



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 18

November 2011

2011 Reunion

Attendance at this year's gathering on 24 September – held as usual at The Windmill – was around 40. Selected photos have been added to the relevant page of the website.

2012 Reunion

For your diaries: at its last meeting the Management Committee agreed that the eighth reunion should be held on **Saturday 6 October**.

Subscriptions

The Committee has also agreed to recommend to the next AGM (see next item) that, in view of the healthy state of the Association's finances and the lack of any major commitments for the foreseeable future, there will be a subscription "holiday" for the year from 1 January 2012 for all who are in membership at the preceding 31 December. Joiners in 2012 (and any former members re-applying after a break) will be required to pay the standard annual fee, which is being held at £10 for Full and £6 for Associate members.

Annual General Meeting

Another date to note: **Saturday 17 March 2012**, starting at 2pm, at Lambeth Academy, Elms Road, SW4 9ET.

Current Membership

107, including three Associates.

Henry Thornton Award

The next award by the Association to a selected pupil of Lambeth College will now be presented at its student awards ceremony on 27 June 2012; the College advises that – given the nature of the award and its recipients – this event would be a more appropriate forum than the main graduation ceremony held in the autumn.

Honours Boards

The two sets of boards, accompanied by a brief descriptive plaque, are being stored jointly at Lambeth College and Lambeth Academy, and the Management Committee are awaiting a decision on their permanent location. More information will be given via the newsletter and website as soon as it becomes available.

Reminiscences

Derek Yandell (1945-52) reflects on Michael Searle's piece in issue 14 (November 2010): I certainly recognize his comments on various teachers. As he says, Mr Dix was an enigma who hated children. I have no recollection of Mr Cundall ever doing any teaching. He sat at his desk, reading a magazine, whilst we read our geography books.

I found Michael's later remarks rather puzzling. He refers to his being promoted to the "dour" Mr Gribble's class. I remember him as a quite delightful and friendly teacher. Furthermore, as Michael joined in 1945 he would have been in the same class as myself with Mr Gribble, but I don't remember him.

From Associate member **Robert Worley**: I had an elder brother – Graham David Worley (1930-2009) – who was a pupil at Henry Thornton School from 1940 until the school returned to Clapham in 1943. He remained a pupil at Chichester High School until rejoining Alleyne’s School, Dulwich, in 1945.

Our home in Dulwich was badly damaged courtesy of the Luftwaffe and in 1940 we as a family accepted an invitation from well-heeled relatives to take refuge in their house on the Aldwick Bay Estate near Bognor, only to find the town half-empty on our arrival as they thought invasion was imminent! The seafront was covered in rolls of barbed wire while tank traps littered the beach, plus gun emplacements, etc.

Prior to our move to Bognor, Graham was accepted by HTS and, as already mentioned, joined the school in Chichester. Every day he travelled by train from Bognor to Chichester, changing trains at Barnham Junction. I can immediately recall his uniform as if it were yesterday: black school cap; black blazer with distinctive chevron badge; grey short trousers, with a black-and-white “snake” belt, rounded off with grey socks with black-and-white hoops.

As for Clapham, I can recall the Common when it was safe to walk in the evening; the trams en route to Tooting and beyond; and, of course, the route 37 bus wending its way from Peckham to Isleworth via Dulwich, Brixton, Clapham, Putney, Richmond, etc. I never did get to see Isleworth – which seemed to be another country!

Tim Gee (1951-60) writes: Glad to hear Mr Noah has joined [the Association]. He taught me Economics in the fourth form, and Russian (lunchtime) in the lower Sixth. He had a CND sign in his car.

I also remember John Jeremy Flood [*obit in last issue Ed*], manufacturer of “Flood’s Fizz” lemonade powder in several flavours, including cinnamon. The tougher classmates used to rag him, but not violently, as he was a bit of a boffin.

Sudden flashback: music lessons upstairs, corner room, window overlooking school playing field. Mr Smethurst [*valeté on page 3 Ed*] in gleaming white shirt, impeccable blazer and tie, with pristine gown (unlike the tattered specimens of some of his colleagues) and manicured nails: in short, a confirmed bachelor.

We stood and piped, in shrill trebles, dreadful Benjamin Britten songs:

“A flaxen-haired ploughboy whistled o’er the lea
And next a jolly cowboy, as happy as can be...”

And Schubert’s *Trout*:

“I stood beside a brooklet that sparkled on its way
And all at once I saw a tiny trout at play.
As swiftly as an arrow, he darted to and fro,
The gayest of the ‘feeshes’ among the reeds below”.

Plus:

“Way down upon de Swanee Ribber, far, far, away,
Dat’s where my heart is yearning ebber,
Far from de old folks at home”.

Absolutely indelible memories.

A few of **Keith Weston’s** (1937-43) memories of the school and Clapham appear in the short history of HTS. Here are further extracts from his original contribution: The main entrance was to the left of South Lodge, where one of the outbuildings was used as a bicycle shed. Two school porters checked to see that all pupils were wearing a school cap; their names were Fields and Wheeler. South Lodge had areas for a dining-room and library. Beyond South Lodge was a large lawn and a wooded area of hard courts and the main school building. The window on the extreme left of the ground floor was to the Head Master’s office; pupils would enter by doors to the right of the main entrance.

[In 1940] I was living in Tooting Bec and like many others had to rely on public transport to get to school. David Whitehouse [1940-1] recalled how he and two friends cycled every day from Streatham Vale, avoiding the bomb craters. Such disruption to education at that time resulted in pupils not having the full year’s tuition (in my case, for the third year) and in September – for a number of classes – the third year’s work was repeated in the fourth year. This resulted in pupils taking the School Certificate examination a year later, in my case at 17.

Most of the teachers at the emergency school were recruited from those over the call-up age.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Autumn 1944:

HENRY CAVENDISH (1731-1810)

Henry Cavendish, natural philosopher, was the eldest son of Lord Charles Cavendish. He was not born in England, but at Nice, on 16th October, 1731. He became, in 1742, a pupil of the Rev. Dr. Newcombe, and in 1749 entered Peterhouse College, Cambridge, but left without taking a degree.

After leaving College, he appears to have lived chiefly in London, and mathematics appear to have been his favourite study, but he later devoted himself to the study of experimental science. He made several important contributions to science, for he was the first man who, by purely inductive experiments, converted oxygen and hydrogen into water, and who taught that water consisted of these gases. He must also be regarded as the discoverer of nitric acid. But he did not pursue his brilliant career with any activity: he led a strangely retired life, and consequently he was frequently left in ignorance of the progress of discovery.

Other experiments made by him included the use of light for promoting the growth of plants and investigations into the principal phenomena of electricity: his views on specific and latent heat greatly advanced our views, while in 1798 he read a paper before the Royal Society entitled "Experiments to determine the Density of the Earth" and the accuracy of his observations was vouchsafed by subsequent writers.

Cavendish was a man of reserved disposition, a shy habit and many singularities of manner: added to these a difficulty of speech and a thin shrill voice increased his dislike of society and his avoidance of conversation. He lived by Clapham Common, his large library being some distance from his house. His large income was allowed to accumulate, and his habits were of the most inexpensive kind. He scarcely ever went into society. Lord Brougham said he had met him at the meetings of the Royal Society, and "recollects the shrill cry he uttered as he shuffled from room to room, seeming to be annoyed if looked at, but approaching to hear what was passing among others. He probably uttered fewer words in the course of his life than any man who had lived to fourscore years..." On all points which had not some scientific bearing, Cavendish was coldly indifferent, but when the discovery of a new truth was told to him, a glow of interest came over him. He was never known to express himself warmly on any question of religion or politics; indeed, he seemed to reject all human sympathy. He died on 19th March, 1810, after probably the only illness from which he ever suffered, and was buried in All Saints' Church, Derby..

T.W.Sharp

Spring 1950:

"WOES OF AN EX-JUVENILE DELINQUENT"

It's strange to reflect,
As I sit here in school
And toil at my wearisome work,
That many a boy
—His fond parents' joy —
Has the burning desire to shirk.

I once tried so hard
To be badly behaved,
But I had not practised the art.
I quelled my desire,
But incited the ire
Of one who to me said, "Depart!"

I'd packed up my bags,
Was preparing to go,
But then, to my total surprise,
That demagogue sage,
Of retiring age,
From his draw'r took a cane of great size.

He came up to me;
He had soon changed his mind.
A felt a few seconds' relief.
Six "cuts" from his cane,
Which gave me great pain,
My joy quickly altered to grief.

I've settled down now
To the daily routine;
And school is a wonderful treat:

With underpaid staff,
Ne'er once seen to laugh,
And prefects just wonderfully sweet.

R. WOOD (IVA)

Autumn 1957:

VALETE

The departure of Mr. H. Smethurst to a post of wider responsibility was deeply felt by the whole School. He came to us in 1951 with a high reputation both as a teacher of music and as a producer of choral and operatic performances, and very amply he fulfilled our expectations. Difficulties beyond his control prevented him from staging a full-scale opera, but we remember with delight the many choral and orchestral concerts he conducted and with gratitude the assistance he gave to our dramatic productions. Knowledge and love of his art combined with a forceful personality made him a most successful teacher of specialist and amateur alike. We thank him for his many services to the school, and wish him a successful and harmonious career in his new appointment [*not identified Ed*].

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