



MOREANA

THE ST. THOMAS MORE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

A FOND FAREWELL



Thursday 8th March saw a large contingent of Old Boys attend the funeral at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Leigh-on-Sea of founding Deputy Headmaster and later Headmaster Dominick Fanning

A full church heard Parish Priest, and former Association Chaplain, Father Kevin Hale pay tribute to the huge impact that Dominick had on the Christian formation of young men in the town over a period spanning more than 30 years, beginning at St Helen's primary school before moving to St Thomas More when it opened in 1960.

Many members of Dominick's family were present including, of course, his three sons and one daughter together with a large number of grandchildren. His second son, Michael, gave an interesting account of his life humorously referring to

Dominick's love-hate relationship with bureaucracy (*"he loved to hate the Local Authority"*) and his stubbornness, which if behind you could *"help you move mountains, but if in front of you was the mountain!"* He explained how much St Thomas More High School had meant to Dominick and how he would often say *"my boys"* when referring to us pupils.

The family had received many messages of sympathy from Old Boys and those sent via the Old Boys' Association have been collated into a four-page booklet that is being sent to the family, as well as being available for viewing on our website.

Among those present were former members of staff Tom Mayhew (who joined the school with Dominick in 1960), David Finnigan, Ian Britt, Alan Foot, John Askew, David Milne, Frank Keenan, John Barker, Clifford Seagrave, Jan Lewis, Kevin Vickers, Pam Deakin, Leroy HoChee, Maria Berwick, Eileen Gurney, Graham Eastgate, Dawn Collis, Kathy Franklin, Irene Linson, Isabel Hendry and Terry Wright. The Old Boys' Association was

officially represented by our President Paul Driscoll as well as Membership Secretary Liam Rand, with other members including John Bowman, Graham and Geoff Lewis, Paul Clancy, Richard Dawson, Anthony Crowley and Mark Denton also attending. The current school was well-represented by Headmaster Peter Travis and the Head Boy, Deputy Head Boy, Head of Prefects and his two deputies along with teachers Steve Harrison, Roman Kabarowski, John O'Connell, Steve Griffin, Geoff Mason, and Chairman of Governors Michael Barry.

A rather nice touch was that sneaked into the incidental music played on the organ as the congregation gathered was the tune of our very own School Hymn.

Dominick joined the school, of course, when it opened in 1960 as Deputy Headmaster and was twice Acting Headmaster (between the reigns of Henry Wilson Curry and Don McGregor and then between Don McGregor and Tony MacDonald) before becoming Headmaster in his own right in 1985. He retired after 30 years service in 1990. To

mark his passing we have reproduced on page 2 an earlier biography from the March 2008 edition of this esteemed publication.

OUR ANNUAL CHANCE TO REMEMBER

This year's Old Boys' Memorial Mass will be held in the school at 8pm on **Thursday 21st June**.

This will be the first such occasion at which our new Association Chaplain (and fellow Old Boy) Father Daniel Kelly will preside.

Daniel, who was ordained last September, left the school in 2000 and is currently serving as Assistant Priest in Hornchurch.

As usual the occasion will be split into two halves—the first being the Mass itself when we shall, once more, remember all of those past pupils and members of staff who have died (the list this year has grown by five names!). This is followed by a lavish buffet reception providing the perfect opportunity to renew acquaintances.

The occasion is provided free by the Association and is open to all Old Boys and their partners.

GOING THE WRONG WAY!

Around 30 members of this esteemed Association enjoyed the 14th Old Boys' Dinner on Saturday 4th February in the school Dining Hall.

The food was its usual high standard and there was plenty of it, to say nothing of the alcohol!



Once again the traditional Intercourse Bingo led by stalwart John Cobbold proved to be as popular as ever and helped massively towards the almost £300 that the evening generated for the Association funds.



Our guest speaker this year was 1979 veteran David O'Ryan who held us all spell-bound for at least 15 minutes (and could have continued to do so for at least double that) with his tales of participating in the BT Global Challenge round-the-world yacht race in 1996/97. The difference between this and more conventional round-the-world yacht races is that they had to do it right to left, against the wind - in other words "the wrong way"!

David told us that fourteen



yachts, measuring 67' long and weighing around 42 tons each took part in the 10-month voyage. To further illustrate their size he explained that the main mast was 105' high and the spinnaker was about the size of a tennis court! They were crewed by 14 people who were split into two watches of 7 apiece.



To participate each crew-member had to raise £18,000 (at 1996 prices) and, having achieved this, they set off from Southampton in September 1996 with a Force 8 gale blowing!



The first leg took them to Rio de Janeiro via the Bay of Biscay. After a stop-over in Brazil they then undertook the second leg of 6,000 miles to Wellington, New Zealand via Cape Horn. The third leg to Sydney took a further eight days, followed by the fourth leg from Australia to Cape Town. The fifth, and longest, leg saw them travel 7,500

miles over 42 days to Boston, Massachusetts, from where the sixth, and final, leg brought them across the Atlantic and home to Southampton. After all that racing over such a massive distance David's yacht actually crossed the finishing line a mere two seconds behind the boat that was in front of them!



David rather cleverly linked his experiences to the school itself when he explained that his first taste of sailing had been at Burnham on an "experience sailing" event arranged by the school a few years before he left.

Quite how much similarity bobbing about at Burnham had to the 50'-60' waves that he experienced travelling towards him at 30 knots in the Southern Ocean he didn't elaborate on. Neither did he compare the scenery on the Crouch with the exhilaration of racing along towards picturesque sunlight breaking through storm clouds whilst being escorted by dolphins and pilot whales. Discretion always was one of David's character traits and his modesty in the telling of this tale belied what a truly heroic undertaking it must have been.



WITH GRATEFUL THANKS

We re-print here excerpts from a previous article (In the Beginning - Issue 36, March 2008) in memory of Dominick Fanning, one of the school's longest serving teachers - original Deputy and later Headmaster....

Dominick actually began his career in Scotland at St Ninians Orphanage in Fife. He had himself just left O'Connell's Grammar school in Dublin and had asked one of his former Christian Brother teachers for help in getting a job. By pure coincidence Brother Galvin had bumped into a teacher at another school who had been contacted by the orphanage who were searching for a teacher. Brother Galvin mentioned this to Dominick who applied both to the orphanage and to a school in Cork. Both offered him a job (the two telegrams [for younger members, these were a kind of cross between letters and e-mail - Ed] arrived within $\frac{1}{2}$ hour of each other), but since Scotland were offering a slightly higher salary he accepted that one. Upon receiving his acceptance the orphanage telegraphed back "Come immediately" and by 5.30pm that day Dominick was leaving Dublin for Belfast to catch the boat!

He arrived in the small village of Falkland and reported to St Ninians to find a small orphanage of 83 boys in 2 classes and 2 teachers on the staff. Since no-one had bothered to prepare his room the matron got it ready and by the afternoon he was

teaching in his classroom!

MACBETH

"I spent 2 years teaching at St Ninians and learnt more there than anywhere," commented Dominick happily. "I was always struck by the address: St Ninians, House of Falkland, Falkland, Fife, perhaps because of the obvious connections with Macbeth!"

He must have certainly been happy there because he ended up marrying the matron (Norita) in St Helen's church, Westcliff in 1955. He had taken a job at St Helen's "Unreorganised" Primary School which had boys up to 14 years old on its roll. The seniors were taught in the church hall which used to be on the corner where the car showrooms now stand. Dominick's class was situated at the stage end and he was responsible for teaching 10 subjects to 11-13 year olds!

FOUNDATION STONE

In 1959 Dominick stood with his son on the bank opposite the eventual site of St. Thomas More High School and watched the Foundation Stone being laid. *"I came with the cement!"* he joked. Later that year he and Bernard McCarthy were both *told* they would be moving to the new school in the following September!

It was at this point that he came into contact with the first Headmaster - H Wilson Curry. *"I'm not entirely sure what his first name was,"* Dominick reminisced,

perhaps strangely for us in today's "first name terms" society. But that helps to illustrate the character of this slightly mysterious and distant first Head. *"His wife called him Bunny!"* Dominick continued with a chuckle.

Wilson Curry wanted Dominick as his Deputy and, when his first application was rejected, encouraged him to try again. This time he was successful and became Head of English, History, R.E. and Deputy Head all at the same time!

Dominick helped organize the school from its very beginnings. When he was appointed all they had was the building and that had been built with great economy. *"To save money they hadn't even employed a Clerk of Works. This led to a number of shortcomings. For instance, the boys soon learnt that you could actually short-out the radiators with plastic milk bottle tops!"* remembered Dominick.

He and Wilson Curry had to furnish and equip all the departments on their own. They spent months and their summer holidays doing just that. During this time they worked together well, but when the school finally opened Wilson Curry's true personality emerged. *"He was an interesting character," a bit of a control freak!"*

FIRST AMONG EQUALS

He decided, quite sud-

denly, that Dominick's office should be given over to the prefects as a Common Room and so the Deputy Headmaster found himself residing for the rest of Wilson Curry's tenure in the Staff Room. That suited him and his relaxed temperament perfectly. *"I was a sort of first amongst equals. I didn't hold with too much formality and, by being in the Staff Room, could sort out problems as soon as they arose."*

RUN THE SCHOOL

In February 1963 Wilson Curry went off sick with cancer and Dominick moved into the Headmaster's office to run the school during his absence. He also visited him at his home on a regular basis to report on progress. *"I remember accidentally burning his desk with a cigarette and dreading his reaction!"*

Finally after a lengthy absence Wilson Curry returned to work *"There was no announcement. He simply opened the door and walked in. Nothing was said. I simply got up and vacated the office"*, remembered Dominick with a smile.

When the ailing Head's health forced him to retire not much later Dominick stood-in again as Acting Head until Don McGregor took over in 1964. He repeated the exercise a third time between Don McGregor and Tony MacDonald in 1981, before finally becoming the school's fourth Head-

master between 1985 and his retirement after 30 years service 1990.

REMINISCENCES

Such was the affection for Dominick amongst Old Boys that quite a few sent in tributes and reminiscences upon hearing of his death. The Association has compiled these into a small booklet which will be presented to the family. An electronic from will also be available for viewing via the Association website and to give you a flavour we reproduce some extracts below...

"..strolling around the school in his gown he seemed every inch an academic"

"A real gentleman who gave me encouragement at a time when I needed it most"

"He described the other non-grammar school pupils as the 'Saxons of Belfairs, the Jutes of Eastwood and the Huns of Fairfax"

"Some of my career success must be credited to Dominick's encouragement to develop my English skills"

"A man who truly cared about the boys...the only teacher who gave me encouraging words for my future"

"...the cricket stumps increased in height when he used them as an ashtray for his many Players Weights"

"He remained one of the most respected members of staff"

MEMBERSHIP AS AT APRIL 2012

1961 Graham Lewis

1962 Michael Hughes
John Lewis

1963 John Bowman
John Sheehy

1964 John Griffiths
Ronald Patchett

1965 Brian Dalton
Terry Knights

1966 Martyn Barker
Patrick Clancy
Bill Clegg
Paul Hutchinson
Paul Wenham

1967 Tony Cane
Paul Clancy
Glen Sweeney
Mike Thompson

1968 Martin Duggan
Geoffrey Lewis

1969 Peter David
Paul Marsh
Chris McHale

1971 Bernie Brooker
Mike Donovan
Kevin Flynn

1972 Paul Culleton
David Thompson

1973 Phil Mahoney

1974 Paul McArdle
Simon Millyard

1975 Eamon Day
David Ekers
Keith Exley
Chris Fairchild
John McDermot
Andrew McGregor
Gerry Thomas

1976 Laurence Blainey
John Chambers
Guy Francke
Clive Knight
Andrew McWilliam
Simon Ravinet
Martin Sullivan
John Todryk
James Tyrie

1977 Graham Axe
Phil Coath
John Cobbold
Richard Copley
Martin Hodson
John Judge
Liam Rand

1978 Kevin Thomas

1979 Paul Clarke
Paul Driscoll
David O'Ryan
Sean Tyrie

1980 Sean Leggett
Martin McKeown
Nial O'Callaghan
Sean Conlon

1982 Mark Harvey

1983 Richard Allard
Anthony Crowley

1984 Michael Barry
Mark Denton
Stuart Humfrey

1985 Tim Allard

1986 Ian O'Connell

1987 Martin Corr
Martin Diggins
Steven Hurren

1989 Damian Dillon
Justin Hennessey
Paul Lynch

1990 Christopher Hull
1995 Paul Bending

2000 Daniel Kelly (Chpln)

2001 Chris Thompson

2011 Dale Claridge

FT John Askew
FT Ian Britt
FT David Finnigan
FT Tom Kennedy
FT David Milne
FT John O'Connell*

H/M Peter Travis

Hon Jan Lewis
Helen Wigmore

*John O'Connell is currently a member of staff having previously left.

WHAT DO YOU REALLY THINK?

Using the wonders of modern technology our tireless Executive are attempting to canvas your views on a few minor points.

Simply go to the members' section of our website (if you require log-in details please e-mail the address on the front page) and click on the "Members' Survey" page where you will find the link.

Nine simple questions await your completion which will help inform future developments of the Association.

The survey will remain open until **10th May 2012**. Go on—tell us what you think!

If you require a hardcopy please contact the postal address on the front page and we shall be happy to send one to you...so there really is no excuse for not spending a few minutes completing it.

CHANGE IS UPON US (AGAIN)

Tuesday 15th May has been set as the date for this year's **Annual General Meeting** to be held in the school at 7.30pm.

All members are encouraged to attend to receive the reports from the President, the Membership Secretary and the Treasurer and to elect next year's President.

This year we also have two other vacancies to fill on the Executive. Current Treasurer Paul Hutchinson is standing down after 8 year's service! In addition the role of Social Secretary is also vacant. Enclosed with this edition of *Moreana* you will find nomination forms for all three positions. Do please consider either standing for one of them yourself or nominating someone else [*having obtained their agreement beforehand!* - Ed] and return the

form without delay.

These are exciting and developing times for the Association as we slowly start to rebuild the membership numbers amid a real feeling that we are tearing ourselves off the launchpad towards a re-invigorated future. If you want to take an active part in that development be sure to attend the AGM and have your say.

HATCHES, MATCHES & DESPATCHES

It is with sadness that we report three deaths this issue:-

In addition to former Deputy Head & Headmaster Dominick Fanning another former English teacher, Dot Parkinson, also died in early Spring and past pupil Geoff Bennett (1974) died just before Christmas.

May they Rest in Peace.