



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 47

October 2020

AGM and Annual Reunion 2020

As advised in Ted Hayward's email of 14 September, both meetings (originally scheduled for 21 March and 3 November respectively) were cancelled owing to the continued, serious risks associated with Covid-19. Members will, however, be pleased – and perhaps relieved – to know that at its recent virtual meeting, using Zoom technology, the Management Committee agreed that:

- the deferred Annual General Meeting should be held, again using Zoom, at 2pm on **Saturday 12 December 2020** (to avoid clashing with next year's AGM)
- The Windmill, Clapham, be rebooked for the next reunion on **Tuesday 2 November 2021**, on the assumption that by that date it will be safe for OTs to be able attend in person.

Ted will issue the updated AGM papers nearer the time, and keep members advised on the revised reunion arrangements.

Website

Please let the Editor know if you have any comments, queries or suggestions relating to the recently "refreshed" site. For (primarily) security reasons it has not proved possible to reinstate the entries which featured on the former site's Guest Book

Obituaries

M E (Monty) Clarkson (1935-42): died April 2020. With other pupils Monty was evacuated to Chichester in 1939, and wrote about his time there in the January 2011 newsletter (no 15), referring in particular to the HTS teaching staff also temporarily based at the local High School for Boys. He was awarded Form prizes in successive years, 1938 and 1939, and subsequently graduated from London University in 1944 with B.Sc. (Lond.) ARCS; his entry appears on the honours boards displayed at Lambeth Academy, Elms Road. He joined a small group of OTs who, by invitation, toured the Academy in February 2015 (report in issue 30), and another party – all evacuees – who made two "memory lane" visits organised by Terry Sharp (1938-45) to the High School in 2008 and 2009. Further information on the latter, including a couple of photos, is given on the relevant page of the website.

William (Bill) Major (1941-8): died 13 January 2019. School Captain, 1947-8.

Ernest Williams (1940-5): died 13 June 2020. His reminiscences relating to his time at the school and thereafter were published in issue no 27 (August 2014), and are well worth re-visiting.

[Editor's note: the obituary for **Harry Spence**, included in the last newsletter, referred to French and German as the two subjects of his Exhibition to London University after he left the school. This should have read French and *Latin*.]

Reminiscences

Geoff White (1958-65) writes to endorse the gist of the Editor's recollection of senior pupils' access to the rear balcony of the main hall, following the query raised by John Jones in no 46:

"[I can] ...confirm that sixth formers definitely used the balcony at the back of the hall for assembly. My cohort was 1958 to 1965. It was great that you could slip in to the balcony more or less unnoticed. If you were late for school you got caught by the late prefect but, if you were really late, he was no longer on duty. Thus, it was possible to arrive at 9.35, creep on to the balcony and get away with it."

Recent joiner **Stephen Langley-Hart** (1957-9) wonders whether any other OTs of his era might remember him. Here are extracts from his post on the Guest Book page of the former website:

"I was possibly in Clarkson House but can't be sure....There was a chum, whose name infuriatingly escapes me, who came with me, during lunch time, to my home opposite St Mary's Church. ...he and I would have sat on the flat roof, accessed through our French windows, overlooking Clapham Park Road until it was time to get back and try not to be late."

Were you that particular friend? If so, or you recall meeting Stephen in another context, contact the Editor who would be glad to relay any relevant information to him.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Autumn Term 1956:

MISCELLANY MILTON AT HENRY THORNTON

1. *Confusion heard his voice and wild uproar stood ruled*
– The entry of a Prefect.

2. *Abashed he stood*
And felt how awful goodness is.
– Awaiting punishment.

3. *Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood.*
– Outside the Head's study.

4. *Must I leave thee Paradise? Thus leave*
Thee native soil? These happy walks and shades
Fit haunt for gods.
– End of schooldays.

5. *Hard are the ways of truth and rough to walk.*
– On becoming a Prefect.

6. *Perplexed and troubled at his bad success.*
– After the Mock?

7. *Untwisting all the chains that tie*
The hidden soul of harmony.
– The School Orchestra.

8. *Her silent course advanced
With inoffensive pace, that spinning slept
On her soft axle.*

– The lawn-mower.

9. *They eat, they drink, and in communion sweet
Quaff immortality and joy.*

– In the dining hall.

10. *Eased the putting off
These troublesome disguises which we wear.*

– The period before P.T

11. *In his face excuse
Came prologue and apology too prompt.*

– The innocent offender?

12. *If this fail
The pillared firmament is rottenness
And earth's base built on stubble.*

– A science experiment.

1958 School Inspection

Three further sections from the HMI report of the inspection undertaken in June 1958.

Nature and Scope

The boys who enter this county grammar school come from a large number of primary schools in South-West London. As in all schools maintained by the London County Council, ten per cent are admitted to Governors' places and the remainder qualify through the Authority's junior leaving examination. Both entries are much in demand, and it is expected that all the boys who join the school next September will have made it their first choice. A few boys are admitted from neighbouring secondary schools for sixth form work or at some earlier stage in the course.

Compared with 1949 (the date of the last report) the school roll has increased from 431 to 462 and the Sixth Form from 37 to a total of 46 last September, and a strength in recent years consistently between 45 and 55. Nearly two-thirds of the members of the present Sixth Form are specialising in science subjects and about half the whole form hopes to proceed to the university. The number of boys remaining at school after their seventeenth birthdays is almost exactly the national average. In the last three years 23 boys have left for universities and 14 for other forms of full-time education; and there has been a tendency for boys to seek employment in industry rather than in offices. In these same three years two State Scholarships and 13 County Major Awards have been won by members of the school.

Governing Body

The school shares a Governing Body with Aristotle County Secondary School. Several of the Governors are Old Thorntonians. The Governors meet at the two schools alternately, each Headmaster attending only for the part of the agenda that concerns him.

Premises and Equipment

The school continues to occupy the pleasant quiet buildings that have been described in the last two reports. The only major addition since 1949 has been a useful biology laboratory which may, however, soon prove too small for the Sixth Form biologists. By partitioning, and by enclosing corridor space, minor improvements such as a balance room and a medical room have been provided. The cost of the new stage equipment was partly met through the school's own efforts. The buildings are well cared for, but the copse that separates the playground from the lawn needs attention.

South Lodge, which stands some 200 yards from the main building, now contains the kitchen and dining room, a Sixth Form common room, the headquarters of the Principal of the South-West London Institute, the school keeper's flat and the school library. If the library is to play its full part in the life of the school, it is most desirable that it should be transferred to the main building; the Headmaster hopes to use South Lodge increasingly for teaching the divisions of the Sixth Form, for which purpose it would appear very suitable. The other main difficulty concerning premises is the restricted accommodation for science and particularly for the recently established course in mechanical science which requires for its proper development its own laboratory and good facilities for technical drawing. The Governors and the Authority are hopeful that a major addition to the main building will soon be practicable. The geography room is congested.

On the whole the school is well supplied with teaching equipment and materials. The regular income of the library is out of keeping with modern book prices. Several classrooms need display boarding and a number of the desks seem to be unsuitable in design and size for the hoys using them.

And finally...

A few words from the Chairman on his recent flying exploits, including a photo (below) of him in gear which you will probably not have seen before.

"Amidst the difficult and challenging times in which we are currently finding ourselves I thought I would share with you my experience earlier this month that might just lighten your mood.

Born in 1940 and living in blitzed London, it has been a lifelong ambition of mine one day to sit in the cockpit of a Supermarine Spitfire, an aircraft that contributed so much to our survival at that time.

Thanks to RAF Duxford in Cambridge, and after an hour of video instruction and briefing and accompanied by an ex-RAF Tornado pilot, I not only sat in, but flew, a Spitfire fitted with dual controls. This was a dream come true but slightly tempered by the pre-flight safety instructions, including emergency exiting and parachute deployment drill! I feel my years in 1351 squadron ATC at school were not sufficient preparation.



A thought: given the parlous state of the commercial airline business, perhaps parachutes will be issued on our future budget flights and we would be required to jump from 2000ft over our chosen destination, thus avoiding landing fees!"

Jeff Green

The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or email them to:
Ted Hayward, 31 Linfields, Little Chalfont, Amersham, HP7 9QH; ted.hayward@btinternet.com
President: Michael Caplan QC Website: www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk