

for Mr.
Tom Drum



RHODES NEWSLETTER

Organ of the Old Rhodian Union

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EDITORIAL

THIS *Rhodes Newsletter* is being sent to Old Rhodians in the hope that it will revive happy memories of years spent at Rhodes. Newsletters have been sent out in the past, but this one is headed Vol. I No. 1 because it is new in form and content, because it will appear when Rhodes University College is undergoing its metamorphosis into Rhodes University, and because it is the first of what the editors hope will be a regular series.

Almost inevitably in a time of transition such as Rhodes is experiencing now, our minds turn to the past, and praise of things past is the tenor of this letter; but Dr. Alty's message has an important statement on the rights and responsibilities of Old Rhodians in the new University and all who profess loyalty to Rhodes should act on it promptly.

The editors are grateful to the contributors to this letter and will welcome articles and suggestions for future letters,

E.R.S.

E.T.V.

MESSAGE TO OLD RHODIANS

By Dr. T. ALTY

THIS is probably the last message to Old Rhodians from a Master of Rhodes University College. By the time it appears, the College will have become a University and the Mastership have been replaced by its Vice-Chancellorship. I should therefore like to begin by thanking on behalf of the College all of you, old students of the College, who have taken your part in advancing the reputation of the College and its development to University status, and who have contributed to its improved financial position. The Council and Senate of the College are indeed grateful for your interest and practical help.

The new University also will need your support, which I am sure will be very freely given. I hope that all of you qualified to do so will join the University Convocation. Each graduate of the University of South Africa who was a student of Rhodes University College is entitled to transfer his name from the Convocation of the University of South Africa to that of Rhodes University. Convocation is entitled to elect representatives on to the Council of the University and the question you must now decide is whether you prefer to retain your vote in the modified University of South Africa, as it will exist after Rhodes and Potchefstroom become independent, or to transfer to the Rhodes Convocation and take your part in the future government of Rhodes University. It should be made clear that, whatever your decision, no change is involved in the value or status of any degree you may possess. We hope, however, that many of you may elect to join the Rhodes Convocation and so continue your interest in Rhodes. All who wish to do so should notify the Registrar before 5th April, 1951. *After that date transfer from the one Convocation to the other is not permitted under the Rhodes Act.*

The University Convocation should not be confused with the Old Rhodian Union. The latter is open to all ex-students of the College, whether graduate or not and membership of the Union confers no voting rights for the new University Council: it forms a social link between past and present students which is very valuable and which I hope it may be possible to retain. I understand that the future of the Old Rhodian Union is to be discussed by its members at a meeting during the inauguration celebrations. Whatever decision is reached then, I should like to take this present opportunity of paying tribute to the services to the Union of Miss Britten, who has acted as honorary Secretary for many years and has worked indefatigably for the welfare of the Union and its members. At this moment, when the College is attaining University status, I am sure all members of the Old Rhodian Union would wish to join me in expressing our thanks to Miss Britten and our hope that she will be able to continue her very valuable work in the new University.

I hope that many of you will be able to be present at the Inauguration ceremonies in March; we look forward to seeing you then. To all of you unable to come, I send greetings and good wishes and ask for your continued support and help in our efforts to advance the interests and reputation of our new Rhodes University.

EARLY DAYS

By Professor C. W. BOWLES

Master of the College from 1931 to 1937 and Honorary President of the
Old Rhodian Union

IN attempting to give some idea of the early days of Rhodes University College, I am handicapped by the fact that I have no first hand knowledge of the first five years of its existence, as I did not join the staff until April, 1909, whereas the College began in July 1904. In one sense the College was really founded in 1878 when Government-aided Lectureships were established at St. Andrew's College. From 1878 the College Department of St. Andrew's successfully carried on University work, as the Diocesan College did in Cape Town, but there was a growing feeling that the needs of the Eastern Province demanded the foundation of a separate University College. With the aid of the Rhodes Trustees and the citizens of Grahamstown, this was achieved in 1904, and the College was named after the Statesman to whose generous provision for Higher Education the realization of the scheme was primarily due. And so in July, 1904, a band of some 35 students and four Professors optimistically began work in the Old Drostdy House which stood where the Library Front now stands. Of those four Professors, two are happily still with us, Kidd and Dingemans, and the names of the others are preserved in Matthews and Cory Houses. A photograph of these foundation members was (and may still be) in existence, among whom could be seen the present Mayor of Grahamstown. Most of them were survey students, and the work in this Department quickly necessitated the appointment of a lecturer, who in 1911 became Professor of Mathematics and was known for 25 years as "Taffy" Williams.

In 1905 a big step was taken: the four professors who for the first year had run as many as three departments single-handed were relieved by the appointment of several professors. Among them were Schonland (Botany), Ogg (Physics), Duerden (Zoology), Schwarz (Geology), and Lord (Philosophy), and the College began to get into its stride. Numbers gradually increased and when I joined the staff in 1909 there were some 80 students on the roll. The staff were very enthusiastic and full of ideas for the advancement and development of the College: notably for the building of residences for students, provision of better lecture rooms and sports facilities. At that time all departments were formed in old barracks, once the quarters of Imperial Regiments, e.g. Mathematics in the Old Drostdy House, Chemistry and the Registrar in the old Hospital (later the Botany Department), Physics in the stone building abutting on Artillery Road and all Arts Departments in buildings on the site of Botha House, known for many years as "The Blessed Isles" for reasons I have never known. They were quite the coldest buildings I have ever known; no fires, no radiators (electric light did not come to Grahamstown till 1924), and lectures began every day, winter and summer, at 8 a.m. Tradition had it that when Dr. Duerden began his experiments on the cause of bars in ostrich feathers, the birds were housed in "the Blessed Isles" but on their complaining that the buildings were unfit for ostrich habitation, they were moved and the barrack rooms handed over to the Arts Professors. I can well believe it. The Students' Common Room was the building still used (I believe) for the Zoology Department, facing Artillery Road: for years this was used for dances, concerts, mock trials and as a General Common Room. And yet, in spite of these primitive conditions, during the first 15 years of its existence the College won some 35 University Scholarships and Exhibitions, and launched on their

careers four of the present Judges on the Cape Bench, one Cabinet Minister, one lady M.P. and the present Union High Commissioner in London.

Much the same may be said of sports facilities. There was no sports ground and only one tennis court (in front of the old Physics Laboratory). For all practices students had to walk to City Lords and there too the Annual Athletic Sports were held for years. But the rugby team won the E.P. Grand Challenge Cup in 1909, a match won largely by the magnificent display at full back by H. Sampson, and this feat was not repeated till 1926 (or was it 1928?). But a move was made about 1910 which resulted in the College's acquiring the site of the present sports ground and this was opened by a match against the S.A. College; no one expected Rhodes to have any chance of winning, but till within 15 minutes of the end Rhodes led 4 nil, only to be beaten in the last five minutes by two tries to a dropped goal; the honour of scoring the first points on the new ground fell to H. T. Crouch, playing in the three-quarter line and wearing a cap all through the game. Later on the ground was extended and the swimming bath and squash court (on which the Duke of Kent played in 1934 against E. P. Hindson) and further tennis courts were added. The first world war checked the growth of the College for five years and no developments were possible. At one time the number of men students in residence fell to 27. But after the war the College expanded rapidly; the numbers increased with the return of ex-soldiers, though naturally not to the extent of the astronomical figure of 1946. Botha House, Milner House, Jameson House were built and in 1922 the first wing of the new front, housing the Arts and Chemistry Departments, was opened, and the War Memorial Tablet dedicated by General Tanner. Later again the Drostdy House was pulled down after a tussle with the Historical Monuments Commission and the new Library built, and when I retired in 1937 the way was open for the big expansion that will culminate this year in the natural establishment of the College as an independent University.

If I were asked for the reasons for the remarkable growth of the College in 46 years, I should mention two: the first is the very wise policy adopted as soon as possible of building residences for students, whereby a real University spirit has been created: the second is one for which no individual can lay claim to any credit, viz. the entire absence of racial feeling among the student body. As a College we have no politics, but I often think that Rhodes presents an object lesson to politicians of the wisdom of leaving things to settle themselves. Certain it is that no one, whether English-speaking or Afrikaans has ever been made to feel uncomfortable for racial reasons and relations between the two races have always been most harmonious.

And now that the natural ambitions of the College are shortly to be realized, we of the Old Guard salute the new foundation, and wish it well. It is the natural tendency of age for a man to be "*laudator temporis acti se puero*," and though some of the old friendliness, by which every member of the staff could and did know every individual student (even their initials), has gone, such a change is inevitable with the growth in numbers, both of staff and students. But we of the older generation rejoice, equally with the present, at the fulfilment of the hopes of nearly 50 years and are proud to have made some small contribution to the working out of the College destiny—*Floreat Universitas!*

ADDRESSES:

As this Newsletter is to be sent out to all Old Rhodians irrespective of whether they are members of the Union or not, will you please send to the Hon. Secretary of the Union the address of any Old Rhodian you may know who has not received this Newsletter and also make sure that she has your correct address.

THE MAJOR

By H. J. CHAPMAN, M.B.E.

Professor of History in the South African Native College, Fort Hare

I WAS given to understand that the reason why I had been selected from among the thousands of Old Rhodians to write something about the Major for this Newsletter was that I had the enviable distinction of being the only Rhodian ever to have been instructed by him in the working of a gas-ring. It is true that I asked him one evening. But he didn't. There can be but few of us who did not within the first few days or weeks have a chastening encounter with him and who were not thus early put in our proper place in the Rhodes scheme of things. That was part of our training. The fear of the Major, like that of the Lord, was the beginning of wisdom.

The space allotted to me does not permit of the writing of even the briefest of biographical notes. Such would not do him justice even if I were competent to do so. What I have essayed is to set down in writing some of the thoughts which must be uppermost in the minds of all Rhodians at this time and preliminarily (for no doubt the College authorities at some future time provide an opportunity for a worthy tribute to his memory) to record the significance of his place in the College tradition.

Many, perhaps most of us, are incurable *laudatores temporis acti* but the giants of our youth do not all retain their stature in the retrospective estimation. Too many of our gods are found to have feet of clay. But the Colossus of our narrow student world remained and remains the dominating figure that he ever was. Which of us even now would dare to take a short cut across the grass between Botha House and the Dining Hall without a sense of risk? What meal in Founder's Hall could be properly taken without his prefatory *Benedictus benedicat*? Other voices may utter the words but always there will be the booming echo. Young men disturbing the peace of Botha House in clamorous conversation in some upper room might, if they had ears to hear, heard in his characteristic tread the resolute onset retribution. Let not after-generations fondly imagine that he ruled by fear. We did not fear him. Our sentiment was a healthy respect for him personally and as *bonus paterfamilias*. He did not remember against us our peccadillos, our youthful exuberance, our irresponsible pranks. However heinous the offence of the night he did not let the sun rise on his wrath. The next morning there was the beaming smile and the nod of assurance that all was again well.

He took an interest in us and in the multifarious activities of our student life — our amateurish efforts at photography, at Gilbert and Sullivan; our strenuous exertions on the river, in the ring and in the rough. He urged us on in the digging of the swimming bath. *Quicquid agunt Rhodienses . . .* One is reasonably sure that he even went to bed in a Rhodes jersey. He must have been the most photographed man in the Eastern Province. Which of us but has a treasured photograph of him seated in the midst either of his assembled wards-for-the-time-being or his swimmers, his golfers, his oarsmen or his squash-racketeers? And his interest in us continued long after we had gone down. The memory of a Macaulay was as Lethe compared with the card-index of his mind. Which of us has ever returned without being remembered, and remembered not only for what one was but also for what one had become? During the war he kept in touch directly as far as he could and for the rest

indirectly with Old Rhodians on service in all parts of the world. He got vicarious satisfaction from their honours and awards, he sympathized with them in their danger, their discomfort or their captivity, and he mourned the losses like a parent. He was proud of the College war record and he took up the cause of the War Memorial with great devotion.

Increasingly handicapped by honourable wounds he finished the course both in Office and in Hall; afflicted with ill-health and often in pain he preserved his wonted cheerful exterior to the end. He passed away peacefully without any fuss. That is how he would have wished to die. We may be sure that he faced the Last Enemy as unflinchingly as he had faced many deaths in France. It is difficult to believe that he has gone and more difficult still to imagine what the place will be like without him. Venice without the Campanile; Rhodes without the Major. The Campanile fell and was in due course replaced by another and Venice seemed the same again. He has gone and good men in succession will fill his place, but

"The tower that stood and fell
Is not rebuilt in me."

He now forms part of our tradition. He has gone to join the other great men of our Rhodes past, himself not least of all.

THE LATE MRS. C. W. BOWLES

By PROFESSOR D. LIDDELL.

RHODIANS throughout the length and breadth of South Africa and Rhodesia will have heard with regret of the death on 9th February of Mrs. C. W. Bowles, wife of Professor Bowles.

Mrs. Bowles for the past few years had not enjoyed the best of health, but in spite of this she remained her former cheery self and her passing was a sad shock to her many friends.

The youngest daughter of the late Professor Matthews, at one time Professor of Mathematics at Rhodes, she was brought up in a scholastic atmosphere and it seemed fitting that she should continue in that atmosphere when she married our well loved Professor of Classics who later became the Master of Rhodes. Rhodes in those days was but half the size it is to-day and consequently she came into more contact with the student body than is possible to-day. To know her was to love her and there must be few students, particularly during the years when Professor Bowles was Master, who did not have contact with her and who as a result learned to respect and revere her. She took a kindly interest in all the students and her home at St. Margarets was always open to present and past Rhodians. Many are the Old Rhodians who enjoyed their tennis on the court at St. Margarets with the Master always present to add to the joy of the occasion. A happier combination at the head of a university institution it would be difficult to find. No Rhodian ball was complete without their genial presence. Students regarded it as the highest honour to be welcomed by them on such occasions. We miss her greatly and are grateful for the privilege of knowing her. To Professor Bowles and her sons and daughter we extend our deepest sympathy.

THE ATHLETIC UNION

From the Minutes

By J. W. KING

Senior Lecturer in Mathematics, Chairman of the Athletic Union

THE general organization of sport at Rhodes is the duty of a central body, the Rhodes University College Athletic Union. In an attempt to give a comprehensive picture of the development of sport at Rhodes, extracts have been made from the minutes of the Athletic Union and comments have been added to them where necessary.

31st July, 1905: "At a General Meeting of the Professors and men students of Rhodes University College, the above club (i.e. the Athletic Union) was formed. Professor Matthews in the Chair; proposed by Professor A. S. Kidd; seconder, A. G. Mullins; 'That a General Athletic Union be formed.' Carried. Proposed by Professor A. S. Kidd; seconder, H. T. Landers; 'That there be four sub-committees, one each for cricket, football, tennis and athletic sports.' Carried."

Today 17 clubs are affiliated to the Union. The last club accepted was the Judo Club and the last application for affiliation was from the Women's Cricket Club which is still on trial.

It is perhaps a matter for regret that the close co-operation between staff and students shown in these early minutes is tending to disappear.

2nd March, 1906: "Resolved: 'To respectfully request the Senate to approach the Council with a view to securing an Athletic Ground for the exclusive use of this College'."

25th September, 1906: "Resolved: 'That the number of students desirous of taking up Cricket next term be ascertained in order to find out whether it is worth while having a pitch made'."

The site subsequently selected for the sports ground is the present one. The Ground was officially opened by the now legendary match between S.A. College XV and Rhodes XV on the 19th June, 1913.*

Development of the Ground was marked by close co-operation between students and Council, and offers a fine example of the truism that man (including students) gets out of life what he puts into it. In 1922 men students excavated most of the site of the present top tennis courts, riding the soil by rail trolleys to the side of the present second rugby field, and so gave the College badly needed courts and playing fields. The work was done in the afternoons. There was no "Kaif," in the present sense of the term, and the women students made tea and sandwiches for the sweating workers and bandaged their blistered hands. The Council completed the work. In 1926 students excavated most of the site for the swimming bath, and again Council completed the job. A special fee of one shilling per student per term for n terms (placed on accounts) was instituted to reimburse the Council for capital expenditure.

There was little sport during the 1939-1945 war and on the 18th November, 1944, the Union donated £1,000 (accrued from student subscriptions) to Council for the further development of the Grounds.

21st November, 1906: "General blazer for R.U.C.A.U. Resolved to have as per sample submitted from Birch & Co (1) Green body; (2) Diagonal red and white trimmings; (3) Monogram R.U.C. in white on pocket till such time as coat of arms available."

* See Professor Bowles's article, *Early Days*,

Football uniform at the time was a dark-green jersey with white collar and white shield bearing the monogram R.U.C. in red; white pants and dark green stockings. If any O.R. possesses any of these colours, he is requested to communicate with the Chairman, R.U.C.A.U.

Colours were changed later to amethyst and white and then to the present purple and white. Football uniform was changed to the present Second XV colours, then to white vests and black pants and finally to the present all white.

31st October, 1913: "Resolved: 'First Team players (Rugger, Cricket, Tennis) be entitled to wear the coat of arms on a straw hat on either a black band or College colours as preferred'."

7th April, 1908: "Resolved: 'To grant the sum of £5 to the ladies in order to form a R.U.C. Hockey Club. That the ladies should elect a committee of four in connection with the Club. That this committee should, of course, be on the same basis as the other games committees'."

5th March, 1918: "Resolved 'That the ladies be granted colours on the same grounds as the colours are awarded for Cricket.' Carried unanimously."

Women (or should it be "the ladies?") were given representation on the Athletic Union the same year. The Men's Hockey Club was started only about 20 years after the Women's Club.

19th February, 1910. General Meeting of the Athletic Union. Professor Cory in the Chair.

"The Chairman brought the business to a close by a short speech . . . The rest of the evening was spent in social intercourse and the following programme was presented:

Piano Solo: Mr. Payne.

Duet: Mr. and Master Brereton.

Refreshments.

Piano Solo: Miss Hockly.

Speech: Judge Koetze.

Songs: Professor Cory.

One may regret that a very different spirit pervades the General Meetings of today, which are usually held at the unconvivial time of 1.40 p.m. to 2.10 p.m.

OLD RHODIAN UNION COMMITTEE (1950-1951)

Hon. President: Professor C. W. Bowles.

President: Mr. S. B. Hobson, M.P.C.

Hon Vice-Presidents: Professor A. S. Kidd and Professor G. F. Dingemans.

Vice President: Mrs. M. E. McKerron.

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer: Miss L. Britten (133 High Street, Grahamstown).

Committee Members: The Vice-Chancellor (ex officio), Miss M. J. Kannemeyer, Mr. D. Butler, Professor D. Hobart Houghton, Prof. S. G. Shuttleworth, Dr. E. T. Verdier.