

The Egbertian

NEWS FROM THE OLD EGBERTIAN ASSOCIATION

see our website at www.oldegbertians.com



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Winter 2011

Editor's Comment

Welcome to the Winter Edition of EgbertNews.

The last edition of EgbertNews was very well received but did rather exhaust my supply of articles.

The OEA newsletter is for you, the members, so if you have something that would be of interest to your fellow members then please let me know.

With Christmas rapidly approaching, the final social event of the year will be the Memorial Mass followed by the Christmas Buffet this coming Sunday (11th). If you have never been to Christmas Buffet before then try and come along as it is a thoroughly enjoyable event. See the back page for further details.

On behalf of the committee I wish you and your family a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Jeff Thomas

College Memories *by Brian Pieri*

This is the first in a series of articles from members of your committee giving their recollections of their College days. The first is from Brian Pieri, who is our Social Secretary.

I arrived at St Egberts College in 1945. The war had finished, but St Egberts still bore the scars.

Behind the Chantry was the School Hall. Sadly during the Blitz a fire bomb fell on it, causing severe damage to the extent that the site was subsequently used as a bike shed. Incidentally the Chantry was originally the Rectory for the parish church of St Peters and St Pauls.

My first form master was Brother Fidelious who was a man with a kindly round face. He was followed by Brothers Peter, Felix and Pascal. This was in my junior period. On reaching senior level I was taught by Brothers Fergus, Oswald, Raphael and Alyious. The lay teachers were Mr Keegan, Mr Stevenson and Norman Cresswell.

I remember the college as a rather stark building. Inside there was brown and cream paint on the walls with white windows and rather large fin radiators, which the pupils clung onto in the depths of winter and the milk was placed next to them to thaw out.

The playground had an excellent tarmac surface with tennis courts marked out. During the morning break, it would seem that half the school would be on their roller skates, with great lines of pupils,

whirling round the centre skater. It was rather dangerous for those on the outside travelling at speed. Dotted around the outside of the playground were small groups of boys playing with cigarette cards or five stones - games long since forgotten.



One afternoon each week was devoted to sport, which was either cricket or football. This involved a walk down Kings Head Hill to the sports field next to Sopers Farm on Sewardstone Road. The trip down during the summer was quite pleasant but during the

Winter, after football, the walk back was cold and miserable, especially if you had tackled an opponent whilst sliding through a cow pat, as cows still grazed on the pitches! The washing facilities were just a series of wash basins in the cloak room, which was beside the playground entrance to the school. They were very limited and the water was cold.

The running track behind the school was ash covered and 220 yards long. There was also a sand filled jumping pit for both high and long jump.

My only claim to sporting fame was winning the high jump at a height

Continued on page 2

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2011

Continued from page 1

of 4ft 9ins. The prize was a cricket bat, which was unfortunately rather wasted on me as I was the pupil who had all the gear, but sadly not the talent!

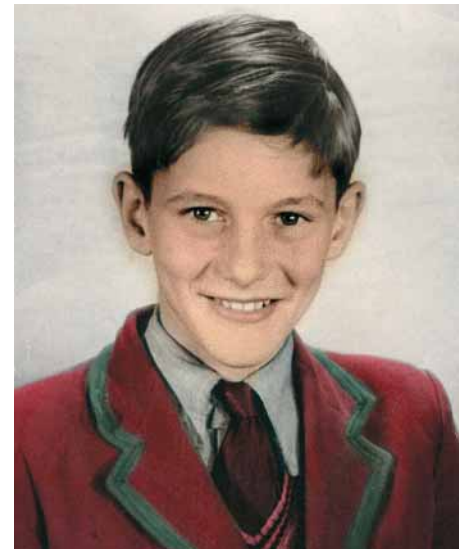
Sports day was the highlight of the year when parents, staff and pupils gathered. The day started with a display of gymnastics which in theory was timed with great precision, but in practice there were always pupils who lacked any great sense of timing and who managed to stand out from the rest and performed a particular movement a second or two before or after everyone else. However I am sure that their mothers forgave them even if Mr Smith the P.E. Teacher did not.

The event finished with a march past the forms to martial music, followed by the presentation of prizes and a

speech from the Headmaster. As the school holidays started the following week, everybody went home in a happy frame of mind.

The teacher who made the greatest impression was Norman Cresswell. Being a former member of the Palestine Police, he controlled the class with his personality. I remember being introduced through him to the poetry of the First World War including Rupert Brooke amongst others. Norman Cresswell became Editor of the Catholic Herald and died only last year.

St. Egberts has provided me with many happy memories of my school days, the Old Egbertian Football Club, for whom I played for many years, the Association and above all, the lifelong friendships which are to be treasured.



If you have similar memories that you would like to share with your fellow members and I am sure that many of you will have, then I am sure that the editor would like to hear from you.

Brian Pieri

A trip to Doctor Johnson's House *by Brian Pieri*

Our visit to Dr Johnson's House took place on Friday November 4th when a group of about 20 of us made our way to 17 Gough Square. This was home to Samuel Johnson, who lived and worked in the house from 1748 – 1759 during which time he compiled his famous 'A Dictionary of the English Language'.

The house was built in 1700 and is one of only a few surviving houses of that era in the "Square Mile", although there are several houses still in existence outside of the City.

It was a very interesting tour of about an hour when our guide showed us several rooms which featured paneled rooms, a magnificent pine staircase and a fine collection of period furniture, prints and portraits as well as exhibitions of Johnson's life and work.

During the 18th century the house was subsequently used as a hotel, print shop and a storehouse, before it fell into disrepair. It was purchased in 1911 by Cecil Harmsworth MP who commented "At the time of my purchase it presented every appearance of squalor and decay. It is doubtful whether in the whole of London there existed a more forlorn or dilapidated tenement". He restored the house and opened it to the public in 1912. It is now operated by a charitable trust.

After the tour we retired to the *Ye Old Cheshire Cheese* pub in Fleet Street, which in itself is steeped in history as it is one of the few pubs to have been rebuilt after the Great Fire of London in 1666 and there has been a pub on the site since 1538. We enjoyed a hearty and very good lunch and all agreed that it had been a very good day.



Memories of Stainsby Hall *by Cyril Selby*

In the early 1930s my mother, father, sister and I moved into a brand new three bedroomed semi just off Chingford Mount, which backed onto Roper's farm where I would go scrumping. Needless to say it was a new experience for me to live in the "country" after living in the East End of London. I was duly enrolled in the junior school in New Road and at the appropriate age I was elevated to the senior school located in Wellington Avenue.

Like so many others, Sunday 3rd September 1939, would prove to be a momentous date in my life. On that fateful day my parents were instructed to ensure I was in the school playground at 2.00 p.m. On arrival I was checked, labelled and loaded onto one of the buses lined up and waiting with all the other children to become an "evacuee". Once we had all been checked and counted, probably to ensure nobody had escaped, the buses set off in convoy.

After what seemed to be a never ending journey we stopped in a small town where we de-bussed and were allocated to various homes. Having been fed and watered we were put to bed after having been instructed to be in the local school at 10 a.m. the next morning.

On arrival we were provided with pen and paper and instructed to write to our respective parents to let them know that we had arrived safely and where we were. But where were we? Of all places we had finished up in Rochford! To say the least my mother was not impressed. As she said we were actually nearer the enemy than if we had stayed at home in Chingford!

Needless to say my stay in Rochford was very short lived and I was packed off to my grandparents who lived in Bath which made a lot more sense. I remained there for a few months whilst my parents hunted around for a more permanent and suitable location for me and that is how I came to be a boarder at Stainsby Hall in Horsley Woodhouse, near Smalley in

Derbyshire, where I stayed until early 1943 when my father died very suddenly from Leukemia, which at that time was incurable.

The early history of Stainsby Hall is unclear but the greatest period in the houses existence began in 1782 when the Barber family sold it to Edward Sacheverell Wilmot Sitwell of Horsley and it remained in the family for the next 150 years until it was sold in 1939. During the Second World War it was acquired by St Aloysius College in order to accommodate their staff and pupils who had evacuated from London, hence my attendance.



Amongst the Brothers who were there at the time, my main recollection is of three in particular. Brother Gabriel was Headmaster and known affectionately as "Gabby". In charge of discipline was Brother Rafael who was very tall and slim so the nickname of "The Rake" was most appropriate. My form teacher was Brother Patrick or "Paddy". There are two particularly strong memories of him.

Firstly, if you misbehaved in any way you could be sure of a very sharp sting as his aim with a small piece of chalk was deadly! It was also possible to be on the receiving end of his aim with the blackboard rubber!

My main abiding memory of him, however, was his foul smelling pipe. His favourite filling for this instrument of torture was thick black twist which had to be cut up before he could smoke it. This task was usually given to anyone his eye fell upon. You were handed this black lump of something nasty and a single-sided razor blade and had to cut the stuff into small pieces. When

lit it gave off a mass of evil smelling smoke that would have made any self-respecting Red Indian jealous!

Boys being boys we had a little trick up our collective sleeve to make life more interesting. In the London Underground trains of the time they had handles hanging down from the carriage ceilings for the use of strap hangers. These handles were made of black vulcanised rubber. Somehow one of the boys managed to obtain one of these handles which we kept hidden until one of us had to cut up some of Paddy's special. Needless to say we included a certain amount of our special additive! The stench was unbelievable and yet Paddy appeared not to notice anything untoward!

On a lighter note one of the boys in my dormitory was a keen radio enthusiast and actually built a crystal set in an old cigar box. The problem was that we needed a very strong aerial. What better than the iron bedstead we slept on! Perfect.

My only academic attainment before I left, due to the untimely death of my father, was to pass the Oxford Junior Certificate. Soon after leaving the school I was conscripted into the army and served in many countries in the Far East.

As I understand it the school continued at Stainsby Hall until the early 1950's when it was taken over as a poultry farm when the occupiers lived in a flat within the building. The building rapidly fell into disrepair and in 1964 complaints about the smell lead to an inspection by the Medical officer for Health. The building was demolished in 1972 and was replaced with an ultra modern design for Robert Morley, owner of Alida Packaging. Every room was round or oval without any corners and it became known as the Spanish House.

I am now an 85 year old grandfather and can still look back on those far off days with a certain amount of affection and nostalgia. I must admit I did wear my red blazer with a certain amount of pride.



The Old Egbertian Association
Presents a

CHRISTMAS BUFFET

On Sunday 11th December
at the Queen Elizabeth
Public House, Forest Side,
Chingford, London E4
From 12 noon - 3pm

£6.95 per person

Call Brian Pieri on 020 8524 0258 for further details



Membership

You will have read in the last newsletter that at the last AGM we changed our membership year to coincide with our financial year which ends in December. To date we have 82 members which means that we are 18 short of our target figure of 100. If you have not renewed, and it will be highlighted on the address carrier sheet, we would implore you to renew by return. We need your membership fee to pay for newsletters such as this and other publications such as the History Book in addition to the other Association commitments such as the maintenance of the website etc.

We have two overseas life members in Terry Sumner, who lives in Australia and Paul McStay who lives in Ireland. The processing cost for overseas members has always been prohibitive on both sides so the committee proposed at the AGM that life membership would be available for overseas members for a one off payment of £60.00.

Social stuff

The last two events of 2011 will be the annual **Memorial Mass**, which is held at the Catholic Church of Our Lady & St Tera of Avila, Kings Road, Chingford at 10,30am and the Christmas Social (see information above) which will both be on Sunday December 11th. The cost for the Christmas Social is £6.95 per head.

The proposed trip to the **Olympic Site** next year has been shelved at the financial commitment to the Association would have been considerable. It is a pity but with a high minimum number required by the organizers at not insignificant cost, it was felt that it would have been too much of a financial risk in these times of austerity.

Snippets

The Football Club's **Clubman of the Year Trophy** has now been repaired. It was decided that a new plinth would be added which will now extend its life for many years to come. Minor repairs were made at the same time and it is now a fine looking trophy. A lack of space prevented a photograph being included in this issue but we will include one next time. The **Contact/Membership sheet** is issued annually with the AGM papers. It has been raised whether we should include dates of birth thus risking, albeit very unlikely, identity fraud. We know that potential members use the dates of birth to see who has joined the Association in the event that the Years Attended information is not available. Your committee will be discussing this in the New Year but if you have any firm views then please let us know.

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