

PRESENTED TO :

THE COWBRIDGE RECORD SOCIETY

by

NEIL WORKMAN

A PUPIL

at

COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

1958 to 1966

and

DUX SCHOLAE

1965 to 1966

A HEAD BOY REMEMBERS
COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
SEPTEMBER 1958 TO JULY 1966



Cowbridge
Grammar School

To Mum and Dad
without whom none of this would have been possible

A HEAD BOY REMEMBERS
COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
SEPTEMBER 1958 to JULY 1966

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A HEAD BOY REMEMBERS
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FOREWORD

The Free School, afterwards the Grammar School, at Cowbridge in the Vale of Glamorgan was born sometime during the early part of the reign of King James the First, around 1608, and passed away aged three hundred and sixty five years on the 19th July 1973. Its last illness was a long and painful one lasting two years or more and the eventual cause of death was given as 'Education Earthquake'.

The following chapters are a personal account of what life was like at the school for me - a boy, who following in the footsteps of Evan Seys three hundred and fifty years earlier - was privileged to be its Head Boy.

It is an autobiography covering just eight years or twenty four terms in the school's long history. I have tried to paint an accurate picture - 'warts and all' - and I am conscious that I have highlighted only a very few incidents, but ones which made their greatest impact.

Many of my school friends are mentioned ; many others, alas, not.

For me, schooldays were the happiest days of my life. I hope that for those who do read this journal, it will bring back memories of 'The College' and of an age long since past.



Neil Workman

Cowbridge

October 2001

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY DAYS AND PASSING THE ELEVEN PLUS

I was born and brought up in Pontyclun. Pontyclun may truly be regarded as part of the Border Vale of Glamorgan. It is a village through which the river Ely runs (where it eventually joins the river Taff) and was built around the railway station, known in my childhood as Llantrisant, even though the town of Llantrisant lay three miles to the north.

Local employment was provided by light industries such as the iron ore mine in Llanharry, the tin works^{and} the United Clubs Brewery. For those who had the luxury of office jobs it was a base within easy access of Cardiff, Pontypridd and Bridgend. The local squif^eachy included the Clark family of Talygarn who in the nineteen thirties gave what is now the Institute and Athletic Club to the people of Pontyclun, and the Rhys Williams family of Miskin Manor. Two pubs, the Bute Arms and the Windsor Hotel, stood opposite each other near the railway bridge. In the village itself were the St. Paul's church and four other non conformist chapels, as well as a number of shops.

It was into this community on the ninth of April 1947 that I was born, just one of the many in the post second world war baby boom.

My grandfather Workman was a Blaenavon boy and on his marriage in 1911 moved to Pontyclun. My grandmother had lived all her life in Troedyrhiw near Merthyr Tydfil. Grandad left school when he was twelve years old and after various jobs he eventually became an apprentice in the men's wear retail trade moving from shop to shop throughout South Wales. He gained various promotions and towards the end of the first decade of the last century worked for a gentleman named David Richard Jones in Merthyr Tydfil. D.R. Jones was already a successful businessman and was looking for lady shop assistants to work for him. My grandad was sent to a family in Troedyrhiw to speak to a Miss Sarah Lloyd who, it was believed, was looking for work. My grandmother was a first cousin to the Lloyds and kept house for them, her own parents having died when she was a teenager. My grandmother answered the door to my grandfather when he visited and he was immediately besotted by her.

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My grandparents were married for over twenty nine years, my grandfather dying in December 1940. My grandmother lived on until June 1966 when she passed away aged eighty years. It was at D.R. Jones's invitation that my grandfather came to manage the outfitting shop 'The Bon Marche' in Pontyclun. After seven years my grandfather was given a partnership and when D.R. Jones died in November 1928 he continued alone in the business.

My father William was born in December 1912 and was the only son. A daughter, Beryl, was born in 1919 but she died in infancy just five years later from scarlet fever, having contracted the disease when on holiday in Tenby.

My mother Iris was born in June 1915 and lived for the first ten years of her life in the neighbouring village of Talbot Green, moving to Pontyclun in 1926, the year of the general strike. She was the eldest of five children and had three sisters and a brother. It was the time of the depression and her father had over the years various jobs as well as periods of unemployment. He worked on the railway until he was seventy one. My mother's mother stayed at home looking after her mother in law and bachelor brother in law as well as the rest of the family. She had periodic bouts of ill health. My mother left school at fourteen to work in the London Hosiery where she remained for eleven years. With her mother often ill, she would have to do the washing for all nine of them, getting up at five o'clock in the morning before going off to work.

My father's life at this time was somewhat easier. He went to the local infants and junior school and in 1924 at the age of twelve he sat the scholarship. He had to come to Cowbridge to sit the exam and clearly remembers the Grammar School's senior master, at that time Mr. W.R. McAdam, calling out their names in his broad Irish brogue. Dad also had to go to Richard Williams's study and read aloud a passage of English prose to the headmaster.

Only eight scholarships were awarded by the County Council and dad just missed out - he was tenth on the list. His great friend, Ron Evans, topped the list and dad thinks he lost out due to what were known as 'age' marks. This was a system whereby your age was determined on a specific date and for every month you were after

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the specified date you were given four age marks per month. Dad was born in the December and Ron Evans six months later in the July. So even though they were sitting the same exam papers, Ron had an immediate advantage of twenty four marks (6 months x 4) which counted in the final analysis.

Dad could have gone to Cowbridge as his parents could have afforded the tuition fees which were not excessive. But after consulting a few close family friends, he chose Pontypridd Intermediate School where they played rugby, not soccer (as was the case in Cowbridge). It was a decision which ten years later would cost him dear. Dad progressed through Pontypridd and passed what was then known as School Certificate (in my day 'O' level and now GCSE). For Higher Certificate ('A' level) he chose English, French and Geography - subjects which together with Economics he continued to study at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth. After three years he was accepted at Aber to pursue an honours degree in French. But, just as he was leaving the interview, the lecturer posed this question :

'Mr. Workman, you have, of course, studied Latin ?'

Dad's world collapsed. At Pontypridd he could have studied Latin but because he had won a county scholarship it was a condition that he studied Welsh. Latin was not an option which, had he gone to Cowbridge, would have been a necessity. After leaving Aberystwyth with a Finals as opposed to an Honours degree, he taught for a short period at Selly Oak in Birmingham but then decided to change course and to join his father in the family business.

Both sets of grandparents and my parents attended Hope Presbyterian Church. In the nineteen thirties television was unheard of and your social life evolved around the chapel although Pontyclun did have a cinema. My dad played hockey both for the University and also for Hope. Both my parents joined Hope's drama group run by Mrs. Gwyneth Hopkins, wife of the minister, and they played opposite each other in a number of productions. Initially they were part of a much larger group but soon started going out together. By the late nineteen thirties it was evident that war was looming and on Sunday, 3rd September 1939, the Prime Minister pronounced : 'We are at war with Germany'. By this time my father's father was in ill health and unable to work in the shop. Fifteen months later he was dead. My dad was not called up immediately but as he was just twenty seven it was only a matter of time. Mum left the London Hosiery in Cardiff to work in our shop and to help my grandmother, now a widow. This is how the

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war years were spent. After my grandfather's death my dad was given three months to train my mother and he was enlisted in April 1941. After an initial period he was sent overseas and in late November 1941 was heading for the Near East. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour on the 7th December 1941 his ship was diverted to the Far East. In March 1942 dad was captured in Java and from there transported to Japan where he worked on a small island on the south side of Honshu, the largest island, until his eventual release in August 1945. For the first eighteen months my grandmother and mother heard nothing. But eventually a post card from Dad, arrived via the Red Cross with this message :

' I am well and am working for pay. Love Bill '

Dad's signature was clearly recognisable so they knew he was alive. Dad somehow survived receiving better treatment than many others and after three months in Australia returned to this country in December 1945. The following year they were married in Hope on Easter Monday, 22nd April 1946. Dad was 33 ; Mum 30.

I was born in Llwynypia Hospital - their first and as it turned out to be their only child.

During the war years my gran and mum lived in premises behind the shop. In 1946 there was some spare land in Park Crescent on which two houses each costing one thousand pounds were being built. My gran and mum were eager to buy as they had saved sufficient money during the war years. Dad agreed and in November 1946 with mum four months pregnant we moved into Number 11 where I lived permanently until April 2000 and where my parents still live. My gran came to live with us and remained there for just under twenty years. It was one of the best moves the family made. My gran was deaf and she had had periodic bouts of ill health which were improved by the move. Also we had purchased outright without the aid of a mortgage.

I grew up in the crescent and during the nineteen fifties had two close friends ; Lawrence Ryan who was three weeks younger than me and Elizabeth Hussey who was nearly two years older. We would all go round together playing in each other's houses. In 1950, Cliff Jones, the Welsh ex Rugby international and Chairman of the selectors in the nineteen seventies, came to live three doors down from us. He and his

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wife Mary (who is still a close friend of my mum) had three young sons - Huw, Dan and Carey. Huw was three years older than me, Dan a year older and Carey two years younger. We were all in day school together. Every March 1st, St. David's Day, we would have a school concert in the morning and a half day in the afternoon. Even now I can see Dan charging around in a long white robe with his sword and shield like some knight in shining armour, threatening the life out of us.

In junior and infants school I was reasonably content but I did not like our headmaster, Leslie Bailey - he always looked gruff and stern. Nor was I good at things practical such as drawing or 'cutting out' and would weep buckets of tears when we had to do them. Things such as arithmetic, spelling, English, history and geography I found much easier but even here I could be thrown out of my stride. Mr. Withers, who as a young man had taught my dad, took the scholarship class. But one day he was ill and was replaced by Mrs. Bartlett. Mrs. Bartlett was nice enough when you got to know her but as a teacher she was a bit of a tyrant who would often shout at you and scold you. One day there was a difficult sum on the blackboard which I could not solve. I went up to her and started to perform and wail in front of the whole class. She told me to go back to my seat, to calm down and eventually I would find the solution. This is exactly what happened but not before I had made a complete fool of myself. In Standard Five my marks in what I might call the academic subjects were reasonable but looking at my old school reports I find I finished fifteenth overall out of a class of thirty or so. I showed promise but a place at the grammar school could not be guaranteed.

WE all tried the scholarship in March 1958. I remember that in the morning we had mental arithmetic first, then a break and then arithmetic. After lunch, there was spelling, English comprehension and an English essay. I thought I had done very well in the morning session when I compared my answers with those of my friends. The afternoon session was more problematical. It was 'touch and go' whether I had done enough in English to pass. The three month wait until June when the results were published were not particularly agonising as my parents would be supportive

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no matter what the result and I would, in any *case*, have a second chance.

I don't know whether the results were sent direct to the school but I first learnt of my success that early June morning when my mum, after opening the Western Mail, quickly glanced at the results and shouted up to me :

'Neil, you've passed ! '

And there in print was my name : ELON N. WORKMAN

Six other boys - Anthony Goodwin, Richard Evans, Alun Nelms, Michael James, Edgeley Thomas and Anthony Williams - had also been successful. I had passed at my first attempt but some like Glyn Taylor, seven weeks younger than me, would have to wait another year. Many, though, like Lee Tucker (and I remember checking my arithmetic answers with him) were not awarded places. Another contemporary, Phillip Jones, did not hear of his success until a week or so later and unlike me was not offered a choice of school. Phillip had to settle for Tonyrefail. I remember asking him if he had had the choice of either Cowbridge or Tonyrefail which school he would have preferred and he replied unhesitatingly : 'Oh, Cowbridge, of course '.

The other memory of that June morning was the arrival on our doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Jones who came to congratulate me and wish me well. Dan was already coming to the end of his first year. At the end of his second in July 1959 he would leave and continue his studies at Llandovery College.

I seem to remember that when I heard of my success I wept but I think the tears were more out of apprehension as to what the future held rather than tears of joy at passing the eleven plus.

CHAPTER 2

FORM 2B

The fine, warm summer of 1958 saw Wales host the Empire and Commonwealth games and I remember going to St. Athan to see, amongst other things, the running track.

My school uniform posed no problem. By late July my parents had received a list of what I would require and the only things we ~~were~~ have to buy from Evan Roberts, Cardiff were :

School cap, school tie, school blazer badge, school socks and a satchel.

The school black blazer, grey shorts, grey and white shirts and rugby kit, with its green shirt, my dad could provide from the shop.

For the first year, unlike many of my new school friends, I wore short trousers. My gran's cousin in law and his wife (the lady whom my grandad had gone to visit some fifty years previously) were in May 1959 installed as Mayor and Mayoress of Merthyr Tydfil. As a family we were invited to the mayor making ceremony, lunch and evening dinner and it was for that function that I wore my first pair of long trousers.

Term started on Tuesday, 9th September and that first morning I walked up to the bus stop about a hundred and fifty yards from my house, with Dan Jones. I was understandably nervous, not knowing what to expect. I had decided not to take school dinners (I had not done so at primary school even though they were available) but had been given sandwiches by my mum. These, perhaps not surprisingly, remained unopened and uneaten, certainly during my first week.

While I would obviously have to relieve myself sometime during the day, I decided not to go anywhere near the toilets if I could help it. I had heard all sorts of rumours about older boys

'ducking' the newcomers by immersing their heads in a basin full of cold water and I was determined to avoid this at all costs.

The night before term started I confessed my fear of this to my dad, who was very sympathetic and told me not to worry.

CHAPTER TWO

FORM 2 B

Pontyclun lies five miles to the north of Cowbridge and two double decker bus loads of boys always travelled from the Pontyclun area. I was determined never to travel on what we called the 'boys 'bus'. This was the first bus which went through Pontyclun and contained the Llanharan, Brynna and Llanharri contingent. Although many of the boys from these areas eventually became firm friends, at that time I regarded them as the rougher type, well versed in the ways of the world. They were also renowned for singing salacious songs such as 'The German Officers crossed the Rhine' to the tune of 'Mademoiselle from Armentiers'. I well remember one Thursday evening fairly early on missing the 'bus I usually travelled on and having to catch the 'boys' 'bus'. I knew very few and, feeling very uncomfortable immediately got off, only to be persuaded to return by Jeff Langdon, some years older than me.

But back to my first morning; I remember walking up the High Street, turning by the Duke of Wellington into Church Street, and with the school bell tolling, going past the Holy Cross Church, through the tally courts and into the school hall itself where three hundred or so other pupils jostled with each other, packed together like sardines. Apart from the six who had passed the scholarship with me and one or two others, like Dan Jones and Trevor Wooding, who were Pontyclun boys, I knew no one. I remember seeing the headmaster, Idwal Rees, for the first time as he strode to the dias, immaculately dressed in his grey suit, his black M.A. gown flowing behind him. I suddenly realised from reading my Jennings books that here was the 'Archbeako' in all his glory. And as I looked at those masters standing immediately to Idwal Rees's left near the piano, this thought struck me :

The headmaster had power not only over me and my fellow pupils from 9 am. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Friday during term time but also over all the masters who had to do his bidding. What Idwal Rees said, went - no ifs or buts about it.

It was as though God had come down from his heaven and had taken over the grammar school.

And his was an impressive presence - his bald head and grey hair making him appear much older than he actually was. I don't remember the hymn we sang but it must have been 'Lord behold us with Thy blessing.' As soon as that first assembly was over, the new boys were given their form and, as I listened, I heard the words '2 B' and finally my name 'Workman'.

Why the first formers were placed in form two with a Remove in the fourth year I never understood and to this day I have never asked the reason why. Of the boys who had passed the eleven plus with me Anthony Goodwin and Alun Nelms were placed in the 'A' stream ; the remainder with me in 2 B.

Our form master, Mr. Honddu Davies, who would later teach us junior English and Mathematics, was also new. Our form room was in the main school building down the long corridor and lay between the prefects study and the old Chemistry laboratory - Seys classroom. The room itself contained about thirty desks, a table and chair for the master and a couple of blackboards set in the wall next to the prefects study.. The window, overlooking the headmaster's lawn, was impressive with its stained glass. Surrounding it were the initials or names of boys who, over the decades, had somehow managed to carve into the cement.

Within half an hour of my arrival, I met Idwal Rees. Mr. Davies required some information or advice and because I was sitting in the front of the class, he delegated me to go to the head's study which was situated fairly close by. Idwal Rees opened the door himself, invited me in and realising I was a new boy asked me my name and where I came from. From then on, ours was a relationship which in my case was based on respect for a man who had all the attributes required in a headmaster. ^{I am sure} It was from that first meeting, that I became head of the school (Dux Scholae) seven years later.

Whatever organisation you join or whatever occupation you have, you will make new friends and the grammar school was no different in this respect. It was inevitable that the close friends from my early childhood, Lawrence Ryan and Elizabeth Hussey, would no longer feature prominently in my social life and inevitably we drifted apart. This was partly my fault but I was keen on exploring pastures new. Even though seven of us had come to the new school together and I was friendly with the others, it was not a close friendship in the sense that I went round with any one of them or was a frequent guest in their home.

In 1958 the railway station at Llantrisant was still in existence (it was to perish in the Beeching plan of the early nineteen sixties) and parcels would arrive at the station from our suppliers either to be delivered or collected. One day, it might have been just before I started in Cowbridge but certainly within a week of my arrival, the railway delivery man, Mr. James, came into the shop with a parcel. I was there and we naturally started chatting.

'Neil, I've heard that you are going to the grammar school in Cowbridge. My nephew's just started there.'

Interested I replied. 'Oh yes. What's his name?'

'John Prichard' answered Mr. James.

John was in my form and when I next saw him I said: 'John (or it may have been 'Prichard') I know your uncle. He delivers parcels to our shop.'

It was the start of a forty year friendship which has lasted until this day. We meet at least once a year, exchange Christmas cards and so on and I am godfather to his younger daughter.

John Prichard was a farmer's son from Wick in the Vale of Glamorgan and John's father's sister had married Mr. James.

John and I have always been close friends, on Christian name terms, but, as far as I recall, we never sat next to each other in class. It would never have occurred to me to call him by his nick name 'Wick' which everyone else used. John Prichard took his first degree at Birmingham University and then a Master of Science degree at Sussex. After further study he gained a A.C.C.A. becoming a Fellow some years later and now works as an accountant with a company in Maesteg. He, his wife and three children still live in Wick.

My first year coincided with the 350th Anniversary celebration of the of the school's foundation. On Wednesday, 12th November 1958 a Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day service was held in the Holy Cross Church. Even today I can remember where I sat in the church with John Prichard immediately to my right. One of the hymns we learnt was 'Of the Father's love begotten' to the tune Corde Natus from the Pia Cantiones and it has remained a favourite of mine ever since and one which I play every Christmas on the organ at Hope Presbyterian Church, Pontyclun. The importance of the occasion meant that the masters wore full academic dress including

their hoods and this coloured up the proceedings. When I got home that afternoon, for we had a half day, I asked my dad :

'What is that thing that the masters have draped around their shoulders and down their backs ?'

He then explained it all to me and I then said :

'Dad, you are a graduate. Do you have one ?'

Disappointed at the negative reply, I then pleaded : 'Please, get one.' And, sure enough, that Christmas he did.

I had been very impressed by the display of colour although at that time I did not know that the white silks worn by Idwal Rees and Peter Cobb were from Cambridge, or the crimson worn by both Iolo Davies and Arthur Codling indicated Oxford University or that the green and blue or brown and yellow shot silks worn by most of the other masters indicated a degree from one of the Welsh University colleges.

Although Honddu Davies was our form master he did not teach us that first term ~~but~~. I do remember him turning out to referee us in rugby matches. English was taught by the woodwork master Reg. Whittle and our first set book in English Literature was Kenneth Grahame's 'The Wind in the Willows'. Our first English Language essay was about our feelings on passing the eleven plus and joining the grammar school in which I received a top mark of eighteen from twenty. Woodwork was a completely different story. I was absolutely hopeless at all things practical and at the end of the first term I received a mark of fourteen per cent and was bottom of the class. My English mark, by contrast, was one hundred and fifteen marks out of one hundred and fifty and first place. So I must surely hold a unique record and be the only pupil ever to have been top in Mr. Whittle's English class and last out of twenty seven in woodwork.

One other thing I will always remember from those first English classes. In late October or may be sometime in November, Mr. Whittle during one period wrote on the blackboard these words :

'Tom whereas Dick' and then proceeded to write down the the word 'had' no less than eleven times finishing with the words: 'the examiner's approval'

He then turned from the blackboard and said : 'Now, boys, punctuate that'.

I remember I ~~looked~~ at him in amazement, scratched my head and started to write.

CHAPTER TWO

FORM 2 B

I knew that Mr. Whittle was not drunk. He had not staggered into class and his speech was not slurred. It could not have been an April fool as we were in late autumn. But I began to wonder whether, while at the blackboard, he had had some kind of mental blackout. One of us would go up to his desk, then another, then another and each time we were met words either 'No.' or 'Wrong'. After about twenty minutes, Mr. Whittle said : 'Well, boys, none of you has got it right. I'll let you into the secret. Two boys were discussing whether King Charles the First had his head cut off or had had his head cut off. There are two sentences, in fact, which read thus :'

Tom, whereas Dick had had 'had', had had 'had had'.

'Had had' had had the examiner's approval.

At a time when English grammar and punctuation are derided by so many, the words 'had' and 'had had' still linger on.

As the first term drew to its close, the end of term exams approached. For many of us it was a new experience. Apart from the eleven plus, our exams in junior school were more in the way of tests. The exams used to start in early December and for some unknown reason I was away from school the day prior to their commencement. At that time John Dale Owen was deputy headmaster and senior master and he came around directing us as to which classroom we were to sit the exam. One half would remain in Seys classroom and be joined by an older age group, in this case Remove B. The other half would go to Remove B's classroom and join the half of that class that had remained there. I remember having to sit my very first exams in the old Remove B classroom which was then situated in Old Hall above the stairs and opposite the old Physics laboratory. I was seated in the back row on the left hand side as you entered the room. The desks were in groups of three and I was on the outside nearest to the aisle. To my immediate right was Remove B' Gareth Gronow and to his right in the far corner was a boy named Brian Dunn. The first three exams were Geometry before morning break, Latin immediately after morning break and Geography in the afternoon. This was to remain the pattern throughout the five years to ordinary level. The exams lasted about four days and with the masters involved in marking our papers the last fortnight was lesson free. When the exam papers were returned most masters, though not all, would go through them with you pointing out your mistakes. Otherwise we read, played games,

cards or chess or simply lazed around doing nothing. Late December was normally the time when house plays took place but during this first term none were held as many masters and pupils were engaged in the production of Gilbert & Sullivan's 'The Mikado' due to be performed the following March. In fact, there were no house plays until my third year (December 1960).

When my exam papers were returned I thought I had done reasonably well. Of the ten subjects, I had over 90% in one, 80% or more in three, over 70% in another four and two over 50%. But it was still anybody's guess as to my final position in class. To calculate that, I believe your exam mark was doubled and then added to your term mark to get to the final overall total and your placing. I was thankful there were no exams in either art or woodwork.

I clearly remember trooping into Final Assembly that day in mid December. It was a completely new experience and one which I attended a further twenty three times.

We weren't given our final positions by Mr. Honddu Davies and as I went in I was a little apprehensive although I knew both mum and dad would be supportive however well or badly I had done.

The headmaster appeared and assembly began. Idwal Rees read out each boy's class position commencing with 5 A, then 5M then Remove A and so on right down to 2 B - ten classes each with about thirty pupils - three hundred or so names.

You can imagine my delight then when I heard him say :

' 2B. First- Workman ; second-Thomas undecimus ; third- Prichard minor. ' and so on.

I knew from what I had been told by other pupils that this would mean ~~almost~~ certain promotion to 2 A and that very likely I ~~would~~ be joined by my good friend whom I had first met that previous September, John Prichard.

Happy as Larry, I then joined in the singing of 'Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing' and ^{we} broke up for the Christmas holidays.

CHAPTER THREE

FORM 2 A

When we returned in January 1959, it was to a different form and to new class mates. As predicted, Paul Thomas, John Prichard and I were promoted, being replaced in 2 B by Alan Mathias and John Roycroft. Paul Unsworth, a boarder, jumped a year going from 2A to 3A after just one term. I did not know Paul well - he was a Penarth boy - but I guess he may have already done some Latin and French and his learning was thus more advanced than the others. The boarders, at this time, were always placed in the 'A' stream irrespective of academic ability. After Paul left, there were seven of them - John Isaacs, Geoffrey James, known as 'Slim' who was my deputy when I became head boy, Richard James (no relation), Ian McMillan, Geoffrey Palmer, Richard Press and David Robinson. To their number was added one D.G.N. 'Gabe' Thomas who joined the boarding house. With his arrival we were one more in class. Most of the others were already friends as both second forms had joint games - in this case rugby - for the last two periods on a Thursday afternoon.

The time table had not changed but the order of lessons obviously had. Each day consisted of seven lessons, four in the morning each of forty five minutes with a quarter of an hour break at 10.45 a.m. and three in the afternoon each of forty minutes with no break. I cannot remember the exact breakdown but the time table was something like this : Maths. - 5 periods, English - four periods, Latin, Welsh and French - three periods each ; Geography, History, Physics, Chemistry, Woodwork, Art, Physical Education and Games two periods each and Scripture one period. Physics, Chemistry, Woodwork, Art and Games, being practical subjects, necessitated two consecutive periods.

Like woodwork and art I was completely useless at physical education and games although for these first two terms I did try my best. Somehow and much to my amazement I became a lock forward and having a shower after a Thursday afternoon game was something completely new. I loved the water - many a time we would be on holiday often in Bournemouth and I would spend hours and hours in the sea, my mother watching from the shore and begging me to come out. On many a Thursday afternoon, certainly in the first four or five months, I would linger

CHAPTER THREE

FORM 2 A

splashing around and consequently missing the school bus. Luckily there was a regular hourly service from Cowbridge to Pontyclun and I was able to catch the one at five o' clock.

When I moved from 2 B to 2 A the masters in a number of subjects changed. There were new faces in English, History, Geography, French and Maths. Sid Harris still taught Latin and Tudor Hughes Welsh. There were no changes in Chemistry (Johnny Marsden), Physics (Ken Helyar), Physical Education (Don Pugh) and Art (Miss Mary Davies). Reg. Whittle continued as woodwork master but, I am sorry to say, found me denser than ever. Miss Davies was only part time and in Cowbridge only on Tuesdays and Fridays. We were not examined in Scripture although I'm not sure who took us for the weekly period - possibly Honddu Davies or it could even have been Bryn Edwards. From the fourth form onwards, Scripture was taught by Peter Cobb - the Old Testament books of Genesis and Exodus being a speciality. The other highlights of that second term were the school's production of 'The Mikado' as part of the school's 350th Anniversary celebrations. I was not in the cast but I and my family went to see it on the first night. Easter was early that year and the production was staged in the Town Hall from the 10th to the 14th of March. We chose the first night, the Tuesday, primarily because the school's business manager, Morris Vaughan was eager to sell some tickets for that night, and had not had many takers. From seeing that one performance, I immediately fell in love with Gilbert and Sullivan, something which has lasted to this day. The school had no recognised music department and everyone who was connected with that production deserves high praise. Peter Cobb, the producer, was himself an excellent pianist and he was accompanied by Tim Chilcott, then a sixth former of about seventeen. Apart from his academic achievements, Chilcott was exceptionally gifted musically and could easily transpose a work from one key into another.

Of the principals, apart from Arthur Codling in the title role who taught me English in the Remove and fifth forms, and Ian McMillan who played Peep-Bo and who was in my class, I got to know only one other really well.. This was Robert Lewis (Yum Yum). We acted together in three School Plays, were prefects together in 1964 to 1965 and studied Latin together in the sixth form, he being one of Iolo Davies's classicists. Sadly, Robert died young only in his mid

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FORM 2 A

twenties in mysterious and tragic circumstances, a very likeable fellow, greatly missed by all his friends.

In that second term, the 350th Anniversary school photograph was taken, the first of three in which I was to appear. I look rather serious standing in the third row on the left as you look at the photograph with Anthony Williams to my right and Phil Dauncey immediately on my left. Examining that photograph some forty two years later, of the twenty or so masters and mistresses on it only five masters - Iolo Davies, Peter Cobb, Reg Whittle, Ken Helyar and John Marsden - are still alive. All the others, including I believe the French student mistress Mademoiselle Monique Duret, have passed away. As juniors we were delighted to be taught by Mademoiselle Duret - she was, to coin a phrase, 'a bit of all right' - attractive rather than pretty. That year's Dux Scholae, William Adams, 'Jack' Adams's elder son evidently thought so too - he and Mademoiselle were often seen on walks together and this served only to fuel our *ferocious* imaginations, many of us being on the brink of puberty. William eventually became a doctor but he too died in his late forties, a victim of cancer..

There were never any exams at the end of the Easter term but in the March the steeplechase was run, starting from the Bear Field. All the juniors were supposed to take part but as I was no runner, I was determined to avoid it if at all possible. Some years previously I had had trouble in my nether regions and it was possible, although not probable, that it might flair up again. I went to my own G.P. in Pontyclun explained the situation and that I was not keen on running. He very kindly gave me a sick note which I gave to Don Pugh before the race commenced. And from that time on, I never again took physical education or played games. Don Pugh probably thought I was a waster but he never said anything.

At the end of that first Easter term I was placed twelfth out of thirty one, my highest placings being in English, French and Welsh. Needless to say I was placed thirty first in woodwork. The summer of 1959 was a scorcher and in the first week of May Speech Day was held in the Town Hall with Sir Ben Bowen Thomas of the Department of Education in Wales as the guest speaker.

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The masters were again in full academic dress and Idwal Rees, attired in his white Cambridge silk, gave the headmaster's report on the work at the school. Because space in the Town Hall was limited only those receiving prizes and certificates ^{and the first formers} had to attend, the other pupils having a half day. Thus, the only Speech Day that I missed was in May 1960 when I had no cause to go. From 1961 I was receiving either a prize or a certificate or, being a prefect, was acting as a steward.

As my first year drew to a close, I went on two school trips. Iolo Davies, who taught us history, took us to see the remains of the Roman fortress at Caerleon and our form master, who I think was Arthur Codling, took us on a day trip to Oxwich on the Gower peninsular. Sometime during this first year we had to listen to musical recital given by the Cardiff University Trio.

The exam results at the end of the Summer term showed a marked improvement in my form position and I finished fifth overall with marks mostly in the seventies or eighties, my lowest being 55% in Chemistry.

As I left that Final Assembly in July 1959 I reflected on what a school year it had been. I had made lots of new friends, had moved from 2B to 2A after just one term and had had the satisfaction of finishing the term on a high note. I had done well in the academic subjects but even though my parents had bought me a vice and tools the previous Christmas, I still showed very little ability in woodwork, which continued to be a 'bete noire'.

Little did I realise that as we broke up for the six week holiday period that my happiest days were yet to come and that still greater things lay in store. I had survived, unscathed.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDWAL REES

No school reminiscence would be complete without a chapter on the headmaster. Idwal Rees was educated at Swansea Grammar School and after taking his first degree at Swansea University College continued his studies at St. John's College, Cambridge where he read Classics. A fine rugby centre back he played for Wales in the mid and late nineteen thirties and was a member of the team which in 1935 beat the New Zealand All Blacks. He also captained the side on a number of occasions. After a period on the staff of Fettes College, Edinburgh (the Eton of Scotland) he arrived in Cowbridge in September 1938 as successor to Richard Williams.

By the time Idwal Rees took over, the school had over two hundred pupils and was acclaimed as one of the best in South Wales if not in the whole of the Principality. One has only to look at the Honours Board, in my time in the main school hall, to ~~see~~ that this was so. Richard Williams, strict disciplinarian though he was, had modernised the school and had introduced many reforms. Idwal Rees had been set an example by his predecessor and had much to live up to. His headmastership of thirty three years was the third longest in the school's history and of its nineteen ^{head}masters he was the only Cambridge graduate I have already explained how I first met Idwal Rees. Born in 1910, he was at 48 just two years older than my father but his outward appearance seemed to add at least ten years to his age.

That Christmas of 1958 I had occasion to meet Idwal Rees socially. I was invited to a party hosted by the Edwards family of Talygarn. Ieuan Edwards had been manager of the Midland Bank in Cowbridge in the early nineteen fifties but by 1958 he was managing the Pontyclun branch. The Edwardses joined Hope Presbyterian Church in Pontyclun and it was through the church that we became friends although dad also banked in the Midland, almost immediately opposite our shop in Cowbridge Road. The son, David, was older than me and a pupil at the grammar school, leaving the July prior to my arrival. Eleri was the middle child and elder daughter. I was friendly with Mary, the other daughter, who was about eighteen months younger than me, and I was at the party as Mary's guest. Idwal Rees and his family were also guests and he spoke to me, calling me by my Christian name for the very first time.

In his book 'At Cowbridge Grammar School 1949 to 1966' Peter Cobb says Idwal was nick named 'Jim Crow'. I never heard that - to us schoolboys he was either 'skinhead' or 'skull' or simply 'the boss'.

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I can confirm Peter Cobb's accurate description of him - tall with distinguished looking features, dressed always in a grey suit and black polished shoes, with his black M.A. gown flowing behind him.

At the end of the second year the boys in the 'A' stream were given a choice between taking Greek (the head's subject) or Physics. Only a handful, those good at Latin and likely to ^{be} future classics scholars, chose Greek. The head taught Greek up to 'O' level but I never studied the subject (I wasn't given the choice) preferring to take physics. Idwal Rees, however, taught us Latin the fifth form, our 'O' level year. For the four previous years Latin had been drummed into us by Sid Harris in regimental fashion and I now realise why this was so. Sid knew full well that the 'boss' would be taking us in our final year and it would have done his (Sid's) reputation no good if the head found we were not up to scratch when he came to teach us. The head was an impressive speaker who could captivate his audience. His reports on Speech Day were always worth listening to and his Swansea-Cambridge timbre as he read out the lists of the fallen at the annual Remembrance Day service added dignity to the solemn occasion. I do not remember having heard him read 'Let us now praise famous men' from Ecclesiasticus but I can quite believe it was in a manner appropriate to the occasion.

I can understand how some boarders found him difficult, pernickity and fussy. He was, of course, in an unenviable position acting 'in loco parentis' and it was upon his shoulders that the ultimate success or failure of the school was judged. The buck always stopped at the headmaster's desk.

This must have been keenly felt when the horrific car accident in March 1969 claimed the lives of five pupils from the lower sixth, three of whom I knew well for they had been in my House. Who can ever know what Idwal Rees's immediate thoughts were? He must have been totally shattered. How was he going to face the grieving parents? What could he say to them when five young men in the prime of life had been so cruelly taken away? He was undoubtedly a broken man and probably was never the same after that terrible Friday, the blackest in the school's long history.

I never had occasion to cross Idwal Rees and during the year I was Dux Scholae we worked together as headmaster and senior pupil for what,

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I hope, was the good of the entire school.

His words on my final report read :

'I thank him sincerely for his loyalty and conscientiousness as
Dux Scholae. Good luck !'

Such sentiments were typical of a man for whom I had enormous respect,
even affection.

I had little to do with Idwal Rees's family. I never met his son or
daughter and I do not think I spoke to his wife, Mrs. Megan Rees, on
more than three occasions, if that.

Idwal Rees was a man of his time - a Man for all Seasons.

After the austerity of the war years and the rationing during the late
nineteen forties and ~~early nineteen fifties~~ things had improved by the
time I arrived. It was a time of relative prosperity - low inflation
and unemployment at around 300,000. Harold MacMillan's phrase 'You've
never had it so good' had a ring of truth about it, certainly in the
sleepy market town of Cowbridge. High inflation and militant trade unions
were a thing of the future. Consensus politics in the form of 'Butskellism
(the economic policies pursued by Labour's Hugh Gaitskell and the
Conservatives' R.A. Butler) were the norm. 'Thatcherism' was unheard of
at a time when the word 'compromise' was the accepted doctrine.

It is said that the headmaster's somewhat easy going manner resulted in
some masters not working themselves or their pupils as hard as they might
but Cowbridge's results did not seem to suffer. A number of the brightest
won places at either Oxford or Cambridge, some by way of scholarship or
exhibition and many others went to the provincial universities in either
England or Wales. A fair number furthered their studies at Idwal Rees's
Alma Mater, St. John's College Cambridge - Alun Hughes (Taffy's son),
Gareth Jones ~~and~~, Chris Gill, Tim Chilcott and Ellis Thomas to name but
five.

I always felt that Idwal Rees was firm but fair. I do not think he ever
used the cane except when such a punishment was really necessary. Life
could be tough if you misbehaved and for those who did so, a beating was
probably a just reward.

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I never met Idwal Rees after I left school although in the Summer of 1976 I wrote to him for a reference. I had a charming letter back and the reference he gave me no doubt contributed to my successful application. Had I gone to some of the Old Boys functions I would have met him for he was a regular attendee after his retirement in July 1971.

It was sad that Idwal Rees's last five years were marred by serious ill health and after a contented retirement in his home city of Swansea he passed away aged eighty one years in late August 1991. Due to illness I was unable to attend his memorial service held in the Holy Cross Church on the 30th November of that year.

Idwal Rees had all the qualities required in a headmaster and his talents were particularly suited to a school like Cowbridge. He was, truly, a remarkable man.

CHAPTER FIVE
MASTERS AND MISTRESSES

In the late nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties the turnover of staff was very small. Although it varied slightly from year to year there were about twenty five full time masters and a part time art mistress, Miss Mary Davies who eventually became full time. At the end of my first year Tom Evans the senior physics master committed suicide and was the only teacher to die during my eight years. Three others left; John Marsden (Biology and junior Chemistry) to take a lectureship, Ken Helyar (junior Physics) to become head of the department in Bridgend Girls Grammar School and, in December 1961, Lloyd Davies (senior French) moved to Bridgend Grammar School for Boys to take up a similar position in the town where he lived. These masters were respectively replaced by Frank Palmer, David Hunt and Peter Wilson. As the school continued to expand a further two masters were appointed - Gerry Meek in 1962 to assist in the Maths department and, two years later David Lloyd to assist in English.

There were only three masters who never taught me - Tom Evans, Frank Palmer and Wyn Oliver, the physical education and games man who took over from Don Pugh when he became second in command in the chemistry department. I feel that I am in a position to comment on the qualities and deficiencies of all the others. Peter Cobb (Geography and Scripture) was a graduate of St. John's College Cambridge (like Idwal Rees). Arthur Codling, Iolo Davies and Peter Wilson were Oxford men - St. Edmund Hall, Jesus and St. Peter's colleges respectively. Morris Vaughan was a graduate of London University. All the others, apart from Reg. Whittle, had studied at one of the constituent colleges of the University of Wales - Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Bangor or Swansea. I say 'apart from Reg. Whittle'. At Speech Day Reg. always wore a mauve hood which did not appear to be from one of the Welsh colleges. I would have liked to have known from which university he held his degree but I never ever thought of asking him; it would have appeared nose-y.

Most of our masters were pretty competent and did their best to impart their knowledge to us. The 'A' stream, as was to be expected, had the better ones although the 'B' form was pretty well well served, certainly during the fifth form - 'O' level year.

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John Dale Owen was senior master and deputy headmaster during my first four years. He had been acting headmaster during the Second World War from 1941 to 1945 and was the school's first chemistry *master* appointed as far back as 1921 by the then headmaster, Richard Williams. A large man, obviously overweight, J.D. was very short sighted and wore very thick glasses with blue tinted lenses. He had a nervous facial movement and was, not surprisingly, nicknamed 'twitch'. Another favourite was 'totto'. Age is a very deceptive thing, particularly to youngsters, and to many of us J.D. appeared to be about eighty when in fact he was in his early sixties. He taught me for just one year in 1961/62, retiring in July 1962 at the age of sixty five. He lived just seven more years, passing away in 1969. We were in Remove A and every Friday afternoon we would have a double lesson in the new chemistry laboratory situated in the newest block of buildings past Southgate and immediately opposite the biology laboratory. J.D. was always a one for setting us tests and, not surprisingly because of his short sightedness, was apparently unaware that most of us kept our books open and copied the answers straight from the text book. I decided not to do this, not because I was a spoil sport or a teacher's pet, but because I knew that when the end of term exams came I would not have the luxury of an open text book in front of me and I wanted to do well. I have often wondered whether J.D. knew what was going on - how it was that scores of boys were getting 100% in their term marks and only 30% to 40% in the exams. He must surely have realised some 'jiggery pokery' but chose not to take any notice. The only time I crossed J.D. was when we were in 4A, again in Seys classroom. J.D. was not teaching us at this time but must have come into the classroom in his capacity as deputy head. I was seated in the front and sniggered at something somebody said. It was not directed at J.D. but he evidently thought so as I was marched off to the head's study where J.D. gave me two strokes of the cane - the only time this ever happened. I'm glad to say it did not affect me very much and when it came to the following year my chemistry was certainly up to scratch and I received 89% in the Christmas exam and 91% in the Summer one with the remarks : 'excellent work'

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Bryn Edwards 'Gâteau' who replaced J.D. as senior master in September 1962 taught me French in my very first term and then English Literature in my third year. He could be a bit 'prickly' on occasions but by and large was not a difficult man. He used to travel on the school bus with us, getting on at Maendy. Bryn's three sons all went to Cowbridge and were nearly always in the school plays which Bryn co-produced. I never met his eldest son but the twins, Christopher and David were both prefects in my first year (and their last) and both had principal parts in 'The Mikado'. I met Bryn on one or two occasions after I left for he went to work part time in Lear's Bookshop in Cardiff, a far cry from his school mastering days. 'Indolent' has been used to describe him but I would say 'indifferent' would be a better description. When he left in July 1966 he had been at the school for forty one years and two terms and had been forced to teach scores of boys who weren't remotely interested in either French or English. In the end he probably thought 'Why bother?'. Bryn Edwards has been dead about twenty years.

Tudor Hughes 'Taffy' - the third member of the pre second world war staff - taught Welsh up to the fifth form and some maths. He was the kindest, gentlest of men who, unfortunately, was the victim of a heart attack when in his late fifties. He never fully recovered and although he returned to teach for a further eight years, he was plagued continually by ill health. At the time of his first heart attack which would have been in the Autumn of 1959 (the beginning of my second year) there was a temporary upheaval in staff. Tom Evans had died the previous Summer and when 'Taffy' was taken ill we were two staff short. Morris Vaughan's son, Michael, helped us out that first term in physics and Miss Marsh, the former head of mathematics at the Girls High School was persuaded to come out of retirement and joined us for about two terms. And a Mr. Roger Williams came to take the Welsh classes. I chose French instead of Welsh at the end of my first year and the only time 'Taffy' then taught me was in geometry when I was in form four. The only other dealings I had with him was when I was Head Prefect and he had had to take over the role of deputy head if Bryn Edwards was either not in school or detained on other things. Taffy was as generous and as considerate as ever. Sadly he did not live

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to a great age, dying in his late sixties, just four years after retirement.

Arthur Codling had been a junior master during Richard Williams's final two years and within a year of returning from active service in the war was appointed senior English master, English, particularly English language at 'O' level, was a necessity for any future employment and Arthur was most conscientious. He took us for both English Language and English Literature in the Remove and fifth forms. Every weekend you were set specific homework - the first week it would be a 'precis' (reducing a set piece to about a third of its size), the second an English language essay and for the third week an English literature essay. And so it would go on week in, week out. Your essays would always be returned within three days and Arthur was a hard, but fair, marker. In eight examinations with him I never got more than 65% yet I came to see how right he was - a shrewd judge of a person's true ability. At 'O' level I obtained just 55% in English language (having written a disastrous essay on the subject of sales) and 60% in English literature. Arthur was a competent singer, playing the Mikado in 1959 and the Earl of Mountararat in Iolanthe in 1962. He was a regular attender at morning assembly, his high baritone being heard to good effect if we did not know a particular hymn tune (which wasn't very often). He was a first class teacher who knew his subject and thus got results.

Darwin Adams 'Jack' was another character who also travelled with us on the school bus. Tall with greying hair he was in his early fifties ^{and} ~~he~~ taught senior maths. 'Jack' was often to be found in the small room off the main schoolroom where he held forth on the joys of pure and applied mathematics to his sixth form. 'Jack' was highly competent but he never actually set papers for the end of term exams. Instead we were given past 'O' level papers which were in booklet form and the invigilator ^{told us} which questions to do and from which 'O' level paper. Having worked through a lot of the past papers myself I was in one geometry exam. able to gain 100%. 'Jack' had a caustic sense of humour too. We were in the Remove and just before one set of exams. as 'Jack' was leaving the class, Geoff Palmer piped up from the back of the room :

'Will there be a choice (of questions), Sir ?'

'Jack' turned in the door way and replied.

'Yes. Either you do them or you don't do them. That is your choice.'

Lloyd Davies taught me French for three years and he was something of a tyrant who was liable to explode when you least expected it. Fortunately, I was good at French and, in any event, my dad could help me. I enjoyed learning the subject and never got in Lloyd's bad books. Our nick name for him would have been more likely 'Floyd' (after Floyd Patterson the boxer) rather than 'squirrel'. It must have been the Summer term of my first year when I saw a darker side of Lloyd Davies's character. Our form room 2A was next to the biology laboratory in the newest section of the school. We were in the middle of a lesson when something suddenly went wrong. Gabe Thomas was either talking, grinning or not paying attention when Lloyd Davies tore into him. Before we knew it, Gabe was yanked out of his seat as the master proceeded to kick and punch him when the boarder was on the floor. It was the worst form of corporal punishment meted out by a master during all my time in school. Forty years on and I think Lloyd Davies would have been charged with common assault. Times were so different in 1959. You did not spare the rod and spoil the child. Davies had chosen his victim well. As a boarder Gabe could not easily complain to his parents. Lloyd Davies was another master who worked himself and his pupils hard and thereby got results. The Gabe Thomas ^{incident} ensured that I made certain that I never crossed Lloyd Davies and I was disappointed and saddened when he left. Although I continued to study French and took it at 'A' level, the high standards I had set myself dropped considerably and helpful and considerate though he was, Lloyd Davies's successor, Peter Wilson, could somehow not create the same enthusiasm.

Jim White 'Pinky' was another whom we were afraid of as he was a man of many varying moods who could easily get in a temper and turn a shade of pink - hence the nick name. History was his specialist subject and he dictated notes at such a speed that it was difficult to keep up with him. 'Pinky' seldom wore his gown but he always carried around with him a brown bag, well worn with age. It was not a brief case but some kind of hold-all, I suppose. I often wondered what was in it but never dared to ask.

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My marks with 'Pinky' were reasonable but not excessively high. For Ordinary Level we were supposed to study English history from 1815 (the Battle of Waterloo) right up to 1939 (the outbreak of the second world war). But time would always run out and we never got much beyond the outbreak of the first world war in 1914. I had always been interested in history and had privately studied the lives of the Kings and Queens of England and the royal dynesties. When I opened my history 'O' level paper in June 1963, lo and behold there was halfa question on the 1936 Abdication of King Edward the Eighth. I knew that even though we had not studied it, I had sufficient knowledge to answer the question. We had been told than whenever we sat an exam we should tackle the easy questions first as this would give us more confidence. The question on the Abdication was an easy six or so marks without any effort on my part. We had always been urged to attempt all the questions required as the first ten marks were always easier to get than the last ten. It was no good attempting to try just three questions out of five and hope to gain one hundred percent on all three (60%). Far better to get an average of twelve marks on five questions and have the same result that way.

The only time I remember 'Pinky' really getting angry was when we were in the fifth form. Our classroom was again in the new section, two doors up from the Chemistry laboratory and immediately opposite the gymnasium. It was the last period on a Thursday afternoon and Jim White wanted to get away on time. Someone, it was I think Richard James, went out of the room first and inadvertantly or otherwise pulled the door behind him and in the process took away the outdoor handle ! So the rest of us, including the history master, were trapped inside the room which had no other exit. 'Pinky' got into a ferocious temper and started shouting. Fortunately James had not gone far and order was restored when the outside handle was put back in place and we could all go home, including the irate master.

Latin up to the Remove was taught in style by Sid Harris. Sid was another keen to get good results for, as I have already explained, the head would be taking us in the fifth. From my very first lesson in 2B conjugations and declensions were drummed into us by rote :

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'Amo,amas,amat ; mensa,mensa,mensam ; ' and so on. When the masters came into the class we always stood up,out of courtesy. Sid's first words to us were always : 'Salvete,sedete,tacete ' which broadly speaking meant : 'Good morning,sit down and keep quiet.' We would always reply : 'Salve tu quoque,magister. Sedemus et tacebimus. ' which meant : 'Good morning,sir. We will sit down and we will keep quiet.' We always had a weekly test and,as was Sid's habit,the marking was somewhat different. After the test,you would exchange books with the person next to you and mark each other's work by deducting the number of mistakes from twenty. Thus three mistakes would mean seventeen marks. You were also given one mark if you got the date of the test correct using the Roman kalends,ides and nones system. So in theory it was possible to get twenty one marks out of twenty if you had the date correct and no mistakes although I never remember this situation arising. My friend,John Prichard,although he eventually took science,was exceptionally good at Latin and would always beat me in both the tests and end of term exams. Sid was also a fine rugby player and once ran the touch line for a Wales international. He would ~~often~~ referee both senior and junior rugby matches.

Ken Helyar taught me physics in the early years although Adrian Trotman eventually took over. I liked physics but was not good when it came to the exams. In my first term I lost a lot of marks by being unable to convert correctly from centigrade to farenheit and vice versa. Adrian Trotman taught with panache and style but I failed miserably when it came to the exams with a very poor set of marks : 29% ; 40% ; 45% ; 58% ; and remarks such as ' Inexplicable exam result.' At the end of my fourth year I was forced to chose between geography and physics and I chose the former because I thought I was better at it.

I took both subjects at 'O' level after four years,a year earlier than normal. My dad was keen for me to do well particularly in physics and he helped me a great deal. I found the solving of problems difficult and during the spring and early summer of 1962 we would both get up at 6 a.m. and together do an hour or so of work before I went to school. It paid dividends and in the exam itself I gained 67% far better than anticipated. My geography mark at 71% was perhaps surprisingly only slightly better but I stuck to my original plan and took geography.

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Peter Cobb taught me geography in 2A although I seem to remember we concentrated more on geology -rocks, limestone, old red sandstone and that sort of thing. Peter Cobb was interesting to listen to and as a master of his subject ~~was~~ always held my attention. My marks were nearly always in the seventies and I seem to recall that in the fifth form after 'O' level we studied European geography including things such as the Ruhr industrial belt in Western Germany and the Swiss and Austrian Alps. Peter also taught us Scripture which was a subject you could take at 'O' level but one which I didn't. Peter was very affable and easy going and his knowledge of the scriptures was such that I was not really surprised when he eventually found a vocation in the ministry. I also got to know him quite well as he produced all four of the school plays in which I was involved.

Chemistry was taught by Morris Vaughan after John Dale Owen's retirement. 'Alfie' as he was nicknamed (and to this day I know not why) had taught us chemistry in 4A and had been my first maths teacher when he took us in arithmetic and algebra. 'Alfie' had joined the school during the war years and was, I think, originally from the Home Counties. He was the school's business manager for the school play and was always in charge of the arrangements for Speech Day, directing people where to put chairs and so on. Early in his Cowbridge days he had run the school's savings accounts. Competent in his subject he could easily calculate atomic weights, valencies, volumes of gases and so on. Sufficient to say, I passed my 'O' level chemistry under his instruction.

Morley Davies, 'one of the lads' as Peter Cobb calls him, arrived in Cowbridge in 1951 and was the economics master, a subject you could not study until the sixth form. He taught me in my first few years - History and Geography in 2B and in 3A and geography only in 4A. . Then in his mid thirties he was a likeable master with his easy going manner but one who was sadly to die in 1982 from lung cancer - his heavy smoking being a major factor.

Honddu Davies was already in middle age when he came to teach junior maths and junior English. Neither subject proved too difficult for me. His remarks on my school reports were always encouraging with things like : ' A sound worker. Will definitely improve on these results.' Honddu had a slight lisp and one of

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his favourite expressions to those he considered not up to standard was : 'Your work is pwetty gwim,boy ! '

David Hunt and Gerry Meek both taught me maths in the fourth and Remove respectively. Dave Hunt was a shy quiet man in his first teaching post who was,unfortunately,not as strict as disciplinarian as he might have been and he sometimes lost control of the class. I have some sympathy with him because as a prefect I was often in the same position with unruly younger boys to control.

Gerry Meek,from the Forest of Dean,with his strong Gloucestershire accent was a little stricter. One of Gerry Meek's interests was chess and when this became one of the school's out of school activity he was the master in charge. Both only taught me for one year in 1960/61 and 1961/62. Shortly after Cowbridge became comprehensive in 1973,both took teaching posts elsewhere.

I have already said that I loathed woodwork and my parting with Reg Whittle took place in the following circumstances. The woodwork shed was situated near the covered playground as you walked from the main school buildings towards Old Hall. There were only about fifteen or so woodwork benches so our class was divided into two groups A to L and M to Z by surname. Thus you had a whole bench to yourself every Friday after morning break but only had a lesson once a fortnight. For the week you were not engaged in woodwork you were allowed to carry on with your other school work,including homework, in one of the empty classrooms. Sometimes this would be in the 'stag's head' room next to the staffroom in Old Hall. But even this arrangement did not suit me and at the end of my fourth term (Christmas 1959) Reg. Whittle and I parted amicably. He could see how distressing it was for me after I had wept when he showed my miserable efforts to the whole class. 'Unbelievably incompetent' were the words on my school report - an only too true assessment of my inability. On my final report report,he summed up the position as follows : 'Lack of co-ordination made it impossible to gain even a little success.' I was always grateful for this release. It was affecting my other work and had been a prison for me.

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MASTERS AND MISTRESSES

Woodwork was not really a part of the 'A' stream syllabus and at the end of the second year everyone dropped it. After I gave up carpentry my only contact with Reg. Whittle was in the school play where, together with Miss Mary Davies, he executed and devised the scenery.

When David Lloyd joined us at the beginning of September 1964 we abandoned Old Hall completely and moved into the newest buildings of all in Town Mill Road beyond the gymnasium and biology laboratory. In his early twenties, this was his first teaching post. He was a Pontypridd boy and initially travelled down with us on the school bus. He taught junior English and was Arthur Codling's right hand man as by now Honddu Davies was concentrating solely on maths. Dave was given the task of teaching the sixth formers the 'Use of English'. 'Use of English' was an exam you had to pass if you wanted to go to certain universities - these tended to be the older English ones other than Oxford or Cambridge who still set their own entrance exams. Even then the authorities were concerned at the poor quality of English some students were presenting to their tu^ors and lecturers. 'The' 'Use of English' exam was an attempt to remedy this and the exam was somewhat harder than Ordinary level. Given my relatively poor performance in English language, when I just scraped a pass, I was understandably anxious and in the event my fears were entirely justified. When the time came, I ignominiously ploughed it - it was the only exam I ever failed in my eight years. This was not Dave Lloyd's fault or due to poor teaching - it was rather my own inability to cope properly with what had become a difficult subject for me, primarily because I had no interest in reading the English novel, whether fictional or non fictional.

Don Pugh 'Sniffy' was the P.E. and games master from September 1958 to July 1962. When J.D. Owen retired Don Pugh gave up P.E. and became second in command to Morris Vaughan, teaching chemistry to the Junior and 'B' forms. Wyn Oliver replaced 'Sniffy' and had overall charge of physical education and games. I have already said that I gave up all physical exercise and sport after two terms and Don released me without much fuss. Don and his wife, Beryl, and Sid Harris were in charge when we went on the school trip to Rome in July 1963 and he very sociable and amenable then. I never saw him drunk even though

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some say you would often find him in the Duke of Wellington or in The Horse and Groom having a jar when he should have been teaching. I had very little contact with his successor although I would probably have spoken to Wyn Oliver in my capacity as Durel House captain. But I am sitting next to him in the June 1966 school photograph. My relationship with two other masters, Petr^e Wilson and Iolo Davies will be found in the chapter on my life in the sixth form.

I felt that most of our masters did what was expected of them. Some were better than others, it is true. A few were less inclined to exert themselves as their neared retirement.

I should end this chapter by mentioning two mistresses. Miss Mary Davies taught art initially on a Tuesday and a Friday but in the mid nineteen sixties she became full time. Art was another subject I was very poor in, doodling being my speciality. I have often wondered how Miss Davies managed. Until 1964 there was no art room - one was eventually built in the newest part of the building - and she had to be content with teaching us in our classroom. Like woodwork, art was taken only in the first two years. Mary Davies was a tall, striking woman with aqualine features, who smoked very heavily. Less than four years after I left she was dead - another victim of cancer. Miss Davies's greatest achievements were to be found in the various school plays where her talent was displayed for all to see.

The staff in the May 1962 photograph includes a lady whose name escapes me and to whom I never spoke. She was, I think, a violin instructress who taught a few of our pupils part time.

One final word about a lady who, although not a teacher, was very much a part of the school's life and who is on all the school photographs. This was Miss Eira Williams, the school secretary, without whom administrative chaos might have ensued. When I arrived she had already been school secretary for twenty years. She was crippled by arthritis and walked only with difficulty.

Yet she went about her work with little complaint.

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sitting cheerfully opposite the headmaster in his study behind the large table and in front of her typewriter. She was truly inspirational and whatever she asked, you always did.

The three masters who made the greatest impression were, in this order :

First, Arthur Codling ; second, Lloyd Davies and third, Sid Harris.

In my opinion they were very good communicators who knew their subject well and who worked both themselves and us hard.

CHAPTER SIX

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

I think it would be true to say that I am a fairly easy going person who had little difficulty in making friends. Some ~~were~~ closer than others and I had three of these.

I have already mentioned John Prichard but the other two I have not seen for nearly thirty years.

I became close friends with Howard Griffiths mi. about Christmas 1960. Howard was a Cowbridge boy who lived in the Westgate with his parents, younger brother and grandmother. His bungalow has recently been demolished and replaced by Archway House. For three years we sat next to each other in class. I was the slightly better all rounder but Howard (known as 'Griff' to some) was not far behind and was very bright in the sciences, particularly chemistry, His family readily gave me hospitality when I had to stay behind in Cowbridge for school activities and I remember those times with great affection. Howard's mother, Thelma, died in the early nineteen seventies at a comparatively young age. His father, Roy, continued to live in 'The Haven', as the bungalow was called, until his death a few years ago. We separated in the sixth form, Howard to study maths., physics and chemistry and I the Arts. 'Griff' did exceptionally well at 'A' level and won a place at Merton College, Oxford. He became the Editor of the medical journal 'Pulse' and now lives in Tunbridge Wells with his family. John Prichard hears from him occasionally, mainly at Christmas, and tells me that Howard is not in the best of health at present. Sad for someone who was always full of the joys of spring and a good mate.

Philip Thomas sextus and I became close friends when we went into the sixth form. We came up the school together and were in the same form and eventually found ourselves thrown together when we studied two of the same subjects - French and Latin. I took Russian as my third subject. I think Phil toyed with the idea but eventually opted for English (which would as it turned out have been better for me). Phil was very affable and we got on well together, he sometimes cribbing my Latin notes and I sometimes doing likewise to him. After 'A' level Phil went to Liverpool where he read French and English. He travelled

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abroad teaching English and eventually married a Spanish girl. We corresponded in the late sixties and early seventies but I have not seen him for many years, something which I deeply regret. I think he now lives in Spain. He was good company with a dry sense of humour which would sometimes be found in his contributions to the school magazine 'the Bovian'.

I had other friends, not quite as close, but still good friends. Ian McMillan was a doctor's son from Bridgend and I wrote to him for the first time in thirty five years when we held an old boys reunion in May 2001. We have not seen each other since we left school. Ian went to the London School of Economics and became a lecturer in psychology in Bristol where he now lives. Until he replied I had not realised that life as a boarder could have been so miserable. Ian confessed to hating his time in school and seems to have little affection for the place which is something I find surprising. The school used to issue its own Christmas card and Ian was always on my list.

Malcolm Charlish was another friend from very early on and another Llantwit Major boy, like Phil Thomas, from Boverton. He had two elder sisters and a father who was a very strict disciplinarian.

Their house was named PAT-VON-MAL after the three children, Patricia, Veronica and Malcolm. I sometimes used to call him 'Charles' but he left after Ordinary level and I have not seen him since. I think he went into the police force and now lives somewhere in Surrey.

John Orrell was another Cowbridge boy who lived in Llanblethian. He was another boffin who won a place at Corpus Christi College Oxford to read science. His father, who was to die when in his late forties, held a senior position in the Royal Sovereign Pencil Factory in Talbot Green and John lived with his parents and two sisters on the Broadway. I went to the house with some other friends on a couple of occasions in the summers of the early sixties and clearly remember watching some of the mens' singles matches at Wimbledon - the years when Roy Emerson won the competition and Fred Stolle was the runner up.

Two other boys I was quite friendly with were Martin Sykes of Llantwit Major and David Muir of Cowbridge but both left at the end of my first year.

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When I went into the sixth form, boys who had been mere acquaintances became firm friends. One such was Barrie Johns of Llanharan from the second year sixth. The W.J.E.C. syllabus in those days was such that some set books were studied over a period of years. Thus someone in the first year could be doing the same work as someone in the second or even third year sixth. From my own year only Philip Thomas sextus was studying French with me but we were joined by R.G. Lewis (known as 'Archie' from a year below me, he having gone straight from the REMOVE into the lower sixth,) Barrie Johns from a year above me and two others, C.J. 'Wally' Saunders and Owen Hopkins from the third year sixth, 'Wally' and Owen having to resit their exams to gain better grades. We all had classes together, French poetry, Lamartine, Hugo and Gautier, being among the set books as well as Moliere's 'Tartuffe' and Albert Camus's 'La Peste' (one of the most difficult books I have ever read). A similar thing happened in Latin. That first year ten of us, four Classicists and six others were huddled in a remote part of Old Hall away from everybody else. All the classicists I knew reasonably well - Robert Lewis and Ian McDonald had been in school plays with me; Anthony Goodwin I had known from junior school. D.A.P. Rees (Dap) I knew through the harriers. In my second year we were just four in the French class, Nigel James, a boarder, having joined Phil, Archie and myself. 'Nig', as James was known, also joined me in my Russian classes. That second year we were eleven in the Latin class. Two from the previous year, Ian MacDonald and Barrie Johns had left, but we were joined by two other boarders, who again skipped the fifth, John Illsley and Paul Morris and another boy from Cowbridge, Geoff Nicholas. Clive Jenkins and Geoffrey James continued to study Latin with us but there were so many permutations of subjects that you could take in the sixth that Latin was the only one common to Clive, Geoffrey and myself. Another friend from my sixth form days was Colin Van Rooyen who did not arrive at school until September 1963 to study sixth form History, Geography and Economics. Colin, who lived in nearby Pantyquesta, came to my house on one or two occasions. The Van Rooyens eventually moved from the area and were at one time living in ~~Monk~~ Monknasn, I think.

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In the sixth form, the younger pupils, particularly those in my own House, would look up to you and despite the age difference many became friends. I would like to think that boys such as Ken Cooper, Paul Fisher and Gwyn Reeves saw me as a friend in whom they could, if necessary, confide. Both Ken and Gwyn lived in Pontyclun and Paul in Groesfaen, only three miles away. There were others, like Stephen Evans, Michael Kirwan and Michael Duggan (a future Dux Scholae) who, although not in my House, travelled on the same school bus.

The only member of my own family who was at Cowbridge during this time was my first cousin, Jeffery Pearse, two years younger than me. We were in Iolanthe together, he being one of the fairies, and was also in Durel but we did not have a lot of contact other than perhaps meeting occasionally at lunch or break time. Jeff studied at one of the newer universities, Bradford, became a pharmacist and now lives in Rochdale with his wife and family. I see him once or twice a year when he comes to Pontyclun to visit his mother, my mother's youngest sister.

My friends were from a variety of backgrounds and their fathers had many different occupations. I got on well with all of them. Despite its long history and traditions, Cowbridge was not a 'snob' school although many thought to the contrary. Although the school was divided into three sections - the main building in Church Street, Old Hall overlooking High Street, and the new buildings in Southgate, which were extended after we ceased to study in Old Hall after July 1964, there was not a lot of room. The boarding house section, I understand, was particularly cramped - the beds in the dormitories were crammed next to each other with one lavatory for fifty boarders and two boarding masters. And although we had modern laboratories for chemistry and biology and a large gymnasium, I always got the impression that that they had been grudgingly given by a County Council which would have rathered we did not exist, perhaps because of our past connections, stretching back over three hundred years.

This chapter is entitled 'Friends and Enemies' so where are my enemies ? Well, to be quite truthful, I cannot really think of any.

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Like everybody I sometimes got into a temper or had an argument with someone but this soon passed and we were soon friends again. I don't remember many fights and, if there were any, I was never involved.

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When I first arrived in Cowbridge the House system was an important feature and continued to be so during the whole of my time there. Each boy was allocated to one of four houses, all named after eminent persons associated with the school over its long history. Leoline (red) was named after the school's second benefactor, Sir Leoline Jenkins, of Jesus College Oxford. Sir Leoline, a secretary to King Charles the Second, bought the school from the first founders, the Stradling family of St. Donats and under the terms of Sir Leoline's will the school was gifted to the Principal, Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College to be maintained as a 'free' institution in which religious education and the Classics would play a prominent part.

And this state of affairs continued from the time of Sir Leoline's death in 1685 until 1919 when the Glamorgan County Council became involved.

Stradling (blue) was named after the Stradling family of St. Donats near Llantwit Major who were the school's first founders in the first decade of the seventeenth century, 1608 being given as the most likely date. The Stradlings, Sir Edward and his nephew, Sir John, were wealthy landowners and the school may have originally been a monastic offshoot of ^{one at} Llantwit Major.

Seys (black) was named after the person who was probably the school's first Dux Scholae - Evan Seys. Seys's speech, delivered in Latin on Speech Day 1618, will be found in Mr. Iolo Davies's book 'A Certain Schoole' which was published in 1967.

The fourth house, Durel, (green) was named after the Reverend Daniel Durel, who was the school's second longest serving headmaster; over forty years from 1721.

The four houses competed with each other for the 'Cock House Championship'. In 1958 there were five disciplines : rugby, cricket, ~~steeplechase~~, athletics and work. By 1966 three further had been added : house plays, house debates and chess. Approximately six hundred points were to be gained and the winning house in each event would be given the maximum points available and 100%. In 1964/65, for example, plays, chess and the steeplechase were each worth fifty points rugby, cricket and athletics one hundred points. Work, for some unknown reason was worth one hundred and fifty points - grand total six hundred points. The winning house would receive the 'Cock House

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Shield' ²presented to the winning House captain at the following year's Speech Day.

Each house was given a master in charge. Durel, the house to which I belonged, had two masters ; John Marsden from 1958 to 1960 and Adrian Trotman. Being a junior and a newcomer, I had virtually nothing to do with John Marsden, but as I progressed through the school becoming house secretary in 1962 and house captain in 1965, I saw more and more of Adrian Trotman. He himself was a former pupil during the war years and in Durel House and very easy to get on with. He would attend house meetings but left the running entirely to the pupils although he was always on hand to give us advice and encouragement if and when we needed it. And he always came along to support us in competitive rugby and cricket matches when we played the other houses.

Durel was the house no one wanted to be in - if you were a member, you had reached the pits. We were always bottom in the Cock House competition sometimes over two hundred or more points behind the winner, more often than not Leoline. Wins against the other houses in any activity ^{were} a rarity and any individual brilliance was seldom matched by a team effort. If, for instance, we did well at rugby, it was always compounded by a failure in the steeplechase or in athletics. To put it bluntly, we were consistently inconsistent. And at the very beginning we were the smallest house with few seniors.

In my early years stalwarts such as David Adams, Gareth Gronow, William John ma. and Mike McConville always gave of their best but it was never enough. We were constantly let down by others. For instance on Sports Day 1960, Bruce Maskell, a year my senior, ^{who} had already won the Under 14 100 yards and come second in the 220 yards, was forced to run in both the senior and junior relays, one of our senior runners having conveniently disappeared.

Over the years our numbers grew and we were able to give a better account of ourselves. I've mentioned Bruce Maskell and it was upon people such as him that the house relied. Bruce was a great competitor as were others such as Roger Williams xi., Barrie Johns and Michael Humphries. Mike Davies x (known as 'Spike') was another stalwart and restored a little of the houses's pride by winning the senior steeplechase in April 1952. There were, of course, many others. One

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such was Ian Mitchell of Llantwit Major whom I came more and more to rely on in my last year when I was both House captain and Head Boy. 'Mitch' was the only other Durel House prefect after Paul Jones joined the boarding house, and thus, Leoline. He was an excellent runner and was, by now, captain of the school harriers. He had acted in two house plays - 'The Man with the Cane' (1964) and 'the Doubtful Misfortune of Li Sing' (1965) but was good at all sports, including both cricket and rugby. He succeeded me as Dux Scolae and in 1967 won the senior steeplechase - a worthy reward for all the effort he had put into house activities over many years.

There is only one house cricket match which I really remember and this again involved Ian Mitchell. During the summer of 1965 we played a senior match against Seys. Seys had a lot of first eleven players, that is players who played for the school's first team. We were ably captained by Paul Jones but had no real star players. We batted first and although we continued to lose wickets at regular intervals we built up a reasonable but not excessive score of about seventy. Ryland Griffiths with 18 runs was our top scorer and Ian Mitchell managed 14. But to my amazement, and, I think, to that of his team mates, Michael Jenkins minor from 5A whose bowling skills were known only to his class, turned up trumps and completely changed the course of the game. 'Jenks' chipped in with four wickets for twenty four runs, Ian Mitchell bagged a brace and with one or two of our other players bowling accurately Durel won by ten runs. We also beat Leoline with Jenkins taking four wickets for eight runs but lost to Stradling.

House Debates were revived about 1961 and one of the very first, in which I was not a speaker, was against Leoline. The motion read 'That this house thinks it better to be red than dead'. The debate was held in the main schoolroom and Durel was opposing the motion. Bill John major spoke first for us and as soon as he got to the rostrum he began his speech with the words : 'Comrades !' which immediately was followed by much laughter and applause. A year or so later I myself was one of the speakers in a debate, again against Leoline, when we opposed the motion : 'That professional boxing should be banned'. Forty years later, I can confess that the content of my speech was due in no small measure to my dad who helped considerably both with its construction and

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content.

I think I would have to say that my proudest moment in Durel took place on Wednesday, 7th July 1965 - the annual sports day. When I was made a prefect the previous September, Bruce Maskell was the only other prefect from our house. We worked together but it was Durel's misfortune to lose Bruce in December 1964 as he left to further his career. I took over from him as House Captain with Roger Williams xi as Sports Captain. As a second former I had been dragooned into entering the sports day heats but somehow I managed to miss them. In 1965 I knew that our seniors and under 16's were comparatively weak and that, by way of points, not much could be expected of them. The juniors, from Under 14 downwards, were an entirely different proposition. Not only were a number of them very able but they were also very enthusiastic and I was determined to exploit this, I resolved that, unlike the situation I found myself in at their age when I had to be coaxed and cajoled into doing anything physical, I would concentrate on developing the talents of those who were really interested and who wanted to take part in the competition. My feeling was this: 'If you don't really want to be considered, don't waste my time as we will get nowhere.' And this is what in essence I told them.

But the youngsters who did take part on that July day performed absolutely superbly, particularly the Under 14 section who picked up 66 of the 158 points we eventually gained. In that section, Martin Pearce (P 3) won the 100 yards, 220 yards and 440 yards and was well supported by Colin Bull (a future Victor Ludorum) and Ken Cooper. Paul Fisher won the high jump with a new record of 4' 6" and also the shot and discus with Bull again and John Price ml. also picking up valuable points

A tall, lanky lad, G.J. Griffiths iv although only in his first year easily won the 100 yards and 220 yards, in the Under 13 age group. At under 12 level, Gwyn Reeves, another future Victor Ludorum, won both the 80 yards and 220 yards, with Trevor Morgan second and Robert Oakes third. Morgan would have finished second in the 220 yards as well but fell ten yards from the finishing line allowing Oakes to claim the runner up spot.

As I expected the seniors only contributed twelve points individually Roger Williams xi being our only winner in the shot put.

At Under 16 level D. Morgan iv (whose face escapes me) was our only winner in the Long jump although Dick Smith iv was second in the 880 yards and Morgan second in the triple jump.

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We were also given a point for finishing fourth, fifth or sixth in an event and this gave us a further fourteen points. The two relays were the last events to be run and prior to them we were twelve points ahead of second placed Leoline. It was not over but I was quietly confident as our relay team of Martin Pearce iii, Colin Bull, Ken Cooper and David Morgan iv had already carried ^eeverything before them on the track that day. The four did what was expected of them and won the event in 1 minute twenty two seconds, we could not be caught; however well Leoline did in the senior relay. Roger Williams, Michael Jenkins (of cricket fame), Tony Morelli and Colin Coles major achieved a creditable third place in the senior relay picking up two ~~more~~ points to give us an overall total of 158 points, 16 points ahead of Leoline.

As I look back at my records I am conscious of the fact that two of those who contributed to our success that day are no longer alive. Andrew Evans ma., third in the Under 13 220 yards, was to die in March 1969, one of the victims of the car crash at Culverhouse Cross, which also claimed the lives of two other Durel boys, David Jordan and Tony Norman. Richard Rees ('red haired Richard') third in the senior 100 yards and second in the 220 yards was to perish in 1975, again the victim of a motor accident when his sports car ran out of control and crashed in Herefordshire.

When I received the sports cup on behalf of the house from the Mayor of Cowbridge, Councillor Glyn McNeil, it was the proudest moment of my life. The *Bovian* of December 1965 recorded our success thus: 'not regarded as serious contenders for Cock House they (Durel) proved to be dark horses and emerged as winners over Leoline, Seys and Stradling'. The sentence was all too true. We had won against all the odds, having been written off as 'no hopers' by our opponents and critics. It was a great all round team effort by a group of athletes who gave their all in the cause and it, naturally, vindicated my decision to concentrate on those who wanted to take part. It was the catalyst which produced in subsequent years two victor ludorums.

Bruce Maskell, my former house captain, watched the competition and took a photograph of me holding the sports cup with Paul

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Fisher to my immediate left looking on. Bruce wrote to me afterwards congratulating the house on its success saying he was both 'proud and envious' of our achievement. We did not manage to achieve the feat in July 1966 and for this I must, on looking back, take some responsibility. I failed to 'plug' the weakness which I knew we had at senior level. G.J.Griffiths iv, now Under 14, had given us a platform with no less than six first places and two second places but his magnificent efforts proved to no avail as we slumped to third place, our 146 points being 12 behind the winning house, Stradling. But we won in 1967, 1969 and 1970 after I had left, the only difference being that the same participants were now in different age groups. And, of course, they were now used to winning.

During my final two years as head of house, I was well served by many. Boys like Kelvin Houston, Arthur Williams, Peter 'snowy' Lewis, Philip Preece and Charlie Morgan, Trevor Morgan's elder brother, spring immediately to mind. There are many others who just remain names and to whom I cannot put a face. They all did their best to make an unfashionable house fashionable and I cannot thank them enough.

The win on the 7th July 1965 was probably Durel's greatest achievement in maybe ten years and it did, I am sure, give many the confidence that in the right conditions there would be many more success stories.

CHAPTER EIGHT
HOUSE AND SCHOOL PLAYS

House plays were revived in December 1960 after a lapse of three years and it was in a play entitled 'The Happy Ending' that I made my acting debut. I had always enjoyed acting principally in church activities such as nativity plays. 'The Happy Ending' was about an old bed ridden spinster whose neeces were trying to get their hands on her property and money. I don't remember if there were any auditions but my friends from junior school days, Richard Evans and Glyn Taylor, both had parts and they approached me and asked if I would take the part of the aunt. It was the longest part and I was in bed most of the time. I readily agreed. We were a cast of six with four females and two males. As well as Richard and Glyn, Roger Beavil had the other female part and David Adams, Darwin Adams's son, was one of the two men. I forget who played the other male - it might well have been Bruce Maskell. Trevor Thomas, four or five years older than me, was the producer. Two things I do remember. Firstly, towards the end of the play I had to get out of bed and give David a great wack with my stick and my final lines which were:

'Poor old aunt ain't dead and gone ;
They ain't put her in her coffin.
They ain't dug her grave both wide and deep'
And at them now she's laughin' '

I used my gran's nightdress and she made me a mop-cap as well as teaching me my lines at home.

To my great surprise and delight we won the competition.

The plays were always performed in the gymnasium and when it came to the following year 1961 I was asked to obtain a selection from which the producer would choose. 'Cards on the Table' was in the words of the adjudicator 'not a very savoury subject for schoolboys'. It concerned a woman who was believed to be unfaithful and having an adulterous affair. The cast was small - David Adams was the imposter (and accuser), Bill John ma. the wronged husband and I his harassed wife. Roger Beavil had a minor part as the maid. Bill John lived three miles to the north and David Adams one mile to the south of me. On the Sunday before the actual production, Bill, David and I had a final rehearsal in the Adams's house in Talygarn. Everything went off smoothly and on the big day Bill and I had a ferocious argument on stage as we were meant to do. We were placed second.

Although I have a copy of the play 'St. Michael comes to

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'Shepherd's Bush' my memories of our 1962 production are vague. I had one of the leading male parts 'the Little Man' and Glyn Taylor played my wife. Bill John, complete with American accent, was the saint. In this play P.J.M. Thomas (known as 'Angus') who was to be a stalwart in other house plays, was the devil, complete with mask and tail. 'Angus' had already captivated audiences the previous March, when playing Fleta in 'Iolanthe' and singing the duet : 'In vain to us you plead. Don't go ! '. We were beaten into third place just eight points adrift of Leoline and SEys, the joint winners.

The problem with our play 'In the Mist' was that it was meant to be a serious play but we played it as a comedy. As soon as the curtain went up. Roger Beavil was supposed to stagger on stage as an injured man. As he did so the audience laughed and from then on it was down hill all the way. 'Angus' was known as a comic actor and found despair beyond him. I tried to hold the production together. I did not like producing and had great difficulty in casting the part of Ned. Barrie Johns turned it down and I was grateful that Olive Farnham stepped in at comparatively short notice. We were insufficiently rehearsed and there was a lot of prompting. It was not a surprise to be placed last and our mark was, under the circumstances, fairly reasonable.

The following year I chose a comedy 'The Man with a Cane' about a schoolboy who places a bet with a friend that he will not be caned for smoking. We received high marks for the scenery, my dad having worked meticulously to provide us with a lattice strip window of wood and cardboard - fittings from our shop. Overall, with some good acting from Roger Beavil, Ian Mitchell, Robert Myerscough, Trevor Clark and myself as the headmaster ('in his element' were the words of the adjudicator) we were placed second just behind SEys. As a consequence, Trevor was given the part of Esmeralda in the following year's school play 'The Servant of Two Masters'.

My final appearance in a house play was in December 1965. 'The Doubtful Misfortune of Li Sing' or 'A spot of Chinese bother' was produced by Paul Jones M.A., a year behind me, but who had not come to Cowbridge until the Remove. Paul was another good sportsman, particularly cricket, where he captained the first eleven. By the time of the production Paul had joined the boarding house and so

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was no longer in Durel House, all boarders being in Leoline. This did cause a little tension between us and Leoline but we managed to retain 'Podger', as Paul was nicknamed, until the Christmas. I played Li-Sing, a Chinaman who had fallen on hard times; 'Angus' played my wife and the three creditors were Ian Mitchell, young Mike Davis from Pontyclun and a chap named Wyn Jenkins, who had just a walk on part. The bandits were led by 'Podger' himself and his retinue were John Price mi., Trevor Clark and Glyn Taylor. I over-acted it is true ('a step in the right direction' was the comment). At this stage I must mention our backroom boys - Ryland Griffiths, Dick Smith iv., P.G. Jones ma. and Tony Morelli who all contributed to our success with setting up the stage, properties, make up, prompting and so on. Like so many other activities, it was a concerted effort by all.

'The ~~D~~oubtful Misfortune of Li-Sing' was adjudged the overall winner due to its liveliness, a wonderful Chinese prayer (recited by myself), good death agony throes by the bandits and overall competence and production.

So of the six house plays in which I was involved, we won two, were second twice, third once and last once, the most successful being in my first and in my final years.

'The Happy Ending' resulted in my being given a part in my first school play. Early in January 1961, Peter Cobb approached me with a view to my being cast as the Town Crier in the school's production of Dr. Knock. I readily agreed delighted that my talent, such as it was, had been recognised. The part was not a long one. I would appear for about ten minutes at the very beginning of the second act. Although the play had been translated from the French and was set in France I was instructed to play the role with a broad Welsh accent, which I duly did. I also liked 'dressing up' and was given a long braided gown, brightly decorated, breeches, stockings and a tricorne hat. The play ran for four nights in late April 1961 and once I had got over my initial nervousness I was fine.

I was somewhat taken back to be offered the part of the Queen of the Fairies in the following year's production of Iolanthe. My voice had broken and there could be no question of my attempting to sing falsetto or as a counter tenor. Also I had had no previous

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experience of singing in public. Not only was my voice rather nasal but I had a poor range - unable to sing the low notes properly which was coupled with a failure to reach much more than an octave above middle C. This was clearly evident in the very first aria when I had to invoke Iolanthe from the deep. I well remember Richard Steele, a boarder from the fourth form who was not in the operetta, mocking my efforts. My song in the second act 'Oh foolish fay' was also difficult and Peter Cobb had to say to his co-pianist, Tim Chilcott, down from Cambridge for the production: 'Tim, take it up a tone to E flat. Neil cannot hit the low notes.' 'Oh foolish fay' reminds me of something else. We were performing for five nights from the Tuesday to the Saturday, and on the first night, as instructed, I had sung only the first verse, the second referring to a Captain Shaw of the London firebrigade whom hardly anyone had ever heard of. On the Wednesday afternoon about three hours before the performance a fire broke out in the Town Hall. Thankfully there was little damage and the evening performance went ahead, as planned. As a consequence, the producers decided to reinstate the second verse of my song. Ever since seeing 'The Mikado' three years earlier I had been a Gilbert and Sullivan fan and had collected the records of all the operettas as well as the vocal scores, so I knew the words of the second verse of 'Oh foolish fay' off by heart. One member of our cast was outstanding. He was Neville Granville, our student English teacher, who had just graduated from Oxford University. He gave a superb rendering of Earl Tolloller and was a member of the same choir as Peter Cobb in which he sang first bass. I suppose he was really a high baritone (Tolloller is in fact a tenor) and his singing was exceptionally good. John Yardley was in his eighth and last school play in the non speaking/non singing role of the Lord Chancellor's attendant. At the very end of the operetta one of the fairies says these lines: 'We are all fairy duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, viscountesses and baronesses'. Peter Cobb then inserted these words (not in Gilbert's original text) to be spoken by Fleta (Philip 'Angus' Thomas):

'All except me !'

Even now, some forty years later, I can see John Yardley taking his cue from the Lord Chancellor, played by David Milsom, crossing the stage and offering his hand to 'Angus' much to the delight of the audience who cheered and roared with laughter.

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Peter Cobb married in 1963 and there was no school play that year. George Bernard Shaw's 'The Apple Cart' had been considered but there were, I think, casting and costume difficulties.

In 1964 we performed Richard Brinsley Sheridan's 'School for Scandal'. I was cast as Sir Oliver Surface, a rich uncle returning from India to see his nephews, Joseph and Charles. The play was in five acts and I did not appear until the latter half of the second act. Again I enjoyed playing the part - it was my style but some critics felt I did not put enough humour into it. Yet again I had one of the best costumes - a burgundy overcoat with burgundy breeches and a coloured waistcoat. The cast was fairly large and the female parts were especially well acted. A form mate, Richard Press, made his acting debut as Lady Sneerwell in his only school play. Stephen Powell, one of the fairies in Iolanthe and a stalwart of future plays, was Lady Teazle; 'Angus' Thomas Mrs. Candour and Christopher Ricketts, Maria. Of the male characters, John Sainsbury proved a testy Sir Peter Teazle, Robert 'Fred' Cudd a knavish Charles Surface and Christopher Gill the rogue villain, Joseph Surface. Chris was another stalwart of the school plays and appeared in six of them from 1957 to 1964, the year he left. He was at his most brilliant as Lady Macbeth in the 1960 production of the Scottish Play. It was a difficult part for a fourteen year old but he played it with great aplomb and was at his most convincing in the scene where Lady Macbeth goes insane. Academically, too, he was outstanding and it was no surprise when he won a place at St. John's College, Cambridge to study Classics and eventually gained a doctorate. ^{Chris was} A regular contributor to the Lion, the school's weekly magazine, and to the Bovian, his great rival was Gareth Jones viii. Both were a year above me and both were always first or second in their year. Gareth was in both the chorus of The Mikado and Iolanthe and in other school plays. He also won a place at St. John's, studied medicine and eventually returned to South Wales, having specialised in psychiatry.

I have not seen Chris Gill or Gareth Jones since I left. Chris was the guest speaker in the final Speech Day of the Grammar School in May 1973. I heard from him after our old boys reunion in May 2001 when he wrote to me from Exeter where he now lives.

My fourth and final school play was 'The Servant of Two Masters' by Carlo Goldini performed in March 1965. Here I was given the choice

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of two parts : either Doctor Lombardi or Brighella, an inn keeper. I chose the former, partly because it was slightly longer and also because I was in more scenes. The star of that play was, undoubtedly, Brian 'B.J.' Lewis of Llantwit Major, who played the waiter, Truffaldino. I had known B.J. for a number of years. We went on the school trip to Rome in 1963 and were both prefects from September 1964 to July 1965. His previous school play had been 'The School for Scandal' in which he played Crabtree. He was another whose friendship I greatly valued at the time but have not seen since leaving.

The School plays produced many who were to be stalwarts of future productions. Stephen Powell was an 'acid' Lady Bracknell the following year, modelled undoubtedly on Dame Edith Evans's film version of the part. Gerard Livingstone was another future star.

The cast of Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of being Earnest' and performed in 1966, my final year, was small. Of the three major male parts, only the Rev. Canon Chasuble would have been suitable. Unfortunately, from my point of view, the part was 'bagged' by Clive Jenkins and consequently my only interest was as one of the audience on the Thursday evening.

I was hopeless at making myself up and had to rely on somebody else to do it for me and apply the '5' and '9'. I still have the photograph of my being 'made up' by Peter Cobb when playing Sir Oliver Surface. Although I have a number of photographs, regrettably, there are none of the whole cast.

Of the seven plays performed, I did not appear in the first two 'The Mikado' (because I did not think I could sing) nor in Macbeth (because I was not asked) nor in the last. But the four from 1961 to 1965 were great fun to do and gave me enormous pleasure.

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Speech Day was nearly always held in May in the Town Hall. The Chairman of the Board of Governors, County Alderman Percy Smith J.P., would normally preside and he would be accompanied by a number of other governors, The Mayor of Cowbridge and on most occasions by the Vicar of Cowbridge. There were two vicars in my time ; the Rev. E.O.T. Lewis who died about 1963 and the Rev. Stanley Mogford. If County Alderman Smith was unavoidably absent, another eminent member of the Board, such as D.C. Watts, an old boy and former Mayor of the borough, would take the chair. Idwal Rees would report on the past year's achievements and he was usually well worth listening to. The masters, with their colourful hoods draped around their shoulders, would sit on the stage behind the head. Only Iolo Davies wore his mortar board which he immediately removed once the proceedings had commenced. I liked Speech Days and missed only one in May 1960. I probably enjoyed them because every year I received a prize. If you were in the 'A' stream, prizes were awarded for the first three places ; in the 'B' stream, only the first. And such criteria were based on your performance in the end of term exams of the previous summer, your prize being awarded at the Speech Day following. Towards the end of the Easter term prior to the May you would be called to the head's study and asked for the title of the book you had chosen. You were allotted a specific sum and if the cost of the book exceeded the amount, you would pay the balance. My first prize was entitled 'William Shakespeare - the Tragedies' and in the subsequent years I chose books on Gilbert and Sullivan. The tuck shop was situated on the corner of ~~Green~~ Street immediately opposite the Duke of Wellington and I recall on one occasion a day or two before prize giving, ~~I~~ was sitting in there when I walked Ian Mitchell to advise me that I was assured of my prize 'Gilbert and Sullivan - a record of productions' as he had seen it in the head's study. You would be awarded a 'dummy' prize if yours had not arrived ^{in time.} The cover of the book was embossed with the three cockerals, the school's motto 'Vigilis et Virtute' and the words 'Cowbridge Grammar School'. Inside was a label with your name, position in class and relevant year and was signed by Idwal Rees. Speech Days could be both humorous and serious. In 1962, when proposing the vote of thanks, the then mayor,

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Councillor Robert Thomas brought the house down when speaking about his chain of office - 'a rollicking speech' was how the Bovian described it.

We had a wide variety of speakers, most of whom were engaged in education. In May 1959, my first year, the guest was Sir Ben Bowen Thomas, then permanent Secretary of the Welsh Department in the Ministry of Education. In 1966, Trevor Jenkins, B.A. the Director of Education for Glamorgan, gave the address. His remarks, concerning the necessity for a comprehensive state system, were controversial, to say the least, and were the subject of a withering editorial in the following week's school magazine 'The Lion'. After speech day there was normally a sumptuous tea, prepared under the watchful eye of Mrs. Megan Rees, the head's wife, and taken in the day boys' dining hall in the new buildings.

My involvement with the harriers began in 1962/63 when I was in the fifth form. I had become quite friendly with Bob Whitaker, the captain the previous spring when he was one of the peers in 'Iolanthe'. He invited me to join them - not as a runner, naturally - but as an assistant to Mr. Iolo Davies, the master in charge, who did all the administrative work, time keeping and recording. And this is what I did for the next four years under three captains - Bob Whitaker, Dave McTeer (whose father was based at R.A.F. St. Athan and who eventually became a boarder) and finally Ian Mitchell. I travelled to all the away matches as well and twice went to Jesus College, Oxford, Mr. Davies's old college. During my four years we ran both a senior and junior team with on the odd occasion a middle group. Iolo Davies had taught me history in 2A and I got to know him better when he played Private Willis in Iolanthe.. He was the one master (and I think the only one) who called the boys by their Christian names from very early on. We got on well together, sometimes having to wait all alone and in each other's company until the runners returned. The marking was easy enough - you might have say eight in the team with the first four to count in the scoring. The team placings would be added together and the team with the lowest score was the winner. We had some very good runners in all sections. From the seniors names like Gabe Thomas, Edward Richards, D.A.P. Rees, Ian Percy, Stuart Dean, Kelvin Houston and Peter Bounds readily spring

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to mind. Juniors included Edward Rowlands, Robert Vaughan, Tony Rex, John Oldfield and John Thomas. Some like Gareth Vaughan and Stephen Powell started off as juniors but as they got older naturally joined the senior squad.

'The Lion' was the weekly school magazine produced by Mr. Davies with the boarders^{help}. The magazine, with contributions from various sources ran to about eight pages and I have often wondered how Mr. Davies, with all his other school commitments, managed to find time to do all the typing and arrange the magazine in such a way that all the space was taken up with no huge gaps.

The matches would take place normally on a Saturday morning and one of my tasks was to write a report for the magazine, run off every Sunday evening during term time. I would get home on a Saturday afternoon and after doing some weekend homework would sit down and draft the report. At 10 a.m. the following day, the Sunday, I would have to telephone it through to Mr. Davies, waiting patiently in the head's study, who would then copy down in long hand what I was saying. All the captains were first class runners and it was great to be involved and part of the set up.

In the Lent term of 1964 I spoke for Durel in the house debates, and in reporting on them in the March Bovian, the writer, probably Arthur Codling, commented: 'We should like to see Workman at our regular Debating Society meetings'. The Debating Society was a joint venture with the girls' High School and the committee members were drawn from both schools. One of the first debates I attended was in the summer term of 1964, out of doors on Old Hall lawn, when we discussed the motion: 'that ghosts are non-existent'. Although neither a proposer nor a seconder I did speak for a short time in ~~what~~ was my first school debate. By the winter of that year I was the joint secretary with Miss Jennifer Jones, a position I held for about a year.

We had on average three or four debates a term on a wide range of topics. Arthur Codling was our guide and mentor and his contributions often expressed the point of view of the older generation, he being some thirty five years our senior. Because it was a joint effort our numbers were quite high, sometimes as many as seventy.

When I ~~stepped~~ stepped down, Richard Steele took my place as secretary. I still continued to attend debates and when Clive Jenkins left at

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Easter 1966, I took over as Chairman for the last three months. Over the three years we had some lively debates and some good speakers - Ian McMillan, Brian Sharp and Roger Beavil were always combative; even though you might not always agree with them.

When I was in the sixth form two General Elections took place in the United Kingdom, the first in October 1964 when the Labour Party, under the leadership of Harold Wilson, was returned with a small overall majority after thirteen years in opposition; the other in March 1966. At that time Cowbridge was part of the Pontypridd parliamentary constituency which stretched out like a long sausage from Pontypridd in the north the twenty or so miles to Llantwit Major in the south. Politics were occasionally discussed but did seem to arouse much passion. A number of boys who lived in Cowbridge belonged to the Young Conservatives but these were more like social gatherings as opposed to political ones.

Roger Beavil, who I believe came from the Pendoylan or Peterston area, was a day younger than me and we knew each other fairly well being in the same class and through house activities. A committed socialist, Roger somehow managed to join the Cowbridge young Conservatives and was also a regular attender at Christian Union. He would often write articles for the Lion where he would be referred to by his initials: Christian REB; Political REB; Social REB. It was Roger's idea to hold a mock election and after approaching Idwal Rees, permission was given. Two were held, the first in February 1964 and the second in March 1965. We had the usual array of political parties - Conservative, Labour, Liberal, Welsh Nationalist and Communist who would outline their various policies.

REB seemed eccentric to some but he could be very good company. For part of this time he lodged with the Reverend Peter Williams and his family in the Limes. Peter Williams would have, I suppose, been in his early to mid thirties, married with three young sons. Peter Williams led the discussions at Christian Union but it was not until about 1964 that I joined the society although, as I have already said, I had been going to Hope Church in Pontyclun ever since I was a child. The meetings of the Christian Union were held

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between 1.00 p.m. and 1.45 p.m. on a Monday in Founders classroom which was next to the door leading to the head's study and garden. The subjects were many and varied. One Monday I was called upon to open one of the discussions which concerned Jesus's attitude to wealth, and to the wealthy. I did not have much idea how to approach the topic and went to my own minister in Pontyclun for advice. He produced a book with the relevant material in it which I copied and used during our meeting. A shortened version of what I had said appeared in the Lion the following week. I don't know what happened to REB although he did become student president of Regent Street Polytechnic where he studied after leaving Cowbridge. I did not, to my knowledge, ever have a 'nick name' although many boys did. Ffrangcon Owen, a few years younger than me and who in the nineteen seventies played on the wing for Bridgend Rugby Club, was a bit of a tearaway and known by all his mates as 'Sensy' ('Senseless' might have been more appropriate). Poor Mike Underwood from Pontyclun earned the name 'Steptoe' because of a slight facial resemblance to Steptoe senior ; 'Steptoe and Son' being a T.V. comedy at the time. Another youngster, Kevin Lewis, I think, was nicknamed 'Lurch Lewis'. Paul A. Thomas xi, who had come up to 2A from 2B with me and had parts in a number of school plays (he was Iolanthe) was, for obvious reasons, known as 'Paula'. David Belle, another boarder and one of my prefects, was inevitably 'Ding'.

During my time we had no recognised music department and no music society and I only recall four people, two masters and two pupils ever playing the piano - Peter Cobb and Peter Wilson from the staff and Tim Chilcott (until 1961) and David Ken Barrington from the boys. It was therefore a remarkable feat to perform the two Gilbert & Sullivan operettas when only a very few of us had any musical knowledge.

Between the ages of eight and ten I had learnt to play the piano and was quite conversant with the notes when it came to singing in Iolanthe but even this took some doing as the accompaniment was, more often than not, not the same as the 'singing line' i.e. the melody.

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I never had occasion to meet the school's former headmaster, Richard Williams although he did come with John Dale Owen to Sports Day in 1965. By now he was rather frail and in his eighties and I was left to ponder on how the ravages of time had changed him. It was hard to believe that thirty or so years previously he had wielded the power of an inspired autocrat to such an extent that even the masters were afraid of him. He did leave his successor a golden legacy which Idwal Rees did his best to preserve. For all its faults and imperfections, Cowbridge Grammar School was still one of the best. If I were asked what were the three things that gave me the greatest pleasure in my eight years, I would place them in this order :

- 1) Being Dux Scholae during 1965 to 1966
- 2) Winning the Sports Cup with Durel House in July 1965
- 3) Receiving my prizes every Speech Day from 1961 to 1964

My greatest sorrow is that I was unable to fulfil the promise I had shown academically **by** gaining a university degree.

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In June 1963 I tried and passed a further seven Ordinary levels to add to my two of the previous year. July 1963 was also memorable in that I went on my only school trip - to Rome. For me it was a disaster - the temperature was in the high nineties and the journey by sea and land was over ^{thirty} ~~thirty~~ ^{on} six hours. The train was cramped and stuffy as it meandered ^{on} its slow journey through France, Switzerland and northern Italy. It was also a time of great stress for me and the beginning of an illness which was to dog me for some years after. I still have the group photograph which shows me in dark glasses hiding at the back and looking like someone from the mafia.

In the sixth form I had decided to study modern languages with a view to becoming a teacher. French was a subject I enjoyed studying and Latin, which I found not too difficult thanks to Sid and Idwal's teaching, was an obvious back up. The third subject was more problematical. I did not want to study English as I did not think my O level marks - 55% in Language and 60% in Literature - were good enough. I wanted to study another language up to A level. Peter Wilson, the French master, had taken Russian at university and was knowledgeable enough to teach it to that level.

My dad was not too happy at my choice - it meant learning a completely new alphabet (cyrillic) and I would have to 'cram' my studies into three years, two to Ordinary level and one to A level. And where would I gain the practical experience of speaking the language? The previous October the world had been on the brink of nuclear war due to the Cuban missile crisis and the United Kingdom's relations with the Soviet Union were not great. It was going to be a tough task and dad was so concerned that he came down to the school for a meeting with Idwal Rees. Idwal thought it could be done and naturally was anxious to promote a new subject even though the time allowed was comparatively short compared with other subjects. It would have been easier to do Spanish or Italian if only to O level as both subjects had Latin as their root. Neither was on offer. Another difficulty was that the Welsh Board did not set Russian papers at either O or A level and I would have to sit the London Board exams where there was naturally greater competition. And so Russian it was - one master, one pupil. It was a mistake I was to bitterly regret. Peter Wilson was a decent man and a competent

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teacher but as I said in chapter five I never really got over the departure of Lloyd Davies in December 1961. It would have, on reflection, been far better to have taken English under Arthur Codling's guidance despite my reservations. My reports showed up my failings in French all too clearly : 'His essays tend to be stodgy ; he cannot distinguish between what is relevant and what is not.' And the advice given : ' I recommend he read more English'. This, coupled with the difficulties I was having in Russian, pulled me back and it was no real surprise when after two years study I obtained only a grade E in French which was insufficient to get me into any university. In addition, we had no modern languages laboratory or linguaphone tapes to help us.

Latin was a different proposition. For the first year we studied in Old Hall shut away in a 'cubby hole' in the far end of the building. In September 1964 we all moved into the old woodwork shed, Old Hall having been condemned as unfit for habitation. Here we studied Virgil's Aeneid, the works of Horace and Cicero under Iolo Davies's watchful eye. I have never given much thought to Mr. Davies's teaching methods. But they may well have been in the form of an Oxford tutorial, as Peter Cobb suggests in his book. Sid Harris assisted in the first year with the translation of English prose into Latin. Whatever method was adopted I did quite well and was given a Grade B at A level in the summer of 1965.

My poor performance in French meant that, in any event, I would spend a third year in the sixth form trying to improve my grade. I dropped Latin in this final year to concentrate on French and Russian and my French did improve to such an extent that I obtained a grade B and in Russian a grade E.

My summer exams of 1966 were marred by the sudden death of my gran. She was the one who for the past seven and a half years had had a meal ready for me every time I arrived home at 4 o'clock, as both my parents worked full time in the shop. She was the one who taught me my lines for the plays and gave me general advice. Being her only grandchild, she and I were very close. On Friday, 10th June 1966 she got up to look out of the bedroom window at the passing traffic, turned around, got back into bed, gave a sigh and passed away. No doctor could have done anything for her - her time had come. I was present when she died and that afternoon I had a Russian exam.

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Naturally I was distressed and in a state of shock and so it was with an aching heart that I went into the gymnasium that Friday afternoon.

My dad was keen for me to try to gain entrance to Oxford or Cambridge which in those days set their own entrance exams, as well as taking students with exceptionally good A levels. I wasn't opposed and I broached the subject with Peter Wilson, although not Idwal Rees. The French teacher was far from encouraging as he, an Oxford man himself, probably thought I was simply not up to it. In retrospect, he was proved absolutely right - my 'A' level results were not good enough and in neither French nor Latin did I achieve a Grade A or a distinction.

Durham, with its collegiate system, was my first choice and in December 1965 my dad and I travelled all the way to the city by train for my interview. We stayed overnight and the following day travelled further north to Newcastle upon Tyne, crossed over from Northumberland to Cumberland and came down via the Lake District to Lancaster where I had an interview in one of the newer universities. We also visited Exeter, Nottingham and Sussex as I was granted an interview by each. All the travelling proved futile as in the end I accepted a place at Swansea University College without an interview and without needing a pass in the Use of English.

At eighteen or nineteen you do not know what the future holds but my adult career has shown that mathematics and economics would have been a far more suitable choice of subjects. Mathematics was treated as a science in Cowbridge and economics an art so I do not know whether it would have been possible to choose such a combination. It seems that these days a more flexible approach is adopted and it is easier to combine the disciplines, something which was not so in the mid nineteen sixties.

My second year in the sixth form brought further challenges and I was chosen to be a school prefect, one of only three from my year. How I was selected I do not to this day know. Probably Idwal Rees made the decision, presumably after consultation

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with the members of the staff. There was certainly no election by the pupils and we did not have a school council which is so common today. There was no parent/teacher association and other than the head I don't think my father met any other teacher. Meetings between teachers, parents and pupils were a thing of the future.

John Sainsbury (known by his second name Albert) was the Head Prefect and Brian Sharp (known as 'Bopper') was his Deputy.

I knew both fairly well, John through the plays and Brian because he lived in nearby Tylagarw and travelled down with us. John was fairly laid back and Brian shouldered a lot of the responsibility. Brian was determined to enforce the rules of the school and many, particularly the juniors, were given either detention or the 'dap'. If you were going to 'dap' a person - which meant giving the victim two or three strokes on his backside - you had to get the head's permission. I would sometimes be in the prefects' study, down the long corridor in the main part of the building, when 'Bopper' chose to inflict this torture on one of the poor juniors and I was always glad that I was not on the receiving end, such were the ferocity of the strokes. During my two years as a prefect I used the dap only once giving two strokes to a lad named Geoff Marr. It was immediately clear to me that I had neither sufficient strength nor the 'hang' of how to do it properly or efficiently and so I resolved to issue either lines or detention instead. The whole idea of beating — smacked of the public school 'ethos' which ^{still} existed at the time.

By the time I reached the sixth form, morning assembly had been split into two groups, the juniors up to form four having theirs conducted by the deputy head, Bryn Edwards, in the day boys dining hall. Peter Wilson would be the pianist. Apart from Mondays when there was just a hymn and a few prayers, the prefects had to read the lesson chosen by the headmaster. We were about sixteen in all and so would read on a rota basis approximately once every fortnight (there being two assemblies). This was no great ordeal for me as I had been used to reading in my own church in Pontyclun. What was an ordeal was the day boys' lunch duty. Lunch was divided into two sessions - the masters and senior day boys would eat between 12.30 p.m. and 1 p.m. and the juniors from 1 p.m. to

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1.30 p.m. The latter, let loose after a morning of lessons, would often be noisy as well as lively, and in order to keep them quiet the prefect in charge would be given a bell which he would have to ring periodically to obtain silence. More often than not - certainly when I was in charge - peace was only restored by the serving staff, under the beady eye of Mrs. Whelan, banging the serving hatch and screaming at those who were misbehaving. It was hardly surprising then, that when in my third year and as Head Prefect drawing up the rota, I relieved myself of this duty.

I was not a disciplinarian in the strictest sense of the word, and many, particularly among the juniors, would often get the better of me. I suppose to them I was a 'soft touch'. Other duties which the prefects had to perform included the taking of classes if a master was either ill or unavailable and the supervision of detention which was held one night a week after school. The work was always shared out pretty evenly among the prefects. I think that there was probably a feeling amongst us all that we were an 'elite' (for want of a better word) who had qualities particularly suited to the role we had been given.

My appointment as Dux Scholae in September 1965 was for me a great pride and joy. But I was well served by sixteen others who did their best to ensure the efficient and smooth running of the school. I was fortunate to have as my deputy G.D. ('Slim') James of Stradling House (Leoline House until he ceased boarding). 'Slim' had gone through school with me and was a tower of strength at all times. The other prefects were :

Durel house : Ian Mitchell ; Paul Jones mi. (Leoline from January 1966)

Leoline house : Richard Steele ; David Belle; Nigel James;
Nicholas Otter ; Jeffrey Uppington and
Geoffrey Nicholas

Stradling house : Howell David ; Richard Llewellyn Thomas and
Clive Jenkins (to April 1966)

Seys House : Michael Clay; Michael James ; Philip Thomas
and John Prichard

Most of us had friends who had come up through school with us but were not part of the 'elite'. Sometimes they would come into the

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prefects' study uninvited and often it fell on me, as head boy, to have to ask them to leave - a task which sometimes I found very difficult. I have often regretted that we never had a photograph of all of us taken together although apart from Clive Jenkins who left at Easter 1966, we are all on the June 1966 photograph, eight of us on each side of the masters.

I never learnt the reasons for my appointment as head boy but Idwal Rees's views were obviously very influential. Also I knew most of the masters and had been reasonably successful academically. And I think that in the two terms previously, after Bruce Maskell left, I had shown leadership qualities as head of Durel. The winning of the sports cup in the July previous was an added bonus.

At the end of the summer term in 1966 both Bryn Edwards and Peter Cobb left. 'Gateau' was retiring after being a teacher at the school for forty one years and two terms. 'Gateau's' length of service was almost as long, if not longer, than that of John Dale Owen. Peter Cobb was intending to go into the ministry and was returning to Cambridge to study Theology. During the early part of July we had made a collection among the pupils and on the Saturday prior to the presentations 'Slim' and I met in Cardiff to choose the gifts. For 'Gateau' we bought a silver plated tray and for Peter Cobb six sherry glasses. We had neither sufficient time nor money to get them engraved so I typed two postcards with their names on in recognition ^{of the service} each had made to the school. The last task I performed as Dux ^{of} Scolae was to make the presentation to 'Gateau' at Final Assembly on Wednesday, 13th July 1966. I cannot remember exactly what I said but I know I referred to 'Gateau's' contribution to the life of the school over such a long period. 'Slim' made the presentation to Peter Cobb.

There were many out of school activities with which I was not really associated - rugby, cricket, tennis and chess for example - but nonetheless, as a true Bovian and 100% for the school, I always wanted all of our school teams to do well and to win. It was in the sixth form that I learnt the basics of contract bridge ^{but} and there was no bridge club. All our societies had as their president one of the teachers and it was good to have their involvement.

CHAPTER TEN

SIXTH FORM AND PREFECTSHIP

I had little to do with the groundsmen, domestic and manual staff although I remember the head gardener, Harold Penny and Tom Carter, the caretaker in my early years. Danny Powell, one of the cleaners, was always bright and cheerful as he went about his daily chores. In my final two years, Bernard Cook, who would, I suppose, have been three or four years older than me was one of the caretakers and, more often than not, he would come to me, in my capacity as a prefect, to ask if I would ensure that the boys took off their muddy rugby boots or running shoes before going into the changing rooms to shower and dress.

Life in the sixth form was more relaxed ; there were more free periods and less supervision. It would have been quite easy for any one of us to leave the school unnoticed and go either to Cardiff or Bridgend. By now, some like my friend Phil Thomas had passed their driving test and if they brought their cars to school they had much more freedom of manoeuvre.

In mid December the sixth form Christmas dance with the High School was held and it was custom and past practice for the head boy and head girl to have the first dance. Girls weren't anathema to me but dancing was and as a passtime it held no interest for me. Somehow, I managed to miss the event - an interview at Durham University proving a more pressing engagement together with a ~~performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Patience'~~ performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Patience' by the University Operatic Society. It was another instance of a convenient absence. I don't remember much about my final weeks. My gran had died suddenly and I had to complete my A levels. There were a number of house activities notably sports day and cricket matches in which I was involved. I do not even remember whether I bade farewell to Idwal Rees or to any of the masters. I was sad at leaving and it had certainly been a very eventful eight years. I had decided to take a year out, in any case, and continue to study Russian as I did not think I had gained a sufficiently high grade. I did, in the end, improve but only marginally from Grade E to Grade D. When I left on Wednesday, 13th July 1966, little did I know what the future held and how my further education would be so dramatically curtailed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FINAL THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

As I look back some thirty five years after leaving I realise how lucky and privileged I was to be a pupil at Cowbridge Grammar School and to have followed in a line of Dux Scholae that stretched back to Evan Seys. I was one of the fortunate ones - I had managed to pass an examination at eleven years of age, one which led me into an entirely different world and one which many of my friends and contemporaries never experienced.

Illness cut short my further education and in October 1967 I was forced to leave Swansea University College. Thus, I never gained the degree I had set my heart on ever since that Remembrance Day service in November 1958. Fortunately, I have had many other interests and have been fairly successful in my professional life. What chances have come my way I have eagerly grasped. And I have had wonderful support from both my parents and from my friends.

On Friday, 25th May 2001 a re-union of the Old Boys was held at The Bear Hotel in Cowbridge, the first since Idwal Rees's Memorial Service in November 1991. It was at my suggestion that the re-union was held and I met many whom I had not ~~seen~~ for over thirty years, *some* not since leaving school. The affection and thanks I received that evening is something I shall always treasure. During the weeks that led up to the function, I received many letters and telephone calls. One such call one evening went thus : 'Hello, Neil. I was one of your fairies in Iolanthe and I'd like to come to the do.' It was from Paul Nicholas, a boarder, three years younger than me. It was not surprising that I did not recognise him when we met - Paul was now a tall, strapping man of 51 with a grey beard !

Cowbridge Grammar School moulded me for the rest of my life. What made it so happy was that after the first year I more or less did what I wanted. I dropped the subjects such as woodwork and physical education which either I did not like or was not competent to do. For me there was an escape into what I enjoyed doing most - school and secretarial work coupled with such things as house plays, debates and harrying. For those boys who hated such things as French and Latin and for whom there was no escape life must have been particularly hard.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FINAL THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

I was also lucky that in Idwal Rees I had a headmaster whom I not only respected but liked. If I had had any problem I would have had no hesitation in going to him for advice.

I suppose it is a sense of 'hiraeth' - longing for something which has gone and which will never return - which has led me to write this short journal. As I read through my old Bovians, old Lions and other school memorabilia, I am conscious of how many people, particularly those from Durel, whom I have not mentioned, but to whom I am greatly indebted for their friendship and kindness.

For those who read these few chapters I hope it brings back memories about what life was like at one of the finest Grammar Schools in the Principality and of what has been lost since its demise.

For me they are memories of a time when life moved at a much slower pace and ^{where} ~~there~~ was, quite frankly, a great academic divide. A comprehensive state system of education may or may not be a good thing but I am a firm believer in letting the brightest lights shine ^{what ever the system}. And, as a Latin scholar, I, naturally, am dismayed at its decline and to know that it is no longer widely taught ~~within~~ the state system.

I simply do not know how I would have reacted if I had failed the eleven plus but I have many friends who did not go to a grammar school but I always recognise that they have talents in certain fields which I do not and never will possess.

We live in an age where tradition and old values are no longer accepted as 'politically correct'. The grammar school at Cowbridge belonged to that tradition and was, in the end, doomed to perish. When the crunch came in July 1973 it had insufficient resources and no independent billionaire backers to enable it to go independent and to opt out of the state system. Yet for over three hundred years it produced many fine scholars, many of whom went to either Oxford or Cambridge universities. As a foundation, it was just fifty years younger than the great public schools at Harrow, Rugby and Westminster. It was over two hundred years older than the public schools at Lancing, Epsom and Marlborough.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FINAL THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

For all its faults and failings, 'The College' was a great school. Its masters and mistresses gave me an opportunity to make something of my life and for that I shall be grateful until I am finally laid to rest.

'FLOREAT SCHOLA BOVIENSIS ! O MEMORIA BEATA ! '

Cambridge Grammar School

Report of E. N. Workman Yuras Term 1958

FORM II B

No. IN FORM 27

PLACE IN FORM 1

2,000 D.P.S.4501. 14/6/55. D.S. & S. (a2)

SUBJECT	No. in Class	Average Age	Place in Term's Work	Place in Exam.	% Marks in Exam	REMARKS
SCRIPTURE						
ENGLISH						
HISTORY	27		1	1	115/150	Excellent. <i>ASD</i>
GEOGRAPHY	27		7	1	83	Very good. <i>ASD</i>
GREEK						
LATIN	21					
FRENCH	27			5	70	A steady worker. <i>ASD</i>
WELSH	27		1	2	88	Excellent work. <i>ASD</i>
ARITHMETIC	27		1	4	81	Very good. <i>ASD</i>
ALGEBRA	27		3	2	91	Excellent work. <i>M.V.</i>
GEOMETRY						
CHEMISTRY	27		16	5	70	U.S.T. ... <i>ASD</i>
PHYSICS			9	10	70	... <i>ASD</i>
DRAWING						
WOODWORK			27	-	-	Very little ability here, I'm afraid. <i>ASD</i>
MUSIC						
SPECIAL SUBJECTS						

CONDUCT AND GENERAL REPORT :-

Very good work done!

ASD

Next TERM begins 9 a.m.

Tuesday 6th January

Boarders return previous afternoon.

J. I. REES, M.A.,
Headmaster.

THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
COWBRIDGE

SPEECH DAY

Wednesday, 6th May, 1959
at the Town Hall, Cowbridge
2.15 p.m.

Chairman : COUNTY ALDERMAN P. J. SMITH, M.B.E., J.P., D.L.

HEADMASTER'S REPORT

DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES
AND ADDRESS

BY

SIR BEN BOWEN THOMAS,

Permanent Secretary, Welsh Department,
Ministry of Education

VOTES OF THANKS

"GOD SAVE THE QUEEN"

D. BROWN AND SONS, LTD., PRINTERS, COWBRIDGE, GLAM.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DR. PARPALAID	.....	MICHAEL MORGAN
MME. PARPALAID	.....	PAUL THOMAS
DR. KNOCK	.....	DAVID MILSOM
JOHN (the Chauffeur)	.....	LYN RICHARDS
TOWN CRIER	.....	NEIL WORKMAN
M. BERNARD (a Schoolmaster)	.....	TIMOTHY CHILCOTT
M. MOUSQUET (a Chemist)	.....	DEREK DAVIES
FARMER'S WIFE	.....	ROGER BEAVIL
MME. PONS	.....	CHRISTOPHER GILL
MARIETTE	.....	KEITH VOSPER
FIRST YOKEL	.....	MAXWELL SCOTT-COOK
SECOND YOKEL	.....	JOHN YARDLEY
SCIPIO (Assistant to Dr. Knock)	.....	ROGER FLUCK
MME REMY (a Landlady)	.....	JOHN ISAACS
NURSE	.....	ROBERT LEWIS

SCENARIO

- Act 1 On the road to St. Maurice.
Act 2 Dr. Knock's Consulting-room.
Act 3 The Lounge of "The Red Dragon", a hotel rapidly becoming a hospital.

House Notes

Durel

Housemaster : Mr. A. J. Trotman. *House Captain* : M. P. D. Adams
Secretary : E. N. Workman

This year has been one of moderate success for Durel.

In the House Play Competition, it was hoped that Durel could retain the position it had gained last year. This hope was not fulfilled and we had to be content with second place. The play performed was "Cards on the Table" by Vernon Sylvaire. Adams, Beavil, John ma., and Workman took part.

In the House matches, the Seniors' rigger team, ably captained by D. Lewis, lost to both Leoline and Stradling ; to the latter by only three points. Fortunately we beat Seys by five points to nil. Luckily the Junior team, under the leadership of their captain Beard, fared better, winning all three matches. In the final analysis, Durel took second place, which is a somewhat better performance than in recent years.

The Steeplechase was run on 11th April this year. The first Durel man home was "Spike" Davies x who came a creditable first. He deserves the congratulations of the whole House. In spite of his efforts, and those of the other Durel runners, we could only manage to achieve third position. In the Junior Steeplechase Durel could again only manage to gain third position.

After the success of the Junior rigger team, it seemed likely that Durel would again show its prowess at cricket. This was not to be and the Juniors have lost all three matches this term. At the time of writing, the Seniors have played one cricket match against Leoline. This was lost by a very narrow margin of three runs. Let us hope that Durel will gain some house points from the remaining two matches.

We hope to regain some of our lost glory on Sports day, which is yet to come !

Finally I should like to stress the fact that, as a whole, Durel is showing signs of improvement, and it is hoped that, in the course of the next school year, Durel will continue to improve and finally lift herself from the position in the Cock House which she has occupied for the past ten years.

E.N.W. (*Rem.A*)







Cowbridge
Grammar School

'A CERTAINE SCHOOLE'

COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE FINAL YEARS SEPTEMBER 1966 TO JULY 1973

'A CERTAINE SCHOOLE'

COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE FINAL YEARS SEPTEMBER 1966 TO JULY 1973

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COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

1608 - 1973

These five chapters are an attempt to reflect on the final seven years of the Grammar School's existence and how it still tried to live up to the values set in the previous three hundred and fifty eight years in the knowledge that it was to close sooner or later.

It is ironic that nearly forty years after the first moves towards a comprehensive state system of education there still exist in parts of England, at least, many fine Grammar Schools. A recent poll regarding Ripon Grammar School in North Yorkshire saw over 60% voting to retain the present set up.

Government spokesmen are not averse to referring to 'bog standard comprehensive schools' and in some cases there is even talk of restoring former grammar schools.

That the Grammar School at Cowbridge has been allowed to fall into a state of decay and of disrepair shows how little we cherish the values of our predecessors.

I hope that these few chapters will remind readers of life in the final few years at one of the finest grammar schools in Wales and of what has been lost since its closure.

Neil Workman

Cowbridge

July 2001

'A CERTAINE SCHOOLE'

COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE FINAL YEARS SEPTEMBER 1966 TO JULY 1973

CHAPTER ONE

The move towards a comprehensive state system of secondary education had its roots in the early nineteen sixties and the Labour government's education circular in 1965 provided for exactly this. The then Secretary of State for Education, Anthony Crosland, promised to close every Grammar school in the country and the language in which his statement was couched was certainly very colourful. Cowbridge Grammar School was no exception and these few chapters cover the final seven years of the Grammar School's existence and will, perhaps, provide a fitting conclusion to Mr. Iolo Davies's book 'A Certain Schoole' which was published in 1967. The material is taken both from the school's magazine 'The Bovian', the final and two hundred and fortieth edition of which was published in July 1974 (by which time the school had a non selective intake in the first form) and from the Rev. Peter Cobb's book 'At Cowbridge Grammar School 1949 to 1966'.

As Peter Cobb says the Grammar school with its long history, a distinguished benefactor in Sir Leoline Jenkins, its association with Jesus College, Oxford and its emphasis on the Classics - Latin and Greek - had all the features of a minor public school. But control had passed out of Jesus College's hands as far back as 1919 and after a so called 'transitionally assisted' period of thirty years, in the Autumn of 1949 the Glamorgan County Council assumed full control with Jesus College having a token representation on the Board of Governors. The boarding element was kept, restricted to fifty pupils, but even this was anathema to many County Councillors. When the crunch came in 1972/1973 the Grammar School was forced to adopt the new system because it simply did not have the money or any billionaire backers to go completely independent and 'opt out' of the state system.

Glamorgan County Council was Labour controlled and had been since the nineteen twenties. The Butler Education Act of 1944 provided for all children to have a Grammar school education if they passed a test at the age of eleven in English, arithmetic, spelling and mental arithmetic - the eleven plus examination.. As a consequence many working class children, the sons and daughters of miners, railwaymen, factory workers and so on were given opportunities that their parents never had.

Thus the top twenty per cent were 'creamed off' whilst the remaining eighty per cent went either to secondary modern or ^{to} technical schools. Those on the left felt that this was extremely unfair (and they may have had a point). They were joined by many of the centre and of the right and also the middle classes who could not, and would not, accept that their Billy or Jenny, who had not won places at the Grammar school, were not as good academically as working class Tommy or Mary down the road, who had. So, although universal comprehensive education was the policy of the Labour Party, it had many supporters covering the whole political spectrum.

The achievements of Cowbridge Grammar School in these final seven years were as great as those of the previous three hundred and fifty eight.

But the links with the past were slowly and gradually being broken.

CHAPTER TWO

In the early nineteen sixties only four masters remained from the time of Richard Williams's headmastership (1919 to 1938) John Dale Owen, acting headmaster from 1941 to 1945 and senior Chemistry master retired in July 1962. Bryn Edwards (French and English) did likewise in July 1966 - both he and J.D.Owen each having given over forty years of service to the school. Tudor Hughes (Welsh) who had suffered serious health problems in the early and mid nineteen sixties, retired at the end of the Summer term in 1968 and Arthur Codling (English) who had joined the staff at the beginning of the Michaelmas term in 1936, took early retirement at the end of the Summer term in 1972. Each succeeded the other as senior master and hence became deputy head.

Idwal Rees, headmaster from September 1938, retired at the age of sixty in July 1971. To many he was an austere distant figure, always immaculately attired in a grey suit, his black M.A. gown flowing behind him as he walked. To others he was a true friend, more so if you ^znever crossed him. Respected rather than loved would probably be his epitaph. Yet those who heard him speak, particularly at Remembrance Day services or on Speech Day, were often in awe of his presence so well did he conduct himself. It is said that many of the boarders found him difficult - probably because he took his 'in loco parentis' duties very seriously.

Idwal Rees's last few years could not have been happy or easy ones. The move towards comprehensive education was in progress and would, sooner or later, happen. More distressing must have been the road accident at Culverhouse Cross near Cardiff in March 1969 which claimed the lives of five teenagers from the lower sixth. Apart from the shock, the visits to grieving parents, the attendance at the funerals, must have been the realisation - always lurking in the background - that no headmaster, however careful or however gifted, can know the exact whereabouts of all his pupils (and in Cowbridge there were over four hundred and fifty of them) at any one particular moment in time. It would probably be fair to say that the incident broke him and he was never the same man again after that Friday - the blackest in the school's three hundred and sixty five year history.

For the last twenty years of his life, Idwal Rees lived in contented retirement in Sketty, Swansea, occasionally visiting the

school but retaining his interest through membership of the committee of the Old Boys Association. His last five years were marred by the onset of alzheimer's disease and in the late summer of 1991 he passed away aged eighty one. His memorial service was held in the Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge on the 30th November of that year.

After Idwal Rees's retirement, Arthur Codling took over as acting headmaster from September to November 1971 when Iolo Davies, senior Classics master since September 1947 and Meyricke scholar at Jesus College Oxford was given the headmastership of the Grammar school for the last eighteen months of its life.

Mr. Davies's appointment was generally welcomed so great was his love of the school and its pupils. Not only were his academic qualifications (a first in Mods, and a second in Greats) outstanding but he was steeped in the school's traditions and took pride in its long history. He was the senior housemaster of Leoline, senior boarding master and ever since September 1950 had, with the help of generations of boarders, produced the school's weekly magazine 'The Lion' of which he was the editor. He was master in charge of the harriers, master in charge of the campanologists (change bell ringers) and active in many of the other school societies. The lighting effects for every school play were his responsibility and in March 1962 he himself took the part of Private Willis in the school's production of Iolanthe. His camping trips to Llangorse Lake, Brecon in the summer holidays drew many boys along (not all of them boarders) and all speak with great affection of those times. He was the life and soul of many school trips whether abroad or to Jesus College Oxford and his yearly excursions with 11a to the Roman fortress at Caerleon gave all great pleasure if only because it meant a pleasant summer afternoon's trip away from school.

Iolo Davies may be regarded as the nineteenth and last headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School.

Throughout the eighteen months of his headmastership, Iolo Davies was engaged in a long battle with the Glamorgan Education Authority over its plans for the school and he was the prime force behind the opposition to the comprehensive idea in Cowbridge.

Yet the County Council, dominated by County Aldermen who, to quote Peter Cobb again, were 'near illiterate when it came to proposing things such as votes of thanks on Speech Day' was resolute in its determination to close the Grammar School, despite the petitions and pleas from various sources. The final decision was given to Mr. Davies on the morning of Speech Day in May 1973.

To quote from 'The Bovian' (Number 239 July 1973) :

Mr. Iolo Davies began (his report) in a rather halting and emotional manner, obviously affected greatly by the failure of his petition, as it was that very morning that the decision had been communicated to him'.

It was left to that year's guest speaker, Dr. Christopher Gill, himself a distinguished scholar and graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge and a boarder at the school in the late nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties, to pick up the pieces as best he could and to speak to a gathering, most of whom were as downhearted and as disappointed as Mr. Davies.

CHAPTER THREE

During these final years as many as twenty different subjects were being taught ranging from Art right through the whole gamut to Zoology, most of them to Advanced level - a far cry from the early days of Idwal Rees when about six subjects were the maximum. After Peter Cobb left in July 1966, Peter Wilson (French and Modern Languages) was the only member of staff who could play the piano. The Head realised that if he wanted Music to be part of the school curriculum, he would have to appoint a specialist to head the Music department and in September 1966 Peter Rees joined the staff and a new subject was introduced. A school choir was formed and works such as Haydn's 'Creation' and Faure's 'Requiem' were performed. In April 1973 excerpts from Rossini's 'The Barber of Seville' replaced that year's school play.

There was a fairly large turnover of staff during this period, with some masters and mistresses staying a relatively short time. As previously stated, Tudor Hughes, Arthur Codling and Idwal Rees all retired. They were joined by Morris Vaughan (Chemistry and Mathematics from 1943 to 1967) and Iolo Davies - although Mr. Davies took further teaching appointments in England. These five gentlemen, all distinguished in their own particular subject, had given one hundred and fifty eight years of service to the school and were part of a nucleus of staff, some of whom had been appointed by Richard Williams and thus spent the whole of their working lives at Cowbridge.

One member of staff died in harness. Miss Mary Davies, full time art mistress since the mid nineteen sixties and part time for many years before that, passed away in January 1970 after a long illness. A full tribute to Miss Davies will be found in Peter Cobb's book 'At Cowbridge Grammar School 1949 to 1966'. Sufficient to say she was a bubbly and enthusiastic person who delighted in her work and whose artistic endeavour was always on show at the various school play productions.

Only one former pupil joined the staff. Colin Lewis returned to the school in September 1971 and took over as head of the Classics department on Mr. Iolo Davies's appointment as headmaster. Colin Lewis and Adrian Trotman (Physics) were the only two Old Bovians on the staff.

Academic ^hachievements were on a par with those of earlier years.

Sixteen pupils received places at Oxford University and five at Cambridge University, some by way of scholarship or exhibition. Many more went to the provincial universities in England and Wales. Many and varied were the subjects they studied and many and varied were the professions they subsequently entered - medicine, law, accountancy, computing, lectureships, the media, broadcasting and so on.

The Old Boys Association continued to meet periodically and in each Bovian there was a section headed 'Old Boys Notes'. The most memorable reunion was held on 9th July 1971 when a presentation was made to Idwal Rees on his retirement. At this function, a film of life at the school made in 1961 by Tim Chilcott and entitled 'The College' was shown.

Rugby, cricket and harrying continued to flourish. Other sports such as tennis, badminton and basketball depended on the amount of interest and enthusiasm shown by the participants. It is worth noting the other non sporting out of school activities :

- The Debating/ Discussion Society
- The Chess Society
- The Society of Change Ringers
- The Geographical Society
- The Photographic Society
- The Music Society
- The Natural History Society
- The Scientific Society
- The Literary Society
- The Christian Union
- The Astronomical Society
- The Motor Club
- The Fictional Library

Some were ever present but others fell by the wayside and eventually folded when the initial enthusiasm had waned. The House system still provided things such as House plays in which any aspiring actor could show off his talent and, as a result, might be given a part in the School play.

Sports Day was always exciting with the winning house receiving the sports cup and the victor ludorum his medals. But even here signs of what was to come were in evidence.

The 1972 Sports Day was poorly attended with almost the whole of the school absent. Some houses even refused to take part in certain events which, if they had, might have resulted in a different final outcome and a different winning house. In 1973 the only record is of a junior sports day for the four age groups from Under fifteen to Under twelve.

The School play, produced by Arthur Codling, took place either in March or April and, as usual, the standard of acting was very high. Notable productions included 'Romeo and Juliet' (1967) and 'Fowl', an adaptation by Mr. Iolo Davies of Aristophanes' 'The Birds' (1972).

For three years in the early nineteen seventies there was the Past XV v. Present XV Rugby match and dinner.

The annual Speech Day, always held in late April or early May, was the only day of the year (except on special occasions) when the staff wore full academic dress. Guest speakers included eminent persons, such as Goronwy H. Daniel, then permanent Under Secretary at the Welsh Office (1969) and Carwyn James, himself a former teacher at Llandovery College and coach to the 1971 British Lions Rugby team (1972).

Remembrance Day services continued to be held in mid November at the Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge and in the late nineteen sixties a carol service, organised by Peter Rees, also took place at Christmas time, again at the Holy Cross Church.

A number of overseas trips were arranged - Spain, Italy and Austria being among the countries visited. In 1971 the Music Society went on a very successful outing to the Salzburg Music Festival.

The last edition of The Bovian was produced in July 1974 (No. 240) but even this was subject to controversy. The South Glamorgan County Council refused to release monies from the Thomas Mansell Franklin Trust and it was only thanks to the efforts of Colin Lewis, Mrs. Jean Bland, the school secretary, and Glyn Williams, Secretary of the Old Boys Association, that enough finance was scraped together to allow publication. This last edition made it quite clear that a new set of values was being introduced. Things, such as Speech Day, Sports Day and Final Assembly, cherished by Grammarians over the years, were to be replaced. 'The Lion' had already disappeared, the reason being that those involved in its

production were protegés of Mr. Iolo Davies and were likely to be critical of the new system. In that final Bovian there was an article from Idwal Rees. He wrote that, in his view, the most fruitful period of his headmastership was the decade immediately after the Second World War when the school had many achievements both academically and on the sports field.

Idwal Rees's thirty three years as headmaster were the third longest in the school's long history ; only the Rev. Daniel Durel and the Rev. Dr. William Williams had more years of service in the eighteenthth and nineteenth centuries when there were perhaps a score or so of pupils.

Idwal Rees was unique in that of the nineteen headmasters he was the sole Cambridge graduate ; all the others having been at Oxford.

CHAPTER FOUR

What made Cowbridge Grammar School continue to 'tick' in these final years? The writer supposes that it was because it had a long history of academic achievement and had, certainly since the Second World War, produced some fine sportsmen - particularly rugby union players. It still valued its traditions, its historic links with the landed gentry of the late Elizabethan/early Jacobean era and its ties with Jesus College Oxford. The Classics were still important but since Richard Williams's time the other humanities and science had played an ever increasing role in a changing world.

The boarding element, naturally, added to its distinction but the boarders were never seen by the day boys as 'them against us'. The day boys were always aware that Leoline House might do marginally better than the other three houses; Durel, Seys and Stradling since Leoline was comprised of the boarders and day boys from the Cowbridge area itself. They were always on hand and could more easily get together after official school hours to train for house competitions, sporting or otherwise. It was always pleasing if the other houses could beat Leoline who were, more often than not, 'Cock House' champions. The House system was valuable in that it gave one group of scholars an opportunity to compete with another group on more or less equal terms. Many friendships were made between older and younger scholars simply because they had these same objectives.

This camaraderie was carried over into all sorts of other activities and there was a definite feeling of 'we are all in this together'. The boarders especially contributed to this as they were always on hand. When scenery needed to be shifted for the school play or chairs taken down to the Town Hall for Speech Day they were invariably called upon to undertake the task. When boarding ceased in 1972 something of the school's unique character was inevitably lost.

The boys themselves continued to come from a variety of backgrounds and were sons of many different occupations. Yet this did not seem to matter; everybody mixed with everybody else and any 'cliquishness' would be more as a result of a shared interest rather than one's social status or standing. In earlier years there was a tendency to treat the 'A' stream as academically more important than the 'B' stream and not many pupils moved between streams. But by 1965 this had disappeared

and the pupils were split into 'A' and 'B' streams in their very first term by reason of their surname - A to L being 'A' and M to Z being 'B'

Thus the school continued to flourish as it had done in the previous three hundred and fifty eight. It continued to adapt to the changing circumstances of the time in the knowledge that its destiny was being fashioned by those who scorned its history, its traditions, its values - primarily because they had had no part in them.

To quote Peter Cobb again : 'The dreaded end had long been predetermined'.

And on Thursday, 19th July 1973 Cowbridge (B) Grammar School 1887 passed into history.

CHAPTER FIVE

The writer left Cowbridge Grammar School in July 1966.

He readily acknowledges that, had he not been a good all rounder in the academic subjects, life at Cowbridge Grammar School could have been most miserable.

He was no sportsman, had no affection for practical subjects such as art. He was useless at woodwork, parting on amicable terms with Reg Whittle, the woodwork master, at the end of the Christmas term of his second year (1959) - the 'unbelievably incompetent' remark on his end of term report being no less than a true statement of fact.

For those pupils who found subjects such as French and Latin hard and for whom there was no escape, life must have been very difficult.

As Head of Durel House, being involved in school and house plays, participating in school debates and acting as recorder for the harriers' teams - these were his enjoyment and great fun to do. A meeting with Idwal Rees within the first half an hour of his very first day, 9th September 1958, when the 11b form master, Honddu Davies, also new, needed some information or some advice, was the foundation of a relationship based on respect for a man who had all the qualities required of a headmaster. One, which, sad to say, was not renewed after the writer left.

His appointment as Dux Scholae in 1965/1966 was probably as a result of that meeting seven years earlier.

For the writer, whose academic career was cut short at twenty years of age due to illness, Cowbridge Grammar School was the place which moulded him for the rest of his life. Everything he learnt came from the teaching of people like Arthur Codling, Iolo Davies, Peter Cobb, Peter Wilson and Adrian Trotman. To them and all the other teachers who spent so much time and effort in school and in out of school activities (often with no thought for their own privacy), he will be for ever grateful.

Cowbridge Grammar School holds for him so many wonderful, happy memories - now part of an age long disappeared - ones which he will cherish until he is finally laid to rest.

ADDENDUM

THE COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION

Although the GRammar School ceased to exist in July 1973, the Old Boys Association has continued to meet periodically since then. The last occasion was on Friday, 25th May 2001 when a hundred and twenty former pupils and masters met at the BEar Hotel, Cowbridge for a reunion. Presentations were made to Colin Lewis, Head of the LOwer Comprehensive School in Cowbridge, and to David Lloyd, who commenced teaching English in the GRammar School in September 1964, both of whom were retiring. Mr. Iolo Davies travelled from his home in Cheltenham and the enormous respect and affection for him which took place before and after he spoke will long be remembered by those present that evening.

In 2003 THE Old Boys Association will celebrate its centenary and a series of events is planned to commemorate this.

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