



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 22

April 2013

Annual General Meeting

The Association's sixth AGM was held at Lambeth Academy, Elms Road, SW4, on Saturday 23 March; 10 members were present. The main items discussed or reported were:

- Jimmy Hill OBE was re-elected as President for a further year. The other Committee members elected to serve until 31 March 2014 are:

Chairman: Jeff Green
Vice-Chairman: Brian Bloice
Secretary: Ted Hayward
Treasurer: Terry Lawlor

Entry-year representatives:
1930s/1940s: Brian Robinson
1950s: Chris Bishop
1960s: Peter Greenwood
(1970s/1980s: Vacancy).

- Co-opted: Mike Surridge (as local representative)
- Subscriptions: it was agreed that a. as there were ample funds in the Association's account to cover projected, routine expenses for the coming year, payment of the annual subscription of £10 for Full members and £6 for Associates be deferred until 1 January **2014**; b. joiners in 2013, and any rejoining after a break in that year, would be required to pay the relevant membership fee in the normal way.
- The previously circulated statement of account for the year ended 31 December 2012, prepared by Terry Lawlor, Treasurer, and examined by Bob Hay, was adopted.

Membership

114, including three Associates.

Founding of Association

Many thanks to the 28 members who responded to the questionnaire circulated with the previous newsletter. The results in summary are:

- Q 1 – clear support for linking the celebration at the next reunion (27-1 in favour)
Q2 – convincing majority (21-6) for the more informal arrangement suggested in option b.
Q3 – 22 votes cast for having a suitably worded plaque on the former school premises, if they can still be accurately identified.

Readers may be interested to learn that:

- As confirmation of the centenary itself, the October 1913 copy of *The Bat* (the Battersea County School magazine) contains a brief report that "an Old Boys' Club has been founded"; the first Secretary was a Mr Ebbels of 131 Narbonne Avenue, Clapham Common, and the annual subscription 2s 6d. The "Club" was therefore not specifically linked, by name, with former BCS pupils or staff, but

– as surmised in the Editor’s note to the item in issue no 20, August 2012 – for the sake of continuity would have been retrospectively named “Old Thorntonian Association” by the latter’s members who were at HTS after its establishment in Clapham in 1929.

- The Assistant Heritage Officer at Wandsworth Library has written to the Editor, as follows: “I have searched the 1908 edition of Kelly’s Post Office London Directory and found one school on Latchmere Road. This was located between the junction with Amies Street and Kathleen Road and is described as ‘London County Council School, Battersea Pupil Teachers’ School (George Collar, BA, Head Master). As far as I can tell the school building still exists today. However, it has now been converted into a luxury apartment complex called ‘The Village’ “. (At the AGM a small, informal working group – Brian Bloice, Mike Surrige and Allan Gellet – was set up to undertake further research on this aspect of the founding of the Association and to report back to the next meeting of the Management Committee.)

Obituary

Eddie Myers (1948-53): died 3 November 2012. Mike Surrige (1947-52) writes: My connection with Eddie was through football. We played together for the Old Thorntonians FC from the early Fifties through to the start of this century. Our appetite for the game extended to Sunday morning games for a club called Parkside until National Service split us up. I returned to that club but he didn’t. There were some seasons when he turned out for the Old Stots [*Old Stotalians, formed from Clapham Central School, Aristotle Road, Clapham North; Ed*] but returned to the OTs eventually. He was not only a player and captain but also offered his services as a social secretary, Chairman and President. My personal memories of him on the field of play were out on the left wing, where he was continually asking for the ball to be passed to him. On one occasion, when trying to help out in defence, he back-headed me in the face – resulting in a black eye which lasted for weeks! Having said that, there were few better crossers of the ball.

In 1987 he became Referee Secretary of the Old Boys Football League. A qualified referee himself, he carried out these duties for six years; in recognition of his services Eddie was appointed a League Vice-President. In 1984, after retiring from League football, he devoted his efforts to the formation of the Old Thorntonians Vets (playing on Sunday mornings), which he ran for the next 12 years.

Reminiscences

Mr S J Linden

As reported at the October 2012 reunion, Mr Linden, who lives in Streatham, had been invited to attend but was unable to do so owing to poor health. In conveying his apologies his son, Martin, wrote to Ted Hayward outlining his father’s memories of his time at the school. Those OTs who knew Mr Linden during his impressively long (34-year) tenure will no doubt be interested to read the following extracts:

My father joined the staff of Henry Thornton School in 1950 under the headship of Mr Evans, and retired in 1984 when Mr Humphries was headmaster.

He became Head of German when Dr Aufricht retired [*1958 – valete in issue 16, April 2011; Ed*], with Latin as his subsidiary subject. He was appointed Head of German in 1973 and promoted Head of the Upper School in the same year. The Governors assured him that he would be relieved of his German responsibilities. Unfortunately nobody could be found to teach German at GCE Advanced Level to university entrance standard, and he continued with his dual responsibilities until retirement. His sixth form duties kept him at school until 10pm every night, when Mr Not, the caretaker, told him to leave the building as he had to lock up. He then took his pupils’ German essays and translations home with him, marking until the early hours of the morning. His wife and children didn’t see much of him during this stressful time of his life.

Casting his mind back to the early years, he was fortunate to have worked with such highly experienced colleagues as Messrs Gribble, Lambert, Jeremy, Hofmann, Hillman, Yorke, Cossins, Read, May, Noah, Davies, Cooper, Bramble, Rawlings and many more.. He was privileged to have taught at such a wonderful South London grammar school and fortunate to have had so many highly motivated and gifted pupils. Teaching them was a most rewarding experience. He remembers John Jones, John Parr, Currie, Ashby and, later on, the John twins, Parker, Williams, the Cole brothers, and Martin Jakes. They were all gifted linguists, and teaching them was a pleasure.

He supplemented his teaching duties by founding the school’s classical music society, introducing opera, operetta, ballet and Viennese waltzes during his lunch-time concerts. He also took parties of pupils, parents and teachers to Covent Garden, the London Coliseum and concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and Festival Hall.

One of his most enjoyable and rewarding activities was taking charge of the school’s senior football – coaching and refereeing – and taking parties of senior players to cup finals at Wembley stadium. He was a qualified referee of the

London Football Association, founder member of the London Grammar Schools FA, and Chairman of the Selectors. He represented the school in the Inter-Sixth Society. Other members of the Society were Battersea Grammar, [*Martin's school*], Clapham College, Rosa Bassett, St Martin's-in-the-Field, and Streatham and Clapham High.

He regards his main contribution to the school as trying to enrich its life in so many different ways. [*An ambition amply fulfilled! Ed*]

From **Bill Rouse** (1943-8):

I remember Mr Noah well from my last two terms at school (I left in the Summer of 1948). I was a member of Mr John's Economics class, which in those days was not an option until the fifth year, when it was a one-year course followed by two years in the sixth – if one opted to stay on.

Mr Noah was introduced to us early in 1948 as a “student teacher”. He participated in the occasional discussions but there weren't too many of those, as Mr John's philosophy was for each lesson to consist of him talking a lot and the pupils being expected to take copious detailed notes of everything he said, all of which didn't leave much time for discussion. I was fascinated by this new subject and during the one year I managed to fill five double exercise books with Mr John's notes and my own researches. Although I shouldn't say it myself, I was probably his top pupil that year (as evidenced by my reports for 1948, which I still have), mainly because I was so interested and fascinated by the subject. More to the point, the bright boys I had struggled against over the previous four years – John Poole and “Spud” Morfee – had opted to continue with their English and Science courses respectively: this made life a lot easier for me, having chosen to go down the Economics road. So it came as a great shock and disappointment to the teaching staff when I explained that for domestic and financial reasons I would not be staying on to take “Highers”. I was not pressurised, although everyone from the Head (Taffy Evans) downwards, particularly Mr Noah, explained the benefits of staying on with the ultimate goal of a university place; but all to no avail, as I had to leave and start earning a living.

Now we come to the point of the story involving Mr Noah. I chose to go into banking and quickly realised the need to start the banking exams, for which my “Distinctions” in Geography and English gave me a couple of exemptions in those subjects but not for Economics. In September 1948 I therefore signed on at Balham and Tooting College of Business and Commerce for evening classes. On joining the first class I was surprised, as you can imagine, to find that my teacher was none other than Mr Noah! I think he too was quite surprised but he welcomed me most enthusiastically. At the end of the first evening he asked whether I still had all my exercise books from school which basically comprised full detailed notes of all of Mr John's lessons. He explained that these notes would help him prepare his own outlines to cover the required syllabus and asked if I would be prepared to lend him the exercise books – to which I agreed.

For the next seven months once a week I attended classes to listen to Mr Noah lecturing on basic Economics and recognised all the lectures as brief paraphrases of my own notebooks. In April 1954 I passed the Bankers Economics paper without much difficulty but can't recall whether Mr Noah was still lecturing at the College when I re-enrolled for my second-year exams (which did not include any further Economics). I didn't get my exercise books back and often wondered how long he continued using them.

Until I read Mr Noah's article for the newsletter [*no 19, March 2012; Ed*] I had no idea he had taken over from Mr John after I left school. In later years I did some evening school lecturing myself at the Regent Street Poly, not on Economics but on the “Practice of Banking” (Part 2 of the Bankers exams). After initial nervousness I soon got into the swing of things once I accepted that, after 20 years' experience in the front line of banking, I had already forgotten more than even the brightest young students knew. Teaching wasn't quite so daunting as I had always been led to believe.

Incidentally, when I retired 22 years ago all the banks were still highly regarded, and being a banker was not a dirty word. As I tell all my friends, everything started going downhill once I retired!

Paul Trummel (1944--7) recalls his time at the school, including a few members of the teaching staff:

I had excellent mentor experiences with several teachers at Henry Thornton Grammar School, Clapham after winning a scholarship at the age of eleven, and decided that sports were not for me. Instead, I played in the school orchestra as a violinist with private instruction by David Rael, leading violinist of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and joined the debating society as an alternative. Peter Katin, the internationally acclaimed concert pianist, was also a Henry Thornton student at that time. [*Peter's years were 1942-4; Ed*]

I had my first writing and entrepreneurial experience by starting a school magazine in my own time and at my own expense. I funded it with money earned collecting horse dung after following United Dairies horse [Dobbin] and carts which I sold to rose growers: fresh, it was worth sixpence a bucket and stale, thruppence so I chose to market

the quality product. Coal merchants were more profitable because they used two horses which doubled the volume and the income; however, the milkman delivered daily while the coal merchant delivered only once a month.

The magazine caused my first confrontation with authority. A Marxist teacher [Mr G W Dix] wanted to make it a class project with himself as the publisher whereupon I immediately stopped publication and have from that time remained apolitical. He reported me to the headmaster [Mr W D Evans] for disobedience and told him that I had cartooned him in my magazine. I had to report to his office and found him to be a very tall Welsh Oxford PhD wielding a bamboo cane shaped like a walking stick and holding up my cartoon.

The headmaster asked if I had caricatured him. I replied that if he found my satire offensive then it portrayed him and that if he found it humorous then it depicted someone else. He put down the cane and put his hand on my shoulder and told me that if I kept thinking that way I would succeed. I was reputedly the only student that came out of his office without a caning.

My mother terminated my successful three-year Thorntonian experience, during which time I joined the Air Training Corps, on grounds that she had decided that I should start an apprenticeship as a cobbler under my father. I rebelled.

Editor's note: the above extracts are reproduced, with Paul's permission, from an article, ref <http://contracabal.com/880-10-00.html>, recently published on his website, www.contracabal.com. He has offered the following additional comments in a separate e-mail:

Mr Read (Chemistry/Biology) was also a very important part of my time at Henry Thornton, although I did not realise it for half a century. He used a "birds and bees" pragmatic approach in his biology class to provide an essential sex education which is unfortunately missing in schools nowadays due to political correctness. Looking back, that was one of the advantages of having a boys-only grammar school.

What he taught did not really sink in with me at the time because of the denial that I was in. However, he needs recognition with the other teachers for quietly introducing condoms into the biology class with the warning that it was always better to wait until marriage. That probably avoided a lot of the unnecessary pregnancies that occur now.

The more I review the situation, the more I appreciate now how important grammar schools were and what a mistake it was to dispense with them. I realised that in 1985 when I retired from business and went back to work on my doctorates – an eye-opener to intellectual mugging in itself.

Hidden Masters

Here are the answers to the quiz included in the previous issue; it originally appeared in the Autumn 1950 magazine. [*Solution hints available on request! Ed*]

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr R S Bramble | 11. Mr W R Davies |
| 2. Mr H J Noah | 12. Mr H F Hofmann |
| 3. Mr E L Hillman | 13. Mr S May |
| 4. Mr S A Owen | 14. Mr R S Lambert |
| 5. Mr W J Cooper | 15. Mr S W Read |
| 6. Mr D C Williams | 16. Mr A E Taylor |
| 7. Mr C W Gribble | 17. Mr A A Rapp |
| 8. Mr H G Rawlings | 18. Mr S J Linden |
| 9. Mr C E Jeremy | 19. Mr G W Dix |
| 10. Mr A C Cossins | 20. Mr J B Phillips |

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Further extracts will appear in the next newsletter.

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