

## **The 2017 Reunion**

### **Wednesday afternoon, 10th May**

We assembled at 1 pm in the Montefiore Rooms at Worth Park, where we had time to drink tea or coffee and eat our own lunches before the arrival of Raj Sharma, the Mayor of Crawley, with the Mayoress and Council representatives. Unfortunately Simon Groves, carver of the Time-Line Totem and the Jersey cows, was busy at work and couldn't join us, but Sam, the Worth Park gardener, proved a capable speaker in his stead. Sam then led us on a tour of the gardens and impressed us with both his plant expertise and his business acumen on obtaining redundant plants to recycle into his domain! Much of the summer planting still remained to be done, and Sam praised the many volunteers who help with this and with the vast amount of weeding needed in such a large garden. The weather was dry, though somewhat overcast, but this could not detract from our pleasure in recognising some of the trees that survive from our schooldays. Tea back in the Montefiore Rooms was accompanied by another lovely cake made by Karen Rham's daughter.

Many of us adjourned to the Premier Inn on the Balcombe Road to change for our special dinner at Alexander House Hotel. Because some of our members had booked late, our party unfortunately had to be split between two rooms for the meal.

### **Thursday**

After a "Grab & Go" breakfast, all that the Premier Inn currently supplies, we returned to Alexander House Hotel, where the Guild committee met first. Coffee was then available before Colin Bagnall, Caterham School's Archivist, gave a most interesting talk on the history of the school, entitled "Things will never be the same again". Essentially, he described how a small school, founded to provide free education to the sons of Congregational ministers, had weathered successive financial (and other) crises to become the flourishing coeducational boarding school it is today.

After a sandwich lunch came the Miltonian Guild's AGM, attended by 22 members, three associate members and one guest. Because of the small sum this currently raised, it was decided that in future members would not be asked to pay a subscription. Kathleen Oliver was re-elected as President, and Margaret Clark was appointed Vice President-Elect for the term 2017–2019, Margaret Osborne today becoming the Vice-President in succession to Jeanne Pumfrey.

Those staying over Friday night had an enjoyable dinner at the Shipley Bridge Inn, a short drive from the Premier Inn.

### **Friday**

On a rather rainy day we left by coach for Bournemouth at 9 am. Although the traffic was heavy in places, we had time for a quick coffee and comfort stop before arriving at BCS. Here we were welcomed by Russell Slatford, the Headmaster, his deputy Maria, and the senior Head Girl, Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy (Danny, Henry and Emmanuel, respectively) for a delicious and beautifully presented lunch of sandwiches and cakes in the Headmaster's study. We had an interesting tour of the buildings led by pairs of pupils (mostly around 12 years old) before proceeding to the Jones Hall for tea and cake and entertainment with 'cello and saxophone solos, poetry, drama and solo singing – clearly there is a wealth of talent in the school.

Our driver, Steve, proved expert in choosing the best route and getting into the best lane during our return journey to Worth Park, during which the sun made fitful appearances. Most of us then went straight to the Shipley Bridge Inn for an ample dinner.

### **Saturday**

The original idea of a visit to Tilgate Park was scrapped, being replaced by an unexpected delight. By

special arrangement, several of us went to Gravetye Manor, now a luxury hotel, for coffee. The manor was built in 1598 and although extended during the 19th century appears “all of a piece”, a handsome, gabled grey stone building and Grade II\* listed. It was bought in 1884 by the horticultural writer and gardener William Robinson (1838–1935), who laid out the gardens and much of the surrounding woodland, and left the woodlands to the nation on his death.

The interior of the buildings is very handsome, but the gardens are quite glorious, and are superbly maintained according to Robinson’s original plan. Some of the colour schemes were very striking, and the display of azaleas was quite dazzling.

The Reunion concluded with lunch at The Cat, a deservedly popular inn in West Hoathly; this is a small village, with narrow streets, and parking was a nightmare!