



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 25

January 2014

Diary Dates

AGM: Saturday 22 March 2014 at Lambeth Academy, Elms Road. (The agenda and supporting papers will be issued next month.)

Reunion: Saturday 4 October 2014 at The Windmill.

Obituaries

Keeble Wilgress Pipe (Joe) (1942-50): died 3 August 2013.

Royston Brown (1943-8): died 17 November 2013. He was awarded a Matriculation prize at the Speech Day ceremony held on 12 November 1948.

If you can provide any additional information about either, particularly relating to their time at the school, the Editor would be glad to publish it in the next newsletter.

Membership

Terry Lawlor, the Treasurer, reports that to date 52 members have paid their renewal subscriptions. Many thanks to all who have responded so promptly to the reminder in the previous newsletter, and he looks forward to receiving more welcome cheques in the coming weeks. (Contact Ted if you'd like a spare copy of the payment slip already circulated.)

Reminiscences

From **Ken Dobeson** (1938-43):

I was pleased to read Hiney's reminiscences but sad to learn of Dave Gianotti's death. We shared a billet in the Palace Lodge of the Bishop's Palace from January 1940 to the summer holiday of 1943, when the school returned to London as the authorities seemed to think we had already won the war. Alas, Hitler still had a few secret weapons to hit back at us with, like the V1 and V2. He almost had the atomic bomb: he sent enriched uranium in a huge cargo submarine to Japan but it fell into the hands of the USN and was used for the two bombs launched on Japan. But that is another story.

In my first year I was in 1A being a Junior scholarship boy and "Granny" Briggs was at the desk immediately in front of me as we were seated in alphabetical order. Our classroom was in the corner right next to the geography room, which was Mr. Cundall's preserve.

Like Hiney, I joined the Royal Navy in September 1945 and, while stationed under training in London where I did a course on radio and radar at the Earl of Northampton's Polytechnic at The Angel, I visited Henry Thornton school in uniform where I met up with Mr. Cundall. He was a brilliant man, a one-time lecturer at the Regent Street Polytechnic and writer of a series of books on geography.

Hiney and I boxed, I remember, as we were about the same weight and build. He may recall that. After all, he did beat me! I was never good at sports, due I later discovered to an eye defect which affected my shooting abilities, so luckily I never became Fleet Air Arm aircrew as was my original intention.

My regards to all those OTs who may remember me.

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Autumn 1959:

VALETE

Both their pupils and their colleagues have been sorry to have to say goodbye to several other members of the Staff [*ie, in addition to Mr C E Jeremy, whose retirement was reported in the same copy of the magazine; see also newsletter no 7, November 2008 Ed*].

Mr. J. H. Carr, B.A., History Master since May, 1952, and head of the History Department since 1954, will be missed not only for his vigorous teaching in the classroom, but for his energetic participation in activities outside it. He will be remembered for having been in charge of Senior cricket, having served as stage manager for three of the School plays and having conducted the School journey of 1958 to Switzerland. He leaves us to take up a post as Lecturer in History and Education at Matlock Training College.

Mr. D.W.Huntley, N.D.D. (Sculpt.), A.T.D., after six years as Art Master, goes to become Head of the Art Department at Elliott School. Besides fostering a resourceful programme of art activities (among which the execution of a series of wall paintings by boys in his classes has been noteworthy), he has lent a talented hand to the designing and painting of the sets for the School plays. [*Mr Huntley's article entitled "The Scholar" – the sculpture he designed and presented to the school after his retirement – appeared in the following year's edition of the magazine and will be reproduced in the next newsletter. The unveiling ceremony was held on 21 October 1960. A photo of the sculpture is displayed on the website: click on Memorabilia on the Home page menu, then Miscellaneous. Ed*]

Mr. A.N.Mason, B.Sc., during his two years as Chemistry Master, has played an enthusiastic role in reorganising the School's dormant Science Society. He has superintended the switchboard for School dramatic and musical productions, and was stage manager for the 1958 play, *The Good Sailor*. He leaves us to take up the post of Chemistry Master at Wirral Grammar School.

Mr. W.M. McElroy, B.A., who is transferring to Chislehurst-Sidcup Grammar School for Boys as English Master. For the past two years he has not only attempted to convey some inkling of such mysteries as the principles of clause analysis. but has produced the 1958 junior play, *The Mock Doctor* – besides acting as stage manager for the production of *Volpone* and make-up expert for that of *The Good Sailor* – and has superintended the preparation of *The Thorntonian* for 1958 and 1959.

Mr. L.C.H. Searle, City and Guilds (Lond.), who has taught Woodwork and Technical Drawing since April, 1955, has been responsible for the achievement of a fine standard of work. Out of his workshop have come the sets for successive School plays. He goes to become Head of the Engineering Department of Haverstock School.

Mr Roy Smith, M.A., A.D.B., who left at the end of the Spring Term, will be remembered not only for his effective productions of *Volpone* and *The Good Sailor* but for his own impressive performances in the Staff play, *The Bet*, in Spring, 1958. His abandonment of the teaching of English was prompted by a desire to resume a career on the stage.

School Inspections

As promised in the last issue, here are the first of selected extracts from the report of the inspection carried out between 8 and 11 March 1949.

NATURE AND SCOPE

The School, which had been evacuated on the outbreak of war, returned to London in 1943. Numbers by then had dwindled to 90 boys but they were joined by the 400 boys who had been gathered into the Henry Thornton Emergency School [*formally designated as "The South-West London Emergency Secondary School for Boys at Henry Thornton School" Ed*]. The education of many of the latter had suffered under war conditions and indeed the education of all was to continue to suffer in the disturbing atmosphere of the last two years of war.

At the time of the Inspection there were 43 boys between the ages of ten and nineteen years. Most of the pupils are admitted at the age of eleven years and there are very few bye-term entries. The annual intake is 90 boys, of whom nine each year are awarded Governors' Places. Practically all the pupils come from the area surrounding Clapham Common. Pupils from outlying districts are the sons of parents who have moved from the neighbourhood. Of late about 20 boys have been transferred each year to technical or nautical schools; the boys so moved have been adjudged incapable of profiting by a grammar school education. This transfer has taken place at the age of thirteen. There has, however, been no compensating inflow of boys to offset this yearly loss. The sixth Form are thus recruited from depleted ranks.

At present fourteen Old Boys are studying in various Universities, most of them having gone on to the University after a period in H.M. forces. The majority of leavers take up engineering, commerce, banking, insurance, or enter the armed forces or police. Many other occupations, however, attract a few boys each year – among these may be mentioned National and Local Government, manufacturing, transport and communication, and the distributive trades.

PREMISES

The buildings were fully described in the last Full Inspection Report, 1939. The only changes to be noted are the loss of the Prefects' room at South Lodge, the temporary loss of the small playing-field which has been requisitioned for allotments, and the acquisition of a main playing-field at Morden in place of the field at Roehampton.

At the time of the last Inspection the Inspectors thought that it might be desirable to assign rooms to certain subjects – perhaps particularly to Music, History and Modern Languages. With the exception of the Geography room the classrooms are at present assigned to Forms. Again, as at the time of the last Inspection there is the nucleus of a Library worthy of the School. But again the Inspectors felt impelled to ask, "Is it really used by the boys?" One of the most pressing needs of the School is for a Library easily accessible and generously stocked with books likely to appeal to the latent as well as to the developing tastes of boys throughout the Main School. When circumstances permit, a new Library might be built immediately adjacent to the main building. The present Library might then become a Music room. The School is also at a disadvantage in that it has no biology laboratory.

The third most pressing need is the return of the small playing-field which lies immediately adjacent to the rear of the School. Its temporary loss is reacting unfavourably on the all-round development of a section of the boys.

Shortage of equipment is referred to in the Subject reports. When supplies become readily available there might be a general overhaul of textbooks, and books of general interest in Music, Science and History might be acquired for use in the Main School. A good deal of physics equipment and microscopes for use in biology lessons are also required. The renewal of the black-out curtains, particularly in the physics laboratory but also in other parts of the School, is a necessity. A gramophone, records and scores are required to enable the Music of the School to develop. The provision of a film-strip projector in the Geography room would be of great assistance in encouraging the masters to develop the use of visual aids. The lockers in the Art room should be removed and the South wall lined with a surface to take drawing pins. Small mirrors should be provided in the boys' cloak-rooms to encourage sensible attention to personal appearance. [*Were they ever supplied? Ed*] If these were provided, no excuse could reasonably be produced to explain the present unpleasant habit (fortunately restricted to a fairly small number

of boys) of combing hair in classrooms. The floor of the Masters' room might be carpeted. The room has a somewhat desolate appearance at present.

It is pleasant to record that the premises are very clean. They have been re-decorated throughout and appear to be excellently kept. The play-ground has been re-surfaced and the grounds trimmed. A permanent gardener has been appointed.

STAFF

The Head Master, who was appointed in 1927, is a man of wide and cultured interests. He has read widely and deeply and given much thought to educational problems. He has a good grip on the discipline of the School and, in general, has kept the flag flying in the difficult circumstances described in the opening paragraph of the Report, and despite recent ill-health.

He is helped by an assistant staff of 23 men, of whom 14 hold Honours degrees. As at the time of the last Inspection special mention must be made of the Master in charge of Economics who has retained and perhaps developed his exceptional gifts of clear thought. The Masters in charge of History, Modern Languages, Science, Art and Physical Education are also doing sound work and each in his own particular way has much to give to the School. The teaching of some of the Masters, however, appears to be conditioned by examination requirements, so that the work in their class-rooms is very formal and lacking in imagination. Geography, for instance, appears to be treated as a non-practical subject. The subject reports on English, while referring to the valuable and devoted work of the English team, suggests the need of more specialist help for senior and Sixth Form work. Similar suggestions are made in respect of Music and Physical Education.

The staffing ratio is 1:20. This appears to be generous but the drafting out of 20 boys each year into Technical Schools does not reduce the number of classes or of the Sixth Form sets. To enable an all-round development of present educational facilities an additional member or members of staff are quite urgently required.

Further excerpts will appear in due course.

Gordon's Gordian Knot?

See attachment. Whether or not OTs seek to pit their wits against the compiler's expertise, the Editor would be interested to know whether further such challenges might usefully and appropriately be included in the newsletter.

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