



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 9

April 2009

Annual General Meeting

The Association's second AGM was held at The Windmill on Saturday 21 March 2009 (postponed from 7 February owing to the bad weather over that weekend). The 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 2010 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 – (Vacancy).

- The audited statement of account for the year ended 31 December 2008 was adopted (copy attached).
- Annual subscriptions: on the recommendation of the Management Committee, this year's subscriptions for those in membership at 1 January 2009 have been waived, in view of the Association's healthy financial position as shown in the 2008 accounts and as there are no major projects planned for the current year. Joiners in 2009 will still be required to pay the relevant sum (unchanged at £10 for Full or £6 for Associate membership).
- Memorial plaque: it's hoped to give members more information shortly on the timetable for installing the plaque in the new Sixth Form Centre at Lambeth College, South Side, which is due to open in September; proposals under consideration by the Management Committee, in conjunction with Richard Chambers, Principal of the College, include arranging a dedication ceremony/service to which OTs, any traceable relatives of the former pupils named on the plaque, and representatives of the College, adjacent Lambeth Academy and local press would be invited.
- Old Thorntonians Football Club: at the suggestion of Mike Surridge the Committee is exploring ways in which the Association could be more closely linked with, and offer practical (if limited) support for, the Club, which was founded in 1928 and is still going strong, currently fielding three teams in the Amateur Football Combination League ; for further information check the Club's website – the address is on the Association's Home page. One possibility would be for the Association to present a "Player of the Year" cup, supplemented by a personal award for the individual concerned.
- Pupil honours boards: currently held at the Adare Centre (an associated site of Lambeth College); no decision has yet been taken on their long-term future storage/display, although one option being explored is for them to be offered to the Museum of London for safekeeping.

Membership

The present total is 109, including two Associates. A special welcome to Nick Bird, the latest joiner (as an Associate member), who is the third great-grandson of Henry Thornton. Nick, who lives in Australia, has kindly provided Ted Hayward with an extract from Henry Thornton's "Recollections" of c1802, which has now been added – with a typed transcript for ease of reference – to the relevant page of the website.

Another OT/OC Meeting?

As reported in issue no 7, five OTs held a successful "mini-reunion" with a few of their Chichester High School for Boys (CHSB) counterparts in July 2008. This year is the 70th anniversary of the evacuation of HTS pupils to West Sussex, and it's been suggested that for this reason a return visit would be appropriate. No firm plans have yet been made, but Terry Sharp has kindly agreed to act once again as co-ordinator for any OTs who may be interested and to liaise with the relevant persons at CHSB. His telephone number is 020 7223 5102, or you can write to him at 10 Wakehurst Road, London SW11 6BY.

Reminiscences

From **Bert Armington** (1960-1), an American exchange student: In 1961 I was 16 years old. My parents were best friends with Walter and Alma Brownsword, school teachers in the United States who had the opportunity to become exchange teachers in the UK for a year. Their son, Ken, who was my age, didn't like the idea, so they suggested that I join them and accompany Ken. My parents were not the type of people who would place their child in the care of another, but they thought it would be a spectacular opportunity for me, and welcomed the idea.

We arrived on the SS *United States* in August 1961 in Southampton, and moved into a flat on Farquhar Road, just below the old Crystal Palace in the Gypsy Hill area which belonged to their exchange partners, Brian and Ann Atkinson. They had arranged that the two of us would attend Henry Thornton School, and after a conversation with Mr B J F Dorrington bought blazers and ties.

Autumn arrived. We met with the Head Master, who was more than supportive. He suggested that, if we had a valid reason, we could skip school to attend museums, theatre, and cultural events. I think Ken and I were highly abusive of the opportunity. The school year began; we were the Yanks. A blessing and a curse, but I found it a thrill to be in a new world. I do remember English in the Lower Sixth, and Mr S Read calling out the attendance – and I wasn't named.

"Anyone else?" he asked. "Me, sir." "Who are you?" "I'm new, sir." I replied. "How do you spell that?"

The boys broke out in laughter. I was instantly accepted.

Every morning we took the Southern Railway from Gypsy Hill to Balham, changed to the Tube, and bumped along to Clapham Common. I remember the old trains of 1960, the old gents in bowler hats smoking their Balkan Sobrani tobacco in tight compartments. Sometimes, during the evenings, we'd slip onto the buses (number 3 to Crystal Palace) or the trains or subway, using our student passes, and go as far as we could on a 3d ticket. (You know what I'm talking about.) I didn't return to London until 2002, and when I did was startled to find the London Transport buses and rail cars I was used to hiding in the London Transport Museum. God, I must be older than I imagined!

1960 was a beautiful year. I attended Shakespearean Theatre at the Old Vic (galleries of course), drank Bitters in the local pubs, travelled the Llangothlen canal in a barge, saw all the sights of London several times over, lost my virginity, joined the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – Streatham branch), toured France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany on a Bella Zundapp motor scooter with David Kween from Henry Thornton, and visited Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

I returned to the USA on the Queen Mary, used in World War II as a troopship, and now a museum. (I'm even older than I thought.)

So much of my core was formed and strengthened by my experiences in my sixteenth year at Henry Thornton, that I just want to say "thank you for the experience!" Nothing since has meant more to me than standing with all the boys and singing "And Did Those Feet in Ancient Times".

Further reflections from **Donald Bishop** (1934-41) on his time at Chichester: ... HTS was evacuated to Bognor Regis in September 1939. It was a blunder as there was no grammar school in that town. By 1 November 1939 HTS was settled in Chichester High School for Boys (CHS).

Boys-only the two schools may have been, but there were differences. The Head Masters were a contrast. The host Head [Dr C W Bishop] came across as serious, rigid, distant, and easy to mimic. I never caught him laughing, and I never exchanged words with him during all my time on the school premises. So I cannot offer a balanced and fair view of the man.

The guest Head [Mr W D Evans] was relaxed, very human, not forceful in manner nor speech, but nevertheless a strong character. As School Captain [1940-1] I got to know him well. He consulted me on who should succeed as School Captain when I had left HTS. My assessment of him is much more balanced: he was an excellent Head who took us once a week in the Sixth Form for what can best be described as Current Affairs. He was very knowledgeable, interesting and stimulating.

It was wartime, and both schools got on well together. There were no fights in my time!

The HTS buildings in London had warm, enclosed corridors. CHS classrooms opened on to fresh air. In the winter our staff wore overcoats! CHS staff were more Spartan, or were they not allowed to follow the lead of HTS? Sessions were marked by an electric bell that rang in all parts of the HTS building. It was rung when required by the School Porter; CHS had a hand bell rung by prefects. HTS prefects had to ring it at times, and managed to break the bell!

HTS Sixth Form included teaching of Economics, Economic History and British Constitution to Higher Schools level. These subjects were not on offer from CHS, so there could be no joint classes.

Pupils from both schools made friendships in youth clubs, sport, church and so on. I made friends with Geoffrey Barnard also [*CHS School Captain 1940*] We both went to the Pre-Officer Training Unit, sailed to India, and spent six months at the Officer Training Unit, Mhow. He went to Italy and I went to Burma. Periodically we have managed to keep in touch. It was easy to do so at one time, as CHS for Girls gave me my wife – for 55-plus years now!

From Terry Sharp (1938-45): Peter Lawson's reminiscences [*issue no 8*] as a wartime evacuee to Chichester intrigued me as I also went on the train from Balham station to Bognor on 1 September 1939. My school House (? Pepys) moved on from Bognor to Mundham, a village on the road between Bognor and Chichester: some boys found billets with families at North Mundham, but I was one of those who drew the short straws and went on to the comparatively remote Manor Farm at South Mundham, some three miles away.

Farm life was a complete eye-opener for a young Londoner like myself, but with schooling at Chichester High School several weeks away I quickly became involved in farming activities. In no time I was introduced to milking cows, and when winter came I usually found myself before dawn, hurricane lamp in hand, chasing up cows from the field to the milking shed. I used to milk half-a-dozen cows before cycling off to Chichester and then the same group in the evening after school, and before tea and school homework! Suckling new-born calves proved to be an amusing diversion...

I spent two years at South Mundham cycling to and from school – a miserable experience in bad weather – and I was then rebilleted, and lived more comfortably with Mr Read, the Chemistry master, and his family in Chichester itself. "Sammy" Read, as he was generally known, was also a weekend lieutenant in the Home Guard, and I used to pedal happily round the southern part of the city as his messenger, delivering notes to his platoon on their next rendezvous. At that time the Home Guard was provided with a miscellany of arms, machine guns, etc, and I spent many an evening *chez* Read practising how to assemble a range of lethal weapons. The Read household was never short of rabbit as a foodstuff because I used to accompany Sammy on early-morning walks along the canal, retrieving his kill with a .22 rifle. With a neighbour we occasionally went duck-shooting at Dell Quay: the men had 12-bore shotguns, and I sported a 410. We had only moderate success, as many of our kill ended up in a deeply flooded meadow behind the Quay. Our neighbour used to take his spaniel with him in the hope that it would act as a retriever, but the dog wisely refused to have an early-morning swim – just as well, as transporting it home would have been very unwelcome!

Derek Yandell refers to Mr Read playing the piano and flute. The only instrument I heard Sammy play was a bassoon, and one Christmastide our neighbours, including Mr Dix, the Art master, were highly amused by carols sung by one treble (me), accompanied by Mr Read on his bassoon.

Incidentally, the accepted reason why Chichester was comparatively unscathed from bombing was that German pilots and navigators preferred to retain the Cathedral spire as a landmark. The proximity of Tangmere was a deterrent, too...

The school returned to London in 1943, and so ended for me an interesting and amusing four years. I regularly listen to "Farming Today" on BBC radio: it stirs up many memories from nearly 60 years ago!

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Summer 1951:

THE NEW HEADMASTER

To succeed Mr. Evans the Governors and L.C.C. have appointed Mr. D. B. Gaskin, M.A. (Oxon.).

Mr. Gaskin was born in 1909 and educated at Oswestry Grammar School and Worcester College, Oxford, where he took an Honours Degree in Modern History in 1931. After some experience at Newcastle-on-Tyne, he was Senior History Master at Devonport High School, Plymouth, from 1938, during which period he served with the Royal Armoured Corps from 1942-5. He was appointed to Emmanuel School in 1946.

A former County Lawn Tennis player, he is keenly interested in sport of various kinds, and in other out-of-school activities, especially debating. Indeed he has been selected as one of three delegates for the United Kingdom to the International UNESCO Conference in Paris in July and August 1951 on History and International Understanding.

[Mr Gaskin left in December 1955 to take up another Headship at Moseley Grammar School, Birmingham. The article in the same issue on Mr W D Evans's retirement will appear in the next newsletter. Ed].

Spring 1932:

“Si Monumentum Requiris...”

Let schools more ancient celebrate,
In doggerel Latin verse,
Foundations of an ancient date
From some old grandsire’s purse!
Such origins we cannot boast;
No palaeologue our pen;
We house no bygone hero’s ghost,
But nourish future men.

And though our names from worthy folk
Of Clapham have their birth,
'Tis but that who these names invoke
May imitate their worth.
Some Cavendish and Stephen took,
Macaulay, some for name,
Some Wilberforce and Pepys and Cook
Of Australasian fame.

For men, not walls, a city make,
Whether they’re wise or fools,
And schools make men, lest I mistake.
So should you seek a monument
To make our name endure,
We’re it, than bronze more permanent,
Than Parian more pure!

Ben W. Vincent (Old Thorntonian)

Autumn 1961:

VALETE

Two members of the staff who have given us a quiet strength are leaving this term, Mr. A.W. Lambert and Mr. S. V. Yorke.

The former has served the School for thirty years, for most of the time as Second French Master and recently as Head of the Department. His work has been marked by a quiet efficiency and unpretentious success, and this year a pupil of his has continued the tradition of winning a Travelling Scholarship. Mr. Lambert is well-read in French and German, and has a considerable acquaintance with other European languages. We shall miss seeing his exact mind combining with that of Mr. Yorke in solving *The Times* Crossword.

Mr. Yorke came to us from St. Olave’s and his contribution to the School has been a painstaking and conscientious training of boys in Mathematics, his care resulting in an intimate knowledge of each boy’s work and capabilities. State Scholarships have been the reward for his work in the Sixth Forms. He has, like his co-solver of *The Times* puzzle, an exact mind and a passion for accurate definition. His range is wide. Who else indeed would know the name of Thackeray’s dog? The Staff Room will be the duller for his passing, but the Oval pavilion will no doubt be richer for his emphatic judgments on the Selectors, or perhaps he will be found apostrophising the rubs of some village green. Will he ever win County Colours? At any rate he will now have time for those walks of his; more than one of the Staff have followed his itineraries with pleasure.

We wish them both renewed energy in happy and lengthy retirement, and a full life undisturbed by the strains of the classroom.

Staff

Future issues, starting with no 10, will include lists of teaching staff (other than those with temporary contacts) who were known or believed to have held appointments at the school at both Clapham and, during the wartime evacuation, Chichester. The information in each list, from the 1920s until the 1970s/1980s, has been compiled by the Editor primarily from reports on joiners and leavers as they appeared in the magazine. As always, he would be grateful for readers’ comments and corrections!

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

Association President: Jimmy Hill OBE Website: www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk