



December 2006

# The Old Mancunian

Edition 24

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Billy Hulme is so prominent in the memories of many Old Mancunians that this magazine would never lack for material if it had a "Billy Hulme Corner" in every issue! Paul Temple, who served rather longer in the Bank of England than I did, recalls in this issue another MGS titan Albert Hyslop. Paul reflects on the trials and pleasures of MGS. Samuel Bamford the 19th century radical had a similar if shorter experience of MGS and remembered the great progress he made in English encouraged by the threat of caning if he did not arrive at School for a 7 am start.

Another pupil of long ago was Harrison Ainsworth, a loyal Old Mancunian. Many of you will have enjoyed as I did his historical novels. The John Rylands University library is attempting to raise £25,000 to purchase a complete set of his first editions plus his family and professional correspondence including that of Richard Bentley, his publisher, to whom he introduced Charles Dickens. Dr Stella Butler, Head of Special Collections at the Library, would be very pleased to hear of any Old Mancunian who may wish to help. She is at the University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PP and can be contacted at 0161 275 8739 or e-mail [stella.butler@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:stella.butler@manchester.ac.uk) I will keep you posted as to the progress of that Appeal.

John Horsfield, Editor

## FROM THE HIGH MASTER

It is August. The examination results are released, with records broken yet again, and the pundits make their move. "I am concerned about the lack of rigour in modular examinations." "Parents, teachers and young people must be sick and

tired of the doom merchants calling into question the efforts and achievements that exam results reflect." Under the editorial tag 'A-levelling down', one newspaper proclaims that "the value and integrity of British education is at stake." However, the quotations above were written, not in August 2006, but in 1996!

During the last ten years, we have seen steady improvements in the attainment for both GCSE and A-level examinations; and, each year, we have seen doubts expressed about whether or not such improvements reflect genuine progress.

With over 20,000 students achieving three or more A grades at A-level, it is worrying that universities are finding it increasingly difficult to discriminate at the top end—precisely where very many MGS boys will find themselves. Almost everyone involved with admissions agrees that the present situation is unsatisfactory.

During the last few years, many in the independent sector have become increasingly concerned about the challenges posed by the A-level programmes available to candidates.

Sir Mike Tomlinson was charged with a thorough review of education for 16-19 year old students. He recommended sweeping changes with the promotion of greater breadth. Many thought that the arrival of an 'English Baccalaureate' to rival the strength of the International Baccalaureate was imminent. However, these hopes were dashed.

Now the discussion too often focuses upon a continuing pre-occupation with methods of assessment rather than with education.

There are some encouraging signs that the Cambridge Inter-

national Examination Board may offer a new programme of A-levels which may provide adequate challenges for the more able. Many independent schools are enthusiastic partners in the venture (called the Cambridge Pre-U). Whether or not the Pre-U will possess the academic rigour, the coherence and the market strength of the International Baccalaureate is uncertain. But we shall watch carefully how matters develop. For us, the key issue is how we are to get the very best out of every boy in the Sixth Form. I believe that there is a place in our curriculum for A-levels, whether home-based or international. For those boys who wish to specialise eg in mathematics or in the sciences, I am sure that A-levels will continue to provide a firm basis for further study. However, for those with broader interests, I believe that we must now look to provide additional opportunities beyond the A-level curriculum and therefore towards the International Baccalaureate (IB).

Essentially the IB Diploma provides greater challenges and promotes breadth, but not at the expense of appropriate depth. It incorporates requirements in extra-curricular activities including service and leadership—thus providing a vital emphasis upon educating the whole person, a characteristic which resonates strongly with the ethos of MGS. No examinations are taken in the lower sixth year, allowing teachers to spend rather more time teaching and to focus upon developing understanding to the full.

Our students have terrific potential. We need to ensure that our sixth form curriculum is sufficient to meet all their needs. And we are lucky: we have a large enough Sixth Form to allow us to offer both

A-level and IB programmes and for both to thrive.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the School has acquired a property in the northern Pennines, within half an hour of the Lake District, which will provide an excellent base for outdoor activities and for study retreats. The Old School, at South Stainmore near Brough, was purchased with a gift provided by the tremendous generosity of an OM. The property needs considerable attention before we can use it to the full and we are now considering precisely what needs to be done. I am delighted that we have a third location through which we can stimulate a love of an involvement in outdoor life, with The Old School joining Grasmere and the Owl's Nest.

## SMITH SQUARE CONCERT

The third biennial Showcase Concert given by MGS musicians will take place at St John's, Smith Square on Friday 2 March 2007 at 7.30pm. The concert will be dedicated to the memory of Richard Sinton (Director of Music 1965-1993). It will again be hosted by the London & SE Section of the OMA, whose committee hopes to be able to share a drink after the concert with members of the audience in the Marquis of Granby public house in nearby Romney Street. Tickets (£10) are available only from the St John's Box Office: tel: (0)20 7222 1061 or online at <http://www.sjss.org.uk>

Ian Thorpe

Director of Development

## DRAMA CENTRE

## CAMPAIGN

A campaign to raise funds to rebuild the Lecture Theatre and provide additional resources for drama teaching and performance was launched in Manchester in October. OM

Nicholas Hytner, Director of the National Theatre, is the Chairman of our Campaign and spoke eloquently at the launch about the value to him of his time at MGS and the contribution of teachers like Brian Phythian. We shall be writing to OMs early in 2007 to explain the project. In the meantime, further details are available at [www.mgs.org](http://www.mgs.org)

Ian Thorpe  
Director of Development

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A railwayman's son and grandson, I joined Form 1A on a foundation scholarship in September 1947.

The first lesson every morning after Morning Assembly was French with the Second Master (Mr A Hyslop). On that first morning he limited himself to handing out copies of *Collins Part One French* and told us to memorise the first page of French text and the relevant grammar for testing the following day: "Marcel et Denise sont dans le jardin..." is imprinted on my memory to this day.

A feature of those first lessons each day was the queue of boys outside the door waiting to be walloped in front of us for assorted misdemeanours such as talking during the Morning Assembly. As a raw eleven year old from a gentle and protected family environment, I was terrified by these rough ritual humiliations of much older boys. We all came, however, to welcome them: the longer the queue and the more protracted the walloping, the less time was left for the rigorous homework-testing round the class. We were walloped elsewhere, of course, particularly in the gym and after swimming, but I do not recall any of 1A being beaten by Mr Hyslop.

The second or third lesson of the day was English. We were told to write an essay on *My Summer Holidays*. Top marks went to an account of spending the entire holidays from early until late each day working in a corner-shop in Rochdale. My

piece—on a family sailing trip round the Norfolk Broads—was, ominously, not returned, but appeared, to my astonishment, in the next issue of *Ulula*, giving me secret hopes of becoming a sailor like my uncle or at least a closet novelist like my father.

Lunch on the first day consisted of one sausage, potato mash and gritty, greasy lumps of compacted cabbage leaves which I had the greatest difficulty in swallowing. This was followed by suet pudding and anaemic pale yellow custard. There were penalties, we had been told, for not clearing the plate. Fortunately a 1A classmate, David J Murray, came to my aid. He must have been even hungrier than I was, undertaking to consume henceforth all my cabbage and any abandoned suet pudding in return for half of my sausage. A mystery to David and me concerned the Fortnightly List in Form 1A. This totted up all homework marks in all subjects in the previous two weeks and rearranged the class list in merit order. The top of the class earned the privilege of handing the List to the High Master at Morning Assembly and the bottom faced relegation to Form 1B. Everyone changed desks with the top boy in the left corner at the back and the worst directly in front of the master at the front to the right. Each term David and I started off in the middle of the class based first on the Entrance Exam ranking and then end-of-term exams and with each successive Fortnightly List we slid inexorably lower and lower towards the bottom. It took me about twenty years to realize that the great bulk of the middle-class boys were probably enjoying plenty of help with their homework and other stimulus at home. David, who was one year younger than anyone else in the class continued sweetly upwards in the A-stream through an open scholarship to Trinity, Cambridge and professorial posts in Queen's Univer-

sity, Kingston, Ontario. By the end of the second year, my downward track had just about reached the bottom and I was demoted to the B stream and not allowed to return for four years until I had won an open scholarship at Oxford.

Moving to the B stream was the best thing that happened to me in MGS. Gone was all the daily grind and competitive pressure. We had truly creative teachers led by Brian Giles, whose own volume of verse, *A Dead Sparrow*, was published by Abelard Schuman in London and New York to great acclaim. Two members of Upper 3B became lifelong friends, John Naylor, a Warrington solicitor of high repute and Christopher Wiseman who, inspired by Brian Giles, became a Professor of English at Calgary and a prominent Canadian poet with about a dozen published volumes to his name. Some of the poems are about his time at MGS. There were wonderful school camps in Grasmere and Borrowdale, school-arranged exchanges with a German boy in Cuxhafen and a French boy in Montmorency and encouragement at school to write and to read widely and to explore all manner of things in Manchester Central Library. I look back on this part of my school life as a period of intense happiness and joy. Brian Giles encouraged us always to have a notebook and pencil in our jacket pocket. "If you think something or someone is amusing or peculiar or exciting", he advised, "jot it down as quickly as you can, rough verse or prose—it doesn't matter. The important thing is to capture it while it is fresh in your mind". This I have done for 55 years transcribing at intervals anything of value into a large pile of black bound A4/foolscap notebooks. It is a very private treasure which has led me in all sorts of unexpected directions and which, in part-retirement, still gives immense pleasure.

Paul Tempest (1947-54)

### RICHARD SINTON

I was saddened to read of the death of Richard Sinton in September's OM. My years at MGS were Richard's last seven before retiring, and I have many fond memories of him. My first encounter with RTS occurred before my first term. He was hearing auditions for music bursaries, and while my mediocre piano performance was far from enough to merit any award, I hardly cared, for I'd been touched by Richard's power to encourage and by his sense of fun – qualities with which at eleven I could connect easily. On joining the school I remember Richard's voice tests, carried out form by form: for 1J the verdict, approximately, was 25 trebles, one alto and four defying classification, but he managed to coax a noise out of even the least musical, and all were welcome to join the Choral Society which shared the Mem. Hall stage with the school orchestra in termly concerts. The first concert of my time became a byword for infamy: Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* and an early entry from the brass, I think, which resulted in Richard's having to halt our confused, cacophonous flow and, infuriated, instruct us to take it from (more than likely) "figure F". A Sinton concert was always an event, and the next one was a triumph. For the launch of the new organ we performed Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* with guest soloists; bass Alan Ward pulled out sick at the last minute, but the day was saved by Edward Hughes, a teacher in the RE department, who learned the part in a day (in a toilet cubicle, it was said) and pulled it off with extraordinary authority. Richard's musical compass embraced many genres. He put great energy into the wind band, which met weekly and played occasionally at open days. Getting stuck into big band standards and the military band repertoire did bookish types like me no harm at

all, and Richard bred in us boys real respect for our individual contribution to the whole. I always think I learned a huge amount from Richard without his teaching me very much at all. Perhaps this is unfair. There were some gems. As a nervous middle school boy rehearsing for a solo performance, I remember his castigating me for having no idea how to start a piece of music. Only Richard could have delivered such a blunt observation in a spirit of such goodwill. Next lesson he provided the remedy, this being to clench one's buttocks together as tightly as possible for the last seconds before commencing so that the rest of one's body might be drained of tension. Going up to St John's, Oxford in 1993 as a choral scholar and being entrusted with the occasional solo by the then organ scholar Daniel Moulton (1984-91), and later having done my share of public speaking, how grateful have I been on so many occasions, Richard, to have been let into your secret! During his final years at MGS Richard's conducting became increasingly esoteric and hard to follow. For one of his last concerts he roped me in to play the timpani (for the first and only time) in Gordon Jacob's *Accordion Concerto*. Murray Grainger, the orchestra's established percussionist, was the soloist, hence a stand-in was needed. I can't imagine what it must have sounded like, but take a piece of music where, in parts, no two consecutive bars seem to have the same time signature, stir in a few ambiguous gestures from a musical director for whom beating time had never been a big priority, and finally chuck in an ill-prepared novice and put him in charge of a couple of hefty kettledrums, and you have a recipe for disaster which no amount of buttock-clenching can avert. In Richard's retirement year I was privileged to be taking music A-level in a class of six along-

side Richard Clegg, Guy Lightowler, Simon Marciniak, Andrew Monument and Duncan Pile. We were the largest A-level group the department had seen. Richard, white-suited, took us for music history, Andrew Dean and Peter Bream prepared us for the other papers, and we all made it through. In the July the Sintons honoured all six of us with invitations to Richard's retirement party at Cesare's Italian restaurant. It was a fine send-off for Richard and, for our A-level group, a leave-taking from the "best bits" of MGS. As then, so now, I raise a glass, clench a buttock, and harbour a suspicion that education is all the more enduring when delivered with a sparkle in the eye and a heart that cares.

Steven Pegg (1986-1993)  
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#### LACROSSE REVIVED

Readers of *Ulula 2005* may have been as surprised – and delighted – as I was to discover photographs of MGS boys once again playing lacrosse. (OMs who played the game at school will probably know that lacrosse was closed down as a school sport in the early 1970s.) Thus inspired, Don Bennett and I organised a reunion dinner in August for former members of the Old Mancunians Lacrosse Club (which also folded in the 1970s). We were a distinctly geriatric bunch, barely recognisable as the finely honed athletes we once undoubtedly were. It was good to meet, to relive triumphs over Old Hulmeians, and to agree to offer some financial support for the reintroduction of the game. Lacrosse at MGS is now played by enthusiasts as part of a wide ranging sports programme, guided by expert outside coaches. Don and I visited the school and saw at once that the game enjoys the strong support of the High Master, who sees the lacrosse training as a good opportunity for boys to prepare for joining local clubs or to play at one of

the 30+ universities now playing lacrosse. (I saw our local university, Exeter, play its first home league game recently – and they won!)

It occurred to me that there might be many schooldays players who had *not* played for Old Mancs who might also like to donate something to support the game at MGS. The school is keen to provide opportunities for boys to try out lacrosse before they commit to the sport – and to do that, they need the kit appropriate for the game as it is now played. Helmet, gloves, stick etc cost as much as £220. If anyone would like to make a donation, from the modest to the magnificent, please send it to Carole Pemberton at the school, making the cheque payable simply to 'The Manchester Grammar School', making it clear in your covering letter that the money is earmarked for lacrosse. Carole promises that the funds will not be misappropriated! Geoff Fox (1949-56, Staff 1961-69)

#### BORROWDALE 1940

The September edition refers to camping in Borrowdale. We had a camp in 1940, but curtailed by the German invasion of Holland, which was judged to make it desirable we come home. However, during our shortened stay, a small group of boys (I think three, including the school captain) climbed Great Gable by moonlight. This was, of course, with the agreement of Hubert Field. I hate to think of the present day attitude by authorities generally to such an expedition by three schoolboys, though I have no knowledge of the MGS attitude. Furthermore, parents' attitude to Haffy (or Lob on his treks in the Dolomites and elsewhere) if anything had gone wrong would undoubtedly have been of sympathy for the loss they shared with him rather than a complaint of lack of care. Alan Swindells (1938-42)

#### GILBERT & SULLIVAN MEMORIES

The September edition of *The Old Mancunian* raised the question of whether a performance of *Iolanthe* in 1939 was a one-off production. My brother Frank, coming to MGS in 1926 from North, and leaving in 1928 took part in a production of *Pirates of Penzance*. My other brother, Norman, came from North in 1928 and left in 1933. During this period he took part in a production of *The Gondoliers*. I still have Frank's music score. (A magnificent bound volume.) They were born in 1912 and 1914 respectively if anyone wants to speculate what their voices were like! Alan Swindells (1938-42)

John Battersby (TOM Ed 23) is correct in assuming that there were G & S productions in the years before 1938. I was in Billy Hulme's Modern 3A/4A in 1933/35 together with E G Riley.

When *The Mikado* was staged, Billy was Lord High Executioner and I think Riley played Yum Yum. I hasten to add that when Radford tested our voices in music class and heard mine, he winced and moved on, so I was only ever a member of the audience.

John Wightman (1929-35)

#### 'OLD BOYS ABROAD'

Alan Pickwick (Staff 1975 - ) met two Old Boys during his summer of astronomy! Firstly he met Chris Benn (1967-74) on La Palma in the Canary Islands. Chris works at the William Herschel Telescope where he is Astronomer and Telescope Manager. Alan was teaching in the Summer School for Teachers, organised by the European Association for Astronomy Education (<http://www.eaae-astro.org/>) of which he is currently Secretary. They met when Alan took a small group of teachers to visit with Chris during an observing session. Chris graduated from Bristol in 1977, took a PhD from Cambridge and soon after started

working on La Palma. [www.ing.iac.es/~crb/](http://www.ing.iac.es/~crb/)  
 Secondly he met by chance past pupil Jonathan Tan (1984-90). Both were attending the International Astronomical Union's General Assembly in Prague. Jonathan was giving an invited talk on "The formation of massive stars and star clusters".  
 After graduating from Cambridge in 1995 Jonathan studied at the University of California, Berkeley, obtaining his PhD in 2001. He then worked at Princeton for three years and is now an assistant professor in the Department of Astronomy at the University of Florida where his research is focussed on the origin of stellar systems. [www.astro.ufl.edu/~jt/](http://www.astro.ufl.edu/~jt/)  
**ERIC JAMES**  
 David Kravitz's letter brings to mind three occasions when I recall Eric James being put to the test. The first came at Assembly one April 1st when, stony faced, he stared impotently as a very realistic spider, composed of a large potato spiked with blue stained pipe cleaners, slowly descended on a thread from one of the ceiling gratings. The second, again at Assembly on another April 1st, came when the school organist, already safe in his university acceptance, played the March of the Gladiators very, very slowly as the Masters paraded in. During that performance, James, again stony faced, several times set off from his podium only to retreat back again. And the third came at Manchester University's Dalton Hall, shortly after I'd left. James invited questions and comments after addressing the meeting on education. I'd begun mine with the words: "Well I suppose I went to a comprehensive school..." - which at least in terms of curriculum and area served was not altogether inaccurate. At that however, without enquiring as to my terms of reference, James nearly went berserk.  
 Now I know he was a man of enormous intellect and almost

worshipped the absolute fizzer - of which I was not an example! But I'd welcome any news suggesting he possessed much of a sense of humour!

David Green (1946-52)

### **BOWKER'S**

Here are some memories on a unique MGS institution by H E Emson (1938-45) Ed.

An unseasonably wet afternoon has set me to reminiscing, and to thinking that I cannot remember a reference in the OM to a beloved institution of my days at MGS—1938-45—Bowker's. This was a private bus, one of a number inscribed on its side as owned and operated by William Bowker of Ashton, which ran from Worsley station via the Court House, Winton, Monton Green and Eccles and picking up boys throughout, finally brought them to school. The return journey in the afternoon dumped us off at Worsley Court House and Mr Bowker then disappeared in a cloud of smoke in the general direction of Trafford Park and workers from the factories there. The several buses were, due to the exigencies of wartime, in various states of disrepair and unreliability, and the journey was made more exciting by the frequent bomb craters from the previous night's raids, and unexploded bombs, necessitating deviations from the established route of unpredictable direction, length and complexity. Late arrival was explained to the prefects on watch by the curt monosyllable "Bowkers" and other, bad boys not of our fellowship would sometimes attempt to pass themselves off as members, only sternly to be rejected.

Discipline was precariously maintained by the presence of Ikey Tenen, who sat on the left side two seats back from the door. Within his ambience peace reigned, more or less, but towards the rear and with the large boys on the back row, oligarchy ruled. Poor Ikey was a perfect butt for the merciless mimicry of the pitiless schoolboy. He had a poorly repaired

cleft palate and spoke in a honk reminiscent of a migrating goose. When Chaos became overwhelming he would utter, "Stop the bus, Mr Bowker, stop the bus!" - and Mr Bowker would duly grind to a halt at the kerb. "Get off the bus, boy, get off the bus!" and Ikey would seize upon the chief offender who would be ejected and abandoned to his own devices anywhere from Upper Brook Street to Eccles Old Road, and peace would prevail for a few days.

### **RIVERS & HULME**

Geoffrey Stone relates in the Old Mancunian how he and his family met Eric James whilst walking a Welsh mountain path. He would certainly recognize James but did James really remember him?

A similar encounter proved disappointing for me. The master to whom I have always felt most indebted was Jack Rivers who taught me English, French and German in the third and fourth years. Tall, lean and athletic he never seemed to be in doubt about anything. Whatever he did was quick, direct, no hesitation. Everybody respected him and I probably considered myself to be one of his best pupils. I was good at languages, won the Proctor French Reading Prize and was often asked to sing German songs and recite German poems.

One day I was shattered when Billy Hulme accused me of copying in Divinity (a most unlikely subject to cheat in) and awarded me a Saturday morning. It was quite unjustified. Even if it had been true a Saturday morning was too great a punishment. In tears I asked Rivers, my form master, to see Billy who agreed to drop it. More distinction for Rivers. I could play football on Saturday morning after all. Some years after the war I was walking along Cross Street near the Manchester Guardian office when I saw him crossing the road towards me. I reached out my hand. "Hello, Mr Rivers, Eric Kime, 3A and Ra,

1933 and 34." He smiled the understanding smile that I recalled so well, hesitated a moment and then said "Sorry, I don't remember you." Eric Kime (1930-35) Editor's note—I too recall Jack Rivers with great affection. Not being recognized as a teacher by a former pupil is equally traumatic!

### **A PLEA!**

We now have a full set of "The Mancunian" and "The New Mancunian" except for Issue 48 of "The Mancunian." If anyone has one and would like to donate it we should be very grateful.

The Archivists, MGS

### **SECTION EVENTS**

**The Midlands Section** is supporting the 2006 and 2007 Shakespeare Festival. The Festival will take place 4-7<sup>th</sup> and 11-14<sup>th</sup> December at 5.30 pm, is open to OMs and is free of charge.

**London & South East Section** will be holding a pub evening on 31 January at The Citie of Yorke, High Holborn from 6.30 pm. All welcome. Please see enclosed letter about the Smith Square concert on 2 March 2007.

The School Captain and Vice Captains will speak at the next **20/30 Club** luncheon on 15 December. The High Master will be the principal guest and speaker at the first lunch of 2007 on 19 January.

**The South West Section** reports a fascinating day at The Royal Western Yacht Club for lunch and visit to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Naval Dockyard where members were plunged into a world of periscopes, size 19 naval boots, nuclear submarines, warships and field guns.

### **1950-59 REUNION**

A reunion for all those boys who joined the School 1950-59 will be held on 5 May 2007. For further details contact Carole Pemberton.

Correspondence to Carole Pemberton at MGS ([c.m.pemberton@mgs.org](mailto:c.m.pemberton@mgs.org)) or to John Horsfield. Closing date for Easter edition is 9 March.