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London & South East Section

Clive Garston (1955-62) was elected Chairman at the AGM in November which was attended by around 45 OMs including a healthy student contingent from the 2000 & 2001 entries. Clive outlined a busy programme of events for 2009 including a pub evening on Thursday 29 January at the Cittie of Yorke, High Holborn from 18:30 and the biennial Concert on Friday 13 March at St. John's Smith Square. There were a record 8 entries submitted for the £500 music composition prize which was won by Oliver Pooley for his composition *Kaleidoscope*. *Kaleidoscope* will be premiered at the Concert on 13 March and all OMs, family and friends are encouraged to support the boys performing by attending. All OMs are welcome to attend London & SE Section events. Contact the Secretary Nick Gartside at Nicholas.gartside@schroders.com for further details.

South West Section

Having had a very successful Autumn Meeting at the Fleet Air Arm Museum on 18 October 2008, our next event is on Sunday 21 June 2009. This is the Annual Commemoration Service for Hugh Oldham held in Exeter Cathedral. We attend Mattins in the Cathedral which is followed by the short Commemoration Service. We then adjourn to the Southgate Hotel for lunch after which the newly elected School Captain and the High Master speak. All Old Mancunians are most welcome to attend and should contact John Smith, the SW Section Secretary, for further details e-mail John Smith at johnsmith@chyanmor.wanadoo.co.uk or phone 01275 843349

20/30 Club

We start 2009 with James Welsby elected as this year's Chairman for our 63 members. Last year, under the chairmanship of Stewart

Platts, our speakers' topics included "Astronomy" and "Assyrian Kings". If you would like to attend one of our meetings as a guest, please mail alex_wells@Tiscali.co.uk or phone 0129 881 2886 for details of the next meeting - usually the 3rd Friday of the month - at the Freemasons Hall, Bridge Street, off Deansgate, Manchester.

Since the last *TOM* we have been advised of the recent deaths of the following OMs: We would welcome offers to supply brief obituaries for *Ulula*. The asterisk shows that an obituary is already in preparation.

D I Hartley (45-52) T E Caro* (44-48)
D I Lande (43-46) A B Marshall* (47-53)
R Ellwood (40-45) L R Ogden (37-43)
AV Shufflebottom (38-40) AT Davy (34-41)
M Bagshaw (52-58) K H Walker (23-29)
D V Garnett (28-32) D A Cooper (57-64)
K M Shorrocks (37-42) W Bowman (31-36)
L S Brotherton (32-35) K B Norris* (26-29)
W N Handley (32-34) B Drewery* (34-37)
S L Royce (34-42) C E Oakley (40-43)
J Binner (40-46) R B Quarmby* (30-36)
A R Cowlshaw (49-55) G Epstein (34-39)
T M Richardson* (51-56) C E Jagger (63-70)
M J Sieff (25-27) F Gandy* (37-43)
T J Marshall (37-44) F B Burgess (42-47)
C G Bridgman (38-44) R Trueman (34-41)
D N Wood* (50-55) J Baddiley (29-37)
P J Lehmann (56-63) J R S More (47-53)
D N Swann (52-59) C G Hilton (33-38)
P M Brothers (31-35) J Thornley (49-56)
G P Morton (33-39)

We have also been informed of the death of a past member of staff:
P A Gardiner (50-54)

Correspondence to Julie Wright at MGS, Old Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XT
(j.wright@mgs.org) 0161 224 1746 or to John Horsfield at School. Closing date for the next edition is 27 March 2009.



January 2009

The Old Mancunian

Edition 30

EDITOR'S NOTES

In this edition Stewart Platts commemorates the OM connection with Miss Horniman's repertory theatre. Several events last Autumn in Manchester marked the centenary of her purchase of the Gaiety Theatre, including an exhibition at the Portico Library. In this exhibition was an extract from 'The Howl', a finely produced magazine from MGS dated March 1939. There were apparently only two issues of 'The Howl' but one suspects that over the years various quality magazine productions (not forgetting *Ulula*) have surfaced at MGS. Long ago I heard that some MGS magazines in the 1930s were sold at public bookstalls. It would be very interesting to hear more on this topic.

Brian Taylor gives guided tours of MGS to OMs. It was very good to meet at the end of one of these Richard Underwood (1944-49) from Victoria, Australia. He recalled German Prisoners of War interned in Birchfields Park. They were all called Fritz by MGS boys! He also gave an interesting explanation as to why Billy Hulme abandoned his use of wooden spoons.

By coincidence, last Autumn I came across two novels in both of which MGS has but one mention, yet is obviously a significant factor in the lives of leading characters. The first novel is Howard Spring's 'A Sunset Touch' published in 1953. Its main character Mr Menhemiot attended what was obviously Long Millgate MGS. The second novel which is by Sandra Levi 'Rites and Wrongs' is set in more recent times.

These slight references have set me thinking. What about a novel substantially set in and based on MGS? But examples of other school centred novels are not altogether auspicious. Horace Vachell's 'The Hill', though

set in a golden glow, is Harrow warts and all. Alec Waugh's 'The Loom of Youth' caused such controversy at Sherborne that his younger brother Evelyn had to go to Lancing.

John Horsfield

FROM THE HIGH MASTER

Dr Christopher Ray

Enclosed with this mailing is the School's Annual Report for the academic year 2007/08. This is a new venture for us. Previously information about the activities of the school, academic and extra-curricular, has been released through *Ulula*, through the website and through various newsletters. I hope the Old Mancunians find the summary report of interest – but *Ulula* (sent to all paid-up members of the OMA) will still provide the essential detail behind many items and our website will still provide news of more recent events. Any comments on the form or content of the Report will be very welcome: highmaster@mgs.org provides an easy way to reach me.

One of the reasons behind the publication of the Report related to our concerns that League Tables published by newspapers and others misrepresent schools and their achievements. If education was simply about examination results then we would all be very much the poorer for that; and, indeed, as I have noted before, the results published by examination boards do not necessarily represent an accurate picture of the performances of candidates.

Each year, the School draws the attention of one or more of the various examination boards (now called awarding bodies) to our concerns about the quality of marking. Each year, many of our pupils ask individually for their papers to be remarked.

This year challenges were made to the marking of 243 GCSE and 43 A-level papers. As a consequence of these challenges, there were 154 mark and 49 grade changes for GCSEs and 25 mark and 6 grade changes for A-levels. This degree of change indicates that not all is well on the marking front, especially at GCSE standard.

The root of the problems lies within the criteria available to schools to appeal against awarding body decisions: a problem must be found with the procedures adopted by the relevant awarding body. Even when schools provide documentary evidence showing that the standard of examining varies wildly from year to year, appeals relating to outcomes rather than process are dismissed.

I am now discussing with the heads of other academic independent schools how we might mount a robust and collective challenge to this annual travesty which sadly affects the life chances of so many young people.

Two years ago the character of science GCSEs changed. Many academic schools reacted with huge concern as the science subjects were made more 'relevant' and more 'accessible' for pupils. Whilst this change had advantages for the less academically inclined, the challenges facing more able pupils diminished significantly.

MGS and many other highly selective schools moved to the International GCSE programmes for Biology, Chemistry and Physics. We had already adopted the IGCSE Mathematics course three years ago, abandoning the banalities of the home-based course. So far, the impact of moving to more challenging courses has been very encouraging indeed: the increases in the numbers of the top A* grades awarded in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics have ranged from 7% to 21%. Such improvements have been noted in other academic schools too. Having made the sciences more straightforward, the awarding bodies for

home-based qualifications are to introduce revised courses in September 2009 for all subjects other than English, Mathematics and ICT. The changes to these subjects will create an obstacle course more like a combination of low hurdles and dressage than a steeplechase: it is hard for teachers to avoid teaching to the test when the main challenge is understanding just how pedantically pupils will be assessed by the examiners (whose subject knowledge can appear woeful when compared with the best of our boys).

Our primary aims at GCSE are to ensure that our boys are well-prepared for their sixth-form careers and to lay down the foundations which will be needed when they go on to the very best universities. The new GCSEs threaten our ability to do those jobs well. It is little wonder that schools like MGS are now considering a shift to IGCSE courses wherever this is possible.

OLD MANCUNIAN AND MISS HORNIMAN'S GAIETY THEATRE

Ben Iden Payne⁽¹⁾ won a Foundation Scholarship to Manchester Grammar School in 1893 and during his five years at the school he became a leading member of the Dramatic Society. While still at school he obtained a temporary walking-on role with Sir Frank Benson's company. He went straight from school into the theatre and by 1906 he had been appointed director of The Irish National Theatre (The Abbey) which was funded by Miss Horniman. When she decided to found a repertory theatre in an English or Scottish city it was Payne who suggested that she should choose Manchester for her new venture.

The new company which Payne formed with Miss Horniman's financial support put on its first productions in the theatre in Manchester's Midland Hotel before Miss Horniman purchased the Gaiety Theatre in 1908. Payne quickly built up a company of experienced actors who soon established a reputa-

personal experience he can bear witness to James' superlative decency, fairness, gentlemanliness, kindness and supportiveness.

1970-79 REUNION DINNER

Saturday 9 May 2009

The Committee met for the first time last month and they are trying to track down as many "lost owls" as possible. Everyone from the era should now have received a "lost owl" booklet. Please contact Jane Graham j.graham@mgs.org if you have any contact details or are interested in attending.

OMA MEMBERSHIP

Existing Members

We do hope that you have enjoyed reading *Ulula*. Should your 2008/09 subscriptions remain outstanding please remit to Julie Wright at school as soon as possible.

Non-Members

Why not join the Old Mancunians' Association? Members 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 at www.oldmancunians.org. Paper copies are available contact Julie Wright at school.

FOUNDERS' AND BENEFACTORS' DAY

In recent years we have become used to holding Founders' and Benefactors' Day on the final Friday of the Michaelmas half-term in late October. In 2009 the event will take place a little later, on Friday 13 November. The format of the day will be similar to that of previous years, and invitations to the lunch at School will be sent to Benefactors as before.

MGS STUDENTS RAISING MONEY FOR THE BURSARY APPEAL

The current upper sixth students are aiming to raise £25,000 for the MGS Bursary Fund during the Lent Term 2009. The boys have already successfully raised nearly £2,000 by organising a 'Fantasy Football League' and

an 'MGS Superstars Challenge'. The students are hoping that by holding an Auction of Promises, this will allow them to raise a substantial sum towards their goal and to this aim are enlisting the support of Old Mancunians. Further details can be found within the enclosures of this mailing.

Charlie Reid (Form 13X)

SECTION EVENTS

Midlands Section

The OMA Midlands Section held its Annual Luncheon and AGM at The Forest Hotel, Dorridge on 15 November under the Chairmanship of Dan Binnion with 22 members and guests attending. We were delighted to welcome the High Master and Mrs Ray, Ian Thorpe, Tim and Marjorie Hall and Eoin Walshe (School Vice Captain) as our principal guests. The High Master reported on aspects of current School activities. He was supported by Eoin Walshe who gave an accomplished presentation on the development of the new Junior Section, Bexwyke Lodge for which he has special responsibility. This created a great deal of interest and many questions were asked including topics such as bursaries, the school day, staffing and entry into the main School.

The AGM followed in which the accounts were approved and a further donation to the second year Shakespeare Festival was agreed. David Franks resigned as auditor and was thanked for his service over the years. Chris Diggins offered to fill the role which was accepted by the meeting. Otherwise the committee was re-elected en bloc. Finding new members is an on-going problem (as with many organisations) and help from the School will be sought. If readers of this live in the Midlands please do get in touch.

A few members continue to meet at The Old Joint Stock, Temple Row on the first Tuesday of the month. New members and their ladies will always be welcome to join us. Please contact in advance Secretary, John

Mancunian before I set off on my solo row across the Atlantic at the start of this year, I wanted to get back in touch to say that I MADE IT!!

The journey started on 12 January when I rowed out of San Sebastian in la Gomera (just off Tenerife) and finished 78 days later when I rowed into English Harbour Antigua, 3403 miles, 4 storms, 1 roll, 3 capsizes and 2 broken oars later. I'd also gone from a healthy 13 stone to a slightly emaciated 10 st 10. Still, I'd seen sperm whales, humpback whales, pilot whales, pods of dolphins, millions of flying fish, frigate birds and had managed to row myself an eighth of the way around the world and navigate into a harbour mouth 100ft wide totally unaided.

There were some fantastic times such as lying on the decks during a pitch black and totally still night looking up at the Milky Way, floating over the Mid Atlantic Ridge three miles below me and knowing there was nobody to be found for 1000 miles in any direction. There were also some truly terrible times. During one storm, I was locked in the watertight (and airtight) cabin for 3 days whilst I was smashed from side to side as I lay strapped to the floor hoping the boat would hold together. On another occasion, I woke to find a tanker bearing down on me at 20 knots only hundreds of yards off and had to row like an animal to get out of its path. Towards the end, I was hit by a freak wave that buried the boat underwater for 2 or 3 seconds and snapped off the drogue that was supposedly keeping me safe. I was lucky in that I was in the cabin at the time. Had I been on deck, that would have been the end. I've certainly learned a lot from the experience - that you can do more or less anything if you are willing to try hard enough, that it's not in fact a small world and that it's better to fly to the US next time you need to pop over. The expedition raised several thousand pounds for Christies and MGS was generous

in being one of the sponsors of the expedition, for which I'm extremely grateful. Ian Thorpe even sent some amusing quips to my sat phone to keep my spirits up during the darkest times.

The expedition website is www.soloatlantic.com and it has loads of photos and videos and a diary detailing each day of the adventure.

Anthony Taylor (1988-95)

ECONOMICS AT MGS

This year, Economics is available to year 12 students to study at AS level or as part of the IB programme. Across the two qualifications, we have 52 students and this will increase not only through the new Sixth Form intake in September but also as the subject is established in the curriculum. Boys are enjoying this new area of study and are engaged by the issues, policies and strategies employed by the government, firms and individuals. This interest has been enhanced by the global nature of the subject and the economic events of the past few months.

Economics is a social science which requires practical application and understanding. Without this element the subject does not fulfil its potential to give students a broader appreciation of the world around them and the opportunities for their future. Students have benefited from talks from Old Mancunians about their own career progression and relevant experience and the opportunity to ask questions about their field of expertise. With this in mind, should you be able to support MGS to bring the world of economics, business and finance to life by working with our students please contact us, we would love to hear from you! E-mail

h.howard@mgs.org or in writing to school.

MEMORIES OF ERIC JAMES

George Allen (1948-54) comments on criticism of Lord James and writes that Eric James' academic credentials were of extremely high quality and that from his own

tion as one of the best in the country.

In the early years of the century Manchester had an active intellectual and cultural life being the home of the Hallé Orchestra and the Guardian newspaper as well as a number of large theatres. A group of younger art and theatre lovers formed a luncheon club, the Swan Club and also the Manchester Playgoers Club and the Manchester Musical Society. Leading lights in this group were a number of Old Mancunians, including Jack Kahane⁽²⁾, Harold Brighouse⁽³⁾ and Stanley Houghton⁽⁴⁾. Payne quickly established himself in this circle. He obtained help from the Manchester Playgoers Club and soon became a member of the Swan Club.

Harold Brighouse sent Payne three of his one act plays and one of them was produced at the Gaiety in 1909. He and Payne remained friends for many years and it was Payne who directed the first production of "Hobson's Choice" in New York in 1915. Payne recalls how he was chatting with Brighouse and Houghton and the phrase Hobson's Choice came up. Payne remarked that it would make a good play title and suggested that one of the two budding playwrights should write the play. On the toss of a coin Brighouse won and went on to write a minor masterpiece.

Stanley Houghton, another OM and member of the Manchester School of dramatists provided a number of plays for Payne to present at the Gaiety although it was after Payne had moved on that Houghton's masterpiece "Hindle Wakes" was first presented in 1912. Another OM playwright was Gilbert Cannan⁽⁵⁾, who wrote 14 plays, 28 books and many poems and articles by the time he succumbed to ill health at the age of 40. In 1910 his two act play "Miles Dixon" was put on at the Gaiety on the same night as Houghton's "The Younger Generation".

This leads on to the important role played by Manchester based theatre critics. The two

leading writers on the Manchester Guardian were C E Montague and Allan Monkhouse, who was also a playwright and had plays put on at the Gaiety. Brighouse and Houghton also provided the Guardian with drama criticism. However perhaps the most remarkable critic was another OM-James Agate⁽⁶⁾. He made his name on another Manchester paper before moving onto the Guardian and then in the 1920's to the Sunday Times where he was the country's most influential theatre critic.

Payne acted in quite a number of plays at the Gaiety as well as directing them. Perhaps his most successful part was Mr Puff in Sheridan's "The Critic". Another OM who acted in the Gaiety Company was Milton Rosmer⁽⁷⁾ who went on to a very long career in film directing and acting.

There is no doubt that the seven years after 1907 were a golden age of theatre in Manchester. While there were four or five other professional theatres in the city presenting the great travelling companies of the period the central drive was provided by the Gaiety. Under the brilliant direction of Payne and then Lewis Casson and with a fine company of actors the theatre put on many challenging plays by Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy as well as works by the Manchester School of dramatists.

The role of Old Mancunians in this world was remarkable. The pivotal character was Ben Iden Payne but MGS dramatists, actors and critics, in particular Houghton and Brighouse, played a key role. Enthusiastic supporters were also important. Typical of this group was Jack Kahane who when a member of the committee of the Manchester Playgoers Club brought Galsworthy and Edward Gordon Craig to lecture in Manchester. Many of these individuals came together in the Swan Club which moved to premises opposite the Gaiety and various members of The Company including Basil Dean and

Esme Percy used to attend its meetings.

(1) Ben Iden Payne (1881-1976) Son and grandson of Unitarian ministers MGS 1893-1898 Foundation Scholar. Actor and Director in Dublin, Manchester, Stratford etc. Taught in University drama departments in various US universities including Pittsburgh and Austin Texas. In University of Texas a theatre is named after him as well as a series of annual drama awards established in 1963. An expert in staging Shakespeare in modified Elizabethan format. Autobiography "A Life in a Wooden O" Member of the Swan Club.

(2) Jack Kahane (1887-1939) MGS 1893-1899 Foundation Scholar. Novelist and publisher. A founder of Swan Club.

(3) Harold Brighouse (1882-1958) MGS 1893-1899 Foundation Scholar. Dramatist and novelist. Autobiography "What I Have Had". Founder member of Swan Club.

(4) Stanley Houghton (1881-1913) MGS 1896-1897 Dramatist and theatre critic. A founder member of the Swan Club.

(5) Gilbert Cannan (1884-1955) MGS 1896-1902 Foundation Scholar, Novelist, dramatist and translator. Biography "G.C.A Georgian Prodigy" by Diana Farr.

(6) James Agate (1877-1947) MGS 1893-1895 Drama critic and diarist (the "Ego" series of books).

(7) Milton Rosmer (Arthur Milton Lunt) (1881-1971) MGS Prep. Actor in Gaiety Company, then long career in films as actor and director.

Stewart Platts (1946-51)

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

MGS never quite lets you go. You have to accept that. Even so, a performance on the evening of Armistice Day, 2008, at the Temple Church in the heart of legal London seems worth recording as an instance of the lingering influence of the School. The occasion was a series of readings drawn from *The Winter of the World*, an anthology of poems

of the First World War. The readings were introduced by one of the editors, Dominic Hibberd, once of the MGS English Department (1965-70), a radical editor of *Ulula* and a fine comic actor – his performance as one of the maiden aunts in a staff production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*, for many, was definitive (alongside Schofield's Lear, perhaps, or Olivier's Richard III). Since leaving MGS, Dom has become the country's leading Wilfred Owen scholar – his biography of the poet was published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 2002. The new anthology, superbly produced, ranges far beyond the well known names, however. It is also the first collection to be arranged chronologically, through 1914 to 1918 and into the post-war period, offering a sense of shifting attitudes, year by year, towards the conflict.

What made this a remarkable MGS evening was that three of the five readers had been notable members of the Dramatic Society during the 1960s. Philip Bartle QC (1963) had arranged the evening. I well remember him (in the second year at the time) giving a stentorian and very funny reading of Bottom in an Open Day production of the mechanicals' play from *The Dream*; we were allocated a site among the bushes close to the Rectory – the first time Brian Phythian (1959-70) let me loose on a cast. Tom Coulthard (1963) made acting his profession – you may have caught him not too long ago being gleefully naughty in a commercial for something in a packet – I was too distracted by the performance to register the product; he and Philip were both in a junior school production of *My Three Angels* which Peter Jefferson (1963-70) and I directed. Graham Holliday (1962), the third MGS reader, is now the information manager for a large law firm in the City, and is a published writer. Graham spent four long years in my English lessons and we've kept in touch ever since. The other readers, no doubt impressed to be

in such company, were Sir David Eady, the judge in the Max Mosley case against *The News of the World*; and the actor Anne Harvey, herself a distinguished anthologist. The MGS presence did not finish there. In the audience were barristers John Reddish (1961) and Michael Patchett-Joyce (1969); Richard Longworth (1966) - now in advertising – played the title role in *The Admirable Crichton* in 1969, heading a cast which included the current director of the National Theatre as a perky under-housemaid: Fraser Steel (1961), no doubt a busy man as head of the BBC's serious programme complaints department; and Martin Wyn Griffith (1970), a civil servant whose mother Simone taught French at the School. And, since friendships between members of staff are sustained long after they have left the Common Room – and prompted by Philip Bartle's thoughtful emails – Patrick Miller (who taught Russian and RE from 1963 to 1969), Mike Benton (English, 1965-70) and I (English, 1961-69) were also there.

The readers were deployed at some distance from each other along the nave. They invested the poems with strong feeling and, where appropriate, with swift characterisation of the 'speaker'. All the poems were drawn from the anthology except for two written by brothers who had been choristers at the Temple Church; only one survived. Dom had expected an attendance of maybe 40 or 50 on a sharp November evening, but in fact there was barely a spare pew in the house; the readings and the setting offered some 400 people a powerful time of remembrance.

The Winter of the World edited by Dominic Hibberd and John Onions is published by Constable. Hardback, £25.00. Paperback £9.99.

Geoff Fox (1949-56 and Staff 1961-69)

MGS DIVING

In February 2008 MGS launched its own

BSAC Diving Club: Special Branch 2441. Our aim is to offer the opportunity to any interested members of the school to learn to dive and join in with diving trips in the UK and abroad.

We are very proud of the development of the club. Between February and June this year, fifteen teachers and parents of boys in school have been helped by Dr Peter Bowen-Walker (Head of Biology) and a wonderful team of instructors from our BSAC region, to reach Ocean Diver, Sports Diver or Assistant Instructor level. At the beginning of this academic year we were delighted to be able to invite members of year eleven and of the Sixth Form to join the club and in the New Year we will be in a position to welcome new members from year nine upwards. Obviously diving equipment needs to be of the highest quality and can therefore be quite expensive. At the outset, MGS provided us with money to purchase six sets of the essential kit of regulators, buoyancy compensators and air cylinders. Club members have been working hard to raise funds by washing cars and running try-dive sessions and the funds raised this way, together with more financial help from School, have allowed us to purchase six more full sets of kit. It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm of the club members bring about the expansion of this new and exciting venture.

We know there are many Old Mancunians out there who are keen divers and that many more of you would be interested in trying the sport for yourselves. We should like, therefore, to extend an invitation to you to come along and find out more about us. If you are interested, or feel you could support us in any way, please contact Jane Byrne (Head of Modern Languages) using the email address j.m.byrne@mgs.org. We will be delighted to hear from you.

REPORT ON SOLO ATLANTIC ROW

Further to the article I wrote for the Old