



# 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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**No 31**

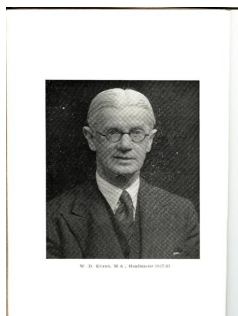
**August 2015**

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## **2015 Reunion – Amended Date**

As previously advised, the next reunion will be held on **Tuesday 10 November**, from 1 until around 4pm, in the Blue Room at The Windmill. Ted Hayward will circulate the usual reminder/invitation nearer the time.

**Can you help?** Mrs Adele Wright, Mr C W Gribble's daughter, would be grateful if any OT planning to attend, and living within reasonable driving distance of her home, could give her a lift to and from Clapham, as she would prefer not to use public transport. Her address is: 7 White Lodge Close, Christchurch Park, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 5TQ; tel no 020 8661 2869. If you are able to assist, please contact her or Ted.



## **Interview with Mr W D Evans**

The following article appeared in the *Clapham Observer* dated 9 September 1927:

### COUNTY SCHOOL'S NEW HEAD

When the Battersea County School re-opens towards the end of this month it will be under the leadership of a new headmaster, Mr. W.D. Evans, M.A. (Cambridge), who has been appointed as successor to the late Mr. Arnold Smith, whose comparatively recent death is still a sad memory with many local people.

Mr. Evans, who took up his duties at the beginning of this month, is only 40 years of age. He was educated at Kelly College, Tavistock, Devon, and King's College, Cambridge, where he was a Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos of 1908. [In fact, he missed becoming a Wrangler, as explained in the obituary published by King's College in November 1971, a copy of which was appended to newsletter no 28. Ed.] For some years he was a lecturer in mathematics at Manchester University and subsequently held the post of senior mathematics master at Ashe's School, Hatcham, New Cross. From 1924 up to his present appointment he was headmaster at Hanley High School, Stoke-on-Trent.

During an interview with a representative of the *Clapham Observer*, Mr. Evans had several interesting things to say.

He expressed the hope that when the new buildings [in Clapham] were ready people would support the school and realise what an opportunity it offered to boys. "When we are in our new home," said Mr. Evans, "we shall be able to cater for more tastes. We want to give boys the best possible education. My feeling about it is that we want to develop the type of school

which has all the good things of a public school and develop a type of boy who will have none of the contempt for art, music and literature that is typical of the public school boy.” [Perhaps not the most tactful of comments if offered by a modern grammar-school head teacher! Ed]

“The London boy wants his æsthetic side developed far more than it is. The kind of man we have been producing was all right in the 19th century, when the country was rolling in money.”

Mr. Evans thought that English and science were two subjects worthy of being stressed. He said, “If a man can write and speak well he has two great assets in life. You cannot speak or write well unless you study great writers. Speakers should be developed too, for many men who write well cannot talk. English is the keynote to everything. Even a chemist is handicapped if he cannot express the knowledge he has.”

The new headmaster is very interested in the sports side of the new school, but at present there is not sufficient accommodation for all the boys to get a Saturday afternoon game. Consequently Mr. Evans hopes to fit in more mid-week games.

He is keenly following the progress of the new buildings at South Side, Clapham Common, which will be ready early in 1929. Of these, he said, “They will provide accommodation for 450 pupils, and are planned on the best modern lines; so far as buildings are concerned, we shall not be surpassed by any school in London. In the past the school has been hampered by lack of accommodation, which has hindered its natural expansion and development. When these restrictions are removed, as they shortly will be, we may look forward to a school which will be a source of just pride for the whole district. “

“So far, the only course of study provided at the school has been the ‘Modern Studies’ course, on which chief stress has been laid on economics. This course has been very useful for boys entering on a business career, and the old pupils have been wonderfully successful in obtaining the higher class of business posts. Next year we propose to start an advanced course in science, which will enable our boys to take their proper share in the scientific development which is bound to exert an ever-increasing influence on the future of our country.”

“From the material standpoint the future of the school is assured. Its traditions of hard work, and the courageous spirit which has enabled it to triumph in the past over so many disadvantages, offer every hope of still greater success in the moral and intellectual fields.”

Mr. Evans concluded with an expression of his hope that parents would not hesitate to apply to him when in doubt on any subject connected with school life.

It is interesting to note that this year, out of 43 candidates, 32 passed the General School examination of London University, 15 at matriculation standard. Between them the successful candidates carried off 40 distinctions. In the Higher School examination all 7 entrants were successful: 6 qualified for the Intermediate Science examination in Economics or London Economics and one for the Intermediate Arts.

## **Obituaries**

**Mr S J Linden** (1950-84): died 17 May 2015, aged 93.

Although his formal subject was German, both during and after Mr Aufricht’s tenure (1948-58), he also taught Latin and mathematics, and later English. He had a passion for sport – football in particular – and refereed school matches at Rose Hill. One of his proudest achievements was introducing classical music into the school; he also took pupils to the opera at Covent Garden. In the latter stage of his teaching career he became Head of the Sixth Form.

More information about his HTS-related and outside commitments and interests is given in a letter, dated September 2012, from his son Martin, in response to Ted Hayward’s invitation to Mr Linden to attend that year’s reunion; sadly, owing to ill-health, he was unable to do so. The relevant sections of the letter are reproduced in newsletter no 22 (April 2013). Other issues – nos 8 (February 2009), 12 (March 2010) and notably 23 (August 2013) – include reminiscences from John Jones (1963-70), mentioned in the letter as one of the pupils Mr Linden recalled teaching. A tribute from Martin and his sister Diana was printed in the order of service for the

funeral on 1 June, which Treasurer Terry Lawlor (1951-6) attended on behalf of the Association. Contact Ted if you would like to have a copy.

**W H C (Wilf) Finbow** (1931-6): died 2 June 2015, aged 95. More information is given in the attachment to the newsletter.

### **Mr D W Huntley, ATD, NDD (Sculpt)**

Still on the subject of former members of the teaching staff: the Editor is grateful to Gordon Holt (1952-9) for alerting him to a Wikipedia entry for Mr Huntley (Art, 1953-9). Now in his late 80s, Mr Huntley presented the school with his sculpture, a figure entitled *The Scholar*, as a leaving gift and installed in front of the Head Master's office. A copy of the article he wrote for the August 1960 issue of *The Thorntonian*, and a report on the unveiling ceremony in October of that year, are reproduced in newsletter no 29 (February 2015). Two photographs of the work are displayed on the Association's website – click on Memorabilia on the Home page menu, then select the Miscellaneous gallery. It also makes an appearance in Ron Bernstein's film recording his site visit in 1997. He describes it as looking "a bit green".

Gordon recalls: "I was fairly closely involved with him as his only A-level Art pupil in 1958-9 [which he passed]. Bit of a temper on him. One memory would like to share: the occasion was morning assembly near Christmas and we were singing 'While shepherds watched their flocks'. A group of fifth formers were, however, warbling the 'washed their socks' version. Huntley, one of the masters standing at the edge, rushed into the bunch, waving his arms and shouting, 'It's blasphemy!'"

### **Reminiscences**

**Mike Overton** (1946-50) muses on "The Value of Old Masters":

I once said something to my children which I have long regretted. I told them that, despite my having spent a fortune on their private education, I was far better educated by my free State grammar school. Unfortunately this is true. I joined the first form at Henry Thornton Grammar School in September 1945, a month after the Japanese surrender.

It had been founded in Battersea, in the 1890s, and relocated, with a change of name, to Clapham in 1929. Henry Thornton (b1760) was an economist, banker, philanthropist, Parliamentarian and also a leading emancipationist. He worked with William Wilberforce in campaigning against the slave trade.

Cue for a song. To remind you, the first lines of the school song were:

*Still Henry Thornton's known/For labours philanthropic/Which loosened slavery's chains/Throughout the sultry tropic. Now in another age, we bear/His celebrated name/And in a way he could not guess/We will extend his fame. (I know, I know – it is pretty pretentious.) It ended, Black and silver will lead for ever, boys/Black and silver will lead for ever.*

The school had a strong sporting tradition and, although it eschewed rugby, soccer was popular– we had four school XIs. We also had a rugby fives court and, most unusually for the time, we cultivated lacrosse. I tried it once and found it far too rough for a boy of my delicate nature.

School "dinners" were served in South Lodge, a Victorian pile some 250 yards away from the school building. To us, the meals were an indigestible joke and truly appalling. The building contained the main library and we often showed our disdain for a revolting meal by opening any large volume at random, emptying a plate into it and closing the book

with a resounding and very juicy “thwack”. The next borrower was guaranteed a rather noisome and unpleasant experience.

We were physically chastised for wrongdoing and I suffered “six of the best” several times for various misdemeanours. The cane was wielded by “Taffy” Evans, who became headmaster during my tenure. I always thought he was an odd mix of geniality and aloofness.

The faculty was impressive and featured a disproportionate number of Welshmen, including Messrs Williams, Griffiths Davies, Evans, John and Owen. All were excellent teachers apart from Williams, who was merely competent: he and I were entirely incompatible and nurtured a mutual loathing throughout my five years at the school. I still miss him.

Each of the teachers, (there were no women) was highly eccentric in his own way. My friend Williams, whose subject was maths, could (and would), as a party trick, draw what looked like a perfect circle, using a cloth duster, holding one end as the centre and using the tightly stretched cloth to draw a continuous arc until the ends met. He would then shout “Voilà!”

Another wild card was the Careers Master, named Hofmann (thereby hangs a tale), an amiable chap who taught Physics but had not a clue about the wider world of business and commerce; so, in truth, he had no idea about this extra-curricular rôle. He and I, with my lack of ambition or direction, made a wonderful combination. In the end, he told me that I seemed particularly suited to the Insurance business, but I’m sure he only did this because he’d learned that the business was crying out for ambitious young men (aka cheap wage-slaves) and it was an easy option for him to suggest this.

Overall – and in retrospect – I loved being at the school, and with National Service looming the prospect of further education did not occur to me or my family and I left at the tender age of 16 years and four months. I shall forever be grateful to the gentlemen pictured on the \*Association website for their patience and perseverance with me and with boys who often appeared to be lost causes. Unlike, we hear, some of today’s teachers, they were dedicated and, to a man, literate,

*\*For those of you who can access the 1948 photograph of the faculty, select Memorabilia on the Home page menu, then Staff on the next page, and click on image no 8. Williams is third from the left, middle row and Hofmann third from left, back row.*

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The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or email them to:  
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Association President: Jimmy Hill OBE Vice-President: Michael Caplan QC  
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