



September 2008

The Old Mancunian

Edition 29

SECTION EVENTS

Midlands Section

Our next event will be the Annual General Meeting and Luncheon to be held on Saturday 15 November 2008 at the Forest Hotel, Dorridge when the High Master will be our principal guest. All OMs are welcome and anyone who wishes to join us on this occasion should contact me on 0121 475 3700 and you will be notified of the details in due course.

Informal lunches take place on the first Tuesday of the month at The Old Joint Stock, Temple Row, Birmingham. Any OM and guest(s) are welcome but please contact me first to ensure that someone else will be there.

Secretary, John Wilson on 0121 475 3700 or john@wilson7743.fsnet.co.uk

London & South East Section

Our next pub evening is on Wednesday 8 October at The Anchor (nr Southwark Bridge) from 6:30pm. The AGM on Wednesday 12 November is at The Cheshire Cheese, Fleet Street starting at 7:30pm. For further details contact Nick Gartside nicholas.gartside@schroders.com

South West Section

The South West Section has two events organized for the next year. The first is our Autumn Event to the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovil on Sunday 19 October 2008. We will have a guided visit round the Museum in the morning followed by lunch at a nearby inn.

The Annual Commemoration Service at Exeter Cathedral followed by lunch at Mercure Southgate Hotel is on Sunday 21 June 2009. All Old Mancunians are very welcome at these events as are new members for SW Section.

Please contact the Hon Secretary, John Smith, on 01275 843349 or by email at johningsmith@chyanmor.wanadoo.co.uk for more details.

20/30 Club

The Ladies' Lunch on 10 October is to be held at the Stanneylands Hotel near Wilmslow. The AGM follows on 21 November and The School Captain will be invited to be our guest speaker on 12 December.

We are always delighted to welcome guests and new members. If you would like to speak to us next year, your benefits would include a free lunch as well as the fine company and attentive audience. Please contact the secretary at alex_wells@tiscali.co.uk if you are interested.

Since the last *TOM* we have been advised of the recent deaths of the following OMs:

N J H Potter* (30-37) R S Glen* (36-43)
 A H Turner (43-48) J C Owen (47-51)
 D G Pateman (36-40) P Feingold (20-22)
 A Smith (20-25) J C M Mason* (38-45)
 A K Mason* (35-42) M Beresford (38-45)
 R Fell* (37-44) A Dransfield (49-56)
 R H Fritzsche (29-36) H G Button* (24-31)
 D M Ingham (42-47) J Bidder* (31-36)
 P E Ireland (42-49) W H Taylor* (34-42)
 E Dodd (28-33) C J Heilpern* (25-29)
 G Schofield (26-32) W E Rhoden* (71-78)
 F B Somerville (38-44) P Harris* (29-34)
 D P Rendall* (59-63) A H Klass (32-39)
 PG Forrester (30-35) G S Kidd (43-50)
 H M Isherwood (26-28) P H Nuttall (50-58)
 GA Wolstenholme (33-38) G Garrett (38-44)
 M D K Baxandall* (46-51) B Hall* (39-46)
 D M Crabtree (51-58) R J T Nash (50-56)
 R A West (47-50) D M H Self* (51-57)
 NBW Thompson (46-51) JA Walton (31-33)
 We would welcome offers to supply brief obituaries for *Ulula*. The asterisk shows that an obituary is already in preparation.

Correspondence to Jane Graham at MGS, Old Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XT (j.graham@mgs.org) 0161 224 1746 or to John Horsfield at School. Closing date for the next edition is 12 December 2008.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Graham Downing who was at MGS 1948-53 confirms the omnipresence of owls, informing us that the mascot of his local golf club in Boksburg, East of Johannesburg is an owl. There were once deep mines where the Club now is and each shift started and ended with a hooter. So the mascot preserves the memory of the Club's antecedents.

Looking to the future the Highmaster recently led my wife, Judith, and myself to a newly minted wooden owl standing guard outside the new building for the junior MGS section.

The proclivity of Eton for appointing old Etonians as Headmaster is well known. Has MGS ever appointed one of its own as Highmaster? It is not easy to find examples.

OM's may help me on this one. But I have come across a possible OM, Ralph Brideoake, who was a 'master' (or highmaster) in 1638 and later feoffee of MGS. He was a great survivor through the turmoil of the Commonwealth and Protectorate and died in 1678 as Bishop of Chichester. To supplement his income whilst presiding over MGS he secured the patronage of the Earl of Derby.

To end on a congratulatory note. Philip Hill a great classicist, as well as a fine ball room dancer, attained 90 years earlier this year. He was appointed by Highmaster Miller, which takes us back a bit. Philip Hill was one of many fine appointments made by a Highmaster who had otherwise many griefs to contend with during the 1939-45 War.

John Horsfield

FROM THE HIGH MASTER

Dr Christopher Ray

We have been tremendously lucky in having been able to attract some exceptional speak-

ers to MGS. Indeed, some OMs will have attended the Hugh Oldham Lecture given by Lord Winston who is just one of many outstanding academics who have spoken here in recent years. Others include Lord Rees (the Astronomer Royal and Master of Trinity College Cambridge), historians Michael Wood and David Starkey, former Cabinet Secretary Lord Butler, theologians like Alistair McGrath, and leading scientists such as Richard Dawkins and Steve Jones. Later this term, on 16 October, we welcome Marcus du Sautoy, Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, whose television series *The Story of Maths* is being screened in October. All the speakers who visit us are impressed with the vigorous intellectual life they observe at MGS.

So much happens beyond the curriculum here: boys are involved in the arts, in community service, in sporting endeavours and in outdoor pursuits; and the School is immensely proud of the considerable achievements of our boys over and above the academic. The 'co-curricular' dominion, what we do beyond the classroom, is vital for the health and welfare of this School. However, the academic and scholarly life is fundamental and will remain central to the ethos and character of this School. We expect every boy to accept the challenges of that life wholeheartedly.

I know that older OMs will join me in congratulating the 'class of 2008' – the latest cohort of our boys to join your ranks. At MGS our boys are not simply keeping up with overall trends at A-level, they are racing ahead of the field. Record results – once again, but not for MGS the small (2 to 3) percentage gains seen nationally: improvements here during the last four years have been closer to 8%. Why is this kind of ex-

ceptional performance important? Not because it looks good in our publicity: which it does. Nor because it enables our teachers to boast of success: which they do. Nor because newspapers may seize on our results and set us alongside the best schools in the country: which they do. Rather it is because such results represent the fulfilment of ambition: boys getting into the universities of their choice, laying down the firmest of foundations for the careers of their choice. As I write, the new building for the Junior Section is ready for the 94 younger boys who will join us for the start of their MGS adventures: Bexwyke Lodge has been named in honour of the sister and brother-in-law of Hugh Oldham, Joan and Hugh Bexwyke both of whom helped to realise Bishop Hugh's vision for The Manchester School. Christopher Kenyon CBE, former Chairman of Governors of the School, will open the building formally on Founders' and Benefactors' Day, Friday 17 October.

Term has started with its usual bustle and with unusually heavy and near continuous rain. When the junior boys join us, the School will be larger than at any time in its history: 1475 boys. It might perhaps be fitting to have 1515 boys on our roll seven years from now. We have a larger than normal 'external' entry into our Sixth Form, with the introduction of the International Baccalaureate, which will now run alongside A-levels, helping to attract some excellent students from elsewhere.

The days of 2000 pupils taking Part 1 of the Entrance Examination are long gone and the relatively coarse filters applied in the past have outlived their purpose. Close attention to relative performance in Parts 1 and 2 has revealed that some pupils who tend to do relatively poorly in Part 1 can excel in the more challenging Part 2. How many boys who might have flourished at MGS have been turned away after an unsuccessful Part

1? Henceforth, we shall ask all candidates to sit both parts. Furthermore, we have found that too many pupils have been drilled for these examinations and that we need to find new ways of determining the potential of a boy as well as his actual achievement. As we endeavour to maintain the highest standards of entry to the School, this year we shall introduce additional assessment days. We shall use these to see how well applicants respond to our teaching and to help us to make sharper judgements about potential. The examination for entry at age 11 will remain an important part of the admissions process. However, with the assessment day giving us a more detailed picture of each boy, we shall have the best possible evidence on which to base our decisions. The Governors of the School have asked me to prepare an annual report on the School, providing academic and other information about MGS for parents, OMs and feeder schools. I shall be delighted to do so and shall send you a copy of this later this term.

Drama Centre Update

As TOM goes to press, we are in the final stages of planning for demolition work in and around the Lecture Theatre to start in late October as stage 1 in the construction of the magnificent new Drama Centre. Fund-raising towards the cost continues apace –



see www.mgs.org for the latest details, in-

mentary, but all submissions have been handed over to the school archivists. If anyone would like a copy of the DVD, please contact Jane Graham in the Development Office.

THE OLD BOYS' DINNER will be held at School on Saturday 22 November. For further details please contact Paul Rose, Recorder. E-mail Paul.Rose@halliwells.com; Birchdale Mews, 3 Birchdale, St Mary's Road, Bowdon, Cheshire, WA14 2PW; 0870 365 8678.

THE 1980's REUNION DINNER

A most enjoyable evening was had by all those that attended the second 1980's reunion dinner to be held at School on Saturday 3 May. Approximately seventy OM's attended with a table of former staff and current staff also contributing to the evening's relaxed atmosphere.

The evening began with tours of the School and thanks must go to the School officers who guided us all around as we reminisced over our school days spent there. Pre-dinner drinks followed in the Memorial Hall where display boards reminded us of fellow OM faces from sports teams, form groups, camps and treks.

Dinner was held in the refectory, where we were formally welcomed by Master of Ceremonies, Roger Alderson. With stories swapped and dinner over, it was time for the speeches.

The new School Captain, Alex Handy opening the proceedings with a light-hearted look at his role at School. Tom Mitchell (1982-1989) then addressed dinner with the professionalism one would expect from a member of the Bar! Tom spoke of his time at School and moved everybody present with his memories of 1980's boys and staff, former and current. The High Master then spoke briefly and afterwards, guided expertly by Roger Alderson answered questions from those present. We were brought up to date

with developments at School and the challenges that lie ahead for, in Tom Mitchell's words "this grand old establishment!"

With the formal part of the evening over, those present managed to fill the refectory with noise and laughter as memories of 1980's life at MGS were swapped into the early hours. For some OM's present, it was their first return visit to School since leaving and the reunion provided an excellent opportunity to mingle with staff who taught us – in OM terms – not that long ago!

Thanks must go to the staff, (former and current) that attended, to Roger Alderson for his assistance on the evening, to the School catering staff and to Ian Thorpe and Jane Graham at School. For Jane, it was her first OM reunion dinner and she really must have wondered what she had let herself in for! Jonathan Fogerty 1988-1991 writes on behalf of the dinner organising committee

1970-79 REUNION

A reunion for all those boys who joined the School 1970-79 will be held on 9 May 2009. For further details contact Jane Graham in the Development Office.

OMA MEMBERSHIP

Why not join the Old Mancunians' Association? You will receive *Ulula* and the *Annual Report*, as well as support various projects at School. Membership is just £12 per year. You can download the membership forms from www.oldmancunians.org

VISIT US

The tours organised for OMs have been very successful. We suggest you book a tour during term time when boys are at work and play! You will be delighted to see the diverse and stimulating activities boys enjoy. OMs have enjoyed reminiscing over a free School lunch in the refectory. Telephone or email Jane Graham in the Development Office to reserve your place.

engaged in an elitist (and probably very English) social experiment, (some less justifiably, referred to “Manchester Crammer School”), and not a very fashionable one. (We were all prone to be impressed by quasi-totalitarian socio-political nostrums then). Not just OM’s. One of my media-ambitious Classical VI contemporaries floated the idea of an anthology of leavers’ writings to be revisited forty years on in 1995 (a date he didn’t live to see) in our then unimaginable future to see how the “experiment” had worked. Not perhaps the ideal date for any assessment, even if there had been agreed criteria—we never got that far, and fortunately the anthology was never compiled. Possibly we were actually growing up, not in the “Republic”, but, in, oddly much read in that particular History Sixth, “Candide”. I don’t recall EJFJ personally doing or saying much directly to us to bear out the Platonic idealism which was generally believed to underlie his approach to the Butlerian educational system of the fifties. We were urged to “listen to the Third Programme” (which was reassuring, because we did) and — about to leave — apply for commissions in National Service.

It was from a fourth year English teacher, B A Giles, I learnt, I now realise, from a single exercise (which we all failed, as perhaps he intended) based on a not very good wartime poem about coast-watching by C Day Lewis, what learning was about, and how, even for a not very promising B stream pupil, it was not only open to, but achievable by, anyone. You simply did not allow ignorance, pretention to authority, or complexity to intimidate you. Not perhaps the trademark Socratic method, but when EJFJ took us into the same territory it wasn’t strange. Which may not, of course, produce anything resembling an elite of Guardians. But it was as good a way as any then available to equip a generation of “Guardian” readers for life in the Anthony

Burgess novel, or succession of them, of the next fifty years or so.

Dubai OM Section

I was recently transferred to Dubai for a two year stint by my firm and was surprised to find that despite our ubiquity there is no OM’s chapter out here. I was wondering if any fellow OM’s might be interested in a get-together. If you would be my e-mail address is imranahmed@cantab.net I’d be happy to organise a few suitably bibulous get-togethers.

Imran Ahmed (1989-1996)

Developments in the Development Office

At the end of May we sadly said goodbye to Carole Pemberton, who has taken (very!) early retirement after just over 5 years as Development Secretary and Development Office Manager. Always calm, cheerful and the consummate professional, Carole had got to know very large numbers of Old Mancunians. Representatives of the OMA and the Editor of TOM attended a farewell lunch to wish her a happy and fulfilling retirement. Julie Wright has joined us as Development Office Administrator. A former Coutts employee, Julie is looking after the records of all our kind donors and will also be involved in events like Benefactors’ Lunch in October and the annual Reunion in May.

Simon Jones, Old Mancunian and teacher in the MGS Geography Department, has taken up a two-year, part-time post as Assistant Director of Development. He will be helping with all our activities and leading some new initiatives, as we start to formulate plans for our 500th birthday in 2015, now only one school generation away.

Thank you

Mr N Smith (History Department) would like to express his deep gratitude to all those OMs who contributed to the making of the documentary on MGS and World War Two. Unfortunately, it was not possible to draw on every contributor’s experiences in the docu-

cluding the opportunity to sponsor a (comfortable!) seat in the new theatre. A limited number of the original seats have been preserved – further details from i.thorpe@mgs.org.

“It’s Yer Responsibility”

Eric James was not everyone’s intellectual and ethical model, but he was mine. He urged excellence, and above all the obligation that privilege should express itself through service. He was the equal of my whitesmith, blacksmith, locksmith grandfather, who alone in that family of rural craftsmen did not see me as a failure because I was clumsy with my hands. The two men had the same standards in different fields of endeavour. What I gained from both was the need and the ability to find my own individual way, and to follow it. This led to a paradox.

In the 1950s, the question asked by MGS of its academically inclined boys was: Oxford or Cambridge? We were on a predestined track. However, I had been taught so well that I was able to work out at Oxford that I was on the wrong train, and did what was then the unthinkable. I jumped off before it had picked up too much speed.

A year later, having found the isolated hovel in which to work, on a visit to the Central Library I thought I would avail myself of some comfort by using the lavatory of Kendal Milne. In the stall next to me was Eric James. He said, “What are you doing, apart from the obvious?” His eyes showed that he was not going to be put off. I spoke what could not be said: “I’m going to write.” “Good. I’ve always hoped I would get one.” The obligation that Eric James had put on me at school extended beyond my need to write.

It gave me no alternative but to spend my adult life also in the service of the hovel. Within days of entering upon the place I knew that it was a medieval timber-frame hall, and soon it became apparent, through

gardening and through walking the land, that it was also an important archaeological site. The place had survived the centuries and the millennia, with an occupation going back ten thousand years to the end of the last Ice Age. The demands of a growing family led to the need for drains. How to achieve that and to add another room without damaging the medieval structure? It was resolved by taking a Tudor timber-frame, which was about to be demolished, dismantling and repairing it and linking its ten rooms to the medieval eight. The next duty was to protect the site from the depredations of those that would come after, without losing its humanity. A place of so much living must not be set in cultural aspic. The solution has resulted, over forty years of planning, in The Blackden Trust. It has been a time of dancing on ice floes.

The Blackden Trust is a Registered Charitable Trust for the support of creativity, study, education and research. It has been active for the past two years, and has attracted some of our finest archaeologists and historians, who give freely of their time and knowledge. It is an extension of the MGS ethos, and has opened doors for students (including MGS boys) that want to learn. What is lacking, and much needed, is help, in the form of advice, from commercial and legal minds of vision, in order to underpin idealism with professional experience and skills. If any OMs should think this to be an interesting cause, do visit

www.theblackdentrust.org.uk If you like what you see, please get in touch.

The purpose is that, through the past, we may bring about the future. The future is our responsibility.

Alan Garner (1946-53)

Report on Walking for Emmaus

I completed the walk in exactly nine weeks and didn’t have a full day of rain during that time which is very hard to believe given the weather we have had since June! It never

seems to have stopped!

I raised in excess of £6000 and would like to thank all Old Boys who contributed to the success of the venture and for the very many letters and e-mails received. I have tried to reply to every one but if you haven't received a reply please accept my apologies - it was an oversight.

John Willson and Alan McDonald assisted me through the Cairngorms as we camped this section in true trekking style. On the second day of this section we had to make an unscheduled river crossing when a bridge shown on the OS map clearly hadn't existed for some years! Fortunately the river was low and the weather was fine.

Ian Orrell (1973-2007)

Wisdens

A big thank you to all the OM's who so kindly donated copies of Wisden to the archive collection. We now have nearly a full set with just a few gaps. If you happen to have any of the editions for 1956, 1957, 1961, 1964 and 1966 and would like to donate it we could complete our set.

Jeremy Ward (Archivist)

OM LETTERS:

PS Commitments

The April 2008 edition has again given me pleasure and one comment in particular reminded me of an incident in my first year at MGS. It still makes me smile when I think back and, who knows, it might amuse other OMs.

The Scene: 1A in their form room with a (history?) lesson by Harold Plant.

One member of the form had seriously upset him and had crossed a boundary!

"Go to PS tonight!" he was told.

"Sorry Sir, I'm there for Mr Hyslop"

"All right, tomorrow night then"

"Sorry Sir, Mr Cuggy"

"Friday night then"

"Sorry Sir, Mr Lingard"

"Take a Saturday Morning. I've lost patience

with you!"

"Sorry Sir, Mr McGuire"

"PS on Monday next week?"

"Mr Hyslop again, Sir"

"And when is your next free evening?"

"A week on Wednesday, Sir"

"Fine. Go to PS then."

The details may be slightly at variance with the facts but the main line of the story is spot on. I leave you to imagine the reaction of the rest of the class.

The "boy" concerned may still be alive so I will not name him.

Best regards and keep up the good work.

Jim Barrow (1943-50)

"Being nice"

Continuing the theme of MGS staff "*being nice*" and raised by Chris Knott (1969-76) in the April 2008 copy of TOM, I would like to relate my experiences. In early 1988, I sustained a serious injury and I was in hospital for many months. As John Willson did for Chris Knott in the 1970's, so Godfrey Jackson (Maths) did for me in the 1980's. Mr Jackson's many visits to me in hospital brought old exam papers for me to work through and he took away for marking, work I had done. Without his support and encouragement before the maths GCSE exam and amanuensis role in it, I certainly would never have achieved the "A" grade which I was awarded. I too shall be forever grateful to a number of MGS staff for their support over many months but Mr Jackson's early involvement in particular, proved a springboard for my return to MGS later that year. I am sure it was never in doubt but OM's, let us remind ourselves that on the MGS staff there were (and presumably still are) many "*very nice*" people!

Jonathan Fogerty (1984-91)

Memorial Hall Memories

The last issue of The Old Mancunian reminded me of two untypical occasions when I figured prominently on the platform of the

Memorial Hall. The first was in July 1937: the last day of the School year: my last day at school and I was the platform prefect. I could not resist the temptation to announce a reading from the Epistle of James. A titter ran round the ranks below, which of course I stilled with a stern and disapproving look. It was a blissful moment.

The second was in November 1973; by then I was a senior MOD official. Allegedly, MGS were not all that welcoming to School Liaison Officers, offering the attraction of careers in the Forces. I'll see to it, said Peter Mason but in return I'd like you to address this morning assembly. What a prospect! A thousand boys aged 11 to 18; don't know you from Adam; how could one possibly get and hold their attention. Then I remembered the 1937 occasion. Why not compare what was news then with what was happening now. The Guardian staff were very helpful and the contrasts and similarities that emerged were obvious. In 1937 trouble between Jews and Arabs in British mandated Palestine; in 1973 the Yom Kippur war had just ended. 1937 Manchester City Council was arguing with Whitehall about the cost of air-raid shelters. In 1973 the argument was about education funding. 1937 disputes in the cotton industry and farming; pitifully low wages compared with 1973. 1973 Heath and Joe Gormley had clashed over miners pay; Joe won. 1937 Hitler's shadow was spreading over Europe; he'd occupied Austria earlier in the year. 1973, the Cold War was still very chilly. These events, I mentioned others, were the Address and the boys seemed to appreciate it which was nice of them.

T C G James (1928-37)

Jim Brennan 1948 - 55 writes:

The EJJF described in the current "OM" is pretty recognisable all right. But there were different perspectives. One's first impression — at the entrance examinations, for example — was of a distant, gowned, im-

mensely authoritative figure who could quell the assembly hall chatter with a single instruction, followed by "Let it stay like that" to the awed silence. But it didn't, of course. And the "Eric James" of the BBC Northern Region Radio "51 Society" would in time take the Modern Side Sixth Forms through Plato, from the "Symposium" to the "Apology" and the "Republic" and discuss by way of justifying philosophical enquiry, what it felt like to wake up in the London sleeper around Watford and wonder "What an earth am I doing here?". Does anyone then present recall his reaction walking into a Plato class in late autumn of 1956, the morning after Eden had given the go-ahead to land at Suez? By the time reports of it had reached Oxford, it was two devastating sentences (the first of which was, "Well, he's done it!") followed by "Now let's turn to 'The Republic'". He once invited the Play-Reading Society of my day-an offshoot of Bert Parnaby's Drama Society — to read of all things, "Caesar and Cleopatra" with him in his study. Memory says he read Caesar, but I don't recall who represented Shaw's Cleopatra. Memory also suggests there was tea, served in impressive china, but perhaps memory overdoes things. And "I am a very bad driver. The result of which is that I hardly ever drive". Unimaginably grand, certainly, but another result was, for me, the scorer, a trip in the High Master's very upright chauffeur-driven Daimler (if it wasn't a Rolls) to Edinburgh, to play George Watson's, Fettes and Loretto when the 1955 cricket tour coincided with that year's rail strike.

I wonder how much of my own picture of "EJJF" is actually a composite of other people's "Lord James of Rusholme" refracted through, for example "The Rise of the Meritocracy" ("so that was what all that Plato was really about, was it?") They, some OM's among them, pointed out that we were all