

RUGBY FIVES CLUB TOUR OF THE USA

OCTOBER 27th to NOVEMBER 3rd 1986

MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL, FIVES CLUB

Months of planning and expectation by school and pupils alike, culminated in a highly successful Fives tour of New England at half-term. The party of nine comprised of John Hampel, David Wiles, Daniel Cohen, Adrian Barnes, John Hayes, Carlo Sammarco, Lee Scott, Guy Thompson and Mr. Ingram. We departed from London, Heathrow at 11.30 a.m. on Monday 27th October only to return at 6.00 a.m. the following Tuesday week, exhausted but highly contented after a most successful tour.

On arrival at Logan Airport, Boston at 12.30 p.m. local time, we were met by the St. Mark's representative, Mr. John Carey, who, despite towering several inches above everyone, remained a genial and most generous host throughout the week. He was also to be the party's personal chauffeur (apart from a few occasions when PMI drove us into Boston in one of the school's three minibuses), and during our time in Massachusetts and Connecticut, gave his untiring co-operation to all our requests. On arrival at St. Mark's School, Southborough, where we were to spend the week, we were each assigned a female host who immediately made us feel most welcome. We were taken on a tour of the school which proved to be most impressive. The evening was spent with our hosts, Lee "the social animal" Scott deriving the greatest benefit! We rose early on Tuesday morning and sampled the adequate breakfast. The remainder of the morning and entire afternoon were spent in Boston. The tour of the city was enjoyed by all, especially those who were sampling American city for the first time. We followed the Freedom Trail visiting Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market. Before our departure we visited the "Cheers Bar", the scene of a current television series. We returned to St. Mark's in the early evening to compete in the Massachusetts Open Singles and Doubles Championships. John Hampel became both the Open singles Champion, (defeating David Wiles 11-3 in the final) and the Open doubles Champion with the aid of his partner, John Carey. That night we ate at the local pizzeria (as guests of John Carey), where, it was agreed by all that Carlo Sammarco was the second champion of the day - the undisputed Merchant Taylors' pizza-eating champion!

We left for the venue of our second tournament early on Wednesday morning. We were to play the Connecticut Open, which was 3½ hours minibus journey from the school. The tournament was played on a private singles court (they have different sizes of court for singles and doubles) set in the middle of 12,000 acres of American "Grizzly Bear Country" owned by Mr. Childs. Mr & Mrs Childs made us feel most welcome and kindly offered us the exclusive use of their splendid facilities which we exploited to the full. John Hampel won his second championship in as many days, beating Guy Thompson 11-1 in the final. Disaster struck on the return journey when, the minibus, driven by PMI at the time, broke down, over an hours journey from St. Mark's. It was 3.00 a.m. when we finally reached our beds. Never have a group of students been so glad to see a school in their life! Our sincere thanks go to the St. Mark's breakdown service!

We rose early on Thursday, tired but eager with anticipation - we were to travel to New York to-day. We caught a train from Boston and arrived 3½ hours later at Pennsylvania Station, New York. The whirlwind tour of the Big Apple had begun

We elected to venture up the Empire State Building at night. The view of the Manhattan skyline was "awesome". That evening we met with Dr. Dudley Major (OMT) and with Peter Garrod (OMT), whom Dudley had contacted and who is spending one year in the States on medical research. Dudley showed us some of the cultural landmarks of New York such as the Grand Metropolitan Opera House. We dined together at the slightly less cultural MacDonalds, before returning to our hotel via the even less cultural New York subway! A much needed night's sleep was taken advantage of at our four star 42nd Street hotel kindly paid for by Mr. Barnes. Friday morning saw the high point of the tour. We flew over Manhattan Island by Helicopter! The indescribable view will live in the memory forever. We returned to earth to make a whirlwind shopping spree of New York, some of us taking time to sit in on one of the debates of the United Nations General Assembly, before catching the return train to Boston. This highly eventful journey had taken in Time Square, Maddison Square Gardens and Broadway.

Saturday morning saw us attend regular lessons for the first time. Yes, there are other schools on this planet that suffer the same fate as ourselves - Saturday school! Early on the Saturday afternoon our touring side played against the St. Mark's Girls soccer XI. In a hard fought match we just scraped home 14-2! Following this victory, we spent the remainder of the afternoon touring Harvard University which is just across the Charles River from Boston in Cambridge. This proved to be most interesting. We returned to discover that the Halloween Ball was taking place that night. (Halloween originated in New England). The theme was "past celebrities". Special guest performances were made by John Hampel as Cinderella (if only the Headmaster had been there!) accompanied by "her" ugly sisters, John Hayes and Lee Scott; Carlo Sammarco as Rocky; David Wiles and Daniel Cohen as Warriors from Baseball; and Guy Thompson and Adrian Barnes as New York Arabs! The Ball was enjoyed by everyone, and once again, our female hosts proved to be most friendly.

We departed for the venue of our final match in Boston by minibus, driven by PMI, on Sunday morning. We journeyed via Lexington and Concorde to visit the oldest piece of American history, the Old North Bridge, where the British were forced to retreat at the time of the "War of Independence" by the Minutemen, and in the vicinity of the place where the first shot was fired precipitating that war.

Our match at the Boston Union Boat Club was played on a totally different type of Fives court to anything we had experienced before. Once again the Americans made us feel most welcome and the phrase "Next time your in Boston, Call us ..." was frequently made.

Monday, our final day, proved to be very restful. We attended lessons once again and spent our final few hours at St. Mark's with our hosts. We then said our final farewells, and not everyone was completely dry-eyed! The long journey home had begun back to reality

The touring side would like to express its deepest gratitude to the School Committee; the Headmaster; Mr. Mark Barlow, Headmaster of St. Mark's; Mr. John Carey; the Ladies Committee; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Childs; Dr. Dudley Major; and, of course, Mr. Peter Ingram, who all gave their greatest co-operation in making this such a highly successful and enjoyable tour.