teaching of Mathematics and in running the School Squadron of the Air Training Corps. He became an officer in the A..T. C. when it was founded, and would this year have completed twenty-one years as an officer, a distinction which few in the country could rival.

He was generous to a fault and many boys have reason to be grateful for his assistance. He gave unstintingly of his energy and time, and truly lived for youth. He was a cricketer of county standard and always took every opportunity of helping boys who showed cricketing promise.

His genial smile and dry sense of humour made him popular with boys and colleagues, and his passing leaves a keen sense of loss.

The school held a memorial service to Mr. Williams on Tuesday, 17th July, at Clapham Parish Church.

Where Are They Now?

As the heading implies, this section will be devoted to requests from OTs for information about the whereabouts of contemporaries with whom they have lost touch over the years since leaving the school. The Guest Book page on the website is also available for this purpose, for those with access to the internet. The first such appeal is from Eric Wilson (1946-51), in Australia, who's anxious to know what's happened to two former friends: **Robert G J Wood** (1946-54) and **Alan Jones** (1950s – precise attendance years not confirmed; believed to have been a member of the HTS band "The Teenagers", on alto saxophone, and later may have joined a Guards regiment). If you're able to help in any way, please contact the Editor in the first instance.

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