



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 14

November 2010

Obituary

Richard ("Tiggy") Ainsworth (1939-43): died 14.9.57 in Nairobi. Brother **Geoffrey** (1940-3) has supplied the following information: "After leaving school Richard worked for the Midland Bank in Chichester before National Service in the Royal Navy. After travelling the world he joined the Standard Bank of South Africa in 1948, holding a senior position there. He was a proficient linguist – he liked German at school, and taught himself Swahili in readiness for his Standard Bank appointment." Best friend **James Hiney** (1941-4) recalls:

"When Ted Hayward told me there was to be an obit of Richard (Dick) Ainsworth and asked if I'd like to contribute, I thanked him and said, 'he was my closest friend at HTS Chi-High'.

He was not an HTS evacuee – that I knew for certain. I think his family moved to Bognor, from London, soon after the beginning of WW2, while my mother and I followed suit in late 1940, to live with my aunts in Nyetimber, a village three miles west of Bognor, in time for me to join my new school in the Spring term.

Why HTS, not Chi-High? My mother thought that a London school would be better and on such tosses of the coin people's futures are built. My guess is that the Ainsworths thought much the same for Dick and his younger brother, Geoff.

So I arrived, early in January 1941, at Third Form age and was told (I guess by *Charlie Wab, since I think the lesson was French) to 'it there'. 'There' was next to Dick, who promptly took me under his wing. As happens whenever anyone changes schools, I suppose, I was a little ahead in some subjects, but behind in others and hadn't started any Science. [*Aka Mr C W Gribble. Ed]

But I remember the occasion when we were paired for some sort of experiment involving boiling something. Sammy Read told us to record temperatures, adding, 'but you won't find it reaches 100'. Dick and I reported reaching 100 degrees and got rude remarks about listening to what we'd been told. We protested, but our appeal was dismissed out of hand. School masters!

I've referred to R.A.A as Richard and Dick, but at school everybody called him Tiggy. He'd been at Latymer Upper School, in Hammersmith, as was my previous school and I couldn't believe both were in the same part of London. 'You were in Chis-wick', I'd insisted. 'If it were in Chis-wick I'd be known as Tiggy von Chis-wick, not von Hammerschmidt,' he replied!

Out of school, he introduced me to the Sea Scouts. His group was on the other side of Bognor, at Felpham, but I took to Scouting and happily (?) cycled all that way at least once a week – in addition to seven miles each way to school. Sea Scouts, at that time, was something of a misnomer. Small, narrow, muddy-river Scouts would have fitted us better, as we couldn't go to sea because of the barbed wire and (reputedly) mines in the way.

Our (I suppose temporary) HQ was an empty house, with a flat roof over the garage which we were allowed to use. When Tiggy couldn't learn to tie one of the knots every Scout has to be able to tie, the Troop Leader took him onto the roof and threatened to lower him over the edge, knot properly tied or not. He learned how to do it exceedingly quickly.

We had no tea-making facilities in our garage and weren't allowed to light fires in the garden, so himself came up with the bright idea of buying bottles of 'burp' and making money for the Troop (or maybe Patrol) from the proceeds.

He was famous for his writings. One year, he wrote a play for the Scouts. It was heavily rehearsed in the bedroom of the Scoutmaster, away in one of HM Ships, where his pretty wife, our Producer, was ill in bed. It never reached the stage, though I don't recall why.

Since he lived in central Bognor I don't know how he discovered the abandoned Coach House of the already demolished Craigwell House, well out to the west, where George V had convalesced. It became the playground for all our friends, including several girls of his acquaintance. When I was demobbed I visited it, but sadly it had already had the chop.

While we were in the Fifth Form, someone invented the War Service Scouts and a WS Group was set up for the Bognor area. Because the senior member from one of the other Troops was the son of the Sergeant-Major of the Aldwick Home Guards, we got ourselves attached to them. And had a whale of a time.

Almost the last thing I heard of Tiggy was after I'd been 'de-evacuated'. By then, Home Guards were getting some powerful guns and he had had the fun of being allowed to learn how to use them, being then sixteen. But I'm glad I went home.

I saw him once more, *en passant*, but had no time to talk. I'm a poor keeper-upper, so we didn't. I knew he went into the Navy and, later, a bank.

But it was a terrible shock when I contacted Geoff, years later, to hear that he had died so young. We can't afford the loss of such characters."

***Where Are They Now?**

Stan Joseph (1934-40) wonders if anyone of his era remembers **George Bradbury**, who started a year later, was also a Chichester evacuee, and lived in the Brixton area of London during their schooldays.

*A new page, with the above heading, has recently been added to the website and lists this and earlier appeals for information about former classmates. Primarily for the benefit of members without access to the internet all such requests will continue to be published in the newsletter. (If you can help or would like to submit your own enquiry, please contact Ted Hayward.)

2010 Reunion

Attendance on 25 September was around 35, including "grand-father" Wilf Finbow (1931-6); a selection of photographs appears on the relevant page of the website.

The confirmed date of the seventh reunion is **Saturday 1 October 2011**.

Reminiscences

From **Michael Searle** (1945-9): I well remember my Mother's excitement when I was awarded a place at the school. At that time I lived with my parents in Sudbourne Road, Brixton, within a bicycle ride from the school or the 35 bus.

When I now think back to my schoolboy days I have a picture in my mind of the lawn between South Lodge and the asphalted playground, and towards the corner where the fives courts stood with the magnificent copper beech tree. Is it still there, I wonder? It is around this garden I used to walk with my friends, Ray (Lampard) and Robert (Burns). Across the road was the boating pond on Clapham Common, where one winter Robert tested the ice and discovered the water to be three feet deep!

My first-day recollection at Henry Thornton was seeing a boy called Venus flying a model Cellophane-coated aeroplane around the assembly hall – and wondering why he was allowed to do that! He was probably a prefect.

My favourite teacher was Mr Read, the Chemistry master, with his pre-occupation of creating smoke when we had fire drills. Mr Rawlings taught woodwork, except that in those days we no wood so had to content ourselves with drawing woodwork projects which, as it turned out, led me into the profession I am still enjoying. Mr Dix was something of an enigma, usually grumpy and complaining about being a teacher. Deadly with a piece of chalk, fired at any boy causing him displeasure. His demonstration of how not to sharpen a pencil – frightening! He was the Art teacher but surprisingly (to me) would umpire cricket matches.

Mr Williams I got on with very well, as did Ray. He had a jovial disposition and a sense of humour. He taught Maths and ran the Air Training Corps, to which I belonged. At certain times the ATC had a meeting and meal together in South Lodge, where Mr Williams would say a few words about the Corps, always finishing with the word "contact" to signal the start on the food (what most of us were there for!).

Geography with Mr Cundall was always a pleasant, leisurely lesson, especially after lunch, which lulled him into a relaxed mode.

Towards the end of my days at the school I decided to buck myself up, and came first in the class. This unexpected turn of events caught the staff off guard and I was immediately upgraded into the top class of dour Mr Gribble. Bad move! It was

in this class that I remember the form joker writing, in an essay about the Irish, that “they became irritated by eating biscuits in bed”. This was not the correct attitude to take in his form.

I didn’t have much contact with Mr Jeremy, but my friend Robert, who at that time was keen on plants, was given some that Mr Jeremy had grown, called *Dianthus barbatus*, or “Sweet William” by those less knowledgeable.

Wednesday was sports day, when the various Houses could vie against one another. These were named after famous anti-slavery activists. I was in Wilberforce; there were also Macaulay, Cavendish and others whose names escape me at the moment. However, at that time I had no interest in sport, but as the field at the school was being used as allotments we had to go to Clapham Common underground station to board a train to Morden, where we gathered at Rose Hill recreation ground. Mr Davies was in charge, and those who were interested kitted out for cricket, football, etc, while a few others (like myself) quietly disappeared to the far ends of the field where we were not noticed. Ideal for those who liked to light up a smuggled cigarette!

Still on the subject of sport: back at the school playground, a master (presumably) with an interest in lacrosse had formed two teams of this mysterious, dangerous-looking sport(?), whose participants raged about trying to decapitate one another. Was this a male form of girls’ hockey, we wondered.

I believe Peter Katin was at school when I joined and think he may have played at the school concert. Peter Waterman, the champion boxer, was before my time.

One teacher was appointed as careers officer. This I think was very much a part-time commitment. In my case it led to an interview appointment at an insurance firm, where the boss told me it was a job for life and that in 50 years’ time I would be happily retired and growing roses! Despite the tempting offer of £3 a week I declined.

The next prospect was with Boots to train as a pharmacist, but they noted that I wore glasses at the time and didn’t think I’d be able to read a balance when making up prescriptions.

Having been very good at drawing up woodwork projects (with or without spectacles) I decided to apply for a job as a draughtsman and started at W S Atkins & Partners as a junior on a weekly wage of £2. 10s, rising to £11, prior to National Service, during which time I trained to be a structural engineer. In 1960, after NS, I gained full membership of the Institute of Structural Engineers, passing all exams first time.

It’s interesting to think that I may very well have become a pharmacist if that person in Boots had not made a snap decision that wearing glasses ruled me out.

It all turned out fine, and for 50 years I have run my own structural engineering practice very successfully. I still accept the occasional contract but am virtually retired before – thank goodness – the European codes take a hold!

An impressive cornucopia of memories has been received from **Tim Gee** (1951-60). Here’s the first part of his contribution; the concluding section will appear in the next issue.

School productions: when Roger Smith, in the lead rôle of “Devil’s Disciple”, was to be hanged the rope (attached to the gallows by a thread, as required by LCC regulations) came loose, and he had to stand on tiptoe for the hangman to fix it round his chin, like a policeman’s helmet strap. Unfortunately, at this dramatic climax the audience were in fits.

“Strife”: when I bumped into Mr Edmunds [French, English, 1954-5] at the Hampstead Theatre Club 15 years ago – he was presenting a new translation of a Molière play – I asked him if he had ever directed Galsworthy. Negative response. “Yes,” I remonstrated, “at HTS.” “Did the make-up,” he corrected me. Indeed he did, and as a second-former I was a posh lady, so well made-up that Mr Williams said, “Who’s that?” “Gee,” I replied. “You should have been a girl,” said he. It quite put me off the play forever. Edmunds continued, saying that the conversation in the staff room had been of exceptional genius, particularly that of Mr Carr [History, 1952-9].

“Billy Budd”: in which I played evil Captain Claggart, who sentenced angelic Billy (Hywel Bennett) to be hanged. After which, my career as a thespian ceased.

“Volpone”: included a magnificent performance by Jack Lester. With Mickey Rooney as Mosca, Keith Youthed as Corvino or Corbaccio, myself and another boy as two English fops on the Grand Tour (thanks again, teachers), and, I think, Keith Seccombe as Celia.

Staff: a teacher (can’t remember who) told me that Mr Lambert and Mr Aufricht had been in opposite trenches in WW2. [Can any other OTs confirm/elaborate on this story? I was not aware they had met in such circumstances. Ed]

English teachers: Mr Morris, Mr Griffiths, and Jim Doolan, who was also battle-scarred. Mr Clare, a young French teacher, with a novel approach – a kind man.

Mr Bramble teaching us how to march, with only one arm swinging due to his war wounds.

Solomon May... I liked “Come out, come in” [from Derek Yandell’s piece in issue no 8]. He gave me 50 lines: “He who keepeth his tongue in his mouth saveth his soul from sorrow”.

Mr James, a History teacher, who nearly knocked my head off with a clout.

Mr Lambert again, who, noticing a pile of paper, commanded Mr Field: “Er, Porter, clear that up now!” Needless to say, we hailed him as “Porter” forever afterwards. He was not content.

Mr Bonner: shabbily dressed, elderly, riding to school on his bicycle from somewhere near Balham.

“Pop” Rawlings, with his glue cauldron. In the second year we chose Latin, German or Woodwork. My mother said that my father had two left hands and no enthusiasm for DIY, so we decided on Woodwork. After my unsuccessful efforts at making a dovetail-jointed box (with a fair amount of plastic wood in the joints), I was summoned to change to German, since I was also good at French. I suspected that they thought only boys from working-class families should do Woodwork. In any event it was the right choice for me in the end. I even had to take Latin – a crash course with Mr Cooper – to be accepted for study for an English degree.

Mr Huntley, the Art teacher, whom I later met at the Elliott School, Putney.

Mr Smethurst (Music), on whose piano someone had carved a four-letter word, which “Pop” had to sand and varnish.

Other pupils: I knew “Arly” Rose and played lacrosse with him. I was recruited, as a second-former, with Dyer into the school team by Gerry Pennington, School Captain, and we each scored goals against a men’s team at Rose Hill. I was awarded the lacrosse medal for 1958-9, then gave up Saturday games to go on the Aldermaston match. I remember Mr Noah had a CND symbol in his car window, and Mr Cooper wore a smog mask before the introduction of the Clean Air Act.

Burchet (I think), in my form, whose father had a chemist’s shop, came to the school with a stack of rubber items, which were inflated and released to whizz around the classroom.

John Flood’s Flizz: cinnamon flavour, on sale for 1d.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Summer 1939:

JAMES STEPHEN

James Stephen was born at Poole in Dorset in 1758. His father was super-cargo of a ship which was wrecked in Purbeck Island, and he was looked after by the collector of customs at Poole and soon after married the collector’s youngest daughter.

James Stephen had a very desultory education owing to monetary difficulties of his father, but with the help of relations he was sent for a time to Winchester School and later to Marischal College, Aberdeen. He returned to London in 1778 and supported himself as reporter to the “Morning Post”. More funds became available and these enabled him to be called to the Bar in 1782 and next year he sailed for St. Christopher’s.

Stephen touched at Barbados on his way out and was shocked at the brutality shown to some negroes at their trial. He made, and kept, a vow that he would have nothing to do with slavery; the impression then made was strengthened by later incidents. At St. Christopher’s he practised at the Bar and earned enough to enable him to pay a visit to England in the winter of 1788-89. He put himself into communication with Wilberforce who was then starting the agitation against the slave trade and, after returning to the West Indies, sent private information to support the cause.

Upon Stephen’s return to England he openly identified himself with the agitation against the slave trade and in 1800 he married Wilberforce’s sister. Stephen had accepted the religious views of his allies and was henceforth one of the most active of Wilberforce’s supporters and of the party which became known as the “Clapham Sect”.

His ardent temperament led him to regard the abolition of the slave trade as the one great aim of his life.

James Stephen made his chief mark by a pamphlet called “War in Disguise”, which was published in 1805, to denounce the evasion of our regulations by neutral traders. His experience at the English and Colonial Bar had made him familiar with the facts and the pamphlet produced a great effect. It led to the institution of “Orders in Council”, the first of which were made in 1807, and Brougham calls him the “father” of the system thus instituted. He entered Parliament in 1808 and defended the “Orders in Council” against the attack made on them by Brougham. His chief interest, however, was in the slavery question and he spoke with great energy upon various points which arose after the abolition of the slave trade. The refusal of the government to take up a measure for the registration of slaves induced him to retire from Parliament in 1815.

Stephen had been appointed “Master in Chancery” in 1811 and lived for many years in Kensington Gore, where Wilberforce was his neighbour. In his early years he had been a liberal but later he became a tory [sic] and an evangelical,

and until failure of health forced him to resign his Mastership in 1831 he had been a very active worker. He died in Bath in October, 1832, and was buried at Newington Green.

J. Hart-Smith

Autumn 1954:

Mr C.W. Gribble

The news of Mr. Gribble's retirement was received by colleagues and boys alike with surprise and dismay; surprise because, as one boy succinctly put it, "He looked good for another 20 years"; dismay because we had all come to regard him as an essential part of the School and had learnt to appreciate his sterling qualities of mind and character.

Mr. Gribble joined the staff in 1920 and became Senior French Master shortly after. He therefore served under three Head Masters and taught in the three buildings we inhabited since leaving our original home in the Battersea Polytechnic, that is, in Latchmere Road, South Side, and, during the evacuation period, in Chichester. His knowledge of the French language and the perfection of his accent it would be presumptuous of me to praise, for my opinion carries no weight, but of his skill as a teacher I can speak with assurance. Many scholars cannot impart the knowledge they possess. Not so Mr. Gribble, to whom hundreds of boys are indebted for the painstaking care he invariably brought to his work and the interest he created in many of the masterpieces of French literature.

In 1949, Mr. Gribble was appointed to the Senior Mastership, a position which he filled with outstanding success. Many of the duties attaching to this post are hidden from the eyes of the boys, but even they may have appreciated the ease with which he worked out the most complicated examination time-tables. Admiring their clarity, their accuracy, their calligraphic perfection, one was reminded of Buffin's famous remark, "Le style, c'est l'homme même."

I have written elsewhere that, while a man's mental qualities may earn our respect, it is character and manners that appeal to our hearts. Mr. Gribble will always be held in high respect for his solid virtues, his dependability and his devotion to duty, but in addition he will be remembered with affection for, what I would call his sense of fun. Was it the influence of the great French satirists, modified by his innate urbanity, which endowed him with his special type of humour, his delight in gentle ridicule, his debunking (inelegant but useful word) of so many accepted notions?

Now that the time has come to bid him farewell, we offer him and Mrs. Gribble our cordial wishes for many years of happy retirement. He will never lack occupation for his well-earned leisure: he has his garden, his car and his fishing, and always there is Balzac. Boredom cannot afflict a man so keenly interested in the *Comédie Humaine*.

C.E.J[eremy]

(Mr Jeremy's *In Memoriam* tribute to Mr Gribble, which appeared in the Autumn 1959 magazine, was published in the last newsletter.)

Head Master's Letter (1)

Extract from Mr B J F Dorrington's letter to parents, Summer 1960:

May I take the opportunity of reminding you that the official school dress consists of –

School Cap and badge
School Blazer and badge
School Tie
White/plain grey shirt
V. neck grey pullover
Black/grey socks
Black shoes (Oxford type).

Very pointed and "Italian" type shoes, and very narrow trousers, are not approved for school wear.

Advertisements

Attached is a selection, featuring contemporary Clapham-based firms, originally published in the brochure commemorating the 1939 Clapham Exhibition. (The text of an article about the event – held at the school on 31 March and 1 April that year – from the Spring issue of *The Thorntonian* is reproduced in no 7, November 2008.) Also, most copies of the school magazine published in the 1930s and 1940s included a few "commercial" pages, no doubt to defray publication costs: among the companies/products featured were Ilford (film), Bassett-Lowke (model trains), Swan (pens), Bluemel's (cycle pumps and mudguards), Boy's Own Paper, and Dunlop (tennis rackets).

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Teaching Staff

Here's the final list, for the 1970s and 1980s, which (the Editor acknowledges) is clearly incomplete and may well be inaccurate in certain respects.



TEACHING STAFF: 1970s and 1980s (excluding temporary appointments)

Heaton Page, R A	Head Teacher (1968-71)	Jackman, D P	Art
Humphreys, A LI	Head Teacher (?1972-84)	James, ...	Humanities; Head of Dept
Jones, A	Acting Head Teacher (?1984-6)	Johncock, B K	Mathematics
Ackland,...	?	Jones, A	Second Deputy Head (1981-?83)
Allanon or Allans, M B	Metalwork	Jordan, J	Music
Astwood, ...	Geography; Head of Dept	Laylor, .. (Miss)	French
Atkinson, W	Deputy Head (1982-3, repl Noble)	Leverett, ...	?
Austin, ... (Mrs)	Geography	Linden, S J	German, Head of Sixth Form (1950-1970s)
Ayers, M A (Mrs)	Head of Music and Drama (1984-?)	Long, ... (Ms)	Chemistry
Barrett, R	French	Lucas, I	Second Deputy Head (1983-?, repl Atkinson)
Bates, ...	English	MacArthur, N	Science
Bishop, ...	Geography	McDonald, M J	Head of History (?1984-?)
Bracie, J	English	Markwick, ... Mrs	?Photography
Bradford, ...	Mathematics	Marshal, ...	?
Burt, ...	?	Mather, ?J, Mrs	Humanities, Religious Education
Bushell, J R	Science	Maude,...	French
Cardew, S (Mrs)	Art	Maxwell, D	English
Chapman, ... (Mrs)	English	Mitchell-Lambert, I	Deputy Head (?-1980)
Childs, ... (Miss)	?	Nicholl, E	Deputy Head
Collins, J (Ms)	French (1972-7)	Noble, K V	Deputy Head (1978-81)
Strebing,...	?	Nwanko, ...	Mathematics

Cowdery, B A (?Mrs)	English	Palmer, I R	French
Crawley, D	Music	Pengilley, ...Ms	Geography
Cronin, P (Ms)	Biology	Phillips, ...	Science
Daniel(?s)...	English ; Head of 2 nd Year to c1975	Pilkington, ...Mrs	?
Davison, ...	TV Studies	Porter, P	Art (esp pottery, clay modelling)
Donohue, ...	?German	Read, M F B	Deputy Head
Doolan, J	English; Head of Dept	Rech, P	English
Downing, A	Science	Rimmer, A, Ms	English
Edgeler, ...	Deputy Head	Robatham, B	Humanities
Eke, A R	PE (c1975-?)	Rogers, ...	?
Elliot, G C ..	Drama	Rose, Dr ...	Computer Studies
Elliott, ...	PE	Spinks, G H	English; Head of 1 st Year
Ellis, ...	?	Stone, ...	Head of Media Resources
Evans, ...	Water Polo Team Coach	Taylor, L, Ms	Art
Fitch, ...	?	Thomas, ...	Mathematics
Foskett, ...	Science	Thompson, A	English (1971-7)
Fox, ... (Mrs)	English	Thompson, S C	Biology
Gale, C	PE	Tidy, A J	Art; Head of Dept
Gaze, A	Woodwork	Watkins, H	? (1978-86)
Gershon (?Gershwin)	PE (esp swimming, handball)	Webb, A	Mathematics (1969-74)
Gifford, M K	Chemistry	Webb, L (Mrs)	Drama (1969-74)
Goshe, ...	?History	Weeks, D M	Drama
Graham, A	Geography; Head of 3 rd Year	White, I	Mathematics
Hac, ...	?PE	Williams, G	PE/Sport
Haggard,R	Mathematics; Head of 2 nd Year from c1975	Williams, ...(Ms)	?
Hearn, P	PE	Wood, ...	?Electronics
Heath, S (Ms)	Biology (Asst Teacher)	Wood, J R L	French
Holman, S B	Science	Woolf, A, Ms	TV Studies
Hughes, ...	?History	Yateem, A	Physics, TV Studies
Humphries, ...	Geography	Yearwood, P H	Head of English (1984-?)
Hunter, ...	?French		
Hussain, S H Q	Mathematics	Wilson, M (?Mrs)	School Superintendent

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