



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 7

November 2008

Fourth Reunion – Saturday 20 September 2008

This year's attendance was around 50. In addition to the now customary display of photographs and other memorabilia, those present were able to view the memorial plaque commemorating the 54 pupils who lost their lives during the Second World War. As readers will be aware, the plaque has been commissioned by the Association and funded entirely by donations from its members and other OTs. The Governors of Lambeth College have kindly agreed to have the plaque - replacing the original, lost when the school closed in the late 1980s - installed in the new sixth form centre, due to open during the 2009-10 academic year.

The next reunion will be on **19 September 2009**.

Annual General Meeting

Another date for your diary: the next AGM will be held on **Saturday 7 February 2009** at The Windmill, starting at 2pm. The agenda and supporting papers will be circulated nearer the time.

Membership

It's pleasing to report that total membership has increased to 104, including one Associate.

Website

Two recent additions: a short colour film, taken in 1966 by Mike Prendergast (1959-66), and, courtesy of Peter Wells (1954-60), the May 1957 school photo.

Obituaries

Alan Bickers (1953-8): died 13 September 2008. Classmate Peter Hunt (same years) writes that Alan had moved to Australia about 38 years ago and is survived by his wife Pam and their sons. Let Ted Hayward know if you would like to be put in touch with Alan's family.

George Dustow (1932-7): died 7 June 2008. Second XI cricket team, 1936, and Matriculation prize winner, 1937.

John Esmonde (1948-55): died 10 August 2008. His death was widely reported in the UK press. Bob Catlin (same years) recalls: "He and I were contemporaries. We started at HTS in the Autumn of 1948 and left in Summer 1955. We were both in the Science stream – in the Sixth Form John did Biology subjects, I did Maths and Physics, and we shared Chemistry. John was a great sportsman: he was Captain of Swimming, and as Captain of Fives he was forever in the Fives court. He was in the Cricket and Soccer first elevens. He did well in Athletics and always won in his weight in the annual Boxing competition. He was also a member of the school Gymnastics team, and I'm pretty sure he was Captain of Macaulay House. In fact, John was into everything, probably more than I can now remember after 50-odd years. He even did a bit of acting in school plays. We were both prefects, he because of his good behaviour – and me because of my bad! He was popular with everyone: with his contemporaries because of his cheerful, good nature, and with the rest of the school because of his sporting prowess and leadership qualities. Outside school John showed a strong humanitarian conscience. He wanted me to help with the Spastics holiday project, but I always had to work through the school holidays. He also had the idea of working with the animals at Bertram Mills circus (at Earl's Court) but was unsuccessful in his application. He did have a massive German Shepherd that he took for walks on Clapham Common; it frightened the hell out of everyone! In summary, if you want to get a feel for what John Esmonde was like, just look at the Esmonde/Larbey character Tom Good in the television series *The Good Life*."

Clive Young (1943-8) has provided the following additional information about Mike Willett, who died on 24 January 2002 (obituary in issue no 4): he was a professional county cricketer with Surrey, scoring several centuries during his playing career, 1955-67, including 126 (his highest) in 1961 and 1964, and clocking up a total of 6535 runs. Lived at Bookham, Surrey, on his retirement.

OT/OC Meeting at Chichester

Five OTs (Don Appelbe, Les Garrett, Peter Gash, Terry Sharp and Doug Ward) had a convivial "mini-reunion" at Chichester High School for Boys on 11 July 2008. They were joined by a number of Old Cicestrians who also pupils at CHSB during the war years and were accompanied by John Childs, Deputy Head. Terry Sharp, who organised the event, would be pleased to give any interested readers more information; he can be contacted on 020 7223 5102.

Reminiscences

From Steve Kingshott (1951-5), following up, in part, Derek Yandell's piece on 1351 Squadron in issue no 6: I think that Mr Wilson, nickname Tug, had a finger or thumb missing, and I remember him flying with me in an Anson out of Kenley c1953. A number of people on one particularly rough flight were very airsick, including Tug. I only remember Bob Bramble for his wielding of the slipper, but I do remember doing my Morse code, now sadly abandoned. And also the Link Trainer, which taught me my basic flying skills. Dear old Flt-Lt Williams was OC; he was one of my favourite masters and I remember his Japanese General Sohcahtoa (sine, cosine and tangents). Did any of them, I wonder, have any real experience or training in the job? Hopefully someone "out there" will know and inform us. I do know those uniforms scratched like mad, but like many others I did "soap in" the trouser creases. Others, I understand, stitched them. There was a school trip to Paris and Switzerland (Lausanne) in 1953. I made some money selling cigarettes, alcohol and fruit (on the coach trips). I also learned poker from the children at the Lycée (school) and helped to introduce it to HT, but managed to avoid the caning on stage in the hall when a number of players were caught during a lunchtime game in the field. I still think I was the best chess player in my final year, having beaten Leslie and Morgan in the heats, but if anyone disagrees I'd like to hear from them!

From James Hiney (1941-4): Sammy Read took the whole Fifth Form out into the wide open spaces of ChiHigh [Chichester High School for Boys] playing fields to teach us the "speed of sound v speed of sound" problem. Four of us were despatched with stop-watches to stand a measured distance from the rest, including himself with a shot-gun. When we saw the puff, we were supposed to start the watches and switch off when we heard the bang. I forgot to "stop" in the excitement of the moment, but fortunately he asked for my "reading" last of the four!" BUT what terrible consequences would descend on him these days, if he did anything like that? One's mind is past boggling!

From Mike Overton (1945-50): I can beat John Simmons on the Irish story, I'm sorry to say. [See issue no 4, page 3.] When I took my mock History GCE (as it was then) in 1950, one of the questions was: "Outline the main cause(s) of the Irish discomfort in the 19th Century". Allegedly, one of the boys (not me, I regret to say, and the main suspicion centred on a boy named Bill Bailey) answered: "Eating biscuits in bed". If you think about it, that makes more sense than the potato anecdote!

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Summer 1937:

THE THORNTONS

The first known reference to the Thornton family is probably in connection with the transcription of the "Thornton Romances", which was made about 1400. In 1563 this family received, through Robert Newton, of East Newton, Yorkshire (North Riding), a grant of a crest and coat-of-arms. The three thorn bushes in the crest are a punning reference on the name Thornton. There are references to three Thorntons who were successively rectors of Birkin and to their devotion to Church and Crown during Stuart times.

In the *Gentlemen's Magazine* for November, 1790, there is a notice of the death of John Thornton. Part of the notice is here reproduced: "On November 7th, 1790, at Bath, John Thornton, Esq., of Clapham, Co. Surrey. He was the greatest merchant in Europe, except Mr. Hope, of Amsterdam; and generally one half of his profits were dedicated to the poor..." A poem, "In Memory of the Late John Thornton, Esq.", was written by William Cowper. It is reproduced in Vol. X of Southey's edition of Cowper's works. John Thornton had four children: Samuel, M.P. for Kingston-upon-Hull and Surrey, a director of the Bank of England for 56 years and Governor in 1800; Robert, M.P. for Colchester; Jane, who became Countess of Leven; and Henry, M.P. for Southwark. These three sons all formed part of the majority which, under Pitt's leadership in 1784, triumphed over the coalition between Lord North and Fox. The youngest son, Henry Thornton, from whom our School takes its name, was born in an old red-brick mansion on South Side, Clapham Common, part of the estate now being the property of an important Roman Catholic community. John Thornton offered the shelter of a home to his nephew, Williams Wilberforce, M.P. for York, and so began that association of personages known as the "Clapham Sect", which has stamped the surroundings of a suburban village with abiding dignity and rendered some of its residents famous among their contemporaries.

Henry Thornton represented Southwark in Parliament for thirty-three years, 1782-1815, and was recognized not only for his prominent abilities, but also for his effective, yet unostentatious, participation in all the philanthropic movements of his day, especially in connection with the emancipation of slaves. His character, as drawn by Sir James Stephen in his "Essay upon the Clapham Sect", shows him to have been a man of high principles and imbued with a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others, and it is therefore appropriate that the memory of such a man should be perpetuated in the name of a school.

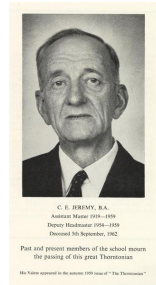
Henry Thornton's constituents in Southwark subscribed to have his portrait painted by Hoppner. This was exhibited in the Royal Academy, and a copy of it now hangs in the School Hall. The family later moved to Battersea Rise House,

and in the “oval chamber”, designed by the younger Pitt, many famous political gatherings have taken place. Henry Thornton died in Wilberforce’s house in Kensington Gore.

The last member of the Thornton family who has influenced our School is Percy M. Thornton. He was Member of Parliament for Clapham from 1892 to 1910, and residents of Clapham during that time will remember him as a familiar figure riding on Clapham Common. During this time the Battersea Polytechnic, in which our School began, was founded under the chairmanship of Mr. Edwin Tate. Both Mr. Percy Thornton and Mr. Tate took a keen interest in our School in its early days.

J. Hart-Smith

Autumn 1959:



Valete MR. C.E. JEREMY

Even in scholastic circles, where occasionally boys of a school return as masters, there is not often one so closely identified with the life of a school as C.E. Jeremy has been. Indeed, he has often said that it was the school’s first headmaster, Arnold Smith, who opened to him the vista of a full life, and gave him inspiration, and from this contact stems his philosophy of life, his consideration for others as individual personalities, and his devotion to Henry Thornton School. A pupil of the original Battersea County School from 1909 to 1913, he returned to it as History Master, and is this year retiring after a unique association of fifty years.

My earliest personal recollection of him was in 1928, when I heard him read the minutes at my first Staff Meeting before we came to see our new building on South Side. Even then he was remarkable for his clear articulation, and lent dignity to the mundane arrangements he was recording. Soon we were to note his wide and accurate range of historical knowledge, his love of the parliamentary system and its customs, but he was also, particularly, the liaison between the School and the Old Boys. He it was who scanned the Honours lists, the Degree pass lists. He kept us in touch with the fortunes of the boys we had taught. How gladly we greeted those who returned to us – often in uniform during the war; our work was worthwhile.

It was fitting that in 1939, when we held the Clapham exhibition [see also following extract], he should be in charge of an absorbing display of books, records and pictures connected with Old Clapham; some from that famous Clapham character, John Burns.

Evacuation to Chichester followed, and it was characteristic that he took over the task of billeting our boys – a task fraught with difficulties and much unrewarding toil, but many a small boy had cause to thank him for his patient perseverance.

On our return he took over the Economics Advanced Course, and continued his close association with the Old Boys, and eventually became Deputy Headmaster, and during the interregnum was in charge of the School. As Second Master many of us have to thank him for the courteous ear he turned to us in our difficulties, his unflinching tact and considerateness. Indeed, though he can on occasion be forthright and firm, his forbearance and exquisite manners have endeared him to all. To colleagues and to boys, past and present, he is, and always has been, the gracious symbol of the School. No one can replace him for he is its past and its present, and we must in our turn wish him happiness in his future. No more will he entertain us with his oratory at House Teas, or farewells to members of Staff, and it was most appropriately at the House of Commons in April, at a dinner in his honour, that he recalled for us some of his experiences, for he loved the British Constitution.

Farewell and thanks to a great Thorntonian, and a loveable man.

W.J.C[oooper]

Spring 1939:

EDITORIAL

Events this term have been very largely overshadowed by the forthcoming Clapham Exhibition of 1939, which is to be held on Friday, March 31st, and Saturday, April 1st. Suggested at first as a School venture, dealing with Science in Industry, it has now been ambitiously designed to include the whole of the educational and industrial activities of Clapham. The scope of the exhibition is indicated by the programme, which is a volume containing many pages on Clapham and its interests, past and present, and giving details of exhibits. Models, paintings, scientific experiments, handicraft work done by both girls and boys from neighbouring secondary and elementary schools, will be on view.

Demonstrations will be given by manufacturers, showing the many processes in different industries. There will be special features covering the different aspects of Clapham life, including, it is hoped, a School Lacrosse match on the field.

The unparalleled expansion of modern London tends to hide, in a welter of indistinguishable streets, the individuality and importance of each particular district. But it is thought that the Exhibition will indicate to some slight extent the importance, both past and present, of Clapham, and will encourage its inhabitants to be proud of the great men and great industries with which its name is associated. [Selected extracts from the Exhibition programme are displayed on the Association's website.]

Spring 1932:

Correspondence

To the Editor of "The Thorntonian"

Dear Sir,

This letter is written in response to the request to your readers that they should send you their suggestions or criticism of our School Magazine. There can be no doubt that one function of the Magazine is to give an accurate and comprehensive account of all the School events: these accounts should not be confined to a mere statement of, e.g., the result of a cricket match, but should include a brief description of the play. I cannot find in the issues of "The Thorntonian" for last year any accounts or even records of cricket matches played, nor any record of the names of the boys who were awarded their First XI colours.

I am firmly convinced, however, that in addition to being a chronicle of School events, the Magazine should be a medium for the expression of original thought. Such expression need not be confined to literary contributions, but could be made manifest in accounts of School activities.

I was pleased to see that the last issue contained an innovation in the shape of an "Editorial", but it was not what an Editorial should be. It should either be expressive of the Editor's personal opinions, or a reflection of what is felt on important questions connected with the School.

Yours, etc.,
VICINUS

School Captains

As promised in the previous issue, here's the list, which Ted Hayward has been able to compile, with a few gaps, from 1929-30 to 1972-3. Please advise him of any corrections, or additional entries for the years not shown. Names marked with an asterisk refer to appointments at Chichester High School for Boys, during the wartime evacuation; those not confirmed are preceded by ?.

1929-30	A G Ranson	1930-1	L W Dennis	1931-2	G Bishop
1932-3	G Bishop	1933-4	E C Stokes	1934-5	R Highman
1935-6	R Miller	1936-7	E O Rowlands	1937-8	A E Smith
1938-9	R S Hope	1939-40	?R Haines	1940-1	*D Bishop
1941-2	*M Clarkson	1942-3	*E C K Wilson	1943-4	L W Watkins
1944-5	M J Challons	1949-50	?J P Poole	1950-1	R G Morfee
1951-2	D F Yandell	1952-3	R G J Wood	1953-4	G E Pennington
1954-5	G E Pennington	1955-6	B D Knott	1956-7	S W M Hughes
1957-8	W E Newton	1958-9	D J Lovelock	1960-1	A M Rose
1961-2	A D Dinkin	1962-3	A Hicks	1963-4	M Graveney
1964-5	P Barkley	1967-8	L Marlow	1969-70	D McNeill
1972-3	S Bryant				

Clapham Common – Wartime Deep Shelters

Issue no 6 included an appeal from Alyson Wilson, of The Clapham Society, for reminiscences from any OTs (and friends/relatives) who had used these shelters during or after the Second World War. Since the part of the Society's September meeting about the shelters which attracted most attention was the tape recordings of memories, she has now asked for recorded memories of those who recall Clapham during and just after the war. Do you remember the air-raid shelters, the allotments, prefabs and gun emplacements on the Common, or bomb damage in the streets? If so, would you like to make a short recording (definitely no longer than 10 minutes) on an audio tape or CD to be kept for the Society's archives, and possibly used at one of its future meetings about that period? If so, please contact Alyson at: alysonwilson.sw4@virgin.net; 020 7622 6360; 22 Crescent Grove, London, SW4 7AH. [A summary of the Deep Shelters story appeared in the November 2008 Society newsletter, available online at www.claphamsociety.com, and in due course the full talk, with pictures, will appear in its Local History series.]

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