



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)

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Reminder

As already announced, the next reunion will be on **Saturday 5 October**, at The Windmill, including (for those interested) a visit to Lambeth College, 45 South Side. The usual invitation, with more information about the timing of the College tour, will be issued shortly.

Founding of Association

At its last meeting the Management Committee agreed not to pursue the proposal – outlined in issue no 22 – for the erection of a plaque on the (likely) premises of the former Battersea County School to mark the founding of the original OT Association in 1913. Members felt it would be more meaningful to have a suitably worded sign displayed at the street entrance to Lambeth Academy, Elms Road. The sign, which it is hoped will receive the blessing of both the Academy authorities and Lambeth Council, would record the relocation of the school to this site in 1929 and include a brief reference to its earlier connection with Battersea. More information to follow on this project when it becomes available.

Obituaries

The November 2012 issue (no 21) included a short contribution from Bill Rouse for **Ray Wakeham** (1941-6). Bill has forwarded a few more reminiscences, which he offered during Ray's funeral service, and these are reproduced below.

I was at HTS with Ray during the war. He was a bit older than me but I already knew him from our local church and, despite the slight age gap, we were good pals. He had quickly established himself as a sportsman and had already represented the school in soccer and cricket in each age range.

He was also a talented pianist, appearing in several school concerts in later years, having been somewhat overshadowed in the lower forms by the internationally acclaimed pianist Peter Katin, who was another pupil at HTS [1942-4] before moving on to Whitgift. Ray was the lead actor in most of the school plays and sang in the choir; in addition, he was a bright scholar who matriculated with good marks and undoubtedly would have been a contender for University if he had chosen to continue at school.

He was an avid supporter of Chelsea and remained so for the rest of his life, eventually becoming a season-ticket holder for many years. A far cry from the 1940s when as boys we went by tram with a crowd of mates to arrive at Stamford Bridge by 12 and play football with a tennis ball on the forecourt, waiting for the turnstiles to open so that we could rush in and get our favourite standing spot on the terraces.

On leaving school he really wanted to be an actor but father said "no" so he started work in Insurance and was soon fully engaged in all the sport the company could offer - I'm not sure how much work he did. National Service in the RAF followed and he served in the Middle East and then India working as an Air Traffic Controller – and, of course, playing lots more sport. So back to Insurance and through hard work enjoyed a steady rise through the ranks serving in the City, the West End and a short spell in Leeds (still playing as much sport as possible) turning out for the CUACO Vets football team until he was well into his forties. He had a distinguished career in Insurance although it is rumoured that much of his success was attributed to his uncanny knack of negotiating insurance deals in any of the many pubs and clubs in London.

His connection through insurance led him to becoming a Liveryman and a Freeman of the City of London in 1978 and he became so active and involved that in 1995 he was installed as Master of the Plaisterers Livery Company, a position of which he was most proud and which brought much approbation. He was equally much involved in Masonry, being an active member of two London Lodges. He became Master of both and eventually achieved Senior London Grand Rank to mark all the good work he had done over many years.

He retired from CUACO in 1988, enabling him to seriously take up yet another sport: so he joined Croham Hurst Golf Club, very near to home. He spent many happy hours there, making many new friends and achieving a very respectable handicap. He played at least twice a week almost up to his 80th birthday and until the first of his many ailments struck him down.

Despite all his obvious talents and achievements in sport, in music, in business and in his public life he remained, throughout a very modest man. He was highly intelligent, sociable, sensitive, witty, enthusiastic in every thing he did and was always kind and caring with a concern for others. He loved his family dearly, particularly Joan, who supported him totally throughout their married life. He was a great friend and will be sorely missed.

Gordon Brewin (1962-6): died 5 March 2013. Chris Allen (1959-66) writes: Gordon first entered my life when he came to Henry Thornton School at about the age of 14. He had been born and living in Bombay (now Mumbai) in India, where his father had been a senior official at the docks. The family moved to England when his father retired. Gordon used to bring green chillies to school and tempt us to eat them. He, of course, found them easy to eat.

A small group of us used to hang around together in the latter years at HTS, including Gordon, Terry Eady, Alan Gale, Michael Everett, Gerald Heather, Arthur Johnson and myself. Gordon was very interested in geography and history and trained as a librarian on leaving school in 1966. He first worked at Golders Green library before taking charge of Morden Library. Later he became part of the Management Team of the London Borough of Merton before retiring a few years ago.

Gordon always had the ability to make friends and speak to anyone. Like his parents, he could walk into a strange pub and soon be talking to people as if he'd known them for years. Gordon would often have a dispute that he was sorting out for someone: he hated to see a miscarriage of justice or some over-officious jobsworth not doing their job properly.. A month before he died he was complaining that the state pension people had diddled him out of several days' pension and was trying to appeal. I hope he is complaining to the highest authority about the suddenness with which he was taken from us.

I had seen him in February when we met for a drink at Wetherspoons in Crystal Palace. At that time he seemed fit and well. The only comment regarding his health was that he felt a little giddy sometimes; we thought he might have had a mild inner-ear infection. Unfortunately, that was the first sign of an aggressive cancer attack that left him with tumours in his brain, spine and kidneys. While the doctors were carrying out a liver biopsy to find the source of the tumours, Gordon had a heart attack and did not recover consciousness. He is survived by his wife, Janet, and two lovely daughters, together with his two older brothers and a younger sister. I can't believe that he won't be with us any more. Farewell, old friend!

Reminiscences

Derek Yandell (1945-52), a regular contributor, offers another anecdote about **Mr D B Gaskin**:

At an Old Boys' reunion, to which Bob Larbey, as Captain of Games, and myself were invited, Mr Gaskin in his presentation remarked that there were so many Welshmen on the staff that a notice, "English Spoken Here", was erected. [Adding that] We then appointed a further Welshman and had to take it down!

From **Bert Fallowfield**, a pupil at HTS (Chichester only) from 1940 to, probably, 1943; he then transferred to Chichester High School for Boys (CHSB), staying until 1946:

There were three categories of HTS pupils in 1939 (and probably 1940): those who won a place by way of the Junior County Scholarship; the free-place winners, who presumably sat an exam, as I did; and those whose parents paid for them to attend the school (which I am sure my parents were not in a position to do).

Shortly after arrival in Bognor I was required to sit an exam for entry to HTS. I remember I was the sole examinee and the teacher supervising me commented that I was very fortunate to have the chance to join HTS and that I should try very hard.

I started at HTS resplendent in my tailor-made black jacket – Father had a close friend who was a tailor. I am uncertain which year I switched to CHSB: I think it was the third form but it may have been the fourth.. I carried on up to the sixth form at the High School but left to take up a clerical post with the Civil Service in the County Court. I sat Oxford School Certificate and gained six credits and a pass. I disliked science so chose the Arts course, which included languages and suchlike.

I have one very clear memory of HTS days. In the write up I've seen about HTS and CHSB, relations were implied to be cordial, but this was not my experience. We were the "Black Beetles" and they were the "Greenfly", and disputes and insults were common. School lunch breaks, etc, were scheduled so that the pupils from each school did not meet. However, one winter's day there was a heavy snowfall and someone got the timing wrong, with the result that some 50 HTS boys, including me, were still outside when the High School boys appeared. The result was an almighty snowball battle, the HTS lads being surrounded on all sides by what seemed like hundreds of the dreaded "Greenfly". We stuck to our guns although heavily outnumbered but were in danger of becoming walking snowmen; fortunately the staff were alerted to the imminent massacre and with gowns sailing behind them came rushing out to break up the battle.

More reflections on Chichester (and London) from **Angus Purdie (1942-9)**:

I also was evacuated to Bognor Regis (6 Gloucester Road) on 3 September 1939 from Bonneville Road School, Clapham. I came home on the 'phoney war' but then the Blitz started. I was bombed out from 59 Park Hill, Clapham, in Dec 1940 by a land mine; escaped to an aunt in Midhurst; and went to the local school on half-days only. I was then re-evacuated to an elderly couple, Mr and Mrs Thompson, in Cocking and attended the village school,

again half-days. I was happy to be a farmer's boy as my best friend was the local farmer's son. I also pumped the village church organ as Mr Thompson looked after the churchyard as well – it really was the good life for me.

I transferred to HTS at Chichester High in, probably, January 1943 and started late in Form 1 with Mr Dix. I have all my reports from 1943 to July 1949, when I left. I returned to the London school for year 2 with Len Cundall, continuing with the A stream through to year 5. When at Chichester, I travelled by bus (Southdown) from Cocking to Chichester each day. One day, as I was returning home to Cocking, there was a "tip and run" raid. I don't remember the date, but what I can recall very clearly is the sight of the Dornier Do17 flying very low down West Street spitting tracer bullets at the bus queue opposite and a stick of bombs dropping from under. I was on the front seat on the top deck of the bus outside the cathedral, and promptly dived under the seat. One bomb demolished Shippam's Paste factory in East Street. Thereafter every high building around the [Market] Cross had a heavy machine gun on the roof.

I left Cocking in 1943 as my foster parents' son, a POW in Stalag VIII, returned home unannounced after being released by the Americans, so I joined HTS in London. I was now living at Palmers Green and travelled to school across London by bus and Tube. If an air raid was on, we had to get out of the train either at Bank or London Bridge station, walk across London Bridge (the tunnel under the river had been closed in case of bombs dropping), and go back down to the trains. The journey was even more hazardous as the V1s were coming thick and fast, being followed by the V2 rockets. One fell on hit Palmers Green, and I saw the house hit go up in smoke followed by the sound of the thing coming down. Oh well, c'est la vie! Ted has shown me a photo of the honours board for 1952, where I am listed, as also is Bert Lanham, my bosom pal – does anybody know of his whereabouts?

I was Vice-Captain of the school in 1948-9 with Major the Captain and Captain of Macaulay House, with Len Cundall as House Master. The running of the school outside the classroom was by the Prefects – discipline and detention included. My mentor was Sammy Read, who made chemistry my love and career, and because of that I became Technical Director at Wiggins Teape's Glory Mill – manufacturers of photographic support papers coating. I took out patents from 1963 onwards for waterproof colour print paper using a polythene extrusion process. In conclusion: what a marvellous school and staff.

I have been retired for over 20 years from my last job. I have also been a governor of various schools, including Aylesbury Grammar, and am still an independent education panellist for Bucks County Council. After living in Berton, near Aylesbury, for 21 years I now live in a small village outside Thame in Oxfordshire.

Mr S J Linden

Following up the extracts from Martin Linden's letter reproduced in the previous issue, **John Jones** (1963-70) recalls:

I had previously seen Mr Linden in 1979 when I left London to work, as a translator, in Germany. He was at that time the head of languages at the school but said that German teaching would stop when he retired.

One thing that always struck me about Mr Linden was that he never wore a gown, not even in the school photograph taken in 1966. It was only relatively recently that it occurred to me that he may not have (or then have had) a degree. If the story as I remember it is correct, he left Austria shortly before the war and joined the British Army where he was assigned to Intelligence. After the war he served as an interpreter at the Nuremberg Trials. There is very little written about the four-language interpretation at the Trials, which interpreters generally agree was the beginning of modern simultaneous interpreting, but there are plenty of old black and white photos and accounts on the internet, and I believe I have recognised Mr Linden in one of them – the giveaway feature, if indeed I am correct, being his wavy hair. He must still have been very young for a task of such importance. Apart from Hitler himself, virtually the whole Nazi establishment is on the benches at Nuremberg. To think that Mr Linden sat in a room with all of those people. The court itself is still in use as a general court in Nuremberg but the interior design has changed and so one would not recognise the court room of 1945 today.

All this may well explain why Mr Linden did not wear a gown.

Mr Linden arranged for pen-friends for half-a-dozen boys in our O-level German class in 1968. The exchange was with a school in Bad Reichenhall, literally the other side of Germany in Bavaria and only a few kilometres from Salzburg. The German boys stayed with us in London for three weeks and participated in our school life and the boys' family life and pursuits (my German pen-friend had to go to church with me, poor fellow, but he also enjoyed staying out in rural Essex with my country cousins). The German boys returned home and we followed them to Germany later in the summer. I celebrated my 16th birthday with my pen-friend's family and the other boys from HTS in August, with beer and schnapps provided by my pen-friend's father. It was an amazing eye-opener to be surrounded by the beauty of the Bavarian mountains if all you knew basically was South London!

In my pre-A-level year, 1969, Mr Linden arranged for the boys doing A-level German the following year to work for six weeks in a factory in Hamburg. The factory produced deodorant sprays and hair sprays! We worked on a production line from 6 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon, or from 2 till 10pm, but the money was quite good and very useful. That year I celebrated my 17th birthday with the other boys at the top of Hamburg Television Tower. Starting work at 6am meant being at the conveyor belt by that time ready for the machines to be switched on. In effect, it meant getting up at 4 o'clock for a very early breakfast and taking a tram for nearly an hour to get to the factory gates. But it didn't seem to harm any of us. 1969 was the year of the first moon landing and we watched the grainy images of the landing on the TV in the breakfast room at the hostel where we were staying.

I am sure it was Mr Linden who encouraged me to go on and do a degree in languages, which I did – a BA (Hons) in German and French. My languages became the basis for my professional work as a translator in the UK where I worked for the British Standards Institution for four years before moving to Germany to work in 1979 and then on to work for the EU in Brussels in 1984. My fascination with all things German continues to this day: my wife is German and my children are bilingual.

Phil Campbell (1957-62) recalls:

I was one of Herr Linden's pupils, and although the man was something of a martinet I always had fond memories of him. His passion for HTS football and the many selfless, after-school hours he devoted to this and at weekends have not been forgotten. I believe he was Austrian rather than German and may have had to flee the Nazis; his past was always a matter for speculation. Either way, I still remember much that he taught more than 50 years ago. That is the mark of the man.

Geoff Sloan (1948-53) remembers Mr H J Noah from his pre-HTS days:

Mr Noah came to Hazelrigge Road Junior School as a "student teacher" in 1948, my last year there. If memory serves, he took our class only once or twice. After that summer I started at HTS. On my first meeting with Mr Noah there, he said, "I know you, don't I?" I was surprised and flattered that he should remember me.

Bill Rouse (1943-8) writes about Mr M McQ Bennetton, the long-serving School Secretary (1925-61):

...his aunt (a Mrs Bennetton) was my primary school teacher at Bonneville Road School. She was very kind to me and took great interest in all I did (I have to admit I was probably her school pet because I was quite timid then and worked and behaved unbelievably well!). When she knew I was going to HT she told me that her nephew was School Secretary there and insisted I could always turn to him if I had any problems at the new school. Fortunately, I had no need to avail myself of that invitation but he obviously knew who I was and without fail would always stop me in the corridor and ask how I was getting on, so I got to know him quite well.

Editor's note: Mr Bennetton makes a rare appearance in one of the whole-school photos, that taken in September 1955 (inner right section) and displayed on the relevant page of the website. Mr Beadle and Mr Bramble are seated immediately to his right.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Autumn 1963:

VALE

Mr. C. B. Bonner has left us. At seventy-three years of age he has been constrained to pull out of the hurly-burly of school life. We wish him every happiness in his retirement. He served the school for eight years, during which time he taught English, French and Science. This is a rare combination of subjects, but then he is a rare man. His erudition is vast and eclectic, yet he is not aloof; indeed, he is one of the most approachable of men. He is a cosmopolitan; he is equally at home on the Continent of Europe as he is in England, for he is not only fluent in several languages but he also understands the differences among men in general that attend merely upon the accident of circumstance. His tolerance and liberal-mindedness is not surprising, for he is related to Charles Bradlaugh, the eminent Victorian Rationalist, after whom he is named.

On leaving Westminster School Mr. Bonner went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated in Natural Science and, in the following year, in Medieval and Modern Languages. For many years he taught in Mercers' School [a private school in the City of London, which closed in 1959, Ed] and was there when it had to disband owing to lack of funds. He deeply regretted that a centuries-old school had to come to such an end.

There is a fine zest for life about him. He still shows remarkable physical agility for one of his years. His eyes twinkle when he recounts the harmless absurdities of day-to-day living and his subtle sense of humour makes him a delightful companion. I went on a school journey with him which I shall always recall with pleasure. I remember his telling me, when I was striding to keep up with him in the Alps above Lenzerheide, about a boy he taught at Mercers' who was a good carpenter but not a bit of good academically. He was, however, a very likeable boy with a warm personality and, despite his lack of promise at school, he made a tidy fortune later on, making antique furniture. We very much regret losing Mr. Bonner's daily companionship but he will keep in touch with the school and we shall be more than glad to see him again on every possible occasion.

J. D[oolan]

The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or e-mail them to:
Ted Hayward, 31 Linfields, Little Chalfont, Amersham, HP7 9QH; ted.hayward@btinternet.com
Association President: Jimmy Hill OBE Website: www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk