

Meeting of Archive Group Friday 24th Nov 2023.

There were apologies from Erika, Irene, Maia and Dorothy. Present were Arlen, David, Edmund, Ted and Ann. We were very pleased to welcome Safia Murdoch who is a member of S6, and head of a group called Young Conservators.

After introductions Arlen showed us a series of exciting items which he has located – including a photograph of the 1870 Rugby team. He has dealt with a number of requests from people trying to trace their relatives and their connection with Madras.

He has also produced a draft pamphlet on the various building stages of the school showing their development. Serendipitally, Dorothy had found last week, while working on the Keil Archive, a set of plans for the 1960s building works, which Arlen can add to his researches.

Other recent finds have added to the collection of book titles – one is an autobiography by Noreen Masood who is now a lecturer in English at Exeter University, and took part in one of Melvin Bragg's "In Our Time" series on Radio 4 recently. Also mentioned was Eve Poole, who recently received an OBE and was hosting a discussion at New College Edinburgh on her most recent book which concerns AI and its place in the spiritual dimension.

Safia introduced the line of research which her group wants to explore – based on changes in teaching methods, organisation, resources etc – starting with the Madras system of 1833. Maia has introduced them to the cataloguing system, and is introducing them to the University's archive sometime soon.

Tasks and problems.

The Dr Bell portrait has been hung, as I intimated in the last communication. It still needs a plaque to identify it and I hope to get this underway soon. The storage problem persists, and the items which the Preservation Trust kindly allowed us to leave at Cameron may well have to be removed. David outlined the problem about the Trust's own needs. This leaves us with a problem – commercial storage is very expensive, but I will continue to pursue avenues. If anyone has any bright ideas please let me know.

I still have no idea how much money, if any, we still have ring-fenced in the School Fund. I will try again. As Jim has intimated that he wishes to step back from the Group at the moment, Ted suggested that for the Oral Archive perhaps Veronica – if I have got the name right - who helps at the Preservation Trust, and who transcribed previous interviews might be able to help again. He has a list of possible interviewees.

Arlen and Edmund introduced the problems of how to preserve present items into the future now that almost everything is in digitised form – a problem not just for us but in the wider world of research and accountability. Thanks go to Maia for her continued help, to Dorothy for her sterling work on the voluminous Keil Archive, to Erika for her willingness to sort out some of the snarls in the classification, to Arlen for all the research work, and for the curating of the website, and to Safia and her group for raising the awareness among present pupils of the heritage of Madras College .

Interesting footnote:

I learned in conversation with The Lord Lyon, King of Arms for Scotland that King Charles has some property in Transylvania, and that in one of the villages attached to one of the properties the Madras system is still used in the local school – rumour suggesting that it was imported in the nineteenth century by a teacher at Madras. I have done a bit of research on it, and I don't think it is true – the system and Dr Bell's connection with it, might have led to this idea. The other possibility is that the link is through the Episcopalian Church, but that is too tenuous a link to follow.