

In
harmony
small
things
grow



Celebrating 125 years

1897 – 2022

Clapham College

Clapham Old Xaverians





125 Years of Clapham College 1897 to 2022



Chapter 1 - Clapham College opens



On the first week of September 1897 the first boys began their education at the Xaverian College Clapham in Nightingale Lane. The 30 boys included **Austin Kirkham**, officially the first boy to enter the school. A total of **5,297 boys** joined the College and created a legacy that continues with the COX Association to the current day..

*Concordia
parvae res
crescunt*



*In Harmony
Small Things
Grow*

Through the 125 years of the College, we hope to show the mark this small school made on those who taught and were educated there, and the effect this continues to have into the 21st Century. Clapham College opened in September 1897 finally closed at the old **Notre Dame [Battersea]** site in 1989. The College had left it's spiritual home in Nightingale Lane, after the reorganisation of the Catholic Secondary Schools in 1985. This publication is an effort to record the impact of the school on the many thousands of boys who attended over the decades. Since 1989, the "gauntlet", thrown down by the College's closure, to keep the ethos of Clapham "alive", has been taken up by **COXA**, the Clapham Old Xaverians Association.

1. Why Nightingale Lane?

The College buildings place in history is based in Yorkshire, with Sir Titus Salt, 1st baronet, a manufacturer, who built a large textile mill and the village of Saltaire, next to it, for it's workers. He married Caroline Whitham in 1830. The couple had met during a business visit by Titus to Lincolnshire, they were married in the Parish Church, Grimsby, in 1830.

During their marriage of more than 46 years, Caroline had 11 children. As Titus' business and civic responsibilities grew, Caroline is seen to have played her part, as supportive wife, at formal events and ceremonies. Sadly, Caroline was to see five of her children predecease her. The death of Sir Titus in 1876 was followed by a move south by the Dowager Lady Caroline, to Clapham, in Surrey. With her two unmarried daughters Helen and Ada, Caroline set up home in Broadoak, an impressive mansion standing in grounds overlooking Clapham Common. This was to be the home of Lady Salt for the remainder of her life. Broadoak still stands, west of the present day underground station at Clapham South.



2. Clapham's First Headteacher Br. Gabriel...Amadaus Coene.

On 19th March 1896, Brother Gabriel, a Xaverian brother from Brugges, bought Broadoak and Nightingale Hall [later to be named "Hollywood"] in Nightingale Lane, opposite Clapham Common. Br. Gabriel was in England from 1895 and had taught in Xaverian College Manchester, before negotiating the purchase of the College and it's grounds. In 1897, Gabriel oversaw the building of the Chapel, as well as the top floor dormitories and classrooms. The Chapel was dedicated on 25th August and the College opened to 20 fee-paying boarders and 10 "day-boys" on 15th Sept. 1897. By the end of it's first year almost 100 boys had joined the school. Clapham College was "up-and-running", Br. Gabriel was appointed it's first Headmaster, a role he filled for eight years, until 1905. He was born in Belgium 1843 and died and was buried at Mayfield 1913 aged 70 years old, not only was Gabriel Clapham's first Head, he built it and set the tone.

3. Clapham College - 1897 - 1900 [article by a College boarder - from Portsmouth]

To write an article on the early days of Clapham; and, as one of the first seven boarders of Clapham College a certain claim is mine. In September, 1897, my parents took me to C.C. and left me in the care of the Xaverian Bros. I remember well the paternal care lavished on me by **Bro. Paul**, to stem the exuberance of my joy at having left home for the first time. The first year was hardly like school. We had lessons certainly but also a great deal of freedom. In the second year this changed, our numbers were considerably increased, and C.C. became a school indeed. **Brother Gabriel** (R.I.P.) was then Provincial and Head of Clapham, with **Bro. Cuthbert** a good second in command. Bro. Cuthbert lived for C.C. and all his efforts were to keep that famous flag flying, which he indeed did with flying colours. His one fear was that C.C. might be disgraced. We survived thanks to that magnetic force of a man who had the courage to put 40 of us in for Oxford Exams, knowing that we'd all pass. Indeed we did, not one dared fail, thus laying the foundation of that great educational centre of South London. We all owe Bro. Cuthbert "a debt" we can never repay. He was untiring in his zeal and his one thought was our good. Meeting him recently he said to me, "I taught you no wrong lad" and indeed he did not. He had the interest of every boy at heart and his one wish was to see each boy a credit to Clapham. All were. Well, nearly all. God help him who wasn't...Cuthie, as he was known strictly among ourselves, although a man with a large heart he could instil terror· even into the stoutest heart. Many a time I quaked, when the object of that withering eagle-eye and tongue. Oh, the inexhaustible supply of words. Often after a strenuous spell of hard work, while taking a short rest was I brought to earth. "McFadden, your idleness does me sadden, whereas your industry should me gladden, go on **McFadden**," Oh, and, Did ye speak lad? I'll speak ye.". The Horror of Wednesday mornings is still fresh in my mind. " I'm going to turn the board round " (and he did in a whirlwind). "There are twelve algebras. Not a budge till they're all right.". How I hated Myers who could get them right. I never could, and so spent most of my half holidays "Twisting necks (of Algebras) and drawing blood " with the Neronian Cuthie in attendance to witness. We have to thank him the way he taught us Catechism. He never smoked not wishing to make a chimney of his bougie organ. They were happy days and we made the most of them. Football and cricket were for those who could do Algebra. For obvious reasons I seldom played either game. Myers and I produced a play called "His Only Way"! ·" The personal: **Myers, Turner, Glyser, Kirkham** and myself; all agreed that the play was an unparalleled success. Those were the days! What would we have done without Bro. Paul? Everyone loved him. Wonder how many shirts he mended. Bernardine-his classic bearing; now headmaster of Clapham, Bro. Stanislaus I liked best at centre half on my side. Oh, those games against Manor House, with Bro. Francis, centre, Bros. Denis and Ignatius, Jacks, Solman & Fitzgerald left wing, my brother Rupert and Athersmith on the right & Bro. Dominic left and Bro. Joseph, "the fiddler" [*violin I hope*].

Bernard McFadden ĉC 1897 [later became a Catholic Priest]



4. Background on how the Xaverians ended up at Clapham

The Xaverian Order was founded in 1839 by Theodore James Ryken, in Bruges. It was named after St Francis Xavier, the Order dedicated to bring formal Catholic education to the children of Belgium. But there was always a vision held by Ryken, to take his “message” to the USA. He set up other schools in Ireland and England, but his real “heart” was in the United States. Xaverians brothers arrived in England in 1880, and in 1884 a Xaverian School was opened in St Philip’s Square Battersea. The Battersea Site closed in 1896. Cardinal Vaughan opened the College on 24th August 1897. Top Hats and Eton Collars were the uniform of the day. Entrants were aged 7 to 15 years. In 1900 the Xaverian Association formed [for the Old Boys of all four Xaverian Colleges]. It was not until 1927 that a Clapham Old Xaverian Association was formed. Interesting the Xaverians have withdrawn from England, but as was Ryken’s dream in the 1800s, are now established in the United States, although the future is 100% in Africa.

5. Brother Dunstan's Clapham College "origins" story

CLAPHAM COLLEGE AND THE XAVERIAN BROTHERS.

The Xaverian Brothers came to England in 1846 and opened schools in various places, Preston, Bury, Manchester and St. Philip's Square, Battersea. The Battersea School was the only begetter of the present school, although Battersea closed in 1884 and Clapham did not open until 1897. Nine Elms, even then, was as little Sylvan as it is now is, and it is certain that the Brothers domiciled in St. Philip's Square would have made many a visit to Clapham Common in search of quietness and fresh air. In some hearts developed an affection for the Common, especially that part of it which is remote from Battersea, and a determination to one day start a school there. In 1896 the opportunity came. A handsome Georgian house, "Broadoak", in Nightingale Lane, once the property of Sir Titus Salt the founder of Saltaire in Yorkshire, came on the market and Brother Gabriel bought it. Work on the school block started immediately and was completed the following summer.

In 1897, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Year, Cardinal Vaughan consecrated the altar and declared Clapham College open on 25th August (the Feast of St. Louis). Brother Gabriel was the first Superior and Headmaster. Although the social decline of Clapham was manifestly underway the school was thought of as a rather superior establishment, and the prospectus offered lessons in equitation. The boys wore top hats and Eton collars. Incidentally there is no evidence that the lessons in equitation were ever called for. There is plenty of evidence that many of the boys were "Carriage Folk". There were a hundred of them, including a dozen boarders, and the age range was seven to fifteen. At the end of the first year boys were entered for the Oxford Locals at the Preliminary, Junior and Senior levels.



Br FRANCIS

CLAPHAM COLLEGE 1898

Br STANISLAUS

Br GERARD, (BELGIUM) Br JEROME, Br CUTHBERT, Br BERNARDINE



Brother Vincent's Class

6. An analysis of the 1897-1900 intake at Clapham

On the first day of Clapham College in September 1897 only thirty boys were at the gates, some were from European Countries, [Belgium. France, Spain mainly]. Three years later nearly 250 boys had been signed up, the average intake was about 60 per year, of various ages. The lure of London, boarding, Catholic Education and reasonable fees with a healthy environment - the College was surrounded by open space (and orchards) was too good to miss out on for wealthy Europeans. Of those early boys ten became priests and well over half served in the First World War. We have records that some of the French borders fought for their country in the Somme. Over twenty of these fresh-faced Clapham pathfinders went on to make the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives in WW1.

There were many, many brothers who joined in great numbers during this period, including a number of twins, Charles and [the Corbishley twins from Bonneville Rd] , the L'Hirondelle twins from Calais, Gustave & Alfred] ...[Alfred seems to have been the most popular name]. Alfred and Harold Bolder were another set of twins from Priory Road. Although a Catholic College, there were a number of Jews educated at Clapham at this time - Jules Ackermann, Geoff Lefte, John Voz and Marius Levy, whilst Albert Asfar was a pupil from Turkey. There was the usual group of Irish too from Dingle, Tipperary and Galway. Conrad and Gerald Eisenmann were borders from Bavaria ,whose father, Herman was a famous violin maker in the West End. Xavier Balfre would have been popular with the Brothers, as would Richard Whistles....The first of the NINE Cummings brothers joined in 1899, he was followed by his eight brothers, two sets of twins [one set of twins became priests, plus two others! Four priest from one family!]. THE most famous Xaverian.....

7. The most famous Xaverian joined us in 1900, he was Rowland Burke, Victoria Cross. He was the most unlikely “hero” 5’ 9” with a poor physique and incredibly poor vision. His bravery “unmatched”.

Lieutenant Commander Rowland Bourke -“Victoria Cross”, DSO, RNVR.”

Also awarded Chevalier of Legion of Honour by the French President

Rowland Burke was born in England in 1885, his family lived in Raneleigh Mansions in S.W.12. Rowland was at Clapham College from 1899 to 1903 and left Clapham when his family emigrated to Nelson in Canada to take up fruit farming in 1905. At the outbreak of World War One Rowland volunteered to enlist in the Canadian military. He was rejected by all three arms of service due to poor eyesight. Undeterred by these setbacks he sailed back to England, at his own expense, where he successfully joined the Royal Naval Reserve serving on Motor Launches.

The quiet apple farmer was made a Lieutenant and given command of a motor launch after just a month of training. The 25-metre launches – fast twin-engine boats based on an American yacht design – were tasked with coastal patrols. But in April 1918, the Royal Navy called for volunteer crews to take part in a daring raid on the Belgian ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend, heavily-defended U-boat pens. The plan included blocking sea access to the German-held ports with obsolete British cruisers. The role of the motor launches was to evacuate the block ships’ crews once they had been disabled and sunk.



Rowland volunteered his launch, but was turned down again because of his poor eyesight He persisted in offering his boat for service and sailed as a standby for the raid on 23rd April 1918. During the raid Rowland’s launch was off the port of Zeebrugge, not involved in the action, but when another launch was disabled by German gunfire, Rowland propelled his boat steamed into the harbour, they pulled 38 survivors from the sinking HMS Brilliant and then towed the disabled launch to safety. For this action, Bourke was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), for meritorious or distinguished service this was awarded to officers to recognise their courage, during Wartime.

It was during the second engagement on Ostend three weeks later that Bourke not only earned his Victoria Cross - the highest award in Commonwealth countries for military valour in face of the enemy, but in the words of the raid commander, Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, distinguished himself as “the bravest of all holders of the Victoria Cross”.

Not a bad outcome for a short-ish lad from Clapham, South London with very poor eyesight!

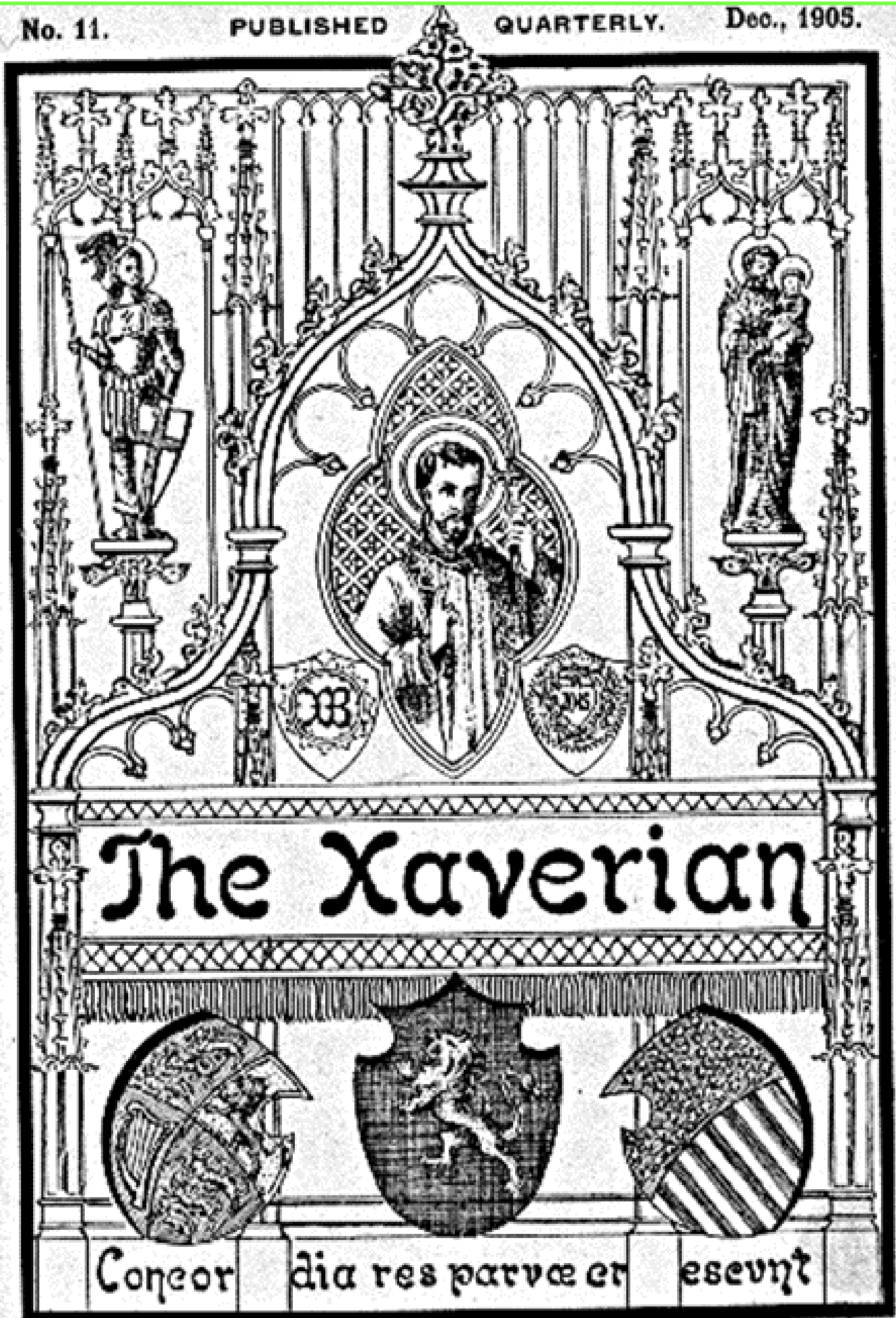
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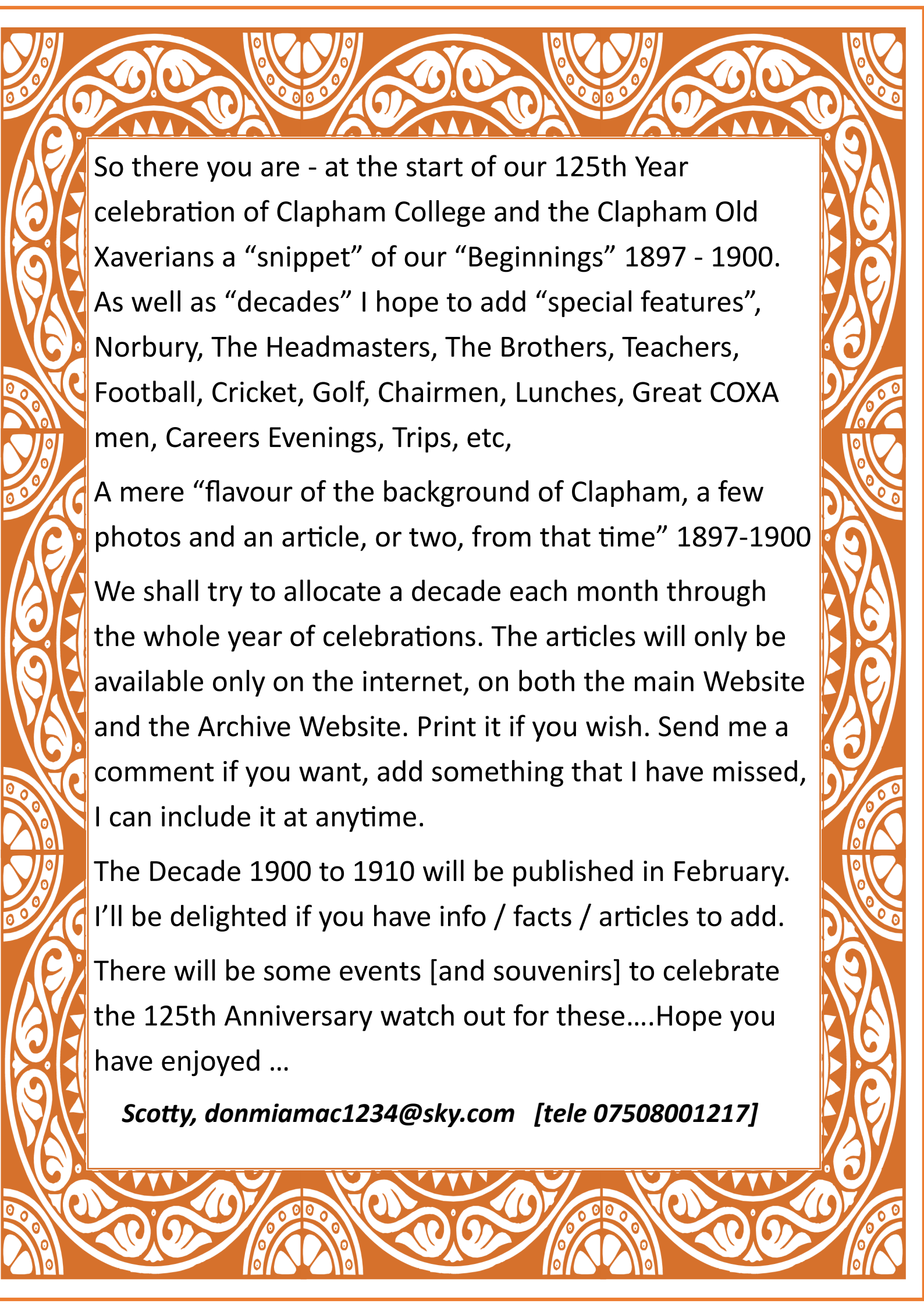
QUARTERLY.

Dec., 1905.



The Magazine of the Xaverian Association.

P.T.O.



So there you are - at the start of our 125th Year celebration of Clapham College and the Clapham Old Xaverians a “snippet” of our “Beginnings” 1897 - 1900. As well as “decades” I hope to add “special features”, Norbury, The Headmasters, The Brothers, Teachers, Football, Cricket, Golf, Chairmen, Lunches, Great COXA men, Careers Evenings, Trips, etc,

A mere “flavour of the background of Clapham, a few photos and an article, or two, from that time” 1897-1900

We shall try to allocate a decade each month through the whole year of celebrations. The articles will only be available only on the internet, on both the main Website and the Archive Website. Print it if you wish. Send me a comment if you want, add something that I have missed, I can include it at anytime.

The Decade 1900 to 1910 will be published in February. I'll be delighted if you have info / facts / articles to add.

There will be some events [and souvenirs] to celebrate the 125th Anniversary watch out for these....Hope you have enjoyed ...

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