RECOLLECTIONS OF HUYTON HILL SCHOOLDAYS

A WORLD APART

To the memory of H. D. B. and G. V. B.

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Getting Motivated

I have had the best intentions of writing some recollections of school life at Huyton Hill for a number of years. This was because there was no sign of anyone else doing so. I felt that if I didn't attempt this, however inadequately, there would be no record of a unique school which represented a now vanished piece of social history.

What finally converted those intentions into action was the news that the house is to be sold. It is, therefore, now likely that my holiday visits to the flats in Huyton Hill (created after the school closed) will be coming to an end; and the memories revived by that continuing association could then disappear completely.

So the motivation is not so much that we all had a wonderful life at the school in harmony with the scenery, but rather to leave some trace of the life and times of the school to posterity.

Where To Start?

I was at the school from 1957 to 1962, aged 8 to 13. A five year stretch was about average for Prep. School.

Then as now, the most captivating feature of the place was the beauty of the location. The magic of the setting has remained with me all my life.

In 1957, Lake Windermere was a quieter place; and presumably even more so in the 1890s when the house was built by William (later Sir William) Crossley. He was one of the Crossley Brothers who gave their name to the Crossley Car. Their works was in Manchester and they also made the famous trucks, buses and tanks.

I have heard it said that the house was fashioned on Bramhall Hall, in Cheshire. This seems perfectly possible since Bramhall is near Manchester and William Crossley could well have been familiar with that other Tudor style manor.

There is a recently published book about Crossley Motors but I am told it contains only passing references to the house. You will also find a memorial plaque to family members in Wray Church. One of the rooms in the school was called "The Crossley" — the end room on the ground floor at the north end of the house (left side as you approach the front) with its own side door to the outside (Loughrigg flat).

Sir William died in 1911. Lady Crossley was apparently not much at the house after that and, one way and another, it lay empty for many years between the First and Second World War.

Meanwhile, Hubert Butler and his wife Nita were running a boys' school in the part of Liverpool called Huyton. By 1939, there were increasing risks of air raids from Germany and the school moved briefly to an hotel in Newby Bridge.

Having then looked round for a more permanent home for the school, the Butlers initially took a lease on Huyton Hill and then bought it a year or so later.

So the school was established in about 1940, retaining its Liverpool name, and continued as a Prep. School until it closed in 1969. Hubert Butler died in 1971 having lost his brother Gerald, who was joint headmaster, in 1967.

After 1969, the house was converted into holiday flats in the ownership of Hubert's son Ian, who lived in London. His death in 2001 has led to the sale of the property by his family.

What will we holiday tenants now do instead? What will happen to this wonderful house by the Lake?

Back to the Beginning

Going back to 1956 or '57, I can remember visiting the school with my parents before I started there. We had tea outside at the back of the house with Hubert Butler and his wife, Nita. She was extremely frail at that time. That was the first and last time that I remember meeting her. She died within a year or so of that.

Almost unbelievably, I have no very clear memory of how I felt at the time about leaving my family and friends in Manchester when I started at the school at the age of 8. I wonder how my mother felt? My sister and two cousins were at Calder Girls School in Seascale. It seems quite possible that my parents discovered or heard of Huyton Hill through those earlier visits to West Cumbria. In those days, the address of the school was simply Huyton Hill School, Near Ambleside, Westmorland.

I have a copy of the 1957 school prospectus and an accompanying book of photographs which illustrate various school activities. The prospectus presents the school as a place of traditional values — "Our immediate object is to prepare every boy to make the best possible use of life at his Public School" — but with a friendly and enlightened approach to life in general — "The basis of Education is perhaps more truly summed up as The Three H's — Health, Happiness and Hard work". A separate section is then devoted to each of these aims. The fees were 85 guineas, per term, payable in advance. We had three terms in the year — Autumn, Spring and Summer. The school year in total occupied about 36 weeks out of 52.

There were about 60 boys at the school at any one time. Nobody stayed beyond the age of 13, or 14 at the most. The youngest boy I can remember was 6. We were overwhelmingly white and middle class. Most, but by no means all, of us came from the north of England and several lived overseas. Every year, 10 or so boys would leave for Public School at the end of the Summer term and be replaced by a roughly equal intake of new boys (new ginks) usually at the start of the Autumn term in October. My broad calculation is that, on this basis, something like 400 boys in all attended the school.

Getting Ready

Preparing for the first term at Huyton Hill involved purchasing specified items of clothing according to an inventory provided by the school. The sole supplier of the Huyton Hill uniform was Kendal Milne & Co, then Manchester's answer to Harrods (and part of the same company). My mother enjoyed going to "Kendals" on a fairly regular basis because she had an account there and we only lived a few miles out of town. I can still remember the man who usually served us and how weary I always became trying on clothes.

The blazer was bright red (and very smart); the cap was also red, but we rarely had occasion to wear it (I've still got mine, stitched name tag intact); grey pullover with red strip up and down the V; grey Viyella shirt; red tie, again only rarely worn; grey shorts; adjustable red and grey elasticated trouser belt secured by a snake-like catch; long grey socks with red rings at the top (supported by garters); black lace up

(Oxford) outdoor shoes and black slip on (Cambridge) indoor shoes. Rugby, football (soccer) kit and cricket whites. Everything had to have your name tag on it, even your face flannel. For outdoors, we wore a blue mackintosh if wet together with sou'wester if very wet; and a lumberjacket for estate work which was a grey corduroy jacket with a zip up the front. The colour became lighter with continual washing. My Mum liked to smell the pine off it. We had to have shoehorns (I've still got a whalebone one, again with name tag) and various other accessories. We also supplied our own towels, bed linen, blue blankets and table napkins.

All this and more was packed neatly and carefully at home into a trunk about a week before I left for the start of each term. Every item was ticked off on the inventory which was placed on top of the contents of the tray which fitted beneath the lid of the trunk. We labeled the trunk and also my cream and white bicycle (my pride and joy) and they were collected by Mr. Winterbottom the unforgettable driver of the British Railways truck from Middleton (north Manchester) Junction from where they were dispatched by rail to Windermere station. When the trunks arrived at school, we sat with Matron, and her Assistants, in the bathroom while they unpacked the contents, checked them against the inventory, and took the clothes to the linen room.

Windermere station was also the point of my arrival for Huyton Hill at the start of the Autumn term in October 1957. Every term, for 5 years, I joined a party of other boys at Manchester Exchange station to make the journey. Each group of any size (London, Manchester, Carlisle etc.) was accompanied by a member of staff. My parents saw me off. It was always stiff upper lip. This was the only time we wore the school tie and cap, except perhaps when we went to church at Wray. My Mum made me prawn, shrimp or crab sandwiches for the journey, which were my favourites. My recollection is that it was always an afternoon train. We all had a small brown suitcase with our initials printed in black letters underneath the handle — another item from Kendals.

On arrival at Windermere, we boarded a coach which took us to the school. On that very first trip, we reached Huyton Hill in the dark. I knew only one other boy and none of the staff. Leaving home at that age was obviously an experience to be endured rather than enjoyed. But I had my teddy bear, Edward (and still do). There was a night light in the dormitory.

One bed in the dormitory was made up but remained unoccupied, which intrigued us. Some weeks later, it became occupied by John Giles, the youngest boy in our year, by far. He was only 6 (possibly less) and remained the youngest boy at the school for ages. In the yearly school photographs (see end of text) he never seemed to get beyond the row of small boys sitting cross-legged on the ground in front of everybody else.

<u>First Term</u>

Every new boy was allocated a "shadow" who took you everywhere for the first few weeks of the term. "Having had this kindness shown to them when they first came" says the prospectus "they (the shadows) have none of the old-fashioned inclination to make a new boy's life miserable ...". And so it was. My shadow was Patrick (Paddy) Morgan. He came from Headington, outside Oxford, and his father was a surgeon. His brother, David, came to the school a year or two later.

The youngest boys dormitory was called Catbells. This is where I started. It had a connecting door to Hubert Butler's apartment. This reassuring asset also increased the chances of being caught talking after lights out or "ragging in the dorm". Mr.

Butler would come through the connecting door, put the light on and say "stand exactly where you are". The punishment was to remain standing exactly where you were until he reappeared later on and told us to get back to bed.

Dormitories

There were 3 other dormitories on the first floor and another 6 on the second (top) floor. They were all named after a hill or mountain in the Lake District, as were the holiday flats created from these same rooms after the school closed.

We progressed through the (mountain) range of dormitories according to age. After Catbells, it was Langdale; then (with the staff room in-between) Dollywaggon, at the head of the stairs; and Helvellyn, at the south end of the first floor, next to the three toilets. It was possible to climb up and look over the partitions of these toilets — and we did. The object was to do this without the occupant of the next cubicle hearing you. Beyond Helvellyn was Wray, the sickroom; and a staff bathroom.

On the top floor, which was more constrained in height by the roof structure (and more reminiscent of servants' quarters) the two most senior dorms were Scafell and Wetherlam but I can't remember the other four with certainty. They were all less commodious than the first floor sleeping accommodation. I think the names included Bowfell, Wansfell, Loughrigg, and Skiddaw.

10 dormitories for 60 boys meant that some of them had only a few occupants. It also worked out that, as you moved up the school, you would have a spell in roughly half of all the dorms, a different one each year being about the norm.

All the beds were made of black painted iron. At the head was a 3 bar iron grille and a lower bar at the foot. A latticework of springy metal within the frame supported the mattress. The springy metal could become stretched and it was not unknown for the whole structure to collapse completely if treated like a trampoline. The thicker the mattress, the more comfortable the bed; and being next to a radiator was an added luxury. These were matters of luck. Every bed was covered with a bright red tartan rug which we each had to provide. We had two blue blankets underneath that (I've still got one of mine, plus name tag, of course). White linen sheets and pillowcase. Top sheet to bottom at the end of every fortnight, when a clean top sheep and pillowcase were put out for you. Linoleum on all the dormitory floors. In the toilets, the lino was red. There was a communal potty in every dormitory — which we called the jerry — and which was kept in a cabinet, called the jerry cupboard. Boys took turns to empty the jerry each morning.

In Dollywaggon and Helvellyn there were pianos for music lessons (which were optional) and practicing in the evening. An older boy, Jeremy Paton, used to get himself into trouble by playing ragtime at the end of his practice time, at our encouragement, as we were starting to get ready for bed in Helvellyn. A master would walk in and Jeremy would depart after a reprimand. (He used to play the piano with his jaw drawn to one side — which we used to imitate).

The wallpaper in Dollywaggon had Mickey Mouse type hunting characters on it, all chasing each other with the words "Yoicks, Tally-ho" printed everywhere. That dorm also doubled as the hairdressers' room. This was a dreaded occasion. Two barbers would come to the school every second or third Sunday morning. We called them the sheep shearers. If your hair was long at the beginning of term, you were an immediate candidate for their first visit; and then every second visit thereafter. In this way, they dealt with about half the school each time they came. The smart thing was

to try and avoid being listed for the sheep shearers. The 60's were dawning and long hair was the new look.

Morning Routine

We got up bright and early but I can't recall at what hour precisely. The "on duty" older boys called us up, dormitory by dormitory. Gerald Butler (who was called Major Butler to distinguish him from his brother Mr. Butler) supervised these early morning proceedings sitting at a desk under the fire bell outside Dollywaggon on the first floor landing, usually doing paperwork. The Butlers were always known as Mr. B. and Major B.

There was only one bathroom and it was on the first floor opposite the staff room. It had 3 baths and 4 wash hand basins from which you could look out across the lake each morning. We used bland, white, unscented soap — it wasn't carbolic. Either the matron, Miss Walker, or one of her assistants, was in the bathroom every morning.

The youngest boys were called first, so the getting up process started with Catbells and ended with Scafell. The older boy on duty drew the curtains, and we re-acted by folding down all our bedclothes, in two orderly movements, to neatly occupy the bottom third of the bed. That done, pillow was straightened and bottom sheet tightened up and smoothed. Bed left to air. Next, pyjamas off and walk smartly, in the nude, to the bathroom via the toilets situated on the first floor. Say good morning ma'am to Matron and proceed, up two steps, to the towel room beyond the bathroom. Collect towel and face flannel. Due to the limited toilet and bathroom accommodation, it made obvious sense for us to be called up in this regulated way.

The towel room was an L-shaped affair and had a wooden ledge at eye level along each of the walls. This ledge was subdivided to give each boy a partitioned section, just large enough for a tube (or tin) of toothpaste and a toothbrush. Uniquely, the toothpaste tubes did not have name tags. Underneath your small section of the ledge were two hooks, one behind the other, for hanging your towel and your flannel. These towel room spaces were allocated to us in age order, the oldest boy in the school having the space nearest the linen room. If his towel or flannel occupied the front hook, the next boy had to have his towel and flannel arranged in the reverse order, and so on, alternating to the end of the line. This was supposed to minimise contact between these items and so lessen the chance of germs spreading. Epidemics were bad news for the school, as I shall mention later.

Back to the bathroom with towel and flannel. Proceed to wash-hand basin and wash face, hands and neck with soap and warm water. Perhaps take an interest in the weather outside. Then, neatly spread the towel flat at the side of one of the baths. Each was filled with cold water to a depth of perhaps 10 inches. Climb in, sit down, then lie down so that the water passed over your shoulders; otherwise, do it again. Step out onto towel, dry briskly. Replace towel and flannel and back to the dormitory.

Opportunities for skipping the cold bath were limited to the odd occasion when Matron was distracted or called away from the room. Even then, she could spot the completely dry body leaving the bathroom with no trace of wetness. Go back, get your towel and get immersed. On the other hand, some boys didn't mind the cold bath at all, and even lingered under the surface. The boys on duty who called everyone up had their cold baths last.

We each had a chair at the side of our bed. On it, we were encouraged to neatly arrange our clothes the night before. We designed the arrangement for maximum

speed of dressing, so underpants and vest were on top, socks at the ready inside the shoes, and so on. We wore those off-yellow woolen vests and underpants in the winter and cotton versions in summer. In addition, the daily uniform was socks, shorts, shirt and pullover. The red blazer was worn only for lunch. Nicholas Morris was a particularly fast dresser and neat bed maker. Nicholas was the second youngest boy in the school after John Giles. His father was a Vicar and he had an older brother at the school called Richard. They lived in or near Leeds. Nicholas was also a formidable fast bowler at cricket.

Big wicker laundry baskets, with leather straps, took our clothes to the Lakeland laundry, which we called the Lakeland Shrinkers. On returning, clothes were stored in the linen room at the end of the towel room. Clean clothes were periodically (but more like weekly than daily) put out for us on our beds. We left the dirty ones (neatly) at the end of our beds for collection.

Once dressed, it was time for breakfast, which is described later in more detail. Then back to the dorm to make our beds. We were taught to do this properly by Matron and her assistants. Hospital folds etc. Beds were inspected by Matron most mornings and you were called up to make good any serious shortcomings.

There was sometimes a variation of the morning cold bath routine in the Summer term. If it was warm enough — even if wet — the upper dorms went smartly down to the pier, instead of to the bathroom, towels wrapped round our waists, but nothing underneath. Negotiating the stones on the path from the back door to the lake, in bare feet, was fairly excruciating. Once on the pier, Hubert Butler supervised our brief early morning dip in the lake. We got dried on the small grassed area before the pier, where we had left our towels. The Headmaster then sometimes dived in for a swim himself, also naked, when we had finished and he thought we were out of sight. He had bad varicose veins.

Classrooms

Form 1/2

There were 6 classes in the school. 1 and 2 were a composite class and when I first arrived, the class teacher was Mrs. McCracken. She was the nearest thing we had to a mother figure. She took our class for the whole range of subjects.

Form 1/2 was located at the south end of the ground floor of the main building (underneath Helvellyn Dorm) beyond the kitchen and pantry. The classroom contained a pink piano which was somehow painted to resemble an (pink) elephant. I remember learning old-fashioned songs, particularly Negro spirituals, from a large hard-backed songbook.

Forms 3 and 4

Forms 3 and 4 occupied the two separate upstairs rooms in the boathouse. Class 3 had a large window over the (magnificent) main boathouse door; and 4 overlooked the lake. Because the boathouse was remote from the main school building, there was ample opportunity for mischief between lessons. While the teachers came and went, we used to skim flat stones or throw other things into the lake from the unseen side of the boathouse. Jumping from the large first floor window was attempted by the foolhardy from time to time. If we were misbehaving in the actual classrooms, we could always hear the teacher's steps on the wooden boathouse stairs and come to order.

The Form 3 room was, despite the large window, rather dingy and also had to rely on a skylight. It had no view of the lake. Form 4, by contrast, occupied surely the most coveted position of any schoolroom in the world. The whole of the east wall consisted of large windows looking across to Waterhead. We could see the steamers and all the other sailing activities taking place on the water.

I remember Paul Lockwood (Plockers) sitting at a window desk in this room and having a blue toy racing car, made in Germany, with large soft rubber tyres which slipped easily on and off the car wheels. He was the oldest boy in Form 4 and I was the youngest. He had an older brother at the school called Roderick. Plockers also had a smart wristwatch. Watches were items of interest and status. Perhaps with us all having to dress the same, these appendages acquired an added competitive significance.

In winter, we had to rely solely on the outside electric light positioned on the oak tree (along the then distinct path to the main building) to guide us to and from the boathouse for evening prep. There was also a stove in the class 4 room, which was the main source of heat for the whole boathouse. On our way to prep, we would help ourselves to potatoes from the sheds outside the main school and leave these to cook in the boathouse stove during prep. The theory was that the smell of cooking spuds permeated into the room so gradually that it was imperceptible to the supervising teacher. This actually worked in practice. At the end of prep, the baked potatoes were consumed. We couldn't get away with this when a senior boy was supervising prep due to his insider knowledge.

Form 5

Form 5 was the ground floor room, previously mentioned, called the Crossley, at the north end of the main building. This room I always associate with Major Butler (Major B) because, in Form 5, he nearly always supervised evening prep in this room, while doing his own mountain of paperwork. It had a connecting door to the main entrance hall which formed part of the Butlers' own apartment. The door had an interesting bow-shaped brass handle, one of several of this kind in the building. Next to that door was another door leading outside to the terrace on the north side of the house (now the entrance door for Loughrigg flat).

Assembly

This outside side door was used twice daily by the Flag Party. Every morning, before classes, and every evening, after prep, the whole school congregated in the Crossley for assembly. Major B. conducted assembly and Mr B. was not usually present. The room contained the smartest piano in the school, with carvings on the fascia. Hubert Butler (Mr B.) would sometimes play this piano at morning assembly. The two assemblies provided the opportunity for Major B to make announcements etc. and there may have been prayers and hymns. Occasionally, at the morning assembly, Mr B would include the School Song in the proceedings. I don't know the origin of the words — they could have been his own. They were sung to the tune of "To Be A Pilgrim". To that tune, the school song began — "Often, when tireless waves hurl us together, into Tintagel's cave, 'spite (in spite) of the weather; ...". The final verse I remember in full. lit was "So here, at Huyton Hill, we pledge the future; we will, with brave good will, meet all adventure; where tasks do most confound, there may we straight be found; though thunder echoes round, laugh at the lightning". Great stuff.

Flag Party

At both morning and evening assembly, come rain or shine, the Flag Party, dressed in red blazers, went outside from the Crossley to raise and lower the flag of St George. See the sketch at the end of the text. Leaving the Crossley by the side door, the party of 6 boys would form up outside on the terrace, next to the wall opposite the large bay window. This was about 35 yards from the flagpole at the north east corner of the terrace, overlooking the lake. The 6 boys were the 4 most senior boys of the "house" which was "on duty" that week; plus 2 buglers, selected on bugling merit, not seniority, but from the same house.

The House Captain would shout "Flag Party, quick march" and the 6 of them, in 3 pairs, then marched, as one group, to the flagpole enclosure. The 2 buglers, who led this small party on the outward journey, surmounted the two flat slabs at the front corners of the enclosure. The House Captain and Vice Captain, who carried the neatly folded flag, stood together at either side of the flagpole. The Prefect and Fourth Boy stood to attention behind them, but slightly to one side so that they were not in their way for the return journey.

One of the buglers then sounded a call, possibly the Reveille, across the lake. At this point, every boy inside was also standing up, facing the lake. At morning assembly, this first bugle call was timed as near to 9am as possible. The second morning bugle call, after the flag was up, was the school call, the pattern of which was Morse Code for HHS (Huyton Hill School). In the evening, I think they sounded the Last Post and then the school call, taking the flag down in between.

At the morning ceremony, the House Captain linked the flag — which was bigger than it looked, and about the size of a blanket - to the flagpole rope and, after casting it out to unfurl, hoisted it up. The whole Flag Party then joined in saying the school motto "I will with a good will" as the flag climbed the pole. These words are taken from Sir Thomas Malory's book about King Arthur, first printed by William Caxton at Westminster in 1484. Mr B, in particular, was a great believer in our converting the words of the motto into everyday actions. It conveyed a helpful, positive and cheerful approach to the business of life.

Morning and evening, the Flag Party marched back, two by two, from their positions at the flag enclosure to return to the starting point of the ceremony. When the last pair were in place (this was the buglers for the return trip) the House Captain shouted "Flag Party, dismiss". On hearing this command, everyone in the Crossley could sit down again. The smell of that large and heavy linen flag, when it was wet, is still memorable.

When dry, the flag was folded again for its next outing the following morning. The buglers were responsible for keeping their brass instruments polished. I think these were kept in the main entrance hall (part of the Butlers' apartment) between flag ceremonies. If they had been kept in the Crossley, I am sure they would have been played by all and sundry at inappropriate times. Bugle practice took place in the basement.

Form 6

As the Crossley and Form 5 were the province of Major Butler, so the Library next door was the realm of Mr Butler. This was the senior classroom for Form 6. Unlike the other classrooms, it had mainly, but not exclusively, larger, flat-topped wooden desks; as opposed to the more common smaller, sloping top variety. It gave a sense

of having reached the heights to finally possess one of these larger, smarter looking desks. But even within this flat top category, there was a hierarchy of desk choices, which were exercised according to seniority.

As its name suggests, the back wall of the Library consisted of book shelves with a range of reading material for general use. I can also remember Major B. once lending me his own copy of a book about Shackleton's Polar explorations. which I've always wanted to get hold of again. In the far corner of the Library, on a slightly raised wooden platform, was a chest of drawers which we used for our personal belongings. I once found a bar of my chocolate had been nibbled by mice.

The Curriculum

Progress beyond the 1st/2nd Class depended on a combination of academic ability and age. Brainboxes could find their way to the Sixth Form on merit, ahead of their age group, provided they were also mature enough to cope with that environment. Daniel Bunting, for example, who was my age or younger, seemed to spend the majority of his school career in the Sixth Form. His reputation for brilliance grew strength from the fact that his father was a Professor. Daniel had an older brother, Edward, and they came from Reading.

We were taught the range of standard subjects throughout the School. English, History, Geography, Maths etc. This also included French from the outset, which was slightly unusual for 8-year olds. Latin, however, started in the 3rd Form. There was no Physics, Chemistry, Biology or Greek. I don't remember Art beyond the 1st/2nd Class. Piano lessons were optional. There was also a harp in the main entrance hall which perhaps one or two boys were taught at any one time. Music lessons cost extra. The teacher, Mr Lewis, came to the school once a week or so.

Hubert Butler taught only Latin and only to the Sixth Form. What he lacked in variety, he made up for in quantity. I can still see Double Latin written on my Sixth Form timetable, pinned under my desk lid, for at least two mornings each week. For the other four mornings, it was only single Latin but still always the first lesson. All lessons lasted 40 minutes. I can't remember exactly how many lessons we had each morning and afternoon. Wednesdays and Saturdays were different, with lessons as normal in the morning but none in the afternoon. No lessons on Sunday. Supervised (by masters or senior boys) prep every weekday evening in our classrooms.

Curiously, we had classes in Handwriting and Road Safety; and even end of term exams in these subjects (Q — Is it an offence to deposit mud on a public highway? And, if so, why should that be? was the sort of thing asked in the road safety exam). It could be that these two subjects were only taught for a limited time, for example, in the Third Form only. There were ad hoc outdoor classes in Natural History during the summer term.

I seemed always to join my next class just as it was about to have its turn for the Tudors and the Stuarts. I was an expert in that period of English history but knew nothing at all of the Second World War which had ended (in the Far East anyway) less than four years (September 1945) before I was born.

Latin deserves another mention not only because of its precedence over all else, but also to relate one unforgettable teaching method in the Sixth Form — the daily stand up test. The lesson always included a stand up test when the whole class (maybe 12 of us) stood in a curved line, practically a semi-circle, in front of the Library windows which overlook the terrace and lake. Hubert Butler sat on the broad window sill, his

back to the lake, facing us all in line. His feet rested on a long chest under the window sill which contained bound volumes of Punch magazines, going back decades. We each held up in front of us a book of Latin sentences or passages. The test involved translating these into English (and vice versa on alternate days) word by word. Starting at the top end of the line (on Mr B's left), the first boy had to translate the first word, the second boy the second word, and so on. If you couldn't answer or got it wrong, Mr B moved down the line until he got a correct answer from someone. It might be the next boy down, or a boy several places down. That boy then moved up the line to the place ahead of the boy who got it wrong first of all. In this way, it was possible to move up anything from just 1 to a spectacular 12 places in the line. The test must have gone on for a good 10 minutes.

At the end, we all sat down and, in response to Mr B calling out our names, told him our final position in the line that morning. So the boy at the bottom of the line got 1 point, the one at the top got 12, and so on in between. Next day, we occupied the position where we ended the day before. These marks were recorded daily and periodically totalled up as part of your performance record for Latin. Latin lessons otherwise consisted of the usual diet of pluperfects, gerunds and gerundives, all fortified by Kennedy's Latin Primer. Written class tests were routine, with marks shouted out again at the end for recording.

Sometimes the stand up tests were supervised by one of the House Captains in Mr B's absence. The two House Captains occupied the desks immediately in front of his own desk in the Library. He was quite regularly missing from his desk, sometimes away for as long as a few days. We never really knew why and weren't too concerned. Even when present, he often left the connecting door from the Library to his apartments open, so that he could hear the telephone. Fee paying parents might not have wholly approved of these inroads into their sons' tuition time.

It may be wholly unfair to say this, but my own thoughts are that, at this stage of his life (mid '50's, at least) Mr B had taken on other or, in any event, additional interests, apart from the School. He was a huge supporter of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Whilst he and his brother Gerald were nominally joint headmasters, the general impression was the Hubert was "primus inter pares" (first among equals), though Major B devoted every working hour to the practical side of running the School; from teaching, to the temperamental central heating boiler. The parents, public relations, goodwill, correspondence etc, were thought of as Hubert's territory, coupled with his tireless efforts on behalf of UNICEF. Gerald lived for the School. Although their roles might have suggested otherwise, Gerald was actually better on his feet in front of an audience than Hubert, who could range from being full of cheery confidence to an almost nervous lack of it.

Both men were always kind and considerate; and full of positive encouragement. As much respected as feared, and without malice. After we left school, Hubert sometimes sent us a postcard of the school and best wishes on our birthday. I still have one of these which is probably for my 21st. While we were at School, he sent all parents a calendar every year at Christmas. I also have a number of these. They invariably depicted a School scene sketched by Claude Harrison, a well known local artist and sometime Art Master at the School. Claude and Audrey Harrison lived near Grasmere and were friends of Hubert Butler. They had a son called Toby who joined the School at the same time as myself. I believe he now also works locally as an artist.

The Staff

Bill Newby

In the main, the other staff followed the Butlers' noble example and aspirations. In particular, Bill Newby (WHN). He lived at Waterhead and cycled daily to and from the school in all weathers. He was a (nearly always) cheerful, stocky, local man with black wavy hair who smoked a pipe, off duty, and wore an intriguing ring. We believed that under the large black stone at the centre of the ring lay drops of blood from the Japanese soldier(s) which Captain Newby had killed during the war. He also wore a gold watch with a stretchy gold strap. WHN took classes for Geography, Handwriting (his own was immaculate) and Road Safety; supervised rugby and football; took us on long cycle trips; and organised us for estate work, at which he did more than his own fair share. The flat, grassed area between the main house and the boathouse is a lasting tribute to WHN's industry. In my time, this was a largely uncultivated area with rough protruding rock outcrops, all requiring to be dug out. Due in no small part to Bill's endeavours, and those of his labour cohorts, it became, firstly, a new cricket pitch and now an extensive recreational area. Outdoors, he worked in corduroy shorts, with his pipe wedged down his thick knee length socks, its head protruding atop. I think he and his wife also ran a boarding house near the youth hostel and steamer terminal.

Gordon Osmaston

Another memorable character was Brigadier Gordon Osmaston. Affectionately and inevitably known as Ozzy, he was by no means the formidable character that his distinguished military status might suggest. In fact, he was the most amiable of the masters and full of energy, despite his years. We were cruel about his baldness. He was the Maths teacher; and travelled in daily from his home — we imagined it might be rather grand — in Grasmere. He sometimes arrived in an unusual estate car or "shooting brake" as they were then known. I believe it was a Dodge. Ozzy's classes were, in the main, characterised by a lack of firm discipline. His main mistake was that he believed, despite continual evidence to the contrary, that we could and would behave like mature young adults if trusted to do so. We repeatedly let him down badly. This misplaced trust also extended to our capabilities in the field. Once, on an (Wednesday or Saturday) afternoon ramble in the hills, it was growing dusk and we still had to cover a fair distance back to the school. The pace quickened, the party became separated, and the stragglers fell behind. I was one of them. The light faded and, in open Lakeland country, it becomes formidably dark. Eventually, we got back to the school but, by then, we were genuinely frightened and shaken. Nothing was said to us but I suspect the Brigadier may have received a dressing down from the Major. For all that, we liked the Brig because he was fun and game for anything.

Miss Walker

Miss Walker was the Matron. She would emerge from the staff room along with gusts of cigarette smoke. Her brother used to visit her from Edinburgh in a vintage car. She herself had a blue bubble car, parked at the front of the school near the garage (at the south end of the front elevation but now incorporated as part of the southmost ground floor flat) where Hubert Butler kept his car, which was a Singer Gazelle, or similar. The old garage is visible on the aerial photo at the end of the text (as is the old pier, weather vane tower on the roof, some trees no longer standing and many of the former flower beds both on and bordering the front and back lawns).

Miss Walker was not somebody with whom we shared a great deal of hilarity but she looked after us well enough. She had a small dog with a squashed face, probably a Pekingese. Her Assistants came and went and the only one whose name I remember was an elderly lady from Ireland called Miss or Mrs Byron, who was a real worker. One night, a boy had been sick on the floor of the dormitory and Ms Byron hastily came in, asking where the mess was. Before she had finished the question, she was flat on her back in the middle of it.

Another lady who helped Miss Walker used to tell us of her wartime experiences and how the young pilots used to sleep for days after their flying missions. Younger women were not much in evidence but I remember two who briefly joined the staff. One was rather extrovert and her name escapes me. Her parents were in Turkey and, on the day of the week when she expected a letter from them, she would always say to her companion at the other end of the table at lunch "Goody goody Miss Curtis, it's Turkey day today". I've no idea why I remember that.

Other teaching staff

The other teaching staff of my day included Mr (Richard?) Ellis, who was a great long distance runner, and often ran to the school in the morning. He still looked very athletic in early middle age. He had taught at Huyton Hill before returning again for another spell while I was there. English was his subject.

There was also a Mr. Richard Kingdon, a younger man from Natland, Kendal, who also taught English and wore tweed jackets with leather elbow pads. We called him Hot Breath. As an end of term treat, instead of teaching the class, he would read us ghost stories by Edgar Allan Poe and M. R. James.

There was, at some point, a Mr Green, who also wore a tweed jacket. In fact, tweed jackets were surely standard issue for all male Preparatory School masters of that era, and they would have only one. Mr Green did not, so far as I remember, teach any class I was in. I think he lived in the Lodge. He had a very mobile and expressive mouth.

After having Mrs McCracken in Form 1/2, we were taught French by M. Pierre Huttner, a tall young Frenchman (no tweed jackets), at times openly bemused by the traditions of English boarding school life. He would remonstrate with Major B, usually in frustration at not being allowed to do things his own way. He also enjoyed a good argument with the boys. In short, he was pretty vocal. At the start of one term, he returned, married to a young German woman who also joined the staff. They divided the French teaching between them.

The range of subjects was completed by Gerald Butler himself, who took History, and Latin below Form 6. He was a fair cricket umpire and also supervised most of our outdoor activities at weekends when the majority of the staff were off duty. Mr B was not a games person.

Latterly, a very young, quiet man joined the staff between his leaving public school and going to (Durham?) University. I think he stayed on without ever going to Durham. I fail to remember his name but he had been at Charterhouse, which had a fine cricketing reputation and tried to teach us to bat properly instead of slogging.

The one glamorous interlude in our academic routine was the visits of a very attractive lady to teach us ballroom dancing. She came and went in a sports car

driven by her boyfriend. We thought she was very chic. I still haven't mastered ballroom dancing.

The male staff all addressed the Butlers as Sir. I never knew for certain, but always believed Hubert Butler's BA Oxon was in Classics and that Gerald's MA Oxon was in History. We knew nothing at all about Major B's military history.

Common Entrance Exam

The academic curriculum was also geared towards what lay in store at public school. Towards the end of our time at preparatory school, we would know which public school our parents hoped to send us to next, having regard to Mr B's advice. We sat the "Common Entrance" exam at 13 and, presumably, our papers were sent to the public school of choice. However, I can never remember anyone failing to get into the school where they wanted to go. Huyton Hill was a feeder school more for the northern public schools than the better known (and more expensive) ones in the south.

My Father wanted me to sit the 11+ examination at that age and I remember going to another school, no doubt in Ambleside, for the purpose. I passed. When I was 13, and before I sat the Common Entrance, he arranged for me to sit the entrance exams for Manchester Grammar School, which had a very strong record of academic achievement and was my Dad's old school. I sat these exams, on my own, in the Sick Room at Huyton Hill. I passed on the English but failed on the Maths. Eventually I went on to St Bees, in neighbouring Cumberland. It was the destination for many Huyton Hill boys.

Support Staff

A few words also about the characterful auxiliary and non-teaching staff.

Miss Blake

The Queen Bee of Huyton Hill was Miss Blake. She was rotund, imperious and the fiercest teacher in the school. She came to Huyton Hill periodically and would then disappear again. She was the late Mrs Nita Butler's sister. She was served every morning in the school dining room with her own private boiled egg for breakfast. This always amused my Mother greatly.

She was the auxiliary Maths teacher and made us stand up, in Form 3, to recite "tables" from memory, in the traditional style. She also introduced us to algebra. We maybe learned more Maths from her than the easygoing Brigadier; but of course she got no thanks for that.

Ina Blake came from somewhere in Scotland. I always assumed that it was Mrs Butler's Scottish influence which had resulted in the inclusion of Scottish Country Dancing in the school curriculum and performances at the Summer concerts, known as the Floodlight Revues.

Hamish

The Scottish connection continued with the more flamboyant presence, during the Oxford University vacations, of young Hamish. I don't remember his surname. He had long hair and an excitable temperament. He was passionate about poetry and

literature and tried to pass this on by force of personality. We resisted at our peril. I believed he was related to the Miss Blake/Mrs Butler line, but could well be wrong.

Miss Nash

Miss Nash was the School Secretary and lived at the school. Her own room was on the first floor of the main building, near the staff room. She worked in Mr B's study. She was a pal of Miss Blake. Dorothy Mary Nash (DMN) was her full name. We sometimes liked her and sometimes didn't. In practice, she worked exclusively for Mr B. She came from Hastings. She was a great birdwatcher and took us on nature walks during the summer term. If you listened, she knew her stuff. Of the ladies, she wore the brightest clothes and nail varnish. We liked her one-piece yellow dress. We said she resembled a banana in it. Jokes about unpeeling it etc. However, she usually stood for no such nonsense.

Some years later, she moved to Ravenglass (famous for bird watching) and Miss Muriel Shuttleworth became the school secretary in 1964. I met Miss Nash again, by chance, when I was on a cycle ride to Ravenglass from St Bees, my next school. She invited Colin Entwistle and me in for a cup of tea.

Bill Black

Bill Black was the general handyman, gardener, maintenance and boiler man. He was fit and strong and looked very big to us. We thought he fancied Miss Nash. The boiler was a massive fiery furnace in the basement and, to reach it, you had to go down a further set of steps below the boiler room floor. Major B kept it going when Bill Black wasn't around. Mr Newby used to smoke his pipe and chat to Bill Black in the boiler room.

Bill had an assistant called Harold Hinchcliffe, whose wife worked in the kitchen. In place of one hand, Hinch had a fairly large metal hook, connected to the good part of his arm by a leather socket. He could lift buckets etc. with it. This was a source of continual fascination to us. Hinch used to import illicit tuck (sweets) for us from the outside world. I don't think we paid him much, if anything, above cost price; though he was probably risking his job.

Rusty

No account of Huyton Hill would be complete without mentioning the School dogs. These Labradors were really Major Butler's pets and went everywhere with him. When I started at the School, he had an older dog, very golden, and aptly named Rusty. Rusty is visible on one of the School photos at the end of the text. After Rusty came Trigger, a younger, livelier but equally good natured beast, with a lighter coloured coat. They were very much part of the place.

King Arthur and King Alfred

The boys were equally divided into two "Houses', King Arthur and King Alfred, always referred to as simply Arthur and Alfred. I was "on" Arthur. We were not segregated by houses for all that many purposes. We didn't eat, work or sleep in these different groups. The main practical purpose of the two Houses was to share the duties which the senior boys of each house carried out on alternate weeks, as part of the management of the school.

Another purpose may have been sporting contests but I have only a vague memory of competitive matches in rugby, football and cricket and not clear enough to recall whether these included House matches. They probably did; and certainly Arthur members wore a white T-shirt and Alfred a red one as their house colours. There were no sporting events against other schools. In fact, there was hardly any contact with the outside world.

Once term started, and apart from half terms, the only times we left the school grounds were for the walk to Wray Church every fortnight and on the supervised half-day outings for bike rides or more local expeditions. No shopping; no visitors; no phone calls; and only very limited exposure to radio and TV. Ordinary boys in a world apart. Where did I really belong? (Not that I asked this at the time.) I belonged both at home and at school, but the two were completely unconnected. A sort of double life. Curiously, home had entrusted us to the predominant care of school, for five years — and knew little, and saw even less, of our day-to-day experiences.

House Duties

In addition to getting everyone out of bed in the morning and conducting the Flag Parties (both as already described) the senior "on duty" House members were also responsible for various other duties during the day, particularly around meal times.

Voluntary Duties

Some of the most menial tasks we performed might have been part of these prescribed duties but could possibly have been voluntary with the incentive of earning additional conduct marks (more of which later) as a reward. These less attractive chores included cleaning the toilets in the late evening when everyone was in bed; laying the six dining room tables for breakfast next morning; applying liquid polish (with floor brushes from biscuit tins) to the wooden floors in all the ground floor rooms and corridors. The two upper floors of the building were all linoleum covered. We may also have done the washing up in the scullery opposite the dining room or perhaps just as occasional back up if the staff were unavailable.

Changing Houses

At the end of every week, we had an elaborate outdoor parade called "Changing Houses", stage-managed by the Butlers, to symbolise the transfer of duties between Houses. There is a photograph of this weekly ceremony at the end of the text. It took place mainly on the lower terrace at the back of the house. It involved 12 boys from each house assembling, in blazers, on the upper terrace, at about 11am on Sunday morning. Down below on the lawn, Mr B was in position to direct the proceedings, like a conductor, once the music and the marching began. The recorded music was provided from a loudspeaker, off stage, by Major B. It was Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March No 1. This ceremony had been performed weekly since the early 'Ws.

From the upper terrace, we marched to the music in two columns of 12 down the first steps, then the columns split to march on down the two crescent paths onto the lower terrace. We marched up and round the crescent paths again a couple of times, the two columns ending up in a single line along the back of the lower terrace, facing the lawn (as in photo). The tallest boys were in the centre of the line and the smallest at the ends. Two drummers and two cymbalists, standing on the raised platform behind

the line, were cued in when directed by the Headmaster, to add occasional emphasis to the recorded music.

The two senior boys from each House stood forward from the tapered line of the foot soldiers and performed a slow march to "Land of Hope and Glory". (See photo.) This culminated in a meeting of the two House Captains, centre stage, where they performed, under Mr B's unspoken direction, the handover of a wooden cane, tassel atop. This symbolised the handover of House duties. Today, the cane is still in the main entrance hall, minus tassel.

The photograph shows us in blazers and whites but whites were not the Sunday norm. Nor was the standard bearer. We usually wore our ordinary uniforms with blazers for this parade. The photo was probably a dress rehearsal for a Summer revue. These revues always included the Changing Houses Ceremony, as well as the country dancing and various other performances by the boys, some quite elaborate and most of them to music. The floodlights shining on the combination of red and white clothes at these night-time revues further enhanced the spectacle of the Changing Houses Parade. Parents were impressed, but suffered from the midges. These annual concerts took place on one of the evenings of the Summer half term. Parents sat on the lawn below the main house and watched the proceedings taking place on the terrace.

Discipline

Huyton Hill was not a harsh regime by the standards of the day. We called the staff Sir and Ma'am and they called us by our Christian names. This was the exception rather than the rule at Prep schools in this era. Staff didn't exceed the bounds of reasonable discipline. There was no widespread bullying or abuse by older boys. Among ourselves we used nicknames, friendly and less kind.

Corporal punishment was very uncommon and I can't recall any examples. A small minority behaved badly almost routinely and we all had our moments of getting away with what we could. By and large, though, rules were dutifully obeyed.

The culture was not designed to divide the strong and the weak. The Butlers were firmly in charge and everyone, staff and boys alike, was respectfully deferential to them both.

I was never unhappy, in any prolonged or acute sense. A few possibly were; and one or two boys ran away when I was there. They were recaptured very quickly.

On the whole, provided you were occupied, willing to join in, and able to stick up for yourself, boarding school life was not too unkind. We didn't analyse what we were doing there.

The most spirited bad behaviour would occur in the dormitories. There were times (though not that often) when these rooms witnessed acute civil unrest. There were uprisings between dormitories and boys fighting in pyjamas. Major B used to read the Riot Act and impose punishments; but he couldn't patrol every corridor all evening. At the end of a long day and with better things to do, these night-time skirmishes and the more frequent chatter after lights out must have exasperated him. There was once a midnight raid by senior boys on the pantry.

The authority of the staff and the four most senior boys in each house was fortified by a system of conduct marks. These were awarded for good behaviour and deducted

for bad behaviour. Every day of the week, we were automatically credited with 10 points for the day. It may have been 15 on Saturdays and Sundays. The standard total per week was therefore 70 or 80 points.

If you behaved, you kept your daily points. If you misbehaved, you could lose some or all of your daily allocation, and perhaps more besides. The maximum penalty was —20. Points between 1 and 20 could be deducted according to the gravity of an offence. E.g. Late for start of class, without good reason —3; Eating in class —5; Persistent talking after lights out —10; Rank disobedience —15; Flooding the bathroom floor and room below —20. All staff could deduct points up to the maximum of 20 per offence. The Captains, Vice Captains, Prefects and Fourth Boys of each House could also take points off but subject to limits of something like 20, 15, 10 and 5, respectively. Boys needed these powers if they were put in charge of a situation. If you were sent across to supervise evening prep in the boathouse, it was no use just telling the troublemakers to shut up and get on with their prep; you needed some clout.

In every classroom, the day room, the dining room and bathroom was a list of every boy in the school, in age order. The lists were in two columns. (Miss Nash would produce these in blue or red type, as well as black.) If points were taken off you during the day, this was recorded against your name with the initials of whoever made the decision. E.g. Stephen Pratt —20 HDB. This signified that Stephen had uncharacteristically lost 20 points after being caught doing something serious by the headmaster, Hubert (Donald) Butler. Exactly what he had done had to be written on a sheet of lined paper underneath the names list. The two sheets were clamped onto a stiff piece of board by a bulldog clip. The sheets and board were no bigger than about 8 x 6 inches.

Except on Saturdays (when the same sheet was also used for Sundays as well) these sheets were removed and replaced with fresh ones at around the time of evening prep. Major B tallied the points from the used lists every evening and wrote the running daily total of every boy on a composite square-lined master sheet. This hung by a string from a hook in the cloakroom near the dining room. This was where we also kept our red blazers on numbered pegs, allocated in age order. There were two or three toilet cubicles (with red lino) and two wash-hand basins in the room as well. It was really more like a cloakroom corridor leading to the Library.

Less commonly, plus points could be awarded and, as with minuses, were entered on the names list, initialled, with written reasons underneath. E.g. Peter Fletcher +5 GVB. Helping with toilet cleaning or / floor polishing or / washing up. Major Butler's full name was Gerald Victor Butler.

By losing no points (or very few) during a week and gaining extra points to supplement the daily allocation, it was just possible to top 100 points in a very good week. Conversely, by being extremely naughty and unhelpful, you could end the week with a minus. Equally, you could accumulate a minus on any day part-way through the week. You may or may not have cleared it off by the end of the week. A week-day minus was bearable but a weekend minus had more serious consequences.

So far as the conduct marks were concerned, the week ended on Friday night. When we all gathered in the Crossley for evening assembly on Friday, Major B had calculated everybody's marks for the week on the master sheet. He read this out to an audience silent with anticipation. It was a solemn occasion.

Friday night was a cunning choice for the time of reckoning because the sanctions for having a minus hit hardest over the weekend. The sanctions remained in place from Friday night until the marks were next done afresh, for the first time in the new week, on Sunday evening.

Having a minus for the weekend was bad news. For example, you couldn't watch TV in the Crossley on Saturday night or see the film, if one was shown. Instead, you stayed in the next room, the Library, possibly reading the satirical jokes in the old Punch volumes. Or, during the weekend free periods, you couldn't choose from the full range of possible outdoor activities or wander any further than the territorial boundaries set for the youngest boys, which only extended to within sight of the house. We had boundary groups, according to age or seniority. You were not allowed beyond your own bounds.

The rewards for gaining a weekly total of 50 points or more were conduct badges, about the size of a shilling, which you wore on the collar wings of your (grey) shirt. Top of the range was the 100 points or more badge, which was red, and had the word CONDUCT printed in red letters on a narrow white strip across the middle of the badge. No more than perhaps two or three of these would *be* awarded each week. Irrespective of whether you were a member of Arthur or Alfred house, you would receive the same red badge.

Next came the 75 points or more badge. This was the same as the 100 badge except that the colour of the badge and lettering was blue for Arthur and green for Alfred.

The third category of badge was 50 points or more. These were all-over blue, with no lettering, for Arthur; and the same in green for Alfred. There were no badges below 50 points — but you kept all your privileges, unless you had a minus.

At the end of Friday evening assembly, we formed a queue to file past Major B's desk in the Crossley on which was laid out the box containing all the different badges in separate compartments. You took out the badge you were entitled to; and put back any you weren't.

Having the badge you'd earned for the week was considered sufficient reward in itself. I don't think badges carried any additional perks or privileges per se. But, again, I could well have forgotten that detail after 40 years and more.

There was another badge, which was all-over yellow, with no lettering, and the same for both Arthur and Alfred. These were "Good Speaking" badges. From the unprejudiced position of one who was never awarded this badge, I am particularly well placed to judge that this was the most unfair contest in the School. If, like myself, you had been brought up in north Manchester, then, of course, you had a pretty obvious accent which you would most likely keep all your life (and why not?). On the other hand, my friends the Spencer twins (Richard and Timothy who came from Buckinghamshire and whom I once visited there) were probably surrounded from childhood by elegant and refined speakers. Anyway, they had yellow badges for as long as I knew them. It wasn't fair. These badges were not awarded weekly. However, I forget how regularly the Butlers decided on the recipients. On the same subject, I painfully remember being corrected by Mr B, time and again, on how to pronounce the word "one". He insisted I pronounce it more like "won". I got more sulky about that than probably anything else. I hadn't been made so aware of speech snobbery before.

The House Captains, Vice Captains, Prefects and Fourth Boys of both Houses all wore another badge (blue for Arthur or green for Alfred) to denote their rank, or some abbreviation of it, printed on the badge. How boys were chosen for these senior positions was not an open process. The decisions were made by the Butlers. Perhaps they each had an equal voice, perhaps not. There may have been consultation with other staff. Our assumption was that the factors taken into account were a combination of the weekly conduct marks, academic performance results, sporting ability and any other aspect of school life at which you could be judged and measured. But we never knew the assessment process, even though the outcome was very important to us. It was a significant event when the order of seniority for the School was announced at the end of the Summer term (or was it every term?) in preparation for returning at the start of the next academic session.

Of the two House Captains, the one who topped the order of seniority also became Head Boy. There was no badge to signify this. So the most badges you could have at any time was 3 — senior position (House Captain etc); conduct badge (100, 75 or 50) and good speaking badge. My own collar wings were never more than equally balanced. But I did become Head Boy.

Meals

The most attractive room in the building to which we had access was, by far, the dining room. I have a photo of it (see end of text) which shows the lovely oak tables, fireplace, benches and other furniture. Some of these benches are in the holiday flats.

We were very rarely in the other best rooms within the Butler's upstairs apartment (above the main entrance hall) which was at the north end of the house. The family still kept this as their own holiday flat after the School closed. I was only in these upper rooms perhaps once or twice.

Mr B's wood panelled study was on the ground floor, off the main entrance hall, on the right of the front entrance door. This is now Miss Shuttleworth's office. I never knew if Major B also had a study somewhere within these private quarters. I somehow doubt it. I do know that in the Summer holidays, he spent a lot of time, and perhaps even lived, at the small house down at Pull Wyke. No doubt he relaxed there with dog and rowing boat. This was one of a number of houses in the 100 acre policies. We never knew who lived in them all, but perhaps they went with the teaching jobs, if the staff wanted one. There were certainly staff in the Lodge. Mr Green was one. At some point, the Lodge had suffered quite extensive fire damage to the rear. I remember charred wooden beams lying about.

However, returning to the school dining room, this was where we took all our meals. The kitchen and pantry were down the corridor, at the south end of the building.

There were 6 dining tables, with chairs at each end for staff. There were 2 benches, for 5 or 6 boys, down each side. So we had 10 to 12 boys per table. Seating arrangements were in age order; one table for the 10 or so oldest boys. another for the next 10 oldest, and so on. The resident staff (Mrs McCracken; Miss Nash; Major B; Mr B and Miss Walker) always sat at the head of their own table and didn't move round. Miss Blake (when in residence) deputised for Mr B at breakfast.

The boys, on the other hand, changed tables every week. And in addition, at every meal, you moved one place round the table. In this way, we all had an equal share

of sitting next to the staff at either end; and you automatically knew where you would be sitting at any meal. There was no evasion or maneuvering for places each time.

There were 5 tables in the main dining room and 1 in what we called the veranda, the glass-windowed extension which looks onto the main drive. This was Miss Walker's table. In fact, there were 2 half-sized tables in there, with 4 staff places as a result.

Boys at the table who had a "minus", had to sit for every meal in the middle of a row and weren't allowed to speak at all. Obviously they didn't move round like everyone else.

Unless the food was already laid out in the dining room to start with, the two boys at the top end of each table went to fetch it (usually in large bowls) and the plates etc. from the kitchen. They placed these in front of the staff member at the head of table who doled the food onto the plates which we passed down each side. Boys did the serving if the staff were absent. There were rarely 6 staff to occupy the heads of table at breakfast. At the end of each course, empty plates and used cutlery were passed back to the top end, piled up, and removed to the washing-up room opposite the dining room.

One of the puddings we used to have was chocolate rice. Puddings of this kind, stews, porridge and even the cornflakes were served from large porcelain bowls using silver ladles. Sponges, stodge and the like came in on trays. They were served with a trowel-like device. There was usually custard with these; sometimes chocolate sauce.

The chocolate rice pudding — which we enjoyed — was also memorable for what once happened when Donald Wilson was serving. Donald was a tall boy, from Scotland — an army family from Perthshire, as I recall. He came in briskly with a large bowl of chocolate rice and, half way to the table, slipped on something dropped on the floor, so that he fell backwards. As he fell, he projected the bowl of chocolate rice upward and it flew into the air. When it came down, the result was chocolate rice all over Donald and everywhere else. Another good story about Donald, but this may be apocryphal, was that, after one of the Floodlight Revue performances in Summer, his father left and forgot to take Donald away with him for half term. I think Donald went on to Rannoch School (then newly established as a sort of rival to Gordonstoun, but recently closed in 2002).

The proceedings at meal times were also governed by a silver bell, on four little legs, which rang when you twisted the serrated disc on top of a protruding silver stem, between finger and thumb. It sat on a shelf of one of the Welsh dressers and was rung several times every meal to summon silence for an announcement.

The routine announcements during meals were made by the same senior boys from the House on duty that week who had got you up in the morning. Other announcements were made by Mr B or, more usually, Major B e.g. changes to arrangements for the day. On alternate days, (or weeks?) some of the announcements were made in French. For instance, the first routine announcement at breakfast every day was to identify the boys with a minus who were forbidden to speak at meals. The French version was "Les garcons suivants devront guarder la silence pendant tous les repas aujourd-hui" — followed by their names.

At the end of every breakfast, one of the senior boys rang the bell and spoke part of a Latin or French "morning phrase". The only one I can remember was "Mane, signum tollemus; et parvam insulam in lacu videmus". This is Latin for "In the

morning, we raise the flag and see a small island in the lake". The phrase was divided into 5 parts. On Monday, the first part was announced, with translation e.g. "Mane. In the morning". On Tuesday, the first and the second parts — e.g. "Mane, signum tollemus. In the morning, we raise the flag". And so on, until by Saturday, the whole phrase and translation were complete.

But it wasn't just a listening exercise. When each day's morning phrase had been announced, we all had to fold up our square, linen table napkins and thread them through our napkin rings. (Napkins rings, like watches, were another possession with a slightly competitive edge.) Starting with the boys sitting nearest the member of staff at the head of table, we each, in turn, had to repeat the morning phrase while at the same time holding up our napkin for inspection. If the napkin was neat enough and you got the phrase correct, you were allowed to leave the table. Otherwise you were coached until you got it right. We had to repeat the whole phrase and its meaning on Saturday and Sunday.

The napkins for each table were kept in a shallow wooden tray, all of which slid away on racks next to Major B's chair.

Lunch

At lunch, when blazers were always worn, two of the boys on house duty stood at either side of the door to the dining room and we had to show them the palms and the backs of our hands as we entered. They also checked we were tidily dressed. You were sent to the cloakroom to wash dirty hands or smarten up your appearance. One reason for this inspection was no doubt that, on most days, we had Games in the period before lunch; and washing and dressing could have been done too hastily.

As the dining room door was closed, one of the boys on door duty went into the room where everybody was by now standing at their places in silence. The other boy stayed outside in the corridor. The one going inside turned sharp left and proceeded to the wooden corner cupboard. Opening the cupboard door, there was a choice of six or so "Graces" on a typed sheet. He memorised one and went to ring the bell. When Grace had been said, everyone sat down and started chattering.

Lunch arrived on two large wooden trolleys, wheeled in after Grace and positioned in the room on either side of the door. The trolleys had two shelves. On the top were large metal containers with the food inside. Underneath were the plates. Two staff stood behind each trolley and served the grub. The servers were again the two boys at the top end of each table (but different from the breakfast servers due to the rotation of places at every meal). The lunch time servers came and went from the trolleys and took the meals to the boys at their own table. If a roast was included, the servers got this separately from a side table next to each trolley at which Major B and Mr Newby carved the meat.

Meanwhile, outside the door, the boys on duty had lined up the latecomers along the corridor, backs to the wall. They weren't allowed into the dining room while the serving was in progress. If you were late, your name was taken and you lost some points. Possibly minus 3.

At the same time, another boy on duty was down in the basement making another list (from the name tags) of everyone who had left games kit on the floor or in an untidy condition. Games kit included gym shoes (plimsolls), football boots (metal studs), navy shorts with elasticated waist (Major B called them blue bags), T-shirt (red or

white) and woollen, knee-length games socks, which were all red, apart from the foot which was grey.

When the late boys were eventually let in, seated and served, the bell rang and the list of games kit miscreants was read out. I remember the words "Vêtements de sport", so this announcement must have had a French version also. The punishment would be something like minus 2 points per offending garment.

Shortly after, the bell rang again for another announcement in English or French. The French version was "Pour le premier disc au jourd'hui, vous allez entendre ...". This means "For the first record today, you are going to hear ...". The name of the record was followed by the composer's name, nationality and date of birth. Then the record was put on, and we all finished the main course in silence listening to the music.

The records were kept in a large old oak chest in the dining room. There were four boys in charge of the School record collection and radiogram. How these boys were chosen and how long they did this job, I don't remember.

Inside the lid of the chest were typed lists of the names of all the records. The four custodians of these vinyl 33 and 78 rpm discs operated in pairs, on alternate weeks. Their job was to select two records from the box before lunch began, make sure the record player was turned on and then put the record on after it was announced. When it finished, they put the record away.

When it was your birthday, you sat at the old oak chest with the boys in charge and could chose two records. The announcements were adapted accordingly — "For John Nevin's first birthday request, he has chosen ...". There was also a French version of this. Most of us chose something more lively than the Classics. Colonel Bogey's March from the film "The Bridge Over the River Kwai" was a favourite. So were the Scottish country dance tunes. Other memorables were the New World Symphony and the several installments of Peter and the Wolf and also Alice in Wonderland "with Jane Asher as Alice and Marguerita Scott as the storyteller.

At the end of the main course, the servers cleared away the plates and brought in the pudding and the pudding plates etc from the kitchen. The mail was handed out between courses. Disappointment if none for you. Pudding served. Announcement of second record or deuxieme disc and silence again until it had finished. Pudding plates cleared away etc. Napkins away, but no Latin or French phrase at this meal.

End of lunch — almost. At this point, on Wednesdays and Saturdays (half days) a side table was placed at the dining room door and Miss Nash disappeared into the Butlers' apartment to return with the tuck. There were usually two or three choices of sweets, all familiar brands of the day. Cadbury's or Fry's chocolate; Kendal Mint Cake (white or brown — the latter was more popular); McGowan's Toffee Bar; Spangles; Rowntree's Fruit Gums or Pastilles. My favourite was a bar of toffee, six or eight segments, with a dark brown base which tasted rather like liquorice, coated with a white topping of something else. I can't remember the name. It's possible that boys with a minus didn't get tuck. If Miss Blake was in residence, she helped Miss Nash. We queued up in orderly fashion, the youngest boys first, and filed out with our sweets. Blazers off in the cloakroom.

Tea Time

By comparison, tea time was an uneventful occasion in the late afternoon. Some announcements, no doubt; but no Grace, or records etc. I can't remember the exact drill; nor what we did later on about supper.

The Basement and other places

Directly after lunch, but again on certain days only, you could stock up on stationery etc. from one of the small rooms down in the basement. We queued along the basement corridor, which was where we had our lumber jackets in a long line of numbered pegs, in age order, much like the arrangement for the blazers in the cloakroom upstairs and the towels in the towel room. Bill Newby would be smoking his after lunch pipe in the stationery room and jotted down in a book whatever it was that you asked him for by way of pencils, rubbers, exercise books, postcards etc. He served us from behind the door, the top half of which opened like a horse gate. He queried any constantly recurring requirements. The costs were added to your fees.

Quite a lot went on in the basement. It was a bit dingy and relied almost entirely on artificial light. But it was usually the warmest place in the house because of the proximity of Bill Black's boiler room at the south end. Just outside the boiler room was a door which led up some outside basement steps to the back yard outside the kitchen. This door is now blocked off. So is the back door which led from the back yard to the kitchen — handy, in those days, for the vegetables etc stored in the outside sheds.

The room across from the boiler room was a boot room. Black outdoor and indoor shoes plus black wellies and rugby boots. The shoes were kept in numbered wooden pigeon holes which probably again corresponded with your number in age order. I remember that Bill Black and a daily helper from the boys cleaned the shoes; but we probably cleaned our own rugby boots. There was a wooden object outside the back door which enabled you to prise your boots off when they were wet and muddy.

Moving along to the bottom of the basement stairs, there was a pokey little closet under the stairs where Bill Newby and the other Masters used to change for Games. We never knew quite where they took their bath afterwards. No showers in those days.

Further on down the basement corridor was another boot room or changing room. It had small windows high up, from which, if you stretched, you could see the rear terrace at ground level. This is now a drying room for the tenants of the flats.

Beyond that was the stationery room already mentioned; and at the other (north) end of the corridor was the drying room. These last two rooms are now sealed off. The walls of the drying room were lined with wooden staging for our wet games kit. If the kit dried caked in mud, you wore it like a stiff board on its next outing. No clean replacements `til laundry day.

Up at ground floor level, at the top of the stone basement stairs (which Nicholas Morris could clear from top to bottom in one leap, aided by the metal handrail) was a notice board. This is where the payphone now is. Then the back door. Then another notice board on the right (still in place) as you entered the corridor (now gone). To the left, kitchen, pantry, Class 1/2. To the right, Dining Room, cloak room, Library, Crossley.

There was one other room, which I haven't previously mentioned, opposite the bottom of the staircase on the ground floor. This was a day room, rather than a class room. I have a photo of boys in this room doing basket weaving, with a framed poster of a BOAC aeroplane on the wall. There was a single large table in this room as well. My best guess is that this was used mostly by the two boathouse classes as their base in the main building — a place to wait before meals or somewhere for them to do indoor activities when the weather precluded games outside.

Leisure Activities

My recollection is that outdoor recreational activities took place after morning lessons and before lunch, at least on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The main sport was rugby in the Autumn term, football/soccer in the Spring term and cricket in the Summer term.

Rugby and Football

Rugby and football took place on a pitch some distance away, near the end of the drive. The pitch lay next to the main road, on a flat plain, 250 or so yards down from the Lodge. To get there, we ran from the school, down the main drive for about 200 yards as far as the second (now first) turning on the left. This leads into the back drive. At that point, we veered only half left, off road, and into the woods (to save our studs and avoid any traffic). We then jogged along a defined path (no longer visible) which, having crossed a couple of streams, rejoined the main drive just before the turning down to Pull Wyke. This detour bypassed the group of four large trees by the side of the main drive, known as the Four Sisters. It also missed the small promontory, now with a bench on it, which overlooks Pull Wyke and beyond to Waterhead. In those days, the main drive was in an appalling state of pot-holed disrepair.

Having rejoined the main drive, we continued for a short distance along the drive until reaching a low stone wall on the right, maybe 150 yards short of the Lodge at this point. In this wall is a gap, through which we turned right and into the woodland. After a short distance, the wood gave way to the top of a sloping field. We entered the field by stepping over a post and barbed wire fence (for sheep) and then descended quite steeply. At the bottom lay the pitch, on a flat plain, separated by a stone dyke from the main road to the north. The Lodge was 250 yards or so up the hillock on the west side; and a narrow stream almost bounded the pitch on the east. To the south were soggy reed beds which, today, have now claimed back the rugby pitch in its entirety. You would never know it had been there.

The pitch often flooded due to the low lie of the land and adjacent burn. The ball frequently found its way into the water. Before games started, we would lie face down looking into the stream for any trout.

The return journey after our game was the same, in reverse. It was a race for the cleanest bath. Games clothes off in the basement, then up two flights of stairs to the bathroom. Dettol was always added to the bath water and you could smell it. It was not long at all before the water was filthy but it wasn't changed until Matron decided, if at all. Cleaning baths was another activity for which extra conduct points could be gained. If you wanted to do this, you had to ask Miss Walker.

The water supply to the house, incidentally, was then a private supply. I never visited the reservoir but I think it lay up a track on the left hand side not long after starting up

the road to the Drunken Duck. Now, the water comes through a pipe under the Lake from the other side. It was once severed while we were staying at the holiday flats.

Cricket

Cricket was my passion at school. I could name every member of the England team, the Lancashire side and the Touring Party from abroad that year In 1961 the Tourists were the Australian team and I still have their souvenir programme. I aspired to be a great fast bowler like Brian Statham, the Lancashire and England player of that era who opened the England bowling with Freddie Trueman, the larger than life Yorkshireman. Stephen Pratt, who came from Yorkshire, saw himself as Trueman. My other rival was Nicholas Morris, but the quickest of us all was Peter Webber, a year or two older than we three were. None of us ended up playing for England.

Knockabout cricket took place on the lawn fairly close to the School building on the southwest side, with the wickets close to the large copper beech tree. The larger and flatter lawn lower down nearer the boathouse was still being constructed as a new cricket pitch and only became partly usable towards the end of my time. The third venue for cricket was up on the tennis court (never used for tennis) where cricket nets were in place all Summer. It is now completely overgrown.

There were organised team cricket matches and possibly also House matches. But I played knockabout whenever there was a spare moment. There was a queue to bowl, each of us having our own cricket ball. If you succeeded in getting the batsman out, you became the batsman. You did your own fielding unless anyone without a ball was prepared to keep wicket or chase the ball.

The cricket kit was kept in a shed up at the tennis court. The other sheds up in that area were used to keep our bikes in. You could have your own cricket bat but there were a number of communal ones. We took care and pride in treating our bats with linseed oil at the start of every season. It was another possession to compare with what everyone else had. My first cricket bat came from Tyldesley & Holbrook's of Manchester. We all used the leg pads provided. I still have a scar on my knee from going out to bat wearing only one pad and tearing my other knee on the buckle. I played so much cricket that the muscle between arm and shoulder on my right side was visibly more developed than on the left.

The Bike

The second most enjoyable outdoor activity was bike riding. Everyone had their own bike, another object for comparison with the others. I loved my bike and became proficient in how to maintain and repair every piece of it. The older boys could cycle anywhere in the grounds. In my time, I covered hundreds of miles on and off track within the policies. No mountain bikes then, of course.

The older you were, the further you were allowed to cycle or roam on foot within the grounds. We were put into six groups for this purpose, the boundary for each group being clearly defined. Conduct points would be deducted for being caught out of bounds. There were, however, some places which were out of bounds for everyone. The whole area to the north between the School building and Pull Wyke was out of bounds, probably because it is virtually all bog. In the opposite direction, the stone wall just beyond the boathouse and running up to the tennis court and beyond it, as far as the kitchen gardens, was the boundary to the south. Philip (not to be confused with Phil) Walker once took me beyond this wall and we followed the edge of the

Lake until coming to a small river, surrounded by reeds, which was known as The Nile. In the middle of the river was a sunken boat, its small cabin protruding above the water. Philip swam out to it. I thought this was very daring; and quite dangerous.

Kitchen Gardens

In the kitchen gardens were some greenhouses and a number of other buildings for horticultural use but not utilised as such. These gardens were largely uncultivated and have since been sold off for a house which now stands roughly where the greenhouses used to be.

The Back Drive

Beyond the kitchen gardens, the back drive extended as far as the back gate to Huyton Hill which is situated at the junction of the roads to Hawkshead and Wray. Today, the back drive is closed part-way down, at the point where another private house is situated. In my time, this house was still there and it is here that the metal gates now prevent further access along the drive. Those gates used to be the boundary limit for our wanderings and we weren't allowed beyond that point to the main road.

Returning down the back drive to the school, the woods on either side of the drive could be freely accessed within the confines of the stone walls which defined the limits of the School grounds. So, basically, we had a fair stretch of the back drive and the front drive for our use, along with the woodlands on either side, except for the boggy region near the Lake.

Out of Bounds

Other areas which were totally out of bounds lay nearer the School. The lawns directly in front and to the rear of the main building were regarded as the Butlers' own gardens and were only used by the boys for special events. These included Sports Day when the junior events were held on the front lawn and the senior events on the back lawn. The back lawn was marked out as a running track. Sports Day was attended by parents and coincided, I think, with the first of the two half terms in the Summer term. The second Summer half term was most likely when the Floodlight Revues took place with the parents seated on the back lawn to watch the various performances on the terrace. These lawns were well kept (far less moss than now). The front lawn contained flower beds and the rear lawn was surrounded by borders with well groomed shrubs and flowers. (See aerial photo at end.)

As you look from the School, the section of front lawn on the left of the drive rises to a point about 100 yards distant from the building. Behind this rise is a network of paths within a rockery consisting of some very large boulders. This was overgrown even in my time and we were not allowed in there. Interesting to speculate how this little maze may have looked when the place was run as a country house.

Bike Rides

Getting back to our outdoor activities on bikes, the older boys went on supervised bike rides in the Summer term on either a Wednesday or Saturday afternoon. This usually included climbing one of the peaks within the vicinity. For these trips, we formed up in seniority order, with our bikes, in pairs, along the path which stretches back from the main drive near the School along behind the copper beech tree. Bill Newby was invariably in charge of these trips and led the party. Another Master

would bring up the rear. Before leaving, we were given a briefing on road safety and made to check we had all the necessary clothing, the first aid kit etc.

The golden rule for cycling on the roads was that we must remain in pairs; and each pair must cycle 22 yards (the familiar length of a cricket pitch) distant from the next pair in front and behind. Cars could then nip in and out along the line with reasonable safety to ourselves.

There was the occasional mishap on these trips. Returning to School at the end of one outing, we were coming down the fairly steep hill from the Drunken Duck when Nigel Turner came off his bike travelling at speed. The result was fortunately no worse than nasty cuts and bruises but Nigel also lost a front tooth in the process and had to have it crowned. He was the only boy at the School whom I had met before I went there. Our parents knew each other and also had friends in common. Nigel is also the only boy I have always kept in touch with. He now lives in Seville, where I have visited him.

The worst thing that happened to me on any trip was the occasion when we climbed Scafell. This was the longest of the expeditions and you were only likely to do the Scafell trip once during your school career. Unlike most trips, Scafell needed a full day to complete. On the way up the mountain, I was carrying the first aid box that day in my haversack and put my watch in the box to protect it against possible damage. On the way down, nearing the bottom, I decided it was safe enough to put the watch back on. Then I realised that the box and my watch had been left on the summit of Scafell. Somebody had taken the box out of my haversack to use the first aid equipment, and not put it back. Mr Newby would not allow me to go back for it — quite rightly.

Estate Work

The other memorable outdoor activity was estate work. This meant helping to keep the grounds in order. Bill Black & Co did the real gardening but the work we did lent itself more to group participation. For the purposes of estate work and other activities, the School was divided, in age order, into about 6 "cohorts". The list of cohorts was put up at the start of each term on the notice board at the top of the basement stairs.

Each weekday, beside the cohort list, appeared a notice by Major B for that day. For example, cohorts nos 6 and 5 to report for estate work; nos 4, 3 and 2 to play rugby; and no 1 to help gather wood for the bonfire.

Apart from making the new cricket pitch, which I have mentioned already, estate work included sawing logs up near the bike sheds, using large double-handled saws with vicious teeth. We worked these saws in pairs to cut dead tree limbs which were suspended across two supports (cuddies). Another boy sat between the two supports to give greater stability and also to feed out the piece of wood as the logs were sawn off. Health and Safety legislation was obviously either in its infancy or non-existent.

In that same area was an old tractor which G.V.B. used to fire up occasionally. It had huge metal rear wheels with large spikes instead of tyres to grip the ground; and a bouncy metal seat like a massive saucer. The fuel — TVO — was stored in big metal barrels right next to the vehicle. It was probably used to pull out tree roots and the like, with chains attached.

The School Prospectus states that the criss-cross fencing down the side of the path from the back of the house all the way down to the pier was "like many other things in and around the School, made in our own workshops and from timber grown on the School estate". This was before my time.

Another estate work activity was leaf gathering in Autumn, there being no shortage of leaves at that time of year. A cohort would clear a particular area by gathering up the fallen leaves in swills, these being oval-shaped baskets which, turned upside down, looked like a giant turtle. The swills, in turn, were emptied into the School cart, an all-purpose contraption with one wheel at either side and a protruding wooden frame at the back which allowed three or four of us to push it. If a load was particularly heavy, the cart had a metal bar at the front which lifted off to allow ropes, with metal reinforced loops, to be inserted under the bar at the two front corners. This enabled the cart to be pulled by the ropes from the front as well as pushed from the rear. In Major B's absence, there was always the temptation to see how fast we could get the cart to go.

The destination for gathered leaves was round the base of a large tree just at the start of the woodland path on the left of the main drive where the cross-country diversion to the football pitch began. Round the base of the tree, we erected a very large circular enclosure of wire mesh fencing into which all the leaves were tipped for composting.

Estate work of some sort or another was therefore a regular duty for everyone. It was generally regarded by ourselves as a chore to be undertaken as cheerfully as your personality would allow. One or two boys, however, would volunteer to do estate work in their free time at weekends. These were people either desperate to earn additional conduct marks or who actually enjoyed that kind of activity. Malcolm Naughton, a very good friend, was in the second category.

Malcolm came from a farming family in the locality and he liked outdoor work — more than his studies, probably. His older brother had been at the School (before us) and gone on to Millfield. He was a great runner, apparently. Malcolm had inherited his brother's lumber jacket — among other items — which was practically white instead of grey, with continued washing. There was a song at the time called "Big John" and Malcolm had learned every word of it. I then learnt it from him and can remember it to this day. His Mum and Dad brought him to and from School in a magnificent black Austin Shearline. Malcolm was a pal of Bill Black and was happy to chat away to Bill in the boiler room.

In that room, the spades used for estate work were kept. Each boy was allocated a spade and they all hung on one wall with the top "T" of the handle supported on two nails or small pegs. On the back of the shaft of each spade, just below the handle, a number had been branded. You were allocated whichever spade bore your number in the age order of the School, just like the pegs for blazers, lumber jackets, towels etc.

The thing about Malcolm Naughton was that he not only cleaned his spade, like everyone else had to, but he polished the blade with oil as well. Malcolm also had the job of walking across the front lawn before or after breakfast every day to take the rain measurement from a metal tube protruding two feet or so from the ground. I was never sure where this data ended up.

Estate work was given the accolade of its own parade — the Estate Work Parade — at the Summer Floodlight Revues. I have a photo of the parade showing most of the

School taking part, the majority with spades aloft. We are wearing the standard games kit of red (Alfred) or white (Arthur) T-shirts and blue shorts. On this photo, I see I am holding one of the particularly vicious double-handled saws with my pal Derrick Gillingham at the other end. The ubiquitous cart is not there, but the dragging ropes are in evidence. Derrick and I had birthdays only days apart, so we went through the School together for five years almost always in the same dormitory etc. Derrick was great fun, full of cheery mischief and a huge fan of Biggles. I think he may have eventually joined the RAF. While at school, his parents were in Bahrain.

When the Estate Work Parade was performed at the Summer term Floodlight Revue, the marching about (on the lower terrace) with our working implements etc was performed to the musical accompaniment of the theme from The Bridge Over the River Kwai (already mentioned as a popular birthday record choice). In the film, this was, of course, the march of the forced labourers at the Japanese POW camp. One year, the correspondent from the local paper, in a piece entitled "Unforced Labour" was perceptive enough to describe the musical association as ominous; but it never seemed to have raised an eyebrow with the parents, although World War II was only 12 or so years distant.

This news-cutting (which I still have) was written in 1960, the year when the Floodlight Revue in the evening was preceded by a Fete in the afternoon. The proceeds of the Fete went to UNICEF, Mr B's extra-curricula passion. I have the letter from Hubert Butler to my mother, dated 9th May 1960, thanking her for running one of the stalls at the Fete. I see from the Fete programme that she ran the stall with Mrs Lomas, mother of John. Our parents became friends and I remember staying at their house in Lytham St Anne's. John's Dad was a successful Bookie. My Dad knew Jack Lomas from his visits to Salford and Bellevue greyhound tracks. (We even owned greyhounds for a spell.)

Other Sports

The other week-day pre-lunch sporting activities included cross-country running although I remember this as only an occasional sporting activity at Huyton Hill (unlike at St Bees, where it was not only an obsession but also a punishment device). I can't recall many such runs, but I do remember that we had an annual competitive cross-country race. One year, obviously before I had accepted that this would never be my sport, I kept up with the leaders and was in third place at about the half way point. That was at the start of the climb from the apex of the field adjacent to the Wray road up to the top of the back field. I had given it so much that I could only walk all the way up that section of the race and eventually finished 8th. You are either genetically suited for long distance running or you are not. I focused my (limited) running ambitions to short distance events, at which I was moderately good.

When all else was impossible outdoors because of the persistent rain (a fairly regular occurrence), the last resort outdoor activity was a walk in the rain, clad in blue mackintosh and sou'wester.

Weekend Activities

The weekend felt as though it had started after Friday evening Assembly, when the final conduct marks for the week were announced. These determined whether you had retained all privileges, in which case you could enjoy the weekend ahead; or whether you had ended the week with a minus score, in which case you wouldn't.

After lights out on Friday night, "Friday Night is Music Night" (still going strong) was relayed to every dormitory where a small speaker was connected in some way right back to the large radiogram in the Dining Room.

Woodwork

Saturday morning involved routine classes for everyone except those who took woodwork. The woodwork classes were held in one of the buildings up at the kitchen gardens which was kitted out as a work room with benches, vices, and a variety of joinery tools. We walked there and back and the classes lasted perhaps as long as two lessons (80 minutes). The tuition was provided by Mr Ted Pares (pronounced pears) whom we assumed was a local joiner. Discipline could be a bit ragged at the edges which did not make for rapid progress. There were perhaps about six of us in a class and those who did behave were rewarded by Ted Pares with a share of the cakes which he always brought in his lunch box for elevenses.

We each averaged one small item per term, usually completed by Ted himself so that we could take it home for admiration as our own work. I still have a cigarette box with the words "Made by Peter, July 1960" written in ink on the underneath by my Dad. This now contains birthday cake candles. I also still have a table lamp, which needs rewiring; and a book rack, which is a bit shaky now, having spent most of its life supporting encyclopaedias. I can remember making a small coffee table with black screw-in legs; a large coffee table with formica top and black screw-in legs; also a small stool, with the seat woven on top. These three are now long gone but were in use for years in my parents' house.

Saturday Afternoon

On Saturday afternoon, instead of doing the pre-determined outdoor activities posted up on the notice board, I think we were more or less free to choose what we did. An exception to that may have been team games (rugby, cricket etc) postponed from earlier in the week due to bad weather.

Fishing

Fishing off the pier was one of the weekend activities on offer. This was not sophisticated rod fishing but the more basic line-and-sinker version of the sport. It involved a baited hook (maggots or worms) being lowered into the water on the end of a line with a float on the surface which bobbed up and down when there was a fish on the hook, trying to pull free. The commonest catch was perch; then eels; and very occasionally, pike. The sporting thing to do in England is to throw caught fish back again, though sometimes the eels were cut up and fed to the cats on their plates at the top of the steps outside the kitchen door. A curious sight to behold was that, even when in pieces, an eel's body could move off a plate onto the flagstones. The keenest fisherman in the School was Andrew Seddon. Andrew came from the Blackpool/Lytham St Anne's area, where his Father was an estate agent.

Boating

Though a rowing boat was kept in the boathouse, I remember being out in it only once. In any event, it was not a regular activity and never undertaken without Major B being present.

The Younger boys were encouraged to have their own toy yachts. We sailed these in the Lake from the shoreline adjacent to the path leading to the pier. This is, in effect,

a small bay with a sloping grassed area between the shoreline and the path. The sailing area itself was enclosed by a wooden boom so that there was a sort of semi-circular Boat Pond. I have a photo of this.

This enclosure also doubled as the swimming area for the younger boys. To save our feet from the sharp stones on the bed of the Lake, we used to wear gym shoes for boating and swimming. The boom was situated perhaps 50 feet out from the shoreline at its farthest point so that no part of the enclosed area was out of our depth. However, the height of the Lake used to vary quite a lot depending on the rainfall. I have often seen the pier totally submerged but also exposed well down its supports in summer. I never saw the Lake completely frozen over, but this has happened in living memory.

Boating on the lake reminds me of Swallows and Amazons by Arthur Ransome. While I was there, a film crew wanted to use Huyton Hill as the location for a children's TV series of the book. In the event, they had second thoughts but Mr B had managed, as part of the deal, to obtain a copy of Swallows and Amazons for every boy, signed by the author. I still have mine.

Shooting

Opposite this small bay, on the other side of the path leading to the pier, was a rough clearing where the older boys were allowed to shoot with air rifles. There was a screen at the end of the range, formed by placing a number of tree limbs on top of each other to a height of perhaps 3 or 4 feet. You pinned your target on the screen and fired away.

This area has now been opened up by the removal of a great deal of lakeside vegetation to make a pleasant clearing by the lakeside, with benches here and there. I see one of them bears the name of Michael Hebden, who was at school with me, perhaps a year younger.

The keenest "shot" on the rifle range in my time was Colin Entwistle, already mentioned. Colin was from Whalley, near Blackburn, and his other main interests were cycling and photography. I have a framed photograph of St Bees Priory hanging in my home, taken by Colin's father. We stayed at each other's houses during the holidays. I think Colin has, or had, a photography business in Blackpool.

Swimming

In Summer, we used to be allowed to swim in the Lake, under supervision. at the finish of our weekend outdoor activities. The younger boys swam in the Boat Pond, as already mentioned, and the older boys took a dip from the pier. It was usually Major B who was in attendance for these afternoon swims. We collected our towels from the School but, as with the morning dip, we wore no swimming trunks. We removed our games kit on the grassed area adjacent to the Boat Pond and dried ourselves there afterwards.

The pier had been rebuilt fairly recently when I first went to Huyton Hill and was a single deck T-shaped design, like the one there now. It might even be the same one, give or take a few repairs. The previous pier, on the other hand, was a double-decker design and looked much grander. With such a wonderful boathouse, the old pier was no doubt originally constructed in the same ornate style. It is just visible on the aerial photo at the end of the text.

The best record of the old pier, however, was captured on "The School Film" which included footage of a variety of the boys' activities at the School. Miss Shuttleworth tells me that someone has borrowed the film. The filming was all done before my time and it would be a great shame if this irreplaceable piece of archive material vanished forever. It would be good to convert it to video. Major B used to show the film to the whole School occasionally.

We swam off the south side of the pier, within a rectangular area of water cordoned off by ropes tied from the pier down each side with a wooden boom across the end. The ropes were supported by large inflated rings half way along the sides. We were only allowed to swim within the confines of this enclosed rectangle which measured 25 yards long and perhaps 5 or 6 yards wide.

For the wary, there was a wooden ladder into the water. attached to the pier structure. Entering the water in this way, you could stand touching the bottom, in safety. Inside the rectangle, however, you were out of your depth almost immediately. And it quickly became deeper still. With increased confidence, you graduated to jumping or diving from the pier.

I could never muster the courage to dive. There is something about leaping head first into water which I could never handle. This was a distinct disadvantage when we had races because the divers obviously got a much better start. I know the boom was 25 yards from the pier because the races were organised into events of 50 yards, 100 yards etc. The best swimmers tended to be the boys who lived abroad in the Summer, usually because their parents worked overseas — Derrick Gillingham, Ian Tyson, Bruce Murdoch and Co.

Once a year, a group of the very best swimmers aimed to reach the small island which is very visible from the School, maybe a quarter of a mile out. (This, of course, is the same small island (parvam insulam) referred to in the morning Latin phrase about hoisting the flag.) This challenge was undertaken with Major B escorting the swimmers in the rowing boat, with a supply of life jackets. It was a brave effort by those involved. Lake Windermere was never a warm environment to swim in. I notice that the pier today is surrounded by a lot of slimy weed, lying just underneath the surface.

The Dam Stream

The muckiest leisure pursuit at weekends was making dams on the stream which runs through the grounds. The stream was situated on the far side of the back drive, reached along a path near the majestic oak tree up near the kitchen gardens. It was a boggy area of woodland and the stream probably acted as the natural surface-water drainage system. Wellies were essential. Along the sides of the stream, after rainfall, the ground could be very marshy and many a welly got stuck and detached from the foot in these conditions.

There were quite a number of dams built across the stream, using stones, clods of earth and mud. Some of them were a fair size and could contain a large volume of water when stopped up. The idea was to see just how much water your dam could hold. When it breached, or was released, the contents cascaded into the next dam downstream, which may or may not be strong enough to withstand the deluge. We spent many an absorbing Saturday afternoon harmlessly engaged in testing these structures to their limits or to destruction.

If you indulged in this earthy pastime, 2 or 3 boys would have their "own" dam, which was their domain. Dams changed hands, I remember, by inheritance; with boys leaving the school bequeathing their territory to favoured successors. It was here that our spades were also much used in the work of construction and reconstruction.

The Conker Tree

At the start of every Autumn term, there was a scramble to the conker tree to gather those which had already fallen off, and to bombard those which hadn't with missiles until they came to earth. Newly harvested conkers were a valued prize, particularly the larger ones for fighting purposes. The conker tree is still there at the side of the path beyond the maze and before it ascends to the kitchen gardens and the big oak. Surprisingly, there was only one such tree within our permitted bounds.

A certain amount of mystique attached to the process of preparing a conker for competitive activity. Since the fights involved trying to smash your opponents conker to pieces, the secret was to obtain a big specimen and make the shell as hard and mean as possible.

Conkers fresh from the tree were invariably too soft to withstand a battering. They needed soaking in vinegar or some more exotic preparation. Those kept from the previous year certainly had a hard shell, but were vulnerable to cracking when hit, because the insides had shrunk from the outer casing.

A hole was drilled or poked down the centre of the match fit conker (being careful not to split it) and string threaded through the hole with a knot at the end to keep the conker on the string when suspended vertically for combat.

You held your conker passively by its string while your opponent took a swipe at it with his, in the hope of hitting yours hard enough to break it. He kept going until one of his shots missed at which point roles were reversed. This exchange of shots went on until one conker was beaten to bits.

Every time your conker won a contest, this enhanced the status of the victor. So, for example, after 6 wins, the conker was a 6'er. One variation to this was that a victorious conker collected not just one further score, but all the scores which the defeated conker had previously accumulated as well.

British Bulldog

A very competitive and rough outdoor game which Brig Osmaston introduced us to was British Bulldog. From a group of, say, 12 or more boys, one was selected to be the Bulldog. He stood alone in the middle of an open area while all the others lined up to face him about 30 yards away.

They all then charged in a line in the direction of the Bulldog. His job was to bring down one of the advancing horde by rugby tackle or some such means. The victim joined the original Bulldog and together they faced the next charge with the aim of bringing down another 2 bodies to join them.

Gradually, of course, the Bulldogs outnumbered the others until there was only one left who had escaped capture. He was the winner but still had to take on the entire pack of Bulldogs in a final heroic solo charge, when he was inevitably savaged by the mob in glorious defeat. It could get a bit rough.

Bonfires

I only remember one bonfire on November 5th but we possibly had one every year. The one I recall was memorable because the yew tree (down slightly from the big copper beech) on the south lawn was covered in bananas hanging from its branches. The yellow skins caught the light of the nearby flames from the fire until we picked one each at the end of the evening.

TV

Continuing with what we did at weekends, the big event on Saturday was watching TV or a film in the evening. TV reception in that part of England was not good and there was probably only BBC1 anyway. The Crossley floor was cleared by moving all the desks to one side and setting out rows of enough chairs for the whole School, facing the alcove. A screen was set up in the alcove. The TV was actually a large kind of transmitter, quite unlike a TV in appearance, from which the picture was projected onto the screen. It worked well enough and produced a big picture for the whole audience, which was the main objective.

The regular Saturday night programmes which I remember were Dixon of Dock Green and Laramie (cowboys). The younger boys sat nearest the front, to minimise taller heads blocking their view. They also went off to bed first while the older ones stayed on a bit longer.

Every so often, instead of TV, Major B would show us a film. No videos in those days, of course, and no colour TV; but some of the films were in colour. He no doubt hired these from some source. The large metal spools unravelled the images, through a projector at the back of the room, over our heads, and onto the screen in the alcove. The spools needed to be changed at least once during the film. I can still hear the background clicking sound of the rolling projector as the audience watched attentively.

Sunday — Letters Home

Sundays were the only days without any lessons. After breakfast, we still went to our classrooms but to write letters home (compulsory) and to anyone else you wished to write to e.g. sisters, brothers etc. My mother faithfully wrote back to me every week and her letters meant a lot. There was no other communication with home. They were usually sent along with the Beezer or Topper, the comics being rolled up within a brown wrapper bearing my name and address. We traded comics enthusiastically.

The letter-writing might be interrupted by a call to report to the barbers for a haircut, if you were unlucky, as already described. Letters were folded in half and placed sideways inside their addressed envelopes, but without sealing them up. Major B glanced over all the letters that evening and awarded conduct marks for those which were well set out and neatly written. The marks were posted next day on the notice board. In addition to letters, you could also send postcards. The usual postcard was the one of the aerial photo of the School. These could be acquired from Mr Newby's stationery "shop" in the basement.

After letter-writing, the weekly "Changing Houses" Ceremony was performed, as mentioned in some detail earlier on.

Sunday lunch was nothing special. In fact, weekend cooked meals suffered from the absence of kitchen staff. Cakes and the like were probably the only items on the weekend menu which we didn't have normally.

Wray Church

We went to Wray Church every second or third Sunday afternoon. The Vicar was Rev. Lindsay. It was a church service for the School only. The whole School attended and we walked there under the guidance of Mr and Major B. We set off along the back drive and cut down the triangular field (where I gave up on the annual cross-country race) onto the main road. This was a good shortcut, providing ground conditions were dry, bypassing the back gate. From there, we completed the journey on the main road. We wore our full uniforms and shoes were supposed to be kept clean.

The protocol for road walking was similar to cycling — walking in pairs with 22 yards between each pair to enable cars to manoeuvre in and out. Mr B in front, Major B at the back. On arrival at the church, we formed a long line, in age order, along the metal fence opposite the church entrance and which separates the church drive from the adjacent field. The youngest boy, at the end of this line (nearest the road) wheeled round, with the second youngest boy following him, and so on, and they filed along to pair up with the oldest boy, second oldest boy etc at the other end of the line. We then entered the church in pairs. In this way, the younger boys had someone to guide them through the business of finding hymns, when to kneel etc, during the Service.

The journey back to School from Wray could become less orderly. It had been a long time to behave properly and steam had built up. At the roadside were bushes, plentiful with berries. Rose hips, in particular, made good itching powder when peeled down to their rough insides. When broken down further, these skin irritants were inserted down the back of shirt collars.

On the Sundays when we didn't go to church, the afternoons were much like Saturday afternoons, as I recall, with the freedom to choose from the available range of lawful activities. If there had been a film show on the Saturday, it might have been repeated on the Sunday evening. I don't think we watched any Sunday evening TV. There was certainly no TV through the week.

Indoor Occupations

When the weather precluded activities outside (weekdays or weekends), G.V.B. posted a notice on the board which simply read "Indoor Occupations". These were not prescribed for us in the same way as the outdoor activities, and we could amuse ourselves with a fairly broad range of options. Indoor occupations took place in our own classrooms although the boathouse classes, I think, came to the Day Room in the main building; or they may possibly have just integrated with the other classes there.

More Cricket

One of my favourite indoor games was Owzat. It was a very simple cricket game. One player rolled a six-sided (numbered 1 to 6) cylinder to accumulate runs for his batsman and then the other player, the bowler, rolled a second cylinder. The bowler hoped that, when the second cylinder stopped, it would land on a side which gave the batsman "Out" e.g. Bowled, LBW etc. This alternating batting and bowling

process continued until the eleven batsmen in the team were "All Out"; then the other player started his eleven innings and tried to accumulate a bigger total for his team.

I was sent a cricket magazine from home every month which always contained a photo of at least one famous personality or a County or International cricket side. These were carefully cut out and preserved in cellophane covers. I still have some.

Stamps & Board Games

Stamps were another favourite indoor activity. I continued buying "First Day Covers" well into my twenties. Chess, draughts and other board games were always a popular stand-by. I had, and still have, a game called Attack. This involved cardboard soldiers of different ranks moving round a board, avoiding mines, and challenging each other until you had removed the bulk of your opponent's army. You did this by attacking a lower ranking soldier than the one you attacked with. The final aim was to capture your opponent's flag.

Basketwork

There is a photo in the Prospectus showing boys in the Day Room (wearing ties, unusually) doing basketwork. In fact, this was quite enjoyable. All you needed was a base — there were various different shapes — with holes round the edge; and a supply of wet (supple) cane. Insert lengths of cane into holes and secure them upright; then weave long strands of the wet cane in and out of the uprights to achieve the desired height. In this way, we made wastepaper baskets, decorative plant pot holders: tea-trays; teapot stands etc.

Model making

Card games were always well contested (Pontoon; Whist etc.); but perhaps the most universally popular indoor activity of all was model making. These kits were manufactured mainly by Airfix or Ravel and came in cardboard boxes with an attractive coloured picture of the finished article on the lid. War planes were the favourite, followed by cars and Army vehicles. The pieces were made of grey plastic, the smaller pieces being attached to plastic stems from which you twisted them off when needed. The kit also included a tube of glue, instructions and any markings or transfers for the completed item.

Much meticulous effort went into constructing these masterpieces which were on display everywhere in the senior classrooms e.g. on top of the bookshelves at the back of the Library. Once the model was completed — some were never finished due to intemperate frustration or other causes — the final touch was to paint the machine in colours as close as possible to the original livery. Airfix did a range of paints for this purpose, purchased separately. To meet the steady demand for new kits, boys would ask Major B to buy their next choice at a shop in Kendal, where he went most Wednesday afternoons. (Though no doubt for other messages as well.)

Half Term

Half terms were eagerly anticipated both as an escape from School routine and for the reunion with parents. Food was also an attraction. These breaks lasted from Saturday morning to Sunday evening, except that the second of the two Summer half terms included one extra day, probably the Friday.

Staying overnight in an hotel and eating endlessly was always enjoyable. If you stayed in a local hotel, at least one other boy's family would almost certainly be there as well. On one occasion, we were having lunch at the Sun Hotel in Coniston when Donald Campbell came in and sat down at another table. That hotel, I seem to recall, was run by the Robinson family whose son, Anthony. I believe, had been at Huyton Hill.

Sometimes my father was unable to come up at weekends due to work commitments. (He was a G.P.) If I was lucky, someone else would take me out with them. I remember Nigel Turner's parents doing this at least a couple of times. I still recall when his mother laid out an unforgettable picnic — crockery, knives and forks, tablecloth and even white wine — at the edge of the river at Brathay. On another occasion, I was having lunch with them at the Borrowdale Hotel and his parents told the waiter that the cheese he'd described as French was no such thing. Odd, the things you remember.

Once, when my parents were reciprocating by having Nigel with us for half term, we behaved quite disgracefully at the Tarn Howes Hotel. This was a favourite place, then run by Mr Mossop but now an hotel no longer. In the course of one afternoon, we broke the tennis court net by repeatedly jumping over it and went on to vandalise a rhododendron bush by tearing through it with big sticks, lashing out in search of a rabbit. It was Nigel's fault!

A few boys did not get out at half term at all because, for example, their parents were abroad. These boys usually flew out to their families for the Summer holidays but stayed in the UK with other relatives for the Christmas and Easter vacations. Once or twice, I also stayed at School over half term. Since we were a very small group, normal routines were suspended and Major B tried to make our break as pleasant as possible. In Summer, it was on such occasions that you might, for example, go out in the rowing boat.

Pens

Another very important personal possession, like watches and cricket bats, was fountain pens. I mention this in the context of half terms because that's when I remember being treated to new pens. The brand name gave away the price. The most expensive pen was a Waterman's followed by Parker, Swan, Osmiroid and Platignum. Better still if you were also given a matching propelling pencil. We spent a lot of time dismantling and reassembling our pens; washing out the long rubber ink reservoir; then changing the ink colour and refilling them from the Quink bottles. Even the nibs were removed, unless, as with some Parkers, they were hooded. Nibs were compared, even exchanged — broad, medium, fine, italic etc. The top of the range set would be fountain pen, propelling pencil and ballpoint in a posh case. Ink fights were commonplace. Inky fingers were a permanent state.

On returning to School from half term, it was mandatory to hand in all tuck as soon as you got in the door. Large biscuit tins, lids removed, awaited us for this purpose with Miss Nash in attendance, to see that we emptied our pockets into the tins. Inevitably, some contraband was smuggled through Customs without being declared. The tuck we handed in was later recycled communally along with the regular tuck distributions after lunch on Wednesday and Saturday.

The Ordeals
Some already mentioned

I have only mentioned two serious ordeals so far, which were haircuts on Sunday morning and the elocution coaching for words which I found impossible.

Homesickness was obviously a problem for many boys but it was usually something you got over fairly quickly.

The naked bathing and cold baths were routine and unavoidable, and so, by necessary acceptance, ceased to be ordeals for most of us, - like trained dogs.

Fire Drill

More frightening was the fire practice at the start of term. Everyone had to take part. Since all the dormitories were on the first or second floor of the building, it was a fair drop. In each dorm was a fire rope coiled inside a metal case which also contained a device to ensure that the rope didn't uncoil too quickly as you went down. At the end of the broad, flat, rope was a harness. This was placed over your head and fitted under both arms, like a big sling. You then backed out through the window and, in a state of terror, let go of the outside sill to descend to the ground. You can still see some of the bars on the outside sills which we held onto before the drop. The descent was painfully slow due to the controlling mechanism at the top. It was a huge relief to reach the bottom but, coming down, it felt as if your life was more at risk than being saved.

Being Ill

Illness at School was one of the unavoidable risks of communal living; though malingering was not unknown for those attracted by the prospect of a few days rest. The more serious the ailment, the more likely you would be isolated in "Wray", a room on the first floor, at the southern extremity of the building, with a pleasant view down to the boathouse and up to the tennis court. The beds were just the same as in the other dormitories.

There was an outbreak of chickenpox during my second or third year which turned into an epidemic. I remember it because I was one of only a handful to escape. Most of the dormitories had to be used for the afflicted and our small group of survivors felt like the ones who were isolated. Major B tried to maintain some sort of pattern of lessons and recreational activities. The only other survivor whom I remember in that group was John West. John had an older brother at the School, Albert Anthony Ashcroft West, as I recall. They came from Barrow-in-Furness (then in Lancashire). I eventually caught chickenpox from one of my daughters about 20 years later — it was quite painful, at that age.

The worst experience I had of being ill was at the very start of one Summer term when I was isolated in Wray during the first day or so. A rash had appeared all over my body. I didn't know what it was and Matron wasn't sure enough to say. I looked out of the window and saw everyone else mucking about outside or going up to the tennis court for cricket. Lots of tears of misery at what I was missing and the prospect of being the only victim of this illness and alone for days or weeks.

Quite unexpectedly, the gloom lifted completely on the second or third day when Mr B came in and told me I was being sent home again. I had German measles and this move was designed to stop it spreading through the School. That evening, he drove

me in his car to somewhere about 30 or 40 miles away to rendezvous with my parents who arrived from the other direction. Two weeks extra holiday. When I returned to Huyton Hill, everyone had German measles. It was so widespread that they were just going about normally. It was not a condition which seemed to badly affect young boys; and it was probably better to get it over with at a young age anyway.

Hercules

Being upset by irrational fears is one of the hazards of a young imagination. The most acute panic attack I experienced was, as it happened, at home during one of the holidays early in my school career. I suddenly realised that, at the start of the following term, I would have to perform the tasks of "Hercules"; and I knew absolutely nothing about how to do this, what it might involve or whether I was capable enough.

We all took turns at being Hercules, from the time you entered Form 3. The Hercules rota was pinned up on a notice board. When your turn came, you were excused the first one or two lessons of the day. Instead, you changed into games kit and reported for duty to Bill Black. You did tasks like taking the day's requirement of vegetables from the outside sheds to the kitchen; sweeping the back yard; cleaning some shoes in the boot room; shovelling coal in the boiler room etc.

At the age of 9 or so, this was all too much for me to cope with and I had tearful sessions with my Mum on more than one occasion, worrying about what lay ahead. Crying to her about the great unknowns of Hercules seems quite ridiculous now. But I needn't have worried. Everything went fine.

School Reports

The worst ordeals of the School holidays were visiting the dentist (every holiday; no injections for fillings) and the day when the School Report arrived. It wasn't the reports on the mainstream subjects which worried me so much as the two little pages at the end entitled "Helpfulness" and "Manners". These were always a problem for some of us; and sometimes I just knew Mr B would be giving my parents a polite but firm indication that their son "could do better' in these disciplines. I made the effort to compensate for behavioural shortcomings by above-par performances in class and at games; but there had been one particular term where "Helpfulness" and "Manners" had been at an all time low. I had to take evasive action.

On this occasion, I waited every day for the report to arrive in the post at home and, when it did (it was usually about 10 days or so into the holiday) I got to it first. I opened the envelope carefully and the contents confirmed what I had expected. I removed the two offending pages and stapled the remainder together again. Next day, I replaced the envelope behind our front door after the postman called. My Dad commented at table that the envelope seemed to have been opened; but he didn't question why "Helpfulness" and "Manners" reports were missing that term. Shocking.

Going to boarding school inevitably set me apart from friends at the local primary school where I used to go. This must have been the case for many of us who lived in areas where going away to school was not the norm. My life was different from that of my friends at home. At that age, differences of any kind can be uncomfortable, even (or especially) where the advantage is supposed to lie with you. I didn't feel any advantage, even if that was the perception. I felt quite awkward about my other world, at times. The holidays could pass slowly for me after the local school had gone back.

Eat Up

The most dreadful ordeal of all was being forced to eat everything served to you at meals, particularly if lunch included fatty meat. The worst table to be at was Mr B's. He insisted on clean plates all round. The other tables were not quite so uncompromising.

His work with UNICEF gave rise to comparisons from him between our lives and the situation facing children in the Third World. By extension, it was unthinkable to leave any food on our plates. But the one thing I could not eat was fat. We were made to stay behind after the meal in an empty Dining Room with our plates in front of us containing the items which we refused to eat. Out of everything that happened at Huyton Hill, this punishment was the one I dreaded the most. It was a naïve response by the Headmaster to a world problem. I scowled at him with a lonely sense of righteous indignation. But I refused to capitulate. I wasn't going to eat these horrible remains and I sat there until they were taken away.

Needless to say, whenever possible we concealed unwanted food in handkerchiefs etc and smuggled it out; or let it drop on the floor. Not always easy, though, when sitting near a member of staff.

Despite our occasional differences, the Butlers were always very well disposed towards me (and everyone else). In today's world, they would have approved of us all going out and stopping everyone destroying the planet; and each other; defending anything worth defending; and, above all, (especially for Hubert) bringing an end to the deaths occurring every few seconds due to Third World famine.

When Gerald died, Hubert wrote to inform me, and no doubt all other old boys. When Hubert himself died, there was a Memorial Service in London.

Competitions

Towards the end of term (maybe even every term) everyone in the School. except perhaps Form 1/2, took part in various written tests on different topics. The topics I remember were General Knowledge; History Dates; Spelling; and Maths. We sat these papers in class, instead of a normal lesson.

Each test was marked out of 100. The results were announced, in ascending order, by Major B at lunch time, some days later. It was quite exciting if you were one of the last names to be read out. Conduct (plus) marks were awarded to the boys with the best results in each test. So, if you came top in any test, you got 10 extra points; 9 extra if you were second; and so on for the top 10 places.

The General Knowledge competition was always the most difficult and even 50 out of 100 was a good score. We took the General Knowledge paper home with us at the end of term for discussion with our families. Then we had the same test again at the start of the next term. The marks were obviously significantly better and we were correspondingly wiser.

The Spelling test was simply a case of writing down 100 words to the best of your spelling ability, after they were spoken out by the Master taking the test. The Maths test (it may have had another name) was more than just arithmetic. It also contained some questions like "How far distant is the sun from the earth?", - that sort of general knowledge with a numerical answer. I once (only once) came top in the Maths

competition although this was never my strong suit. That's why I remember this triumph. The boy who always came top in anything mathematical was Robert Ashton. He had terrific ability. Robert was also a first class wicket keeper.

My favourite test was the History Dates. It was in two formats. One part listed 50 dates (e.g. 1815) against which you had to write down the event which occurred in that year. The second part was the reverse — the names of events (e.g. Battle of Flodden) for which you had to provide the correct date. I liked History, so I enjoyed this. Apart from the General Knowledge competition, I don't think we sat the three other tests again at the start of the following term, although I could be mistaken.

End of Term

At the end of each term, we helped Matron pack our trunks during the final week and they were sent by rail for delivery to our homes, along with our bikes.

My journey home was always by rail, from Windermere to Manchester Exchange. It was an early start with, as I remember, breakfast of scrambled egg on toast. We then assembled in the Crossley with our brown overnight cases waiting for the coach to take us to the station. Before leaving, we sang the appropriate hymn "God Be With You We Meet Again". I was home by lunchtime.

Postscript

After Huyton Hill came St Bees. It just wasn't the place for me at all. It was a rugby school, above all else. What happened in those grim and isolated surroundings was of no real relevance to the future life outside. 1962 to 1967 were five unusual and unproductive years. By the time I was 18, I'd had quite enough of being told what to do by other people. I only wanted to escape from home and school, and have a more enjoyable life of my own. Like any 18 year old. Things could only get better, and they did.

Dundee University, from 1967 to 1971, was a hugely enjoyable and happy liberation compared with the five previous years of pointless attrition. I graduated in Law, got married and qualified as a Solicitor, in that order. I have lived and worked in Scotland ever since and (semi) retired last year. I still do some part-time Tribunal work. Life was almost blighted by a rare and serious neurological illness I had some years ago. So I thank God for the recurring opportunity to make the most of each day. There's still plenty I want to do.

And that's it. If you have managed to read this far, my own efforts in putting these recollections down on paper have been worthwhile. The thinking has been done at the dining room table here in Strathkinness and it has taken about a month, on and off. The result has been assembled on the basis of my own memory and without any real research or collaboration. The literary lapses, clichés, and factual inaccuracies are therefore entirely my own.

The plea in mitigation is that, at this distance in time, a reasonably accurate recollection is better than no record at all. Where I have had doubts or uncertainties, the narrative confesses to this and. even after 40 years or so, I tried to resist any temptation at invention for the sake of a good yarn.

I must thank my wife Janet and daughters Elizabeth, Caroline and Rosemary for their encouragement to finally get on with it; to Muriel Shuttleworth for her support for the idea; and to Sheila Lawson for typing the whole manuscript.

A word about the Photographs

Three School photographs are reproduced at the end. I have listed all the names I can remember of the people appearing in them. I have also added some spontaneous associations with some of these names.

The general seating formations on the photographs were as follows:

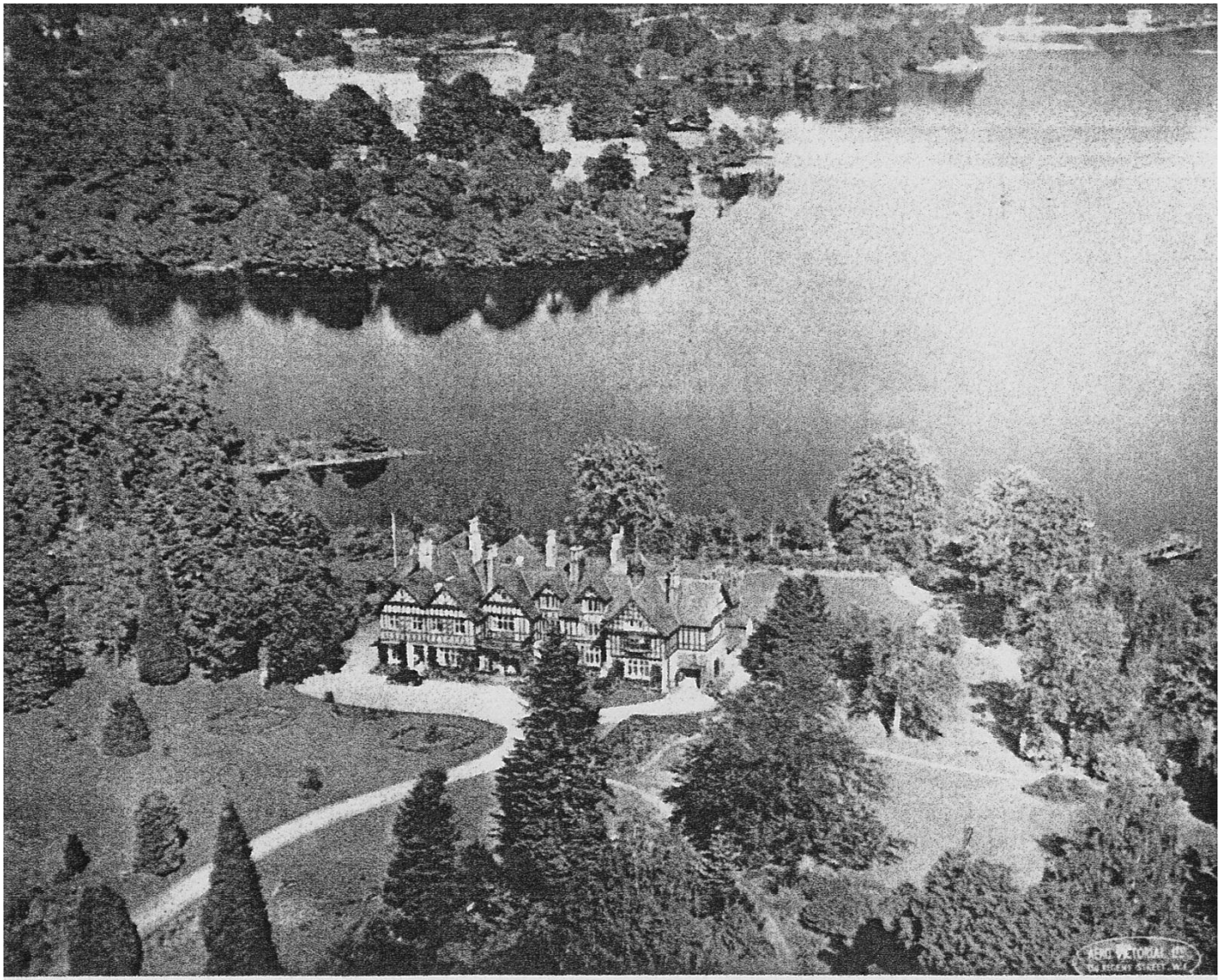
Sitting on the ground at the very front, legs crossed, were the youngest boys. Directly behind them, sitting in the front row, were the oldest boys. The two boys at the centre of this row were the respective House Captains of Arthur and Alfred. Next to them, and working outwards, are the respective Vice Captains, Prefects and Fourth Boys. The remainder of each side of this row are the other senior boys on the House.

Behind them, the back two rows consist of everybody else in no particular House order. In fact, they have probably been arranged according to height rather than age or seniority. Generally speaking, however, the boys along the back row are younger than those in front of them.

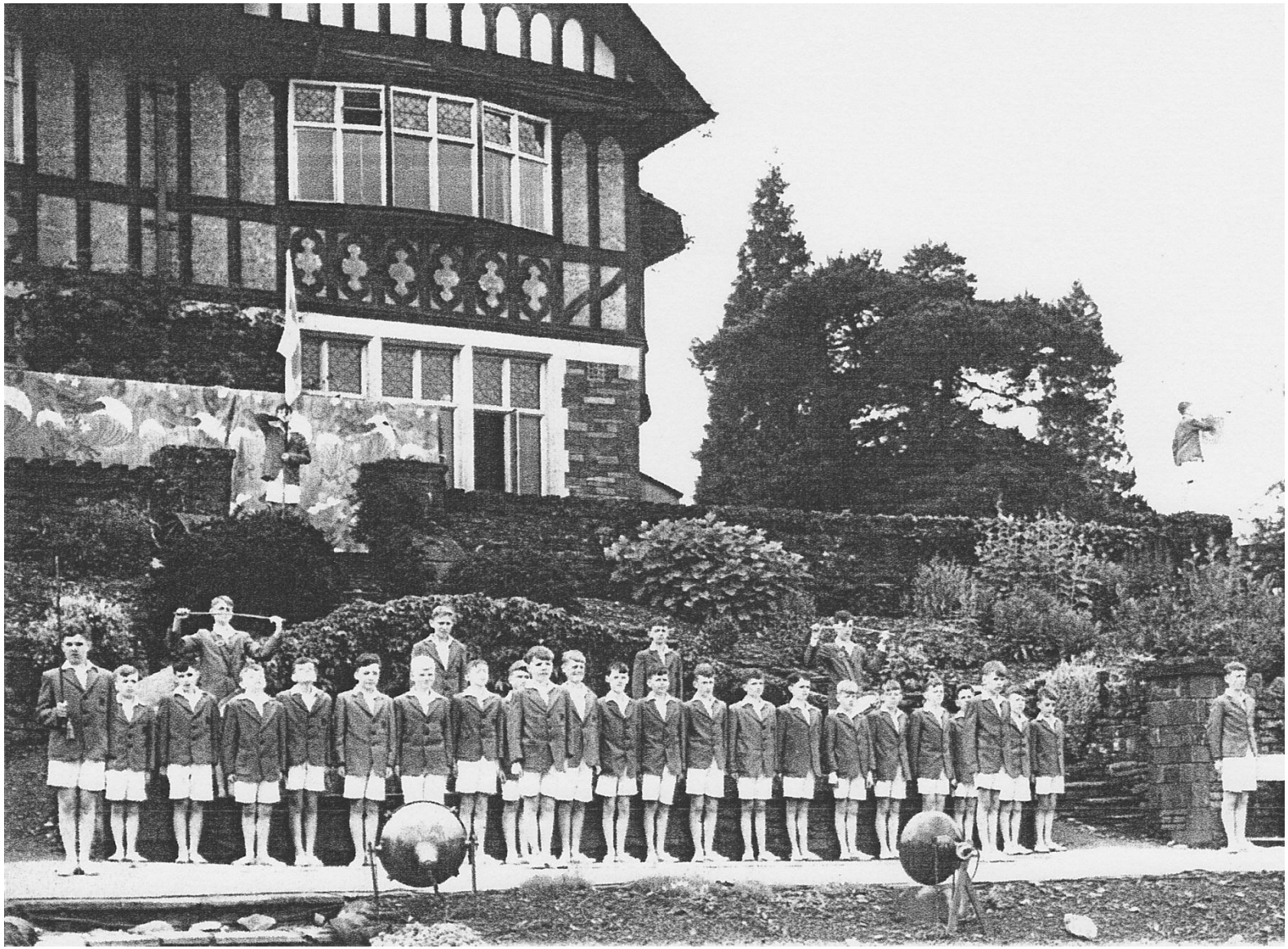
You will see from the lists that I have remembered almost all of those appearing in the photograph of 1959. It seems to be that one remembers contemporaries most readily; and senior colleagues more easily than junior colleagues. I apologise to anyone whose name I should have remembered but didn't; for any mistakes in the names I have mentioned; any spelling mistakes of names; and any inaccuracies in the associated comments.

" I WILL WITH A GOOD WILL. "

DAILY ELAG CEREMONY AT HUYTON HILL SCHOOL. ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT



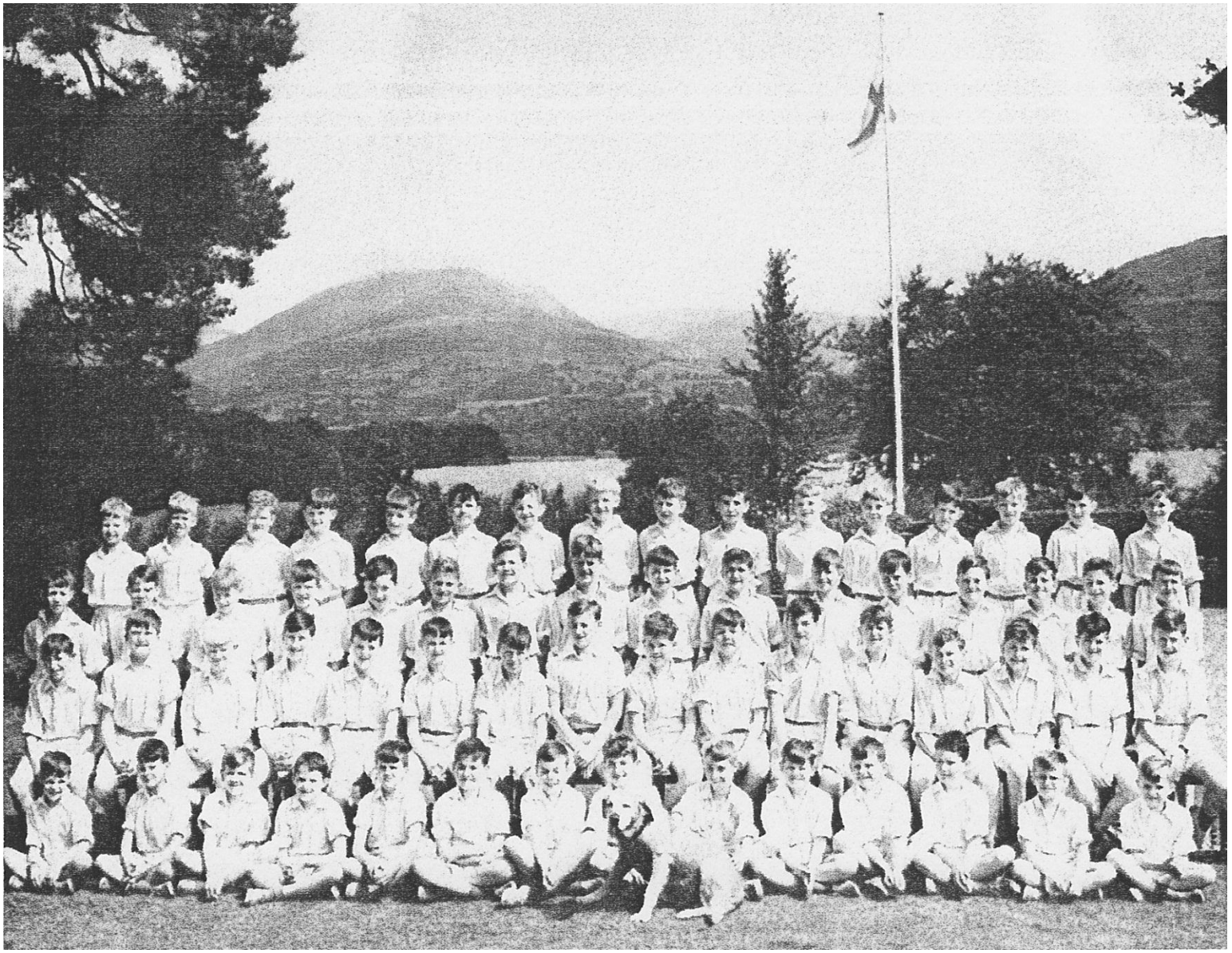
The Main Building from the air.



The Floodlight Summer Review

Part of the Dining Hall

A School group 1949



School Photo - Summer 1959. 62 Boys present

Front Row (the youngest/smallest boys — sitting legs crossed with Rusty the dog in front)

Left to Right

John Giles	Youngest boy in School. Mentioned in text.
Daniel Bunting	Very bright. Mentioned in text. From Reading.
Andrew Seddon*	Mentioned in text. From Lytham St Anne's area.
John 'Ratty' Rattray	G.P's son from Keighley, Yorks. House amusingly called `Kilmany'. Could recite "Albert and the Lion", complete with accent, by heart.
Nicolas Morris	Mentioned in text. From Leeds or thereabouts.
John? White	
Michael Hebden	Mentioned in text.
Derrick Gillingham	Mentioned in text. Parents in Bahrain.
Timothy Spencer	Touching Rusty the dog. One of the twins. Mentioned in text. From Bucks.
John Hargreaves*	Possibly from Lancaster.
Philip Nicol	From Manchester (Eccles). Father a G.P. Stayed at his house in later years when my father did 'Locums' there when they were on holiday.
Gareth Banner	
Mendus*	
Nigel Johnston	

Second Row (the most senior boys divided by Houses Arthur are on the left (8) Alfred on the right (8)

Left to Right

Richard Heppinstall	From Huddersfield. Elder brother of David (below).
Grant Muter*	
Simon Barber	
Peter? Thomson	
Peter Webber	Fast bowler. Mentioned in text.
Stuart Harrison	
Roger Batho*	
David Cade*	From Ulverton way. Became a Doctor. Had elder brother John.
Christopher? Powell	Allowed to wear long trousers when legs bothered by eczema.
Neil "Dumbo" Dumbleton*	Very quick talker. Went to Cambridge. Lives in St Andrews. Works at University.
Colin Armstrong	Oldest boy in School that year.
Jeremy Paton	The pianist. Mentioned in text.
Alan "Tweedie" Rhead*	From Scotland.
Stuart? Sutcliffe?	
Richard Morris	Elder brother of Nicolas (above)
Michael Graves	Elder brother of Harvey (below)

Third Row (next most senior boys)

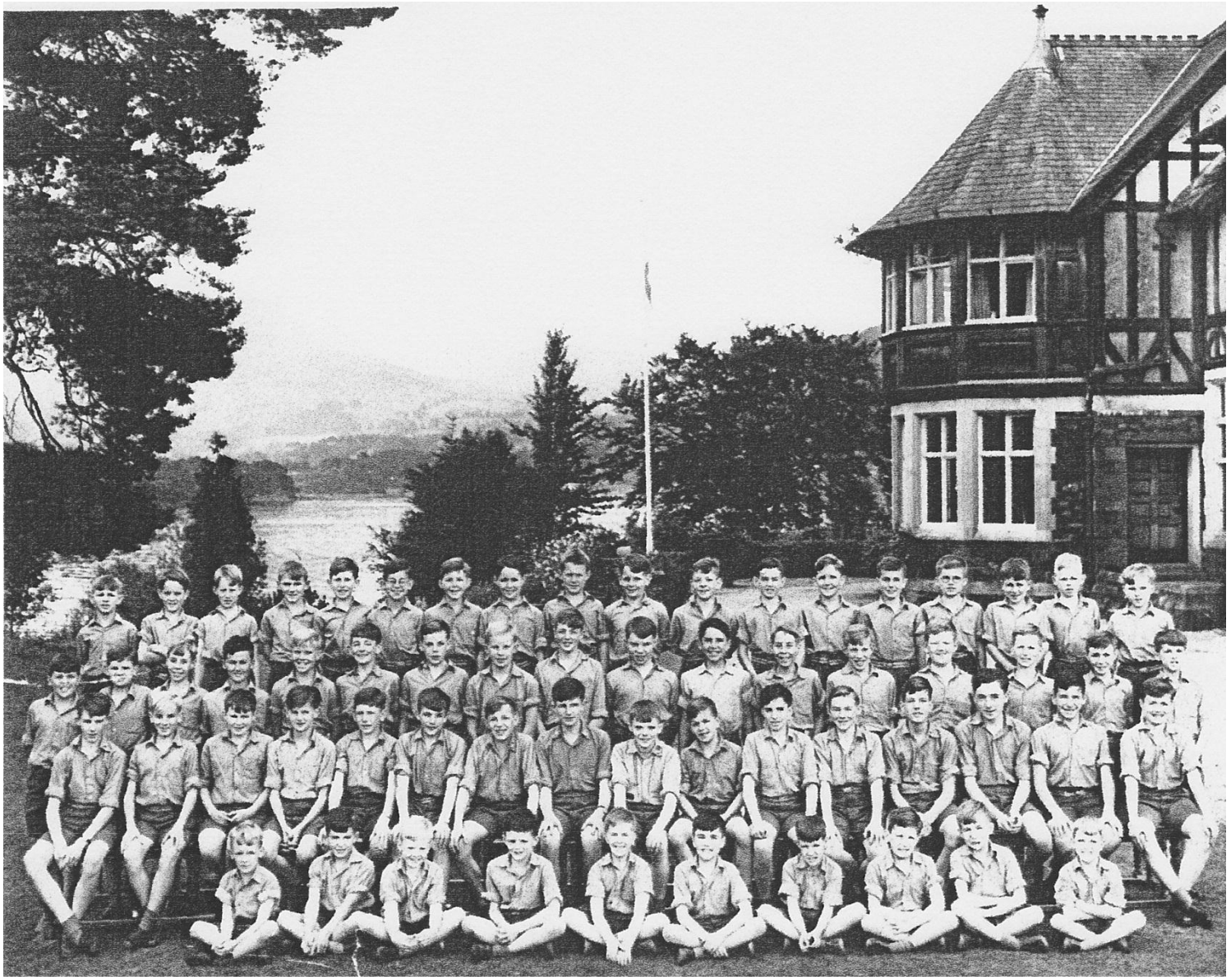
Left to Right

Phil Walker	Philip, the other Walker, (mentioned in text) seems not to be present.
Timothy Bradshaw	
Paul Lockwood	"Plockers". Mentioned in text.
Nigel Turner	Still in touch. Mentioned in text.
Patrick "Paddy" Morgan	My shadow. Mentioned in text.
Stuart Ellison	Tommy Steel quiff.
Donald Wilson	Mentioned in text.
Stuart Fisher	Good swimmer.
Michael Cheetham	
Alan Ferguson	
Roger Whitaker	Visited him durindays in nearby Oldham where parents had a pub.
Alistair Bredée	
John? Moore	
Robert Ashton	Great at Maths. Mentioned in text.
Brett Harris	From Brighton.
David Heppinstall	Younger brother of Richard (above). Many good laughs together.

Back Row (second youngest row, standing on benches)

Left to Right

John Lomas	Mentioned in text.
Bruce Murdoch*	Parents in Gulf. Good sportsman. Mentioned in text.
Harvey Graves	Younger brother of Michael (above)
Malcolm Naughton	Mentioned in text.
Peter Lord	Train buff. Went on to Rannoch.
Peter Burbidge	Second of 3 brothers. From Eastbourne.
Michael "Foxy" Kiernan	
Toby Harrison	Son of Claude, the Artist. Mentioned in text.
Peter Fletcher	From Liverpool. Second of 3 brothers.
Richard "Dickie" Burbidge	Older brother of Peter (above)
John West*	From Barrow. Mentioned in text.
Richard Spencer	Twin of Timothy (above)
Edward Coulson	
Stephen Pratt	Mentioned in text.
Peter Royds*	Yours truly.
lain Tyson*	Started together at Huyton Hill. Finished together at St Bees 10 years later. Even on same Houses throughout. Parents in Bangkok. Had illicit transistor radio on which we listened to Radio Luxemburg (weak reception).



School Photo - Summer 1961 61 Boys present Front Row (youngest boys)

Left to Right

Another Burbidge	Younger brother of Richard & Peter.
Stephan?	
?	
?	
Charles McConnell	
John Giles	Still on front row.
? Calder?	
Mervyn Picker	
?	

Second Row (oldest boys — Arthur on right (8) this time, Alfred on left (8))

Left to Right

Nigel Turner	In 1959 photo.
John Nevin*	Great musician. Left St Bees early and went to Canada.
Colin Entwistle*	Mentioned in text.
Malcolm Haughton	In 1959 photo.
Peter Fletcher	In 1959 photo.
Peter Lord	In 1959 photo.
Jack Priestley*	From Yorkshire
Michael Cheetham	In 1959 photo.
John West	In 1959 photo.
Andrew Seddon	In 1959 photo.
Peter Royds	In 1959 photo.
David Heppinstall	In 1959 photo.
Robert Ashton	In 1959 photo.
Patrick Morgan	In 1959 photo.
Dickie Burbidge	In 1959 photo.
lain Tyson	In 1959 photo.

Third Row
Left to Right

John? Corcoran	
John Hargreaves	In 1959 photo.
Richard Spencer	In 1959 photo.
Charles Lee	From Hong Kong.
Bruce Murdoch	In 1959 photo.
Derrick Gillingham	In 1959 photo.
Michael Hebden	In 1959 photo.
Toby Harrison	In 1959 photo.
Roger Whitaker	In 1959 photo.
Ian Krownso?	From Southport

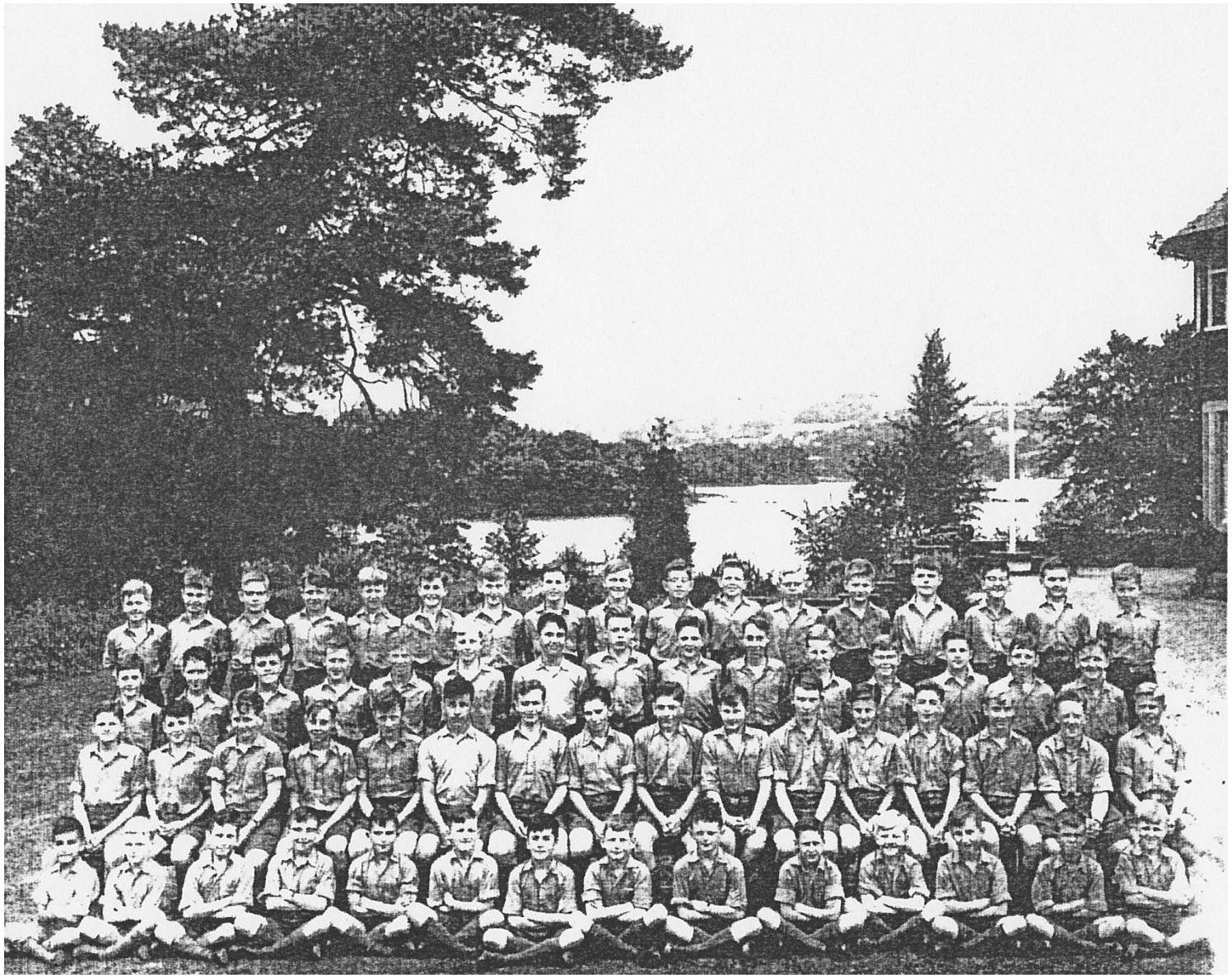
Peter Burbidge	In 1959 photo.
Timothy Spencer	In 1959 photo.
Stephen Pratt	In 1959 photo.
Harvey Graves	In 1959 photo.
John Lomas	In 1959 photo.
Russell Davis*	From USA. Older brother of Kenneth (below)
Nicolas Morris	In 1959 photo

Back Row

Left to Right

?	
?	
?	
Neil Williams	
?	
?	
Nigel? Hartley	
Gareth Mendus	In 1959 photo
?	
Philip Nicol	In 1959 photo
Another Fletcher	One of three
Peter? Mathers	
Kenneth Davis*	Younger brother of Russell (above) In 1959 photo.
Nigel Johnston	In 1959 photo
Bobby Costain	From Liverpool area.
David Morgan ?	Patrick's younger brother.
?	

* denotes more who went on to St Bees



School Photo - Summer 1962 62 Boys present

Front Row

Left to Right

?	
?	
? Calder	In 1961 photo
?	
The third Burbidge	In 1961 photo
?	
Charles McConnell	In 1961 photo
?	
?	
John Giles	Still on front row, after 5 years. (How much longer was he there?)
Stephen? ?	In 1961 photo
Mervyn Picker	In 1961 photo
Another Murdoch*	Bruce's wee brother.

Second Row Left to Right

John Hargreaves	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Bill? Pascal?	From USA?
Philip Nicol	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Richard Spencer	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Russell Davis	In 1961 photos.
Dickie Burbidge	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
lain Tyson	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Peter Royds	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Peter Fletcher	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Colin Entwistle	In 1961 photos.
Nigel Turner	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Malcolm Naughton	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Derrick Gillingham	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
John Nevin	In 1961 photos.
Harvey Graves	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Bruce Murdoch	In 1959 & 1961 photos.

Third Row Left to Right

?	
Gareth Mendus	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
John? Corcoran	In 1961 photo.
?	
Stephen Pratt	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Toby Harrison	In 1959 & 1961 photos.

Peter Burbidge	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Michael Hebden	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
James Farmer	From Scotland.
Timothy Spencer	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
John Lomas	In 1959 & 1961 photos.
Nigel? Hartley	In 1961 photo.
Nicolas Morris	In 1959 & 1961 photo.
Third Fletcher	In 1961 photo.
Peter? Mathers	In 1961 photo.

Back Row Left to Right

?	
?	
?	
Bobby Costain	In 1961 photo.
?	
Kenneth Davis	In 1961 photo.
?	
?	
Neil Williams	In 1961 photo.
George? Adamson?	
David Morgan	In 1961 photo.
Nigel Johnston	In 1959 & 1961 photo.
?	
?	
?	
?	

Footnote

Not present in any of the photos:

Simon Young

Philip Walker

Jonathan Ottley