



POCKLINGTON 500

Celebrating the school's 500th birthday

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMASTER



Mark Ronan - Headmaster

Since its foundation in 1514, Pocklington School has inspired generations of young people.

Exciting opportunities and challenges in all aspects of school life enable individuals to develop the self confidence necessary to go on to achieve their personal aspirations. It is important that, as a school community, we continue to build on that solid tradition and ensure that the values of "virtue and truth", the words from our school motto, remain strong.

The supportive relationships between students and all those who teach, guide and care for them are evident as one walks around the school. Such relationships are key to enabling any young person to flourish.

As we approach our 500th anniversary, we have a unique opportunity to reflect on the school's achievements whilst considering how the school can continue to thrive for future generations. I hope you will enjoy reading the first Pocklington 500 newsletter and that you may be inspired to join in some of the many events which are proposed.

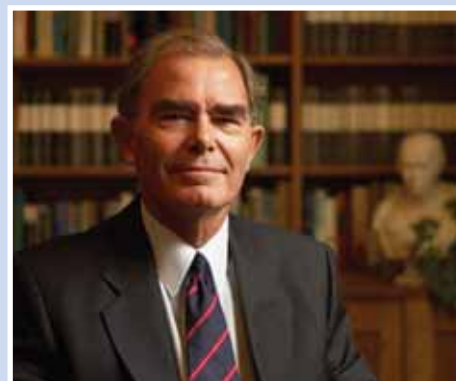
Mark Ronan

In 2014 Pocklington School will celebrate its 500th birthday. Few schools in the country can boast so long a history, and on the same site. We want to ensure that this very important anniversary is given the attention it deserves. Already preliminary discussions have been held to map out ways in which we can mark the Quincentenary, and the school benefit from these activities. This newsletter will be the first of a number keeping you informed of our plans and letting you know of developments. We are keen to involve everyone in this exciting period of the school's history. Five years of preparation lie ahead, offering opportunities for a wide range of fundraising and other social events. Your ideas and support for the anniversary will be welcomed. We look forward to your involvement.

THE FOUNDING OF POCKLINGTON SCHOOL

On the 24th May 1514 King Henry VIII granted John Dowman a licence to found a guild in the parish church of Pocklington. Almost certainly Dowman was a Pocklington man. By the time he founded the guild he was a prominent churchman and lawyer, and thus very wealthy. The guild was to appoint a schoolmaster for a newly created grammar school. Pocklington School had been born. We know from early documents that by 1525 Dowman set up funding to provide scholarships at St John's College, Cambridge, for boys from Pocklington School. In this document he refers to 'my school, lately erected at Pocklington'. The original patent, written in Latin, is in the Public Records Office. It gives the full name of the guild: 'The Fraternity or Guild of the Name of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Nicholas founded in the parish church of Pocklington in the County of York by John Dowman Doctor of Laws'. The patent goes on to say that the guild is to 'find from time to time one man fitted, and sufficiently learned in grammar, to instruct and educate all the singular scholars who resort to the town of Pocklington for the aforesaid purpose of receiving education according to the ordinances and statutes to be made by the said John Dowman in this matter.'

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS



Richard Haynes - Chairman of Governors

Pupils of Pocklington School, past and present, possess an unassuming confidence in themselves and their abilities. Many of them achieve great things in a wide range of fields. But despite this, their style is not to make a fuss about their achievements or to shout them from the rooftops; they are modestly content to let their actions speak for themselves.

Most of them have the same attitude to their school; they know it is outstanding but they would not dream of shouting about it. They are quite happy to keep the knowledge to themselves. Perhaps all this is in the genes of East Riding people?

This attitude has served the school well, but reaching the 500th anniversary of our foundation is surely a big enough event to make an exception and really tell the world about Pocklington School – as well as having a party!

The Governors will be sharing the work leading up to 2014 and we hope that the entire school community will join us.

Richard Haynes

ANCIENT SEAL OF POCKLINGTON SCHOOL

Only three schools in the country still have their pre-Reformation seals: Eton, Winchester and Pocklington. The seal is that of the Guild founded in 1514 by John Dowman which brought the school into being. From the illustration you will see that it is a very busy design. Around the image, in an abbreviated form, is the



Latin inscription 'Sigillum commune fraternitatis nominis Jesu, Beatae Mariae et Sancti Nicolai de Pocklington'. The design on the seal has been described as showing "the boy Jesus... with his monogram, Ihs, stamped upon his stomach, and the whole seal powdered with the same monogram, for the dedication to the 'Name of Jesus'. The Virgin Mary crowned, with the infant Jesus in her arms, appears for the dedication to the Virgin. The place

of honour is reserved for Bishop Nicholas (of Myra), the patron Saint of schoolboys, with a delightful representation of him in full pontificals by a tub, in which two boys are standing, while a third is putting one leg over the side in order to get out. This refers to the well known story of Nicholas having arrived in the nick of time to save the boys. They were on their way to school at Athens, and had been murdered at an inn at Myra by the inn-keeper for their money and clothes, then cut up and put into the pickle-tub, where they were scented out by the Bishop in consequence of a dream, resuscitated, and sent on, not, perhaps, 'unwillingly to school'. The final, tiny figure on the seal is that of the founder, John Dowman, shown kneeling at a desk praying.

WILBERFORCE COURT

The creation of Wilberforce Court is a major improvement to the front of the school. With tarmac and car parking gone, the area has been transformed into a handsome square. Renowned sculptor Sally Arnup was commissioned to create a statue in bronze of the young William Wilberforce. All known early images of Pocklington's most famous Old Boy were studied, including the school's own portrait, said to be by Arthur Devis. The result is a superbly sensitive work of art, with the young man seen walking, head turned towards the south as if anticipating the important work awaiting him there.

Much of the work to prepare the area was done over the summer holidays in 2007, though paving wasn't completed until the following year. In September of last year the stone plinth arrived and the statue was fixed in place and securely covered. Finally, near the end of the month all was ready for the unveiling, carried out by the Archbishop of York. It was a fine day as the whole school, governors, parents and guests gathered for the ceremony. The School Chaplain conducted the service, and the choir led the singing. The Archbishop blessed the statue and sprinkled it with holy water, getting rid of the surplus by showering nearby pupils. He gave an inspiring address, and at the end of the service he patiently signed for hundreds of autograph hunters.



The Wilberforce statue

A CLOCK FOR 2014?

What can be done to add to the school's amenities by 2014? Major anniversaries are often marked by new buildings or improvements to existing ones. There are already plenty of ideas on how we could spend money in this way before we've even raised it! One intriguing suggestion comes as a result of finding the original 1897 architect's drawings for additions to the school. These beautifully drawn plans were discovered in the Borthwick Institute at the University of York in 2006. They come from the oldest architectural practice in the country, founded in the eighteenth century by York's greatest architect, John Carr. In late Victorian times the firm was run by the distinguished architect Walter

Brierley, often referred to as 'the Lutyens of the North'. He had been commissioned to add a large new classroom and dormitory wing (now the staff room) but also to heighten and refurbish the main school block. His meticulous designs are very detailed, even showing where desks, beds and washbasins would be placed. On three separate occasions when he shows the school's distinctive bell tower he positions a clock on one angle of the wall. The round-faced clock is shown in a square aperture framed by brickwork. Presumably because of cost the clock was never installed, although the design was not modified as a result and there is still a large area of blank wall. Could the clock finally be put there some 117 years after it was proposed?



1897 architect's drawings



OPs – YOU ARE NEEDED!

OPs are always welcome, but never more so than in these years leading to the Quincentenary. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to revisit the school, and we do hope many of you will be able to play a part in the celebrations. We are likely to be publishing not only an up-to-date history of the school, but also a more light-hearted book about your schoolday reminiscences. We are also keen to add to the archives material such as photographs and letters home, some of which could be used in an exhibition on the school's history. If you have any ideas you'd like to share with us do please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

FOCUS ON ALAN HEAVEN AND THE SCHOOL PAGEANT

The aim of the Drama section seems to me to be documentary, celebratory and inclusive. That is, I am interested in getting the historical facts right as well as using anecdotes, and in reflecting the journey the school has taken; I believe the tone should be triumphant and optimistic; and I would hope that the inclusivity would extend throughout the existing school community, parents and into the local community and Old Pocklingtonians.

With those aims in mind, here are some opening thoughts on theatrical elements for the Quincentenary.

1. Site Specific Theatre

The journey of the school involves place and architecture as well as personalities. Often these are closely connected (the Headmaster's study, for example) and the first stage of evoking the enormous time span for spectators seems to me to begin as far back as we can go. To that end, I would like to see the involvement of the church; of the oldest buildings; of rooms temporarily reinvented into old forms. An audience, free to follow the meandering route this would involve

should encounter various theatrical moments: costumed guides; acted scenes; interactive opportunities; leading to one or two larger events depicting moments from the school's history.

2. Outdoor Theatre

As dusk falls, the exterior of the school is lit and the audience is led in small groups on a guided walk, dressed with theatre. They may follow an illuminated lantern in the shape of a bird, say, carrying lanterns themselves. Gradually, they are taken to the site of the celebration itself: an outdoor stage where the event becomes participatory. Food, themed around the school, is given. A play is performed; songs and light effects happen. Connections to the local community, to Pocklington itself are presented. It all ends with a bonfire, giant-sized puppets, fireworks and the music of a ceilidh.

3. Tom Stoppard Theatre

The journey ends with the recent past, the present and the future. A multi-media, digitally-driven event dominates the style. Pupils of all ages perform. The foyer has other OP performers.

4. 450th Pageant

Michael Stevenson's script and Sefton Cottom's music prepared for the 450th Anniversary pageant are sampled.

5. Guest Performers

While the emphasis should come from within the School, some OPs may wish to participate. Perhaps they would be willing to read a poem, or a diary extract, or perform a song.

These are just some opening thoughts, but perhaps they help provide a spectacular and emotional element to the event which will intersect comfortably with everything else.



Alan Heaven



Alan's Mystery Play Production

BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

The school is keen to build up its collection of archives and other material relating to its rich history. We are therefore very grateful to two generous donors for their gifts this term. David Stather (OP, 1949-1957) has given a fascinating letter written by William Wilberforce in 1809. This will join other items in a special cabinet in the library where we can display our treasured collection of Wilberforce material.

The second gift comes from a parent, Ian Turner, who two years ago gave us a superb oil painting which hangs in the library. His latest gift is of a

Georgian school desk, doubly welcome since the school retains no furniture older than 100 years. We are actively looking to reclaim items from our heritage which we are sure must be out there somewhere. Occasionally things turn up quite unexpectedly. Recently a kind donor who had no connection with the school gave us a handsome mid-eighteenth century portrait of a Pocklington Headmaster. This has just been cleaned and restored and now hangs in the library. So if you know of anything you think would interest us, do please be in touch.



2014'S UPPER SIXTH FORMERS

Last term's first formers will be in the Upper Sixth during the first half of 2014. Much of the responsibility for the success of the year will therefore fall on their capable shoulders. Here, a group of them give some of their views on how to celebrate the important event.

The first bright idea was from James Thompson, who suggested sporting events against the teachers. This idea was then developed. "Playing in old school kit" said someone else. "With early rules", chipped in another. To involve the whole school it was then proposed that each year should take one of the sports. A revival of fives and the displays of gym popular in the late Victorian Pocklington could be included. Should we rediscover the old cross-country course and add that to our list?

Another suggestion was to release 500 balloons, every one with a different date from each year the school has existed. The balloons would need to carry the Quincentenary logo and the school's name, but opinion was divided over whether or not there should be prizes for balloons returned from far away.



Upper sixth to be

A focus on the CCF was the next idea up. The conversation then moved to school during the Second World War. In the former School House we have our famous mirror, still in place but damaged by German anti-personnel bombs in 1941. But what about the airfield adjacent to school – could our links here be explored? How excited boys had been to abandon cricket one day and rush to watch the first Wellington land on the runway. Wondering whether we could involve present-day gliders in our celebrations, someone hit on the idea of using one of the towing planes to fly a banner proudly announcing our Quincentenary.

So the schemes rolled out, pupils advancing ideas which were then taken up, chewed over, and embellished by those present. The school is lucky to have such a bright, well-intentioned and energetic year group who will be the movers and shakers in 2014.

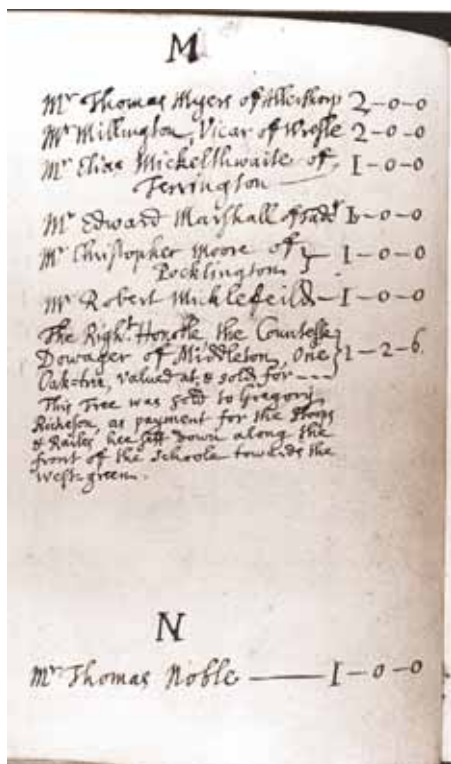
FROM THE ARCHIVES

In 500 years of existence, any school is going to have its ups and downs and Pocklington certainly has had its fair share of the latter. When Thomas Dwyer arrived as Master in 1693 he found the buildings and schoolhouse "running into ruin". He put up with this for 5 years but then decided that he was not prepared to go on teaching in a building in a state of collapse "which is continually expected!". Faced with the challenge of doing something about it he might well have ducked the challenge and resigned. Instead he met it straight on by setting about raising the money required "for the taking down and rebuilding the said schoolhouse 'ere it fall down of it selfe".

He did this by organising an Appeal, and did so with remarkable efficiency. He identified his target groups – Old Boys, parents of prospective pupils, local residents, landowners and "those with noble charitable minds" – and like today's fundraisers he seems to have utilised area organisers to make approaches to likely donors. "The Rev. Mr Jonathan Dryden and Mr Francis Hildyard procured the largest subscriptions in Yorke" and operating more locally Mr Thomas Myers of Allerthorpe "procured about twenty pounds" in subscriptions. It is impossible from the available evidence to be precise but it is likely that about half the subscribers were Old Boys.

Dwyer kept an impressively well ordered, alphabetical list of subscribers. The list was headed by the Archbishop of York who contributed £10 but perhaps the most striking donation was "One oak tree, valued at and sold for £1.2.6". Given by the Countess Dowager of Middleton, Dwyer records that the proceeds of its sale were used to pay for the fencing in of the school frontage. The sum raised by the Appeal did not quite cover the cost of the builder's bill, hardly an unusual story, but we should surely salute Dwyer and those who responded to his Appeal for playing a vital role, in their day, in ensuring the school's survival.

Chris Solomon, Archivist



Opening ceremony

THE NEW CHAPEL: FROM GYM TO BOOKS TO PRAYER

The close association between school and parish church meant that it wasn't until the C20th that Pocklington received its own chapel. This was created by converting the upper floor of the coach house block next to the Headmaster's house. In this rather cramped space there was room for only a small congregation. The building was also far from the heart of the school. The newly created chapel, however, is centrally placed. It also makes use of one of the school's most attractive early buildings. Originally constructed in 1891 as the gymnasium, and designed by the famous York architect, Walter Brierley, it later became the school library. Now with a spacious new library, the building could be converted again and see new life as the school chapel. The fine timber roof has been exposed, handsome Edwardian pews fitted and the organ from Kexby Church acquired. On Wednesday 23rd April, appropriately enough, a service of dedication was held, at which the School Chaplain officiated, the Bishop of Selby preached and a strong choir helped a capacity congregation to fill the building with joyous sound – quite a change from all the years when 'Silence' notices were the rule.

Contacting us:

If you'd like to be in touch with us about any aspect of the 500th, then please contact Mike Evans at Pocklington School, West Green, York YO42 2NJ, tel: 01759 321307, e-mail: evansm@pocklingtonschool.com

Newsletter edited by:

Darrell Buttery, e-mail: pock500@pocklingtonschool.com

Coming up in the next issue:

- Pocklington's new library
- Festival of Pocklington films
- Thanksgiving service in York Minster