
THE ASSOCIATION STORY

LET'S FACE IT—to compress the story of the birth and growth of the Association into the confines of one short article is an impossibility.

However, an effort has been made to outline the main events and personalities. It is inevitable that the names of all who have served the Association well and long cannot be included, nor can every function be mentioned. For the innumerable omissions, indulgence is requested. It is hoped that what is written here will interest the younger reader, and bring back pleasant memories to the more senior Old Boys.

There seems little doubt that an Old Boys' Association was started in 1906, and, indeed, Mr. Thurston recounts an event in 1902 when an Old Boys' Team beat the Staff at Tug-of-War by two pulls to one, the occasion being the School Sports Day. It appears, too, that the First Annual Dinner was held in 1906, but apart from one or two further events nothing more is known.

The present organisation dates from 1919. Some of those returning from the War met at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Curtis, Snr., the parents of Leonard Curtis (whose name has been perpetuated in Curtis House). W. Bonavia Hunt, Esq., was elected President, and John Ware and C. B. Thurston were elected Vice-Presidents. George Sexton became the first Chairman, L. Curtis was elected Treasurer and Philip Atkinson took on the office of Secretary. It is interesting to note the interest of the School Staff in the Association, and amongst the other members present at that historic meeting were W. G. Bowden and J. Wesbury, both of whom were to give sterling service to the Association for many years.

One of the first activities of the Old Boys was to arrange for the erection of a Memorial to those who had fallen in the late War, and this was unveiled in the Creighton Hall during the following year by the Bishop of London.

A great deal of hard work was done by the Committee during the first few years, and by 1924 the Association had grown into a thriving and active organisation. Tennis and Cricket Sections were formed as early as 1920, and Football soon followed. Dances and Whist Drives were being held regularly, and the now famous Smoking Concerts had become a regular feature. In 1924, with the help of Johnnie Ware and John Lodge, the Dramatic Society came into being, and this was to thrive for many years. Plays by Ibsen, Shaw,

Pinero and others were performed for enthusiastic audiences, and the standard of performance and production was high. An endeavour was made to ensure that the activities covered as wide a field as possible, and a more serious note was struck in 1923 when the Benevolent Fund was founded. Fortunately there have been almost no calls upon the Fund, but it is nice to think that should the necessity arise it would be possible for the Association to help any deserving case.

More will be said of the Hockey Club in a separate article. Opportunity must be made, however, to mention the activities of the Football Club. It thrived for many years and was reckoned to be a very formidable opponent in the London Secondary Schools Old Boys' League, and although never successful in winning the Cup, the Club reached the final rounds on many occasions. There were few changes of officers during this period. Arthur Sexton was Chairman until 1925, when he was succeeded by V. C. (Pie) Appleby, who retained the Chair until 1932. Leonard Curtis held the purse until 1927 and was followed by W. F. Edwards, who gave the Association the benefit of his professional experience until 1933. Pie Appleby had been Secretary from 1921 to 1925 and handed over to J. E. Kopp. Claude was to remain a stalwart officer of the Association until 1948, and even now carries out the duties of Auditor. In 1924 it was decided to appoint two Entertainment Secretaries, but the arrangement of the Annual Dinner was still left in the capable hands of Temple Cole. Finally, mention should be made of Mr. W. B. Luke, one of the Governors of the School, who was always a welcome guest at Dinners, and who always supported the Association to the full.

In 1925 Bonavia Hunt retired from the School, and Mr. J. McLeish became President and remained so until his untimely death in 1932. During those seven years he was Counsellor and guide to the Association, and gave it his help in every way. It will be recalled that during his Headmastership the School Pavilion was built by money voluntarily raised, and this remains a fitting reminder of his drive and untiring efforts for anything that was for the good of the School.

Nineteen-twenty-nine brought the introduction of Old Boys' Colours, and this must be regarded as a fitting climax to the progress of the Association over the ten years from 1919. The years 1929 and 1930 appear to have been vintage years. By then the mailing list contained over 300 names. Apart from the Tenth Annual Dinner, two successful Whist Drives and two

very enjoyable Dances were held. There was a production of Galsworthy's "Strife" which was acclaimed on all sides. Also came the first Bohemian Concert which proved so popular that similar functions were arranged in following years. Their success was due to the magnificent efforts of A. Sexton and Teddy Brown, who organised them so well. All the existing sports sections were in good shape, including the Badminton Section, which had been formed in 1927 and played in the School Gymnasium. Apart from this, one event occurred in 1930 which in itself makes the year outstanding—The Hockey Club was formed. Its full story will be found elsewhere in these pages and suffice it to say here that it was the beginning of a Club which was to make its name in Hockey.

During the 'thirties the Association thrived under the Chairmanship of E. W. M. (Teddy) Potts and R. J. (Reggie) Reed respectively, and this was a period of consolidation. The main activities and functions of the Association continued, and from time to time innovations were introduced. If the Committee considered there was a demand for some new activity it was introduced with their blessing. One such function was a Dinner Dance which was held in Town and very much enjoyed by those who attended. Ralph Hobbs was a very keen organiser of these. Any mention of Dances immediately brings to mind Cliff Symes. Cliff seems to have first held office in 1932 as Registrar, and in 1935 he seems to have transferred his activities to Dances. His major effort, however, was still to come. Elected Chairman in 1939 he continued in that office until 1949, surely the most difficult years in the Association's History. A rearguard action was fought during the first year of the War to keep the activities going, but gradually the lights went out. However, in the midst of adversity the "Newsheet" came into being as the only means of keeping touch between members. To Cliff and his small band of enthusiastic helpers must go the thanks for keeping the spirit of the Association alive during those difficult years. The "Newsheet" still remains a means of telling members in all parts of England and the world of the doings of the Old Boys and the School.

It is known that at least 500 past members of the School served with the Forces during the War, and 67 of these did not return. One of the first actions after the end of hostilities was the question of how best the names of those who gave their lives could be commemorated. It was decided that the Memorial should

take a practical form, and that a Bookcase inscribed with a Roll of Honour should be presented to the School, together with a number of books of general reference. The Dedication was carried out by Rev. C. H. Hughes in March, 1948. A fitting choice because, as he said, "Bobby" Hughes had known practically every boy whose name appeared on the Roll of Honour.

Gradually the activities of the Association were revived, and great assistance in the "rehabilitation" was given by the Acting Headmaster, Mr. W. G. Bowden, who has been associated with the organisation since its inception. The Hockey Club was re-started, and is now flourishing as never before. Leslie Mapstone, our worthy Treasurer, made a gallant effort to revive the Soccer Club, but as the School had given up the game during the War his hopes were doomed to failure. However, it's an ill wind, etc., and it was soon possible to found an Old Boys' Rugby Club, and this activity has now taken its place in the life of the Association.

One new difficulty has had to be faced during post-war years. That is the problem of National Service. Although the intake of school-leavers has been high, it has been found that it is very difficult to keep in touch during their period of National Service, and when they return, contact is not, in many cases, re-established.

The Social activities of the Association have been resumed, and the Dinner has once again become a highlight in the year. Dances are run at frequent intervals, and in 1952 the first large Dance at Wembley Town Hall was voted a huge success.

Mr. Williams came to the School in 1949 and like all previous Headmasters, has shown a keen interest in the Old Boys. Cliff Symes decided to vacate the Chairmanship in 1949, but the Association were fortunate in Jack Burton, his successor. Jack has been a keen member of the Hockey Club since its inception, and brought a wealth of experience to help him in the task of leading the Old Boys back to the high standard of pre-war achievement.

Fred Dadswell, the present Chairman, requires no introduction. He has been a keen member for many years and was Secretary during most of the post-war years, and there is no doubt that the Association will continue to prosper under his guidance.

Before this story draws to its close, reference must be made with gratitude to all those who have served the Association. To the members of the School Staff at all times, to the Head Boys who have always shown their willingness to help, and to all Old Boys, who by their interest and service have helped to make the Association, must go our thanks. They may be assured that the spirit of the Association, succoured by their efforts through the years, can, and will endure.
