



The Old Mancunian

September 2005

Edition 20

The Old Boys Dinner

The 201st Old Boys Dinner will be staged at the Freemasons Hall, Bridge Street, Manchester on Saturday 12th November 2005. A reduced price car parking token for the NCP car park behind Kendal's Store is available from the door staff at the Freemasons Hall.

2006 Reunion

The Reunion for the joiners 1960-69 will be held on Saturday 6th May 2006. Volunteers for the organising committee please contact **Carole Pemberton** telephone 0161 224 7201

The Origins of Grasmere Camp

In 1984 Grasmere camp celebrated its 80th birthday. Dr Cantrell and I wrote articles for *Ulula* entitled 'Grasmere the Beloved Octogenarian'. Last year, in 2004, Grasmere celebrated its 100th birthday. It all started with High Master J L Paton. When he was a little boy he attended the school at Halle in Germany and had seen the Wanderbirds, a back to nature movement in Germany, and the idea appealed to him. He came as High Master to MGS in 1903 and in the following Whitsuntide he took the boys to Alderley and in the summer to Grasmere. Paton's camp was on the Easedale Tarn track and stayed there for 20 years. Varnish was the master in charge in 1908 and he was followed by Fry who was killed in 1917.

In the beginning, the boys detained at Windermere and preceded by a school scout band they marched the nine miles to Grasmere. In 1912 the name of Stott is first mentioned as a camper "we had the redoubtable Stott, the Prince of pathfinders and photographers". In 1923

there was a change Grasmere became a school camp for North Manchester School, a preparatory and associate school of MGS, with Tommy Stott in charge. He taught at North from 1920 to 1939, when he came to MGS. He died in 1950.

In 1926 the camp was moved from beneath Silver Howe to the other side of the valley. The site which includes a barn, was rented until 1934 and then in 1936 Stott and four old North boys, Sir Joseph Cantley, who became a High Court Judge and a Governor of the School, Harry Thistleton, a solicitor, Geoffrey Heywood and Cedric Litherland bought the barn and 12 acres of ground round it. North boys continued to camp there until 1940 when the School closed.

The aforementioned old North boys in a notable act of generosity gave the barn and the ground round it to the School. Under some inspirational leaders latterly Brian Moore and especially Nigel Reynolds and now Mark Coffey, the camp is continuing to flourish helped by devoted members of staff maintaining the spirit of Grasmere camp. Reading parties visit the site from time to time but as soon as the summer holidays come round the boys will be going to Grasmere camp again.

Ian Bailey The Common Room

Literary & Debating Society

I write in response to the Old Mancunian article by John Horsfield, who asked whether the Senior Literary and Debating Society was still in existence. Whether or not what we have is the same society, or a modern reincarnation of the group, I can confirm that a Senior Debating Society does exist, and indeed is highly successful. It is at present one of the biggest sixth form societies, drawing numbers only

rivalled by *Philsoc*. Last year, when I enjoyed the privilege of chairing the society, it pulled in a weekly attendance of sixty people. There were a number of debates which over one hundred people attended. There are still plenty of eloquent and opinionated boys at MGS, and as long as that is the case, it is safe to assume that a forum for debating will survive.

Issues debated tend to echo those that have hit the headlines, although debates also relevant to the school specifically have been debated. Last year the motions discussed included whether cannabis should be legalised (it should); whether Third World debt should be dropped (it shouldn't) and whether homosexual marriage should be legalised (I forget...). The debates are held every Friday lunch-time from 1:20pm until 1.50pm. They are joint ventures with Manchester High School for Girls, which led to a memorable week where the motion that the two schools should merge was discussed. It was commented by some that the very atmosphere of the debate was evidence that the motion should be rejected.

Debates are held alternately at MGS and MHSG. The format of the debate that I inherited was of a boy and a girl for the motion and a boy and a girl against it, with each giving a five minute speech (which generally went on longer). Although this gave some debaters the chance to shine, it was an intimidating challenge for a younger debater still being weaned into the sixth form debating atmosphere. Also, due to the constraints of time, the amount of floor time was limited, so I felt that very little actual debating was going on. The idea of listening to four lectures was, I fear, not particularly appealing for a sixth former today.

time-keeping to ensure that speakers did not over-run (a skill in itself), thus increasing the capacity for floor debate. The increased attendance has, I think, been testament to the success of these measures, and debates certainly seem to be more lively. Although in later life debating will be about convincing longer speeches, I am convinced that ample opportunity for those is given in other societies, and that Debating Society should aim to get people involved who would never even consider giving a five minute talk.

Increased numbers has increased activity and led to better debates, but has also lessened the extent to which the atmosphere is of a scholarly nature. There is I fear more heckling from the floor, but many speakers seem able to deal with this well. In solving one problem I created another, and I am watching with interest to see how my successor deals with it. I hope that this letter has helped to reassure readers that debating is well and truly alive at MGS. The society seems to have changed in name and format, but not in its essence. Unfortunately, however, we have never been treated to any talks from a Lord. I would be happy to answer any other questions.

James Corke-Webster (School Captain 2004-2005)

Direct Debits

We would urge all old boys who wish to join the Old Mancunians Association to pay their subscriptions by direct debit. The OMA pays one third of the cost of publishing *The Old Mancunian*.

To solve these problems we both shortened the speaking time and introduced stricter

MGS Parents Society Dinner Dance

The MGS Parents Society invite you to join them for their Dinner Dance to be held at School on Saturday 24th September from 7.30 to 11pm. The evening will include a drinks reception, hot buffet and licensed bar together with a jazz band and disco. Tickets cost £15 each. Please make cheques payable to MGS Parents Society. Dress lounge suits. Please apply by September 10th at the latest to: **Fiona Lloyd, 10 Greenway, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 1LU. Tel 01625 524019**

The Golden Age -1 Immediate Post War

I think that teachers were largely a product of their age. Some needed threats to maintain discipline and others had better skills.

I remember a couple who are largely unsung, probably because of a short tenure in post. Tyzak who had a fascinating skill of adjusting his glasses to act as mirrors when facing the blackboard. He seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. His '10 mark tests' every lesson, where you had to get 8 out of 10 or face detention, certainly gave me a good grounding in French. Charlie Evans started with a reign of terror, hitting his desk lid with a chair leg to make an enormous sound. I remember being surprised in the 4th form, when he had got us

where he wanted, finding that he had a human side. His reading list of explorers, Frank Smythe, Spencer Chapman, Gino Watkins, Whympier, Younghusband took me all over the world in imagination. English literature was the only subject in which I got a distinction.

Too bad I took Chemistry because it would give me 'a good job'. I am still unsure whether I should have thanked Sol Clynes or not. His immaculately dictated notes and clear teaching made me a

competent chemist but I had more natural ability in Languages or Engineering.

The other teachers I remember in particular were Johnnie or 'Jean' Lingard, who awoke my interest in languages; Johnnie Hunter, who was a very gentle father figure and David Copley, who was also my Scoutmaster.

Certainly, many teachers gave a lot then as now in extra-curricular activities. The reports in Ulula bear that out.

Ian McLean 1945-51
[\[ian@mcleani.freemove.co.uk\]](mailto:ian@mcleani.freemove.co.uk)

The Golden Age - 2 Biology

I largely endorse Alan West's view (edition 19) of the stimulating nature of the teaching he received during his time at MGS, which more or less coincided with mine. And Eric James was always very fond of making the point that entry was based on ability and, 'available to all regardless of income'.

However, as someone with a successful career in biological sciences behind him, I am somewhat mystified by the reference to, 'the lack of biology', when that subject was distinguished in our time by the wonderful eccentric genius of Francis Minns. He worked hard at widening our reading in contemporary science, had strong contacts at the University, and encouraged us to attend Open Lectures and similar events. He also knew an amazing range of people. I remember being picked up in his battered old van to go to a University lecture and being waved to the rear doors. Once inside I discovered why – occupying the passenger seat was Father (as he then was) Trevor Huddleston, being dropped off at the station on his way back to Africa!

Michael Venis (1949-55)

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The Golden Age - 3

It amazes me, as I look back on my MGS days, at how useless I was at subjects then - which I seem to have cracked now. Despite the best efforts of staff, I came 31st out of 32 in

September 2005

Latin one year, my speeches in Debating Society were incoherent, and I couldn't write Haiku poems to save myself.

But now I can get by in New Testament Greek, I'm vice-chairman of my Diocesan Synod, and I'm an amateur songwriter. Have other OMs had this experience or am I totally peculiar? Or does it show that MGS laid the foundations of learning for life?

John Hartley (1968-75).
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Swimming Naked

In a recent issue the cruelty of some gym teachers was discussed. The fact that we had to swim completely naked was mentioned only in passing. I do not know if this practice continues at MGS but 34 years after leaving the school I still do not understand the reason for it.

Whenever I have mentioned it to friends or my wife or children they always hink that this was a very strange habit. Often people do not believe me. It would be interesting to know whose idea it was although publishing his name would probably embarrass his relatives.

Although I recall gym teachers whose idea of pain or pleasure was different from the norm of even the 1960s, I do not believe that there were any in my time at MGS who actually particularly enjoyed the sight of naked boys. There were however other members of staff, including, but not only, masters, who did. I am sure that the management of the time would not have approved but why did the practice of swimming naked persist at all? The tradition, or whatever one wishes to call it, must have been a conscious management decision when it was introduced. I would be interested if someone could enlighten me as to why it existed.

Dr Michael D Cohen.
(1964-1970)

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Perhaps I may hazard a response? Certainly in my time at School, swimming trunks were made of wool, which retained a lot of moisture, and purchased new would I believe, be subject to clothing coupons as part of rationing. Fluff from wool would also have been a contributory cause of blockage of the filters. Ed

O.M. Ties & A.T.C.

At the recent "Pre 1950" Reunion, the subject came up of the stripe in the O.M. Tie. Instead of going from "top left to bottom right" (as viewed on a shield), some were made "top right to bottom left". I have seen but not owned one. Ian Bailey was intrigued to learn that the reverse stripe is the "bend sinister" in heraldry – the sign of bastardy. Ian Thorpe, the Director of Development at School, didn't know of these ties, and would like to have one for the School Archives. Can anyone donate one of the wrong ties to him please?

Why has "Dicky" Radford disappeared from polite conversation? Those who adulate the present orchestra and choirs should venerate him as the master who kept the School singing during the War. Also just as importantly he was Flight Lt i/c the No. 600 Squadron with Billy Hulme and Eric Hodge as his fellow officers. His weekly parade, as smart as two pins, was as vital to School morale as was the efforts of the master who merely put on fancy dress and ran about the playing fields. We were a good squadron, and time after time won inter-squadron competitions. (I happened to be the Flight Sergeant, but I claim nothing.) It is a shame that there is, as far as I know, no record of the School A.T.C. in Ulula. Is there anyone out there of historical research ability who can rectify this omission before it is too late?

Brian Berry (1939-47)
**Tillers Patch, Andover
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OMA AGM

The 101st AGM will be held in the School library on Tuesday 29th November. This meeting has a really happy informal atmosphere, with time to meet other Old Mancunians. The simplified new OMA Constitution will be presented to members for their approval. If you are unable to attend, but would like to receive a copy please advise Carole Pemberton

London Section

Twenty five London Section OMAs and guests returned to Horse Guards Parade for 'Beating Retreat' in June followed by a splendid meal at the Commonwealth Club.

We held the London and South East Golf day at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club Deal on 28th July. An excellent occasion attended by nine Old Mancs; good weather, tough golf course, excellent company. The winner was Jeremy Atherton and the prize for the best scores on par three holes was won by Ian Millar.

Jeremy has agreed to host the 2006 event at Theydon Bois on a similar date next year. Details to be confirmed.

Members will be aware that links between the School and Section have become closer over recent years. Following the success of the London and South East Section Concerts, both the Section and the School are keen to further develop and deepen links. One project that the School is keen to develop is a professional register of Old Mancunians who are willing to offer career advice to 6th formers and recent leavers. The register is available on the Old Mancunians website. Entries take the following format:-

- Name,
- Date of leaving MGS,
- Professional area
- E-mail address.

Nick Gartside

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Midlands Section

The Summer Luncheon was held on Saturday 21 May at the Anchor Inn, Ecklington. Following an enjoyable luncheon, David Walker, the Bishop of Dudley, gave a stimulating and thought-provoking address.

The Annual General Meeting and luncheon will be held at the Forest Hotel, Dorridge, Solihull on Saturday 19 November. Further details will be sent to

members in October this year, but members are asked to make a note of the date.

The informal luncheons for members and their ladies continue to be held on the first Tuesday of each month at the Old Royal Hotel Church Street in the centre of Birmingham. Prospective new members and visitors are always welcome, for details please contact me.

Dan Binnion, Hon Secretary
Tel 01902 756894.)

South West

The 39th Annual Hugh Oldham Commemoration Service was held in Exeter Cathedral, 52 members and guests attending including an exceptionally strong party from School. They were the High Master and his wife, Surmaster Stuart Leeming and his wife, the Director of Development Ian Thorpe and his wife, the High Master's P.A. Sally Rogers, teacher Simon Jones and the new School Captain James Burrows.

The Chairman, Derek Andrew, formally welcomed the Dean and his wife and other attendees. Before luncheon the Dean said grace. After an excellent meal the Chairman proposed the loyal toast before inviting the High Master to give us his first impressions of MGS. In summary, the High Master intimated that he was impressed with the maturity of the pupils and praised such School traditions as the regular camps.

Some 20 members and the High Master adjourned for the AGM at which the membership decided to donate £500 of Section funds to a School project. It was decided that we would help to purchase a laptop computer to be loaned to students suffering from Dysphasia/Dyslexia who could be helped by having such a device to use at home. The High Master explained that there was evidence that these machines made significant improvement in exam grades for the small number of pupils who entered MGS with such problems.

Future events include a visit to view the Isambard Kingdom Brunel's ss Britannia at Bristol Docks on the 12th November. After a ferry across the harbour lunch has been arranged at a floating restaurant.

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Old Mancunians Lodge

Old Mancunians Lodge is celebrating its Centenary in

2006. The Masonic Lodge, affiliated to the school, is one of the rare examples of a 'closed Lodge' drawing members, as it does, solely from Old Boys and the teaching staff of MGS.

In this respect, their reaching this milestone is no small achievement. Founded back in February 1906 the Lodge has proved to be an excellent way for Old Mancs to maintain ties with the school as well as making new friends and acquaintances.

To mark their centenary there will be a special ceremonial evening in March 2006 to which all Old Mancs, within the Craft, are cordially invited. Please contact the Secretary for details.

Also, any new prospective members wishing to find out more about the Lodge and Freemasonry in general are welcome to get in touch.

Matthew Walton
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The Fifties

Many thanks for *The Old Mancunian* perhaps there should now be a '*Very Old Mancunian*' for those of us who pre-date rock and roll - it would be fascinating to hear how that subculture was received in a school in which Eric James's rather eccentric censorship excluded "*Ulysses*", "*The Cocktail Party*" and all forms of jazz.

I'm sorry you intend to discourage further reminiscences of the bad old days of the fifties - I wonder whether we shall be denied the definitive account of TB (Toby) Cantrell as a result.

I think the main artistic aridity of the 1950's was music as EJFJ once admitted in a Radio Three "Man of Action" programme in the 70s - in which it emerged his Beethoven quartet preferences were for the Lener Quartet. But the scratch (in every sense) school orchestra of the day included Michael Davis, who went on to a distinguished career. John Ogdon was in the school. And I still remember my first taste of Beethoven's D minor piano sonata from none other than Walter Bodmer, who also played in a piano duet with one of the science teachers whose full name I no longer remember, a Mr Sim, Milhaud's Scaramouche. And the year-end Music (i.e. gramophone) Society sessions in Room 22 seem to have stuck in my mind too.

Everything else we found out for ourselves, including jazz, and Ulysses, and The Cocktail Party.

I hope as you report, my distinguished friend Martin Woollacott really has become Editor of the *Guardian*, but since he retired over a year ago, I think that is unlikely. He has, though, since his retirement, joined the celebrated and select band of *Guardian* writers who have edited the *Bedside Guardian*.

Jim Brennan (1948-55)
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There is no intention to discourage reminiscences of the 50's I was just trying to end one strand which I thought had gone on for a long time.

I am also sorry if I was misinformed about Martin Woollacott, I pass on information received in good faith, verified where possible.

...Well Just The Odd Slap!

I was surprised and rather disturbed to read of the harshness of MGS in the immediate post-war years. This contrasts with my own experience (1950/55). Compared with many boys schools of the time, MGS was a relatively humane and tolerant place. Corporal punishment was fairly rare apart from a the friendly slap or two with a well-aimed gym shoe. Bullying and obvious masochism were almost absent.

One event does, however, stick in my mind. Most masters were well able to keep discipline without resorting to serious violence. There was one, however, who was quite hopeless at keeping a class in order. Out of respect for his memory, I will call him Mr Anon. He was time and again tormented by our class clown by the name of Machin. Then his self-control snapped - he dragged Machin out and delivered six tremendous whacks on his ample posterior. Machin was surprisingly little affected and resumed, rather gingerly, his place. Mr Anon was devastated - he had, unforgivably by his lights, lost his temper. All of us sympathised with him, not Machin.

When Mr Anon retired he was very sensibly replaced by Bert Toft, who happened to be an England front row forward.

(Cont page 4 Col 2.)

Obituaries

Stephen Buckley

Stephen Buckley who taught Modern Languages at MGS from 1972 to 1981 died on June 16th 2005.

Stephen Carlisle (1972-78)

On the 5th June. Stephen was a member of the rugby squad at School; his other sporting passion was cricket. After graduating from Essex he went on to be a systems analyst and a lecturer at Walsall College of Art and Technology

Stuart Dale

We regret to announce the death after a short illness of Stuart (Stu) Dale, who had been a member of the portering staff at MGS for many years, most recently serving as Pavilion Porter.

Mrs Ruth Parker

We are sorry to report the death on May 11 2005 of Mrs Ruth Parker, wife of Geoffrey Parker, High Master from 1985 to 1994.

Harold Victor Smith (1922/27) Age 93

Harold died on the 16th July 2005. He was a former President of the British Legion in Woodford.

I was struck by your heartfelt piece in the Easter edition on Bernard Sloan who became a friend of mine when he became a full time Minister of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1980. Always very zealous as a Christian he never appeared anywhere without his old school tie. He was proud of his associations with MGS which started at age 5 when he was enrolled at the preparatory school Woodbourne Road, Brooklands, (a school that still to this day sports the MGS owl on all exterior walls).

I understand the School is without any information on Bernard and so I will provide just a few interesting aspects of his life.

He became a professional singer in his 20s and appeared on TV a number of times singing in a sweet tenor voice. He married, had three children and later moved into the Antiques business. When his shop closed he stored his remaining stock in his home at

11 Hale Rd Altrincham and I became very familiar with it all when we moved him on the death of his father to Ellesmere Rd, Altrincham. Some of the pieces remained with him until his own death 5 years ago. In particular, I recall boxes of Victorian clothing and masses of sheet music.

Another interesting fact about Bernard is that he appeared in the Guinness Book of records for many years as the man who pulled in the biggest barracuda off the South American coast. I believe the book may also have carried a picture of Bernard carrying out his feat.

I have many other anecdotes about Bernard but I will leave you with the one that involves me accompanying Bernard along to talk to a car dealer in Salford about a misunderstanding in respect to a vehicle which Bernard believed he had bought and the dealer believed he had merely rented. I don't know what Bernard had told them about me but they brought a Doberman attack dog with them into the meeting! It certainly softened my negotiating posture. As we left they brought the Doberman down the stairs and let it off the lead. Bernard became the owner of the vehicle but it nearly cost me my rear end!

Yours sincerely

Brian Foster

Brian@bcrgroup.co.uk

(Cont from page 3)

A splendid teacher, who strangely enough, never had a problem with discipline, although off the field he was of a mild, and non-violent temperament.

I think of my two years in Science Sixth (1953/55) as two of the happiest of my life, thanks to a wonderfully companionable group of colleagues, and 'Tommy' Smith, a form master who was a very able and understanding teacher.

Incidentally in the 'Blue Book' I am described as a professor of 'terrestrial' management. I should like to claim 'galactic', but would settle for the less ambitious, but more accurate 'industrial'.

Emeritus Prof Peter J

Forrester CBE

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The 1930s

May I say how delighted I was to see two letters from 1930s contemporaries (Donald F Dean and J R Anderson) – I was beginning to think that the pre-Second World War generation had been entirely forgotten.

I was fortunate to have my last two years in History Sixth under the inspired tutelage of RFI Bunn, RT Moore and WH Mason (who once caught me taking a breather during a Harriers run and yelled as he padded by "Keep going, Wynn" – which I have retained as a lifetime motto).

I had some brilliant fellow pupils – Basil (Lord) Wigoder, Liberal and legal luminary; Norman Swallow, pioneer TV producer; and Norman Hampson, doyen of Age of Enlightenment historians, among them.

I was also fortunate, as School organist, to play the magnificent four manual Cavaille-Coll organ in the Free trade Hall before the Luftwaffe destroyed it all in December 1940.

I've also been lucky in maintaining contact with my contemporaries, for Denis (not Dennis as in your Obituary note) Richards, TGC James and I have worked as RAF historians in the Air Historical Branch of the MOD – where we were known as 'The Manchester Mafia'.

Humphrey H Wynn 1931-37

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A Century!

Two items in The Old Mancunian reminded me of similar incidents which may be of interest to your pre-WW2 readers.

1) Punishment – in I think 1932, I was in 2 Alpha with 'Simmy' whose 'weapon' was a WW1 bayonet scabbard – a gruesome thing over a foot long of thick

leather, softened by frequent flexure. I forget the reason, but the class had been extraordinarily wicked one afternoon and 'Simmy' finally said "I have always wanted to score a century and now is the time. Get into line and bend over; most of you will receive three and monitors and a few others will get four!" And we did, and so he did!
2) Clerihews – one from the pen of 'Haffie' Field.

Ronnie Plackett

Wears a lacrosse jacket,

A thing which Herbert Toft,

Finds extremely soft.'

Really old Old Boys will remember that Ronnie Plackett had been in charge of School Rugby since 1927 (he taught science) although he was a lacrosse Blue (hence the 'jacket'). Bert Toft (an OM), who had been Rugby Captain at School then Manchester University and subsequently became Captain of Lancashire County and England teams, joined the staff to teach Physics in 1932 but was only allowed to coach the minor and junior rugby teams!

Peter Batterley (1931-38)

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www.Oldmancunians.org

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