

Jack Hawkins and his visit to Trinity in 1952

One of the most memorable former Trinity scholars is the film-star Jack Hawkins (1910 – 1973) and there have been frequent mentions of his return visit to the school in 1952. This was when Hawkins was at the peak of his long film career and must have been around the time he was filming *The Cruel Sea*, which was released in 1953. Several of us who started at Trinity in 1951 recall that visit, how he spent time in one of the classrooms and how he gave an inspirational talk, from the platform in the main hall to the whole school.

The photo below shows Hawkins in one of the first-year classrooms, the boy sitting on his left is Paul Droy, who has the original of this photo.



The photo also shows those glazed dark-brown wall-tiles and only high-level windows, which were somewhat gloomy features of that part of the school. Also note the single desks, a bottle of ink on one of them, and one of the pencil boxes that some of us made in woodwork under the guidance of the legendary Mr Chick. Can anyone recognise the other boys in this photo? And why are there no girls in it? When I met Paul Droy at a reunion in 2011, he had brought that photo with him, from which I made a camera copy. The version shown here has been enhanced by Laurie Pate.

Paul Droy attended another reunion in 2019, which was at the Ranelagh Arms in Bounds Green Road, and he brought with him another and different photo from the same 1952 visit. The photo below is of Paul holding up a framed copy, on which you can just make out Jack Hawkins sitting at a desk and looking like a bored school-boy!



Confirmation of the inspirational nature of Hawkins' talk, is the effect it had on Peter Brown, another first-year boy. At earlier Trinity reunions Peter had related how that talk had influenced him to pursue his first career in the merchant navy, which led to him travelling the world as a navigation officer, before settling in New Zealand. Peter went on to have a distinguished career in New Zealand politics. I reminded Peter about the Jack Hawkins story recently and in an email a few days ago, Peter wrote:

“It was all quite amazing really, I had no association with shipping at all, nothing. Then Jack gave his talk about making the film and I knew I had to watch

it. I was so inspired I got the book from Wood Green library and read it with vigour (if you can read a book that way). Initially I was attracted to the Royal Navy and I read everything about it. Eventually I came across references to the Merchant Navy and my attraction gradually swung across. I was not really a military type and that side of things had little appeal. But I loved the thought of navigating to faraway places and that swung me totally. I can honestly say I enjoyed virtually every minute of my seafaring career and for a person who knew very little about ships and shipping, looking back it seems remarkable on how it all started.”

There is another photograph on the Trinity website that relates to Hawkins' 1952 visit – this is in Galleries, 1950s, page 5. This shows him chatting with Dr Emrys Jones and Mr Swinden, the previous and current headmasters.

Jack Hawkins came from Lyndhurst Road, Wood Green and he was the son of a builder. I believe he had a brother, who was caretaker at St Michaels Primary School in Bounds Green Road, almost opposite Trinity.

Colin Marr January 2021