

The Emanuel School Archive 2009-2010

If you were an Old Emanuel (OE) visiting the school 3 years ago we wouldn't have had an Archive to show you. All our material relating to the long 400+ year history of Emanuel School, and Emanuel Hospital (in Westminster) was stored in boxes, under sinks, in classrooms and storage cupboards. As a school librarian who looked after "the Archive" I dreaded the frequent family history email which often began with *"my Grandfather attended your school.... do you have any information?"* Sadly, we weren't equipped to answer many of these questions, and if we did, I doubt we did a very good job of it.

However, things were soon to change. We began a hugely ambitious project to reconstruct a central part of the school into a new library. Incorporated into the design was a mezzanine floor which has since simply been known as "The Archive". It celebrates everything Emanuel and I have had tremendous fun stocking it, rotating displays and answering research enquiries which were, 3 years ago, beyond me. It is both a visual history of the school, and a storage centre, with a huge amount of information filed behind the scenes to answer those queries we previously used to struggle with.

Since opening, the Archive has attracted considerable attention from pupils, visitors, OEs and researchers. We open to the public for Open House Day, attract big crowds on Dacre Day (our Founders Day) and whenever there are OE functions in the school attract much nostalgia from our visitors.

Although developing the Archive has had many highlights, meeting the OE playwright NF Simpson was the most memorable experience. It happened by sheer fluke; a BBC researcher who was working on a radio documentary on Simpson's life contacted me, and in turn introduced us. We struck up a correspondence which resulted in him inviting me to the premiere reading of his first new play in over 30 years at the Royal Court. He has since donated a large collection of exceptionally rare theatre memorabilia related to his work and life to the Archive. There was a mini-revival of his work in 2007 and 2008 and some of his TV material from the early 1970s was showing at the NFT, an event in which "Wally" (as he is known to his friends) invited me to.

The Old Emanuel Association have been instrumental in developing our collection. They have helped spread my message *"If you have something nice connected to the school, it's better off being displayed in the Archive than hiding in your sock drawer!"* Highlights include a 1948 army rugby cap, which belonged to Bruce A Neale who played for England XV in the 1950s and a collection of items relating to the Surrey cricket captain Stuart Surridge. We have also a large collection of school medals from the 1930s and various other tankards, medals and glasses from the 1950s and 60s, many of which are very rare rowing medals from the years in which the school was a feared crew on the river.

We've also been given a fair share of quirky items including a full CCF uniform from the 1950s, and a Boys U19 England rugby jersey. The Scotland and Lions International Tom Smith also sent us some signed rugby programs of key fixtures he played in. It's important for us to be able to display such items with pride. It shows the current pupils of today, who browse the Archive, that those who have gone before have achieved great things in their subsequent careers. Taking pride in their school is something that Emanuel pupils haven't always been

considerable research time. We're also helping with what might turn out to be a book on NF Simpson, a Stuart Surridge biography, and OE Daniel Kirmatzis has just published "*An Illustrated History of Emanuel School Boat Club*", an opus 8 years in the making, but which was well worth the wait.

I've found that talking to one OE often opens a door to someone else, I call it the "*Do you know who was in my class?*" syndrome, and this has helped us "discover" interesting OEs we might never have heard of otherwise. This syndrome helped us discover Chris Hughes who was the drummer of *Adam and the Ants*, Alan Caddy who was the bassist of *The Tornados*, they wrote "Telstar" the most successful instrumental hit-single of all-time, and Bernard Colin-Day who was one half of the duet "The Allison's" who came second in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1961. Changing musical directions completely Paul Slack was the bassist in legendary London punk band the *UK Subs*. We also uncovered rugby player Tony Boddy, who toured South Africa with England in 1971, and is currently General Manager of the premiership team *Worcestershire Warriors*.

Jumping from sport to the arts, we uncovered Derek Davis as an OE. Derek was one of Britain's best known post-war potters, however in his later years he switched to painting, and his work fetches a hefty price. We have a signed retrospective of his work in the Archive, sadly Derek died in 2009. However, his son contacted us to tell us he wore his father's school tie to his funeral! We also uncovered, what seems to be, an annotated school text by Classics Professor David Stockton, who wrote the classic political biography on Cicero. It includes various doodles and sketches, showing the young mind at work, of a soon to be Oxford Professor.

We've been successful in contacting almost everyone we've tried to. One of the few exceptions is Ian Wilson, historian, BAFTA winner and Turin Shroud expert. Ian emigrated to Australia a few years ago, and so far we haven't been able to find him. Funnily enough though, one of his cousins visited the school on the last Open House Day.

We've relied on the generosity of both parents and OEs in developing the Archive. They have helped us bind (for the first time) all the post-1950 Portcullis (School) magazines until 2005, completely rebind all the school report cards (which were in terrible condition with red rust) from around 1910-1930 and professionally frame many of our paintings, photos and posters. We received a very generous donation from the estate of CW Scott-Giles, OE Historian and author of the original School History, which played an important part in restoring the school reports. So what does it all cost? Actually, not very much. I have a small budget to buy items which appear on the open market. But more often than not OEs don't expect payment for giving something back to the school.

2009 has been an exceptionally exciting year for us, as the Archive has gone truly digital. An A-Level pupil has created a Filemaker Pro database so we can archive, and organise, all our photographs, posters, clippings, and everything else. This means, for the first time, when we get an enquiry, we can very quickly identify what (if anything) we have on a particular subject, event or person. Parent volunteers have been a tremendous asset here, with their help we have been able to add extra layers of detail to the records, for instance, we can now also search for all names of boys mentioned in all our photograph albums. This is a far cry from the old library where the archive material were stored wherever there was a spare drawer! This year we have around 100 research enquiries and almost everyone has had a positive response.

The most recent highlight was taking a display of material to Petersfield for the 70th Anniversary reunion of the School's evacuation from London. Over 55 OEs attended the event, one gentleman coming all the way from Canada. It was a privilege to be there and we are currently sifting through a huge range of photos and other memorabilia which were donated to the Archive. Of all the donations we were given the highlight was a glass decanter which commemorated the 6 years spent in Petersfield and was the prize in the keenly contested annual Rugby match between the Emanuel Exiles and Churchers' College.

If you have anything you might think be of interest to the school please contact me on trj@emanuel.org.uk.

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