



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 35

August 2016

Obituaries

Gordon Holt (1952-9): died 16 April, aged 74. Prefect; member, Art Club.

In the 1955 copy of *The Thorntonian*, the Art Club report (Secretary: T T Phillips) notes that Gordon had worked with another pupil, Charleton, on one of three murals associated with "styles derived from the French Renaissance"; theirs was "in the contemporary manner".

His evident artistic skills were further acknowledged in Mr D W Huntley's article, [Five] School Wall Paintings, in the 1958 issue:

"... 'The Fall of Icarus', by G. Holt, although obviously academic in style and telling a well-known story, has all the other qualities demanded of a famous work. It is a scholarly but sensitive pastiche of a Breughel painting, the atmosphere of which is impressive."

He was awarded a prize for passing in six or more O-level subjects in 1957, and received a further award in 1959 for being one of only four pupils to gain three or more passes at Advanced level.

The following are selected, edited extracts from a fuller obituary which appeared in the 3 May issue of the *Guardian*:

After leaving school Gordon, a Londoner, studied town planning at Brixton School of building (now South Bank University). In 1959 he began his first job in town planning with Sutton and Cheam borough council, remaining in planning for various London boroughs until 1972. He wrote a manual for planning professionals which is still in use today. Having solved the Guardian crossword for many years, he ventured into crossword compiling as a novice after retirement; he also compiled puzzles for the New Statesman.

His extensive general knowledge was freely dispensed in challenging quizzes. He was an avid gardener and an ardent cricket fan.

Members may recall that an earlier newsletter – no 25, January 2014 – included a prize crossword compiled by Gordon. Shortly before his death he offered Ted Hayward another puzzle, which, as a posthumous tribute and with the consent of his family, is published as an attachment to this newsletter. The Management Committee has agreed to offer a prize of £20 on this occasion for the first correct solution received. Further details are given in the attachment.

Leslie Garrett (1938-42): died 31 May. He was evacuated with the school to Bognor Regis in August 1939, and a few months later was joined by his parents who had moved to the town. In 1940 he joined the 1st Felpham Sea Scouts as a patrol leader, and a year later, whilst still a 14-year-old schoolboy, enrolled in the local Home Guard after giving his age as 17. In *Sussex Home Guard*, by Paul Crook, he is quoted: "My teachers knew I was under age for the Home Guard but didn't tell the authorities and they expected me to take a lead during air raid conditions at school in consequence". After leaving school, he worked for a year as a junior clerk in the Chief Constable's office, West Sussex Constabulary (coincidentally next door to the High School for Boys), until he joined the Royal Marines, aged 16, in June 1943. After

serving at sea on a light cruiser – HMS *Diadem* – he was recommended for a commission and was demobbed in 1945 with the wartime rank of Lieutenant RM. He then served in the Metropolitan Police from 1946 until retirement in 1976. In his later years he remained active in various local societies and other organisations, including: Royal Marines Historical Society; HMS *Diadem* Historical Association; St John Ambulance; and D-Day and Normandy Fellowship. In November 2013 he attended the Annual Remembrance Service at Chichester High School for Boys for 61 former pupils who had lost their lives during the Second World War and read Rupert Brookes’ epic war poem, *The Soldier*. Fellow evacuee **Keith Weston** (1938-43), and like Les a resident of Bognor Regis, writes: “Our local paper reported on his wartime record as a D-Day veteran. It states, ‘At the age of 14 he was manning a machine gun on the seafront at Bognor’. [He] was serving on HMS *Diadem* off the Normandy coast on D-Day. The ship survived an attack by enemy aircraft and with Les still as part of the ship’s company was on the Arctic Convoys to Russia.”

Reunion/Anniversary Lunch – 8 November 2016

The current tally of acceptances (firm and provisional) is 24; this figure includes the guest of honour, Mrs Bryony Hill, and our President. Ted Hayward will write again nearer the date with fuller information about selection of menus (meals will need to be pre-ordered), confirmed cost per head, and the programme for the event.

If you wish to attend but have not contacted him, please do so as soon as you are able; he would also appreciate hearing from any OT who had planned to participate but is now unable to do so.

Management Committee Membership

Ron Davies (1948-56) has accepted an invitation to serve as Vice-Chairman from April 2016, succeeding the late Brian Bloice. The sole remaining vacancy is for a nominee for the 1970s/1980s entry-year category. Contact Ted if you’re interested in filling it, or know someone who might be willing to have his name put forward.

Wilf Finbow Legacy

As reported in the last newsletter, members agreed at the last AGM to invite the Old Thorntonians Football Club to institute a “Wilf Finbow Memorial Trophy” (in the form of a cup, vase or shield), to be funded by a donation from Wilf’s generous bequest of £2,000 to the Association. The Club has now purchased a silver shield engraved as follows:

The Wilf Finbow
Memorial Cup
School Years
1931-36

and mounted on a special board, together with a plaque with the name of the first winner. This wording is:

Presented by
The Old Thorntonians Association
To OTFC Young
Player of the Year

The board also contains two blank plaques for the inclusion of the names of subsequent winners. (Three photographs – of the shield, described as “cup”, plaque and display board – are posted on the website: click on Memorabilia and select the Miscellaneous gallery.)

From the Pages of *The Thorntonian*

Autumn 1936

THE STAFF

Next term **Mr. W.W. Baldwin**, B.A. (Oxon.), will join the Staff. He comes from the Friends’ School at Saffron Walden, and will teach English and Mathematics in the Junior Forms. We bid him welcome.

***Mr R.S. Bramble**, who is now giving us all his time owing to the increase in numbers, was originally in the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, and served in the British Expeditionary Force from August, 1914. He was for some time Instructor and O.C. Discipline on a Training Ship, and during the end of the war years was at Merchant Taylors' School, where he taught bayonet fighting to the O.T.C. In 1926 he came to us from the L.C.C. Physical Training Staff. He has brought with him the latest methods of physical training, has introduced boxing, and the gymnastic displays, which are a feature of his work, are well known to all friends of the School.

*Valete in newsletter no 15, January 2011. Ed

March 1929

Letter from the Headmaster

To the Editor of the "Thorntonian."

Sir,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on the issue of your first number. This term has indeed been a historic one, and generations of school-boys yet unknown to us shall hear in days to come of the famous events that have crowded the past weeks. The first day in the new School, when we met in a blinding snowstorm—the perilous route along the duck-boards by which we reached our new buildings—the bitterly cold winds that kept the ponds on the Common ice-bound for months—the novel complications of school life when every day there was some new happening—the Hall being painted, or shades being put on the electric lamps, or someone discovering by experience exactly what it cost to break one of them! And now we have nearly done with this period of unique excitement, and all that we have still to witness is the sight of the last decorations being given to our grounds—the rare wealth of shrubs being planted with lavish hand, the last touches being put to the fives courts.

Certainly next term, when the time comes for the official opening [28 June], both School and grounds will be well worth a visit. Our buildings have proved as useful as they are well-designed and pleasing to the eye. In this hard winter they have been submitted to the severest test imaginable, and they have stood it magnificently.

Next term I hope to arrange for some "Parents' Days," which will give as many as possible of the parents of our boys the opportunity of judging of the new School and its surroundings for themselves.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

W.D. EVANS.

I think "unique excitement" is a fair way to describe such an eventful first day of term! (See also newsletter no 33, January 2016, which reproduced the magazine editors' commentary, in the same issue, on its launch.) Ed

December 1944

EDITORIAL

The hopes of the Editors' predecessors for the revival of the School Societies and Houses have been amply fulfilled. The start made by the opening of a Literary and Debating society last year has initiated the recall of nearly all of those old Societies which used to give such immense delight to former pupils in bygone days. How the names of Cavendish, Cook, Macaulay and Pepys, with those of Stephen and Wilberforce, conjure up in Old Thorntonians' minds those spirited battles on the playing-field and in the school over the House Cup competition! We earnestly hope that this magazine will record the fine start made by the Staff and the boys.

* * *

THE NATIONAL SAVINGS GROUP

The National Savings Group is still working, although, like many similar groups, it is suffering from a constant decline in membership as old savers leave and newcomers to the school remain faithful to their street groups.

However, we collected £151 17s in the April "Salute the Soldier" week, and, in spite of discolation [*sic*] caused by flying-bombs, have raised £26 11s in the current year. For those who are still not sure, stamps are on sale in Monday morning breaks and Tuesday afternoon breaks in Room O.

This issue of the magazine was edited by Association member Terry Sharp, 1938-45.

Clapham Exhibition

On Friday 31 March and Saturday 1 April 1939 the School hosted an exhibition described, in the 40-page "souvenir" brochure, as "Industrial: Educational: Commercial". The event, for which admission was by programme (6d) only, ran from 2.30 until 10.30pm each day, and featured a wide range of activities and themes, including:

- Services and products offered by local firms, many of which had submitted advertisements
- "Working demonstrations" of various crafts, eg, weaving and rug making, by pupils of HTS and other local schools (in all, 10 participated)
- Choral singing
- Gymnastic displays.

Here's the Foreword written by the Head Master. Other extracts – particularly those described in the Educational Exhibits section – will be published in future newsletters. (A copy of Mr Evans's text, and images of the front and other pages of the brochure, are displayed in the Memorabilia gallery of the website.)

"Of all the pretty suburbs that still adorn our Metropolis," wrote Thackeray, "there are few that exceed in charm Clapham common."

These words read strangely to-day, when that same Common, which in Lord Macaulay's time was a "delightful wilderness of gorse bushes and popular groves, and gravel pits, and ponds great and small", is now shaven and shorn, its wilderness tamed, and its hills and valleys ironed out into dull uniformity.

Clapham, once a centre of spiritual and intellectual life that influenced England at a critical time in her history, once so clearly a community with a soul, is now in danger of being swallowed up by the great mechanical maw of London, and of becoming a mere geographical division of that sprawling monster.

It is the object of the organisers of this Exhibition to bring to the consciousness of the people of Clapham a picture of the Clapham in which they live. Here you will see a concrete reminder of the industries carried on, and the educational work done, in the Clapham of to-day. There will be talks on Clapham as it was in early times, and in its great days, and as it is now.

And why should its greatest days not be the days to come? The generation now growing up in Clapham's old streets, and playing on the historic Common, is no whit inferior to the past in body or mind. But we have here the same problem as men are faced with everywhere, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" In modern terms, can man's soul survive in a world of machinery? Can we regain that sense of community, which is all but lost?

We know how in some countries it is sought to revive this sense of community by artificial means, by a vast mechanical organisation of propaganda. That is not the British way. We want spontaneity from below, not pressure from above. And the community sense, if it is to be real, must spread from local centres, such as this Clapham of ours. That our Exhibition may do something to make Clapham people conscious of their heritage and their opportunities is our earnest hope.

W.D.EVANS

The Editor welcomes contributions for future issues. Please post or email them to:
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