



The Old Mancunian

September 2006

Edition 23

EDITOR'S NOTES

We are sorry to note the death of a number of Old Mancunians including Richard Sinton who taught music for many years at MGS and the OMA Treasurer, Philip Johnson, who died on 4 June this year. We will greatly miss Philip's judicious counsel, quietly given. Obituary details of all OMs will be in this year's *Ulula*. In this issue Michael Crick, by invitation, has written a note on Old Mancunian Presidents of the Oxford Union. OMs have remembered recently "Daddy Griffiths" as we called him, who, as well as teaching maths was the Careers Master. He did have a phone in his classroom and he always wore a formal three-piece suit in the days when younger members of staff had taken to sports jackets and grey flannel trousers. He was unfailingly polite and altogether was a civilised entrée to the world of work. He used mnemonics as a teaching aid and I still retain the formula "Pat has brought his pony back."

Finally, OMs will be pleased to hear that a photograph of the whole school was taken earlier this year. The first time this has been achieved since 1935.

John Horsfield, Editor

FROM THE HIGH MASTER

Independent schools have come under increasing scrutiny by those in the government who are anxious about the charitable status granted to them. The new Charities Bill requires the independent sector to justify its privileged status by demonstrating how schools provide 'public benefit'. I have no doubt that the tremendous work done by MGS will enable it to pass this test. "MGS Contributing to the Community 2005-2006" can be consulted in the 'Info' section of

the School website at www.mgs.org.

From its foundation in 1515 to the present day, The Manchester Grammar School has been fully committed to giving its service to the wider community, both locally in Manchester and further afield. The provision of funds for bursaries is just one (albeit very important) way in which we serve. There is an immense range of contributions made both by the School and by individual members of the School. I was delighted when a government minister attending the most recent Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference praised MGS for the work it does in partnership with schools and other institutions in the Manchester area. We are proud that many schools look to us for inspiration and we will continue to encourage others to follow our lead. One recent example of our support for other schools in the region is the Hugh Oldham Lecture, attended by over 200 boys and girls from some twenty schools and sixth form colleges, as well as by 100 of our own boys. This year's lecture *Shakespeare and British History* was given by OM Michael Wood and was preceded by a dozen or so seminars and workshops on related themes. All present voted the occasion a huge success—and yet another example of 'good learning' in action.

On the last Sunday in June I visited Exeter Cathedral and Hugh Oldham's tomb to take part in the annual service and wreath-laying ceremony. I was delighted to see so many OMs attend the service and gather for lunch afterwards. I was also very pleased to be able to introduce this year's School Captain, David Leeming, for his first official duty.

OXFORD UNION

Congratulations to James Wise, who left MGS in 2004 and has been elected President of the Oxford Union for this Michaelmas term. So far as we can tell, he is the seventh OM to have held the presidency of the world-famous debating society, though the first in more than a quarter of a century. Between the Wars three OMs were President of the Oxford Union the space of just eight terms, from 1929 to 1931. Roger Wilson (Hilary term 1929), went on to an academic career and ended up as Professor of Education at Bristol University. His younger brother Geoffrey (Trinity, 1931) (later Sir Geoffrey) became a top civil servant, Chairman of the Race Relations Board and Chairman of Oxfam. In between, in Hilary 1930, the Union elected Edgar Lustgarten, who achieved fame as a journalist and broadcaster.

Basil Wigoder, later a QC and the Liberal Democrat peer Lord Wigoder, held the post in Hilary 1946. Ian Lyon, an active member of the MGS literary and debating society, was President of the Union in Hilary 1960 before going into journalism.

The Michaelmas term of 1979 saw an MGS double – with the future TV reporter Michael Crick serving as President in Oxford, whilst his great friend and contemporary, Michael Booth, (now a QC) presided over debates at the Cambridge Union. Crick and Booth had both been members of the MGS team which won the English Speaking Union national speaking competition in 1975.

Surprisingly, given its reputation as a cradle for politicians, only Basil Wigoder subsequently went into politics

(serving as Liberal Chairman and later as Chief Whip in the Lords). Wigoder stood as a Liberal candidate before he'd left university, though he never made it to the Commons. (Michael Crick 1969-76)

OLD MANCUNIAN IN SCOTLAND

Rob Mungavin would like to get in touch with other OMs in Scotland. Rob's request comes as a result of the 1960-69 reunion recently held at School. His address is 1 Front Street, Braco, Dunblane, Perthshire FK15 9PX

rob.mungavin@btopenworld.com

OLD MANCUNIAN IN NEW YORK

Fabian Friedland (1977-84) is interested in getting in touch with OMs living in New York with a view to setting up a "Chapter". Fabian's e-mail address is

fabian@nfriedland.com

JMB MEMORIES

If you have fond memories of success in examinations set by the JMB, you may be interested in an offer made by OM Mike Robinson to discount copies of a book he has reprinted: James A Petch's 'Fifty Years of Examining - the Joint Matriculation Board 1903-1953'. The 228 page volume can be purchased from Mike at 38 Broad Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 2BN for £9 UK, £10 Europe and £12 elsewhere including postage (all airmail).

75 YEARS ON

The move from the old school to Rusholme meant winners and losers. I was one of the former, my close friend Tom Normanton the latter. When I first went to the old school as a callow 10-year-old foundation scholar in 1929, I soon became prey to three great sources of worry. Firstly, it meant leaving my home in Levenshulme quite early and taking the tram into town. All would go well

until we reached the approach to Piccadilly, but there we met a long slow tail-back, and from then on I agonised whether to get off and run or stay on and hope. Inertia usually won and, in any case, there was really plenty of time, but I was an anxious small boy. Secondly, I hated school dinners down in the gloom of 'Cox's' in the basement. Thirdly came the arrangements for games. The school had two playing fields, one at Fallowfield, not far from my home, the other at 'The Cliff', at Kersal. Inevitably, I always had to go to Kersal. This meant taking a bus from under the arches of Exchange station, then walking what then seemed quite a distance. After the game, often cold and muddy, we only had cold water in washbasins to clean up, then I had the weary journey home - walk, bus, walk, tram, walk - misery on a dark winter's day!

Then, in 1931 it was to the new school and, for me, euphoria! It was only ten minutes from home by bike, so that I did not need to leave home much before 9 o'clock; I could go home to lunch; and after games on the school field I could soon be in a hot bath at home. Life was unbelievably transformed. But for poor Tom Normanton, who lived outside Rochdale, life became much harder. He came in on the train to Victoria station and was there on the doorstep of the old school; but for the new school, it meant the wearisome journey to and from Rusholme at the beginning and end of the day. Moreover, it was thanks to the fact that so many were in his situation that school began so, for me, delightfully late. He never really forgave me for repeatedly gloating over our reversal of fortunes. Geoffrey Stone (1929-36) stonecobbs@yahoo.co.uk

IOLANTHE 1939

References to Dicky Radford in the last two issues of *The Old Mancunian* reminded me of the production of 'Iolanthe' which he put on in 1939. As a

member of the Fairy Chorus I remember the event but can no longer recall the names of all the principals. Other ex-fairies, still tripping hither, tripping thither, have come up with the names Bennett, Hallsall and Moore among the boys, and I'm pretty sure of Billy Hulme and perhaps Mr Saunders among the masters, the former as the Lord High Chancellor and the latter as the Guardsman. Does anyone still have a programme that lists all the soloists? I've been reminded that Harry Lob was a member of the orchestra, wielding a double bass whose strings broke during one performance, to much amusement. Was *Iolanthe* a one-off or was it the last in a sequence of G & S shows? There were no more, at any rate, during the war years. John Battersby (1938-45)

CENSORSHIP

John Bentley's comment on the "rather eccentric censorship" views of Eric James brought a smile to my face. In 1957 I asked his permission to appear on a live Granada programme called "Youth Wants to Know", the special guest was Bernard Levin. Knowing his views that all things on "commercial" television were unacceptable, I was surprised he granted me permission with a proviso. Thus it was that Bamber Gascoigne introduced the programme by telling viewers that the audience was made up of girls and boys from Blackpool Grammar and Blackpool High as was the panel with the exception of "one boy from another school".

Thirty years later Granada gave me a copy of the programme and there I was, unidentified by school, but most clearly showing my school tie and blazer, both with prominent owls that the camera seemed to linger on.

David Kravitz (1950-58) david_kravitz@hotmail.com

TWO BRASS ANGELS

There used to be two brass angels screwed on to the MGS

memorial book plynth. It's the usual "don't know what you've got till it's gone" syndrome: I can't remember what they looked like. I hope there are either photos from the opening ceremony of the Memorial Hall in the 1930s or else architects' or sculptors' plans somewhere. It will be an interesting project for the Art and Design Department to recreate them. Anyway, nobody particularly noticed them, and then suddenly one day, I think ca 1969, they were gone. Peter Mason was absolutely furious about it and made an announcement in assembly demanding their return. Nothing happened. As far as I can remember, some weeks later, Mr Stone as Second Master made a much more placatory announcement, offering an amnesty in exchange for their return. Still nothing happened, and, as we see, they are still missing. More than that I do not know. There was a gang of three lads, a couple of years younger than me, who "hinted" that they had taken them, but I think this was only a matter of wanting to "look big" among their peers. Maybe the Old Mancunian readers could shed more light. George Battrick (1964-71) *Editor's note: presumably Roger Stone's amnesty is still on offer. But security was not such a pre occupation in those days. Perhaps it was an "outside" job.*

FOND MEMORIES

I joined the school on a foundation scholarship in 1947 and was placed in 1B with the inimitable Billy Hulme. I was fortunate in that Billy took a liking to me, and I was spared the wooden baking spoons. In spite of that, I have a vivid memory of the first lesson when he introduced us to his three friends, Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, and must confess that I joined in with my classmates whenever we were asked to nominate the appropriate spoon for an offence. I'm still not absolutely sure whether to regard Billy as a sadist or as an

entertainer, who wallowed in our reactions to his performance. Under Billy I won my one and only prize at MGS - the Procter Reading Prize (English). I still possess the bound edition of "The Master of Ballantrae" with its school crest on the cover and haven't really regretted the fact that I hadn't the courage to ask for the Manchester City FC year-book.

My first physics lesson with Harry Lowther is one of my clearest memories. He had arranged several cylindrical pieces of metal of different sizes and colours on the front bench and asked us which was the heaviest. I shot my hand up and said "They're all the same, sir." This answer (incidentally the correct one) was sarcastically dismissed as a totally unscientific answer and Harry seemed to take an instant dislike to me and I to physics from that point on. The only other unpleasantness I was subjected to at school came from the P.T. department. My offence must have been trivial, because I can't recall what it was, but I certainly do remember the punishment. With a fellow member of the form I was summoned to the gym in my lunch hour and made to change into gym kit and then forced to wait for about 20 minutes. The master in question then made us remove our shorts and touch our toes as he lashed us with a gymshoe. The pain and humiliation took a long time to fade. To protect his colleagues, I had better mention that his name began with 'C'. Those two incidents apart, I have fond memories of my teachers. Did Dickie Radford really teach singing to more than one form at once? We sang lustily, ignoring the instructions at the front of the MGS Song Book that we should "sing them with plenty of spirit, but be careful never to shout them. Shouting will ruin your voice, and the result is not music, but simply a very unpleasant noise." The

index lists amongst others English Songs (surprisingly including "The Blue Bell of Scotland") and Scotch (?) Songs. Is "Hugh of the Owl" still the school song? I remained on the Modern Side at school and went on to study languages. My German knowledge was based on a sound grammatical grounding from Jasper Bowden, but I am still amazed that he was able to persuade the whole form to sing songs about little roses on the heath and wishing one were a little bird. Not a firm disciplinarian, but a nice man, and I think this had something to do with our consent when it came to the singing. Arthur Shutt's laid-back style in the sixth form was a big contrast, but he did at least take me to Germany two years running for month-long camps. Meeting Gudrun and Anneliese did wonders for my motivation. My most inspiring teachers were Bert Parnaby and Terry John. The former was a talented actor and star of the "Pedagogues", and I later saw him as a greengrocer in an episode of "Last of the Summer Wine". On a visit to Germany earlier this year, I met Bob Higgins, a former MGS boy who just overlapped with my time there. Bob had a career on stage in operetta for a good number of years. At a social evening he introduced a sketch on stage and I was immediately reminded of Bert Parnaby. I asked him afterwards if he had known Bert, and he smiled and said "Yes, he was my inspiration." Terry John taught me French in the sixth form, and if my own teaching career had elements of Terry in it, then I am well satisfied. I can still see him bringing life to our literature lessons, "And here comes Quasimodo, swinging in like Douglas Fairbanks Junior." We looked at each other incredulously - Douglas Fairbanks Junior was so dated to us, but I'm sure that Terry was well aware of that. John Lingard didn't teach me,

but he was responsible for nurturing a love of classical music, as he ran a music society after school and sat there conducting as the 78 rpm records turned.

I am not proud of the way we treated Charlie Portal in his first year of teaching, but I was very pleased to hear later that he had overcome his initial difficulties and learned the art of disciplining adolescent boys.

Whilst at school I joined the School Scouts and for some reason was placed in Troop 5, the only one to be led by a non-teacher. Phil Stirrup was an enthusiastic scouter who gave up an enormous amount of time and energy in providing an enjoyable activity for us boys. On a Friday afternoon I would stay behind at school, eat a poached egg in splendid isolation in the refectory, then change into scout uniform and catch a couple of buses to Salford, where we held our meetings. I shudder to think that I used to cross Manchester wearing the old uniform (Canadian Mounties style hat) and actually arrived unmo- lested at HQ. I wouldn't fancy trying the same today. One highlight of scout meetings was when "Oggy" (John Ogdon) was persuaded to play the "Sabre Dance" on the battered old harmonium.

David Buxton (1947-54)

CAMPING IN GRASMERE AND BORROWDALE

Reference to the Grasmere camp in the April edition gave rise to some happy memories of wartime camps with Tommy Stott and an already frail Mr Crawshaw. August 1944 was my first ever trip to the Lakes. I remember being on fag, washing lettuce in the stream (above the barn), so well that a Marmite and lettuce sandwich takes me back there even today. The following year, we sat awestruck in the field, while one of the senior boys explained to us the physics of this new bomb that had been dropped on Hiroshima. In 2004, sixty years on, I took

my grandchildren to the site to show them where grandpa was introduced to the Lakes.

From 1946 to 1949, Ken Hilton and I transferred our allegiance to Hubert Field and Borrowdale. Also in charge of us in the rain were Messrs Clynes and Corbett. Highlights were the "Four Passes Walk" and forays up to Watendlath to annoy the MGS Scouts. Also imprinted on my memory is a day climbing on Great Gable. Ken Hilton and I cycled up to the youth hostel a couple of days early, not having told our parents or the School what we were about. If we had fallen off Napes Ridge (there was a hailstorm as we climbed) no one would have known—there were few people on the crags in those days.

Nine years later, my new wife and I were walking through Grange on our honeymoon when we met Sir Eric James, as he was then, and his son. My late wife loved to tell the story of how her manly guide became an instant schoolboy once again under the serious gaze of the High Master! David Hewett (1943-50)

THE OLD BOYS' DINNER

will be held on 18 November at School. The stewards will be Jim White of the Daily Telegraph and the Lancashire Captain, Mark Chilton. Contact Paul Rose for details 0161 835 3003 or

paul.rose@halliwells.co.uk

1950-59 JOINERS' REUNION

will be held on 5 May 2007 at School. Contact Carole Pemberton at School.

TROOP 2 REUNION will be held on 5 May 2007 at School. Contact John Stewart on 01524 701325 or

doc@gordon3.freeserve.co.uk

MIDLANDS SECTION

The Summer Luncheon was held on Saturday 17 June when 20 people, including members' wives, assembled at the Anchor Inn, Eckington, near Per- shore. Following an enjoyable buffet luncheon, David Rogers gave a fascinating account of his visits to China, entitled "China, yesterday, today and

tomorrow."

Members are asked to note that the Annual Luncheon and Annual General Meeting will take place at the Forest Hotel, Solihull, on 25 November this year. Further details will be sent out in October.

Informal luncheons continue to be held on the first Tuesday of each month at the Old Joint Stock Hotel in Temple Row in central Birmingham. New members and visitors will be most welcome. For details please contact Dan Binnion, Hon Secretary 01902 756894

LONDON & SOUTH EAST SECTION

Our next event is the AGM on 7 November at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, Fleet Street. All OMs are welcome. Details from the Secretary at nicholas.gartside@schroders.com

Around 50 members and friends of the London & SE Section of the OMA attended the Beating Retreat ceremony on Horse Guards Parade on Thursday 15 June. The Massed Bands of the Royal Marines provided an imposing spectacle on a beautiful evening in the presence of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on his 85th birthday. Later, around 30 of the party enjoyed dinner at the Players' Theatre Restaurant. Our thanks to Alec Elmer for organising the outing.

20/30 CLUB

We usually meet for lunch on the third Friday each month at the Freemasons Lodge on Bridge Street, off Deansgate in Manchester. After lunch a speaker talks to us for about half an hour. Recently Alan Dean spoke about moving the Halle orchestra into the Bridgewater Hall and in October Bill Simpson's subject will be the John Rylands library. In June we visited the School for a buffet lunch. We were joined by members of the staff and pupils who showed us some of their current activities. Their interest and enthusiasm were highly infectious! Guests and new members (OMs or previous members of

the school staff) are always welcome.

Contact Alex Wells
alex_wells@onetel.com

CHESS SECTION

A reminder that on Saturday 16 September the 20th OM chess tournament will be held.

Contact Peter Webster
peter@icthus.com

SOUTH WEST SECTION

The 40th Annual Hugh Oldham Commemoration Service was held in Exeter Cathedral on 25 June. 46 members and guests, including another strong party from School, attended. These were the High Master and his wife, Surmaster Stuart Leeming, Ian Thorpe, Carole Pemberton, Sally Rogers, teacher Simon Jones and the new School Captain David Leeming. Canon Neil Collings, conducted our standard Commemoration Service and in conclusion the High Master laid the wreath on the tomb.

We then adjourned to the Southgate Hotel. The High Master spoke about the strength and importance of extra curricular activities in particular drama. Finally, the Chairman explained that in his career in Forestry he had contributed, at least in some small measure, to meeting the final request he had received at School. This request had been voiced by Lady James who wanted the straight lines of dark alien conifers to be removed from her beloved Lake District.

The autumn event will be held in Plymouth on 4 November. We will start with lunch at the Royal Western Yacht Club, and after seeing the sights of the city. Then we will have a guided tour of the Royal Naval Base and its Museum.

Contact: John Smith 01275 843349

FOOTBALL SECTION

Old Mancunians AFC are in their centenary season. The club continue to operate 4 teams in the Lancashire Amateur League playing from the University pitches, across from the school. Training is held on

Tuesday nights at 6.30 p.m. either outside on Fallowfield, across the road from the School, or in the School sports hall. New players of all ability are more than welcome as the club aims to build on last season's success where the first team finished runners up in the premier league. Anyone wishing to join the club should come down to training or contact Mike Richards (07867 642 333) or Geoff Loughlan (07713 085 013).

MASONIC LODGE

Now entering its 101st year, the OM Lodge continues to flourish with a new youthful element providing a welcome stimulus to the Lodge's activities. Another busy year is scheduled and any non-Freemason, or anyone wishing to find out more about the Craft, is invited to get in touch. The wide age range of members, added to the informal social side of the meetings, makes for an excellent way to retain a connection with the School. For more details contact the secretary at m.j.walton@hotmail.com

BERKELEY SOCIETY

Hugh Mellor (1952-56)
DHM11@Cam.ac.uk would like to hear of any Old Mancunians who have memories of the foundation and early years of the Berkeley Society.

COMMUNITY ACTION

Ian Orrell has recently handed over the running of the School's Community Action programme to myself after 30 years. Ian has made MGS one of the country's leading exponents of Community work and it seems fitting to mark this watershed with something substantial and appropriate which will reflect his selfless dedication. As a result I am hoping to write a short history of Community Action at MGS, focusing primarily on the last 30 years, but also looking at what came before. It seems appropriate that the book should be based on old boy's experiences rather than a dry account of administrative procedure, and so I would greatly

appreciate any reminiscences and accounts of any Community Action work old boys took part in while they were at School. This is not aimed simply at those who were heavily involved, but also those who took a passing interest, so to reflect its true role in school life.

I am happy to accept material in any form—electronic or vellum, essays or scribbled notes and tape recordings. If anyone has any relevant photographic material which could be copied and returned I would be most grateful.

Ashley Hern, Master in Charge Community Action, MGS
a.hern@mgs.org

THE WORKING WORLD

Ronald Stephenson's interesting letter in the April issue caused me to think back to the MGS school-leavers, of whom I was one, in 1941. Just 15 years old and with two others from U4B, I was sent by Mr Griffiths (didn't he have an old fashioned phone in his desk?) to work at an old insurance company on Oxford Street. The starting pay, like Ronald's was fifteen shillings a week, so that must have been the going rate at the time. Not much left for my dear mother, after bus fares and lunches. The office was huge and solid; high desks and tall stools; a marble staircase, deemed the "holy of holies", going down to the main entrance where there was a replica of the Whitehall cenotaph. It was wartime, of course, and the other staff, mainly ladies, were very kind to the new boys; the remaining staff were older men, many disabled in WW1, the Great War as we called it then.

Years later, after serving in the RAF, I returned to the same office to pursue an actuarial career by correspondence with the Scottish Faculty of Actuaries. Many others, including several OMs, took the English Institute examinations, those successful in the Fellowship emerging with the letters FIA behind their name. Since those days budding mathematicians

who gained the FIA diploma had earlier been to University to become Masters of Arts. To them came the distinction of adding the combined letters MAFA behind their name. Do they include any OMs, I wonder?

Peter Brown (1937-41)
peterbrown@logic.bm

HATS

Ronald Stephenson's letter touched on the subject of headwear in the 1940s (service in the Armed Forces apart). His employment in Manchester required him to wear a top hat. In 1965 my career took me to the City of London. In those days it was still de rigueur for a bowler hat to be worn. These were expensive to buy and it was not unusual for hard up young bankers and insurance representatives etc to look for a second hand one. An enterprising salesman at a very high class firm of hatters in the City would offer to dispose of the old bowler when a businessman bought a new one which, after a bit of steam treatment at the back of the shop and a brush up he would sell on to one of our hard up young men at a knock down price of 7/6d. They were known as retreads "and very good they were too". Dress code conventions, in the City and elsewhere, have all but vanished and the mandatory wearing of bowler hats was waning by the late 1970s. This gave rise to a custom among those who resented the original headgear so that there was occasionally to be seen in front of the London Royal Exchange (usually after lunch on a Friday) a small group of young men doing a sort of Indian War dance around a bowler, each in turn ceremoniously stamping on this badge of office: this in celebration of the transfer of one of their numbers to where a more enlightened dress code prevailed.

John Evans (1939-44)

Correspondence to Carole Pemberton at MGS (c.m.pemberton@mgs.org) or to John Horsfield. Closing date for Christmas edition 6 November 2006.