



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 29

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2015 Diary Dates/Reminders

Tour of Lambeth Academy: 2pm on Monday 23 February (Contact Ted Hayward if you'd like to join the group - last-minute bookings still being accepted!). For those who have already confirmed their attendance, I will meet you either in The Windmill, from around 1pm, or – if you propose to travel direct to the venue - shortly before 2pm at the Elms Road entrance to the Academy.

Elms Road commemorative plaque – Unveiling ceremony: to be held at noon on Saturday 21 March. (Invitations already issued)

Annual General Meeting: 2pm on Saturday 21 March, at Lambeth Academy The agenda and supporting papers will be circulated later this month.

Next reunion: Saturday 3 October.

1949 School Inspection

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION

Art

The Art Master [Mr G W Dix, 1921-4, 1925-51] has been in his present post for twenty years and evidently rendered devoted service to the School. He is himself a painter of ability, and he has aimed at imparting to his pupils, through a methodical series of progressive stages, some real skill in drawing and painting from nature, as well as some understanding of how to compose a picture. The scheme combines a thorough training in technique with opportunities for creative work. The immediate surroundings of the School provide attractive subjects and it was most gratifying to see some admirable paintings and drawings of them by boys in the Fourth and fifth forms. Design is taught mainly through patterns for tiles, in the form of separate units which are pieced together. Model stage sets are being successfully tackled by some of the boys in school hours.

All boys up to and including the Fourths take Art. In the Fifths the subject becomes an option, and about half drop out. The Fourth Forms, IIB and IIA have single periods weekly, and IA three separate single periods. The allocation of time to the rest is satisfactory. There is no Sixth Form work in Art.

The Art Club activities are open to all. They consist of fortnightly subjects to be tackled out of school. The response has been good and much interest is evidently aroused by the results.

The Art room is spacious and convenient, and the equipment suitable. It would be an advantage to remove the lockers for the boys who use it as a Form room so that the whole of the south wall might be used for displays. It would also be an advantage to line this wall with a surface that will take drawing pins.

Economics

Economics is taught in both Fifth and Sixth Forms by a Master of great experience [Mr W R John, 1918-49] who has an outstanding gift of lucid exposition and a remarkable power of securing hard work and clear thought from his pupils. A high standard is reached and it is clear that the boys gain from his teaching and their critical reading a habit of exact thought which will be invaluable to them in after-life. There is a good collection of reference books in the Library and each boy has in his possession not one but several carefully chosen text-books. The boys' written work is in general good.

More extracts from this section of the report will appear in subsequent newsletters.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

August 1960:

“THE SCHOLAR”

“Everyone wants to understand painting. Why don't they try to understand the singing of birds? People love the night, a flower, everything that surrounds them, without trying to understand them. But painting – that they must understand.”

Having been asked to write an article explaining my sculpture I cannot resist commencing with the above quotation from Picasso. (I take it that no one living doubts either his nature or ability.)

A few important facts, however. The figure has an iron frame made from scrap metal. Concrete and aggregate were forced into wire mesh until the final form was almost complete. A plastic metal consisting of a powder mixed with resin was then modelled over the cured concrete and a fibre glass scrim was added to the shoulders later to be coated with another form of plastic metal – this time a paste mixed with a solvent. Dullness is remedied by burnishing with a brass brush and then with a steel wire brush; in this I was assisted by T. T. Phillips, an Old Boy of the School, the process taking us four days' hard work. The final stage is to coat the whole work thinly over with a transparent varnish, a protection from frost and one or two others.

Roughly then you have the programme of execution for the sculpture. It would not be fitting to discuss the design in similar vein, but I will say that many hours of work have gone into both design and execution and that the main problem was to design a form which was balanced from all round.

The problem itself behind me, I chose to interest myself in a rough and rugged texture in keeping with both the material and subject (a male figure) and have experimented with a series of flat planes rotating as they ascend from a small base to wide shoulders. The figure is asymmetric from all views as is its position on the plinth, which in turn is off centre with its elliptical platform. The plinth and the first plane of the sculpture are parallel to the doorway, so helping to relate the figure to the building. The modern conception, at present incongruous

with the setting, will seem more appropriate once the new buildings, which I have caused the figure to face, are erected.

I shall finish with another Picasso quotation: "People who try to explain a work of art are usually barking up the wrong tree." I suspect that this applies to me too. Still, I have enjoyed working on *The Scholar* and offer it to you with the hope that you will derive some pleasure from it as each day brings it a different light to condemn or commend.

D. W. HUNTLEY

Editor's notes: Mr Huntley was Art master from 1953 (succeeding Mr R R Langford) until 1959. Two images of the sculpture are featured on the website, both in the Miscellaneous gallery (select Memorabilia from the main menu). The 1961 issue of the magazine records that:

On the afternoon of the 21st October, 1960, the School's statue, "The Scholar", was unveiled. It was hoped to perform the whole ceremony outside, with the whole School present, but owing to rain this was impossible. In an amusing speech, the sculptor, Mr. D.W. Huntley, ... described his difficulties in getting the design of the statue accepted, and went on to speak generally of modern sculpture. Mr. A.N. Branson, Chairman of the Governors, thanked Mr. Huntley and expressed the hope that the statue might be a beginning of many a boy's love of modern sculpture, as well as a much-loved feature of the School.

Summer 1939:

SCHOOL NOTES [Extracts]

This term we have taken over our new ground at Morden, which may easily be reached by bus (No 164 or 156) from the Underground station, alighting at Rose Hill. Bought and laid out at a cost of over £18,000, the ground has been thoroughly drained, seeded, and five Cricket Tables turfed. There are two hard tennis courts, and a magnificent pavilion equipped with the latest showers, dressing rooms, and apparatus for clothes drying. In winter six soccer pitches and one rugby will be available, the latter, we understand, for the use of the Bec School. Parents will find a plentiful supply of excellent deck chairs and will be welcomed if they wish to see their sons play or watch a School team.

... ..
It is with regret that we have to say that the Marchant Fives Cup has been lost this year, after being in our possession for several seasons. The meeting with Marylebone Grammar School was very close, as we only lost by the odd game, being even on points. This reverse of fortune must spur the team to greater practice.

... ..
We think Fuller of IVb should be mentioned and wished success before he leaves us. He has sent in several original stories which have had for various reasons, often length, to be rejected. It would delight us to see more of the lower forms boys with the urge to write. Many of the best short story writers appear to take quite ordinary scenes, such as are within the observation and range of boys, and give them an original twist, or manage to create in them an atmosphere of suspense or vivid action, which makes an appeal to the reader. Surely some of our number have had minor adventures, or have been to some place off the beaten track. Many of our contemporary magazines contain poetry, serious or satiric, which should inspire similar efforts on school or local topics. ... Do not many of us read the page-long stories in our evening papers?

London Metropolitan Archives

Members may be interested to know that the LMA website has a number of photographs of the school. If you haven't seen them already and would like to do so, visit "London Metropolitan Archives Collage", then type the full name of the school, without dates, in the search box.

Website

Just to confirm (as a follow-up to Ted Hayward's e-mail of 29 July 2014) that the Guest Book page, with all past entries, is still accessible, but has been discreetly tucked away to remove, or at least mitigate, the risk of further attacks by spammers. If you wish to post a message, or read any of those already shown, select Henry Thornton from the Home menu, then scroll down to the foot of the page and click on Recollections.

OT Mike Clements

Do you remember Mike (more formally and fully: James Michael Henry), who was a pupil from 1948 until the mid-1950s, served in the ATC and now lives in Australia? If so, please let Ted Hayward know, so that he can pass on any information to his niece, Jayne Langley.

The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or e-mail them to:
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