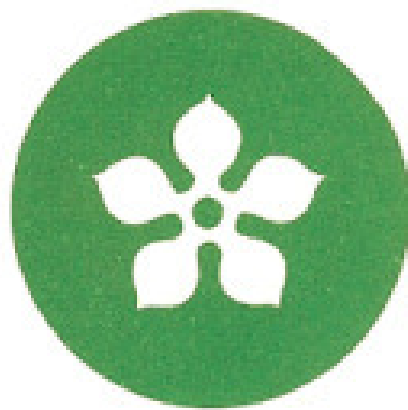


ST. PETER'S

SEAFORD



The Early Years

PART ONE

The Early Years

by Michael Gilbert

In the school magazines of 1972, '73 and '74 there were articles of unusual interest. Written by Darrel Blackburn, John Wright and 'J.B.' they gave us tantalising glimpses of the infancy and early years of St. Peter's. There are no other records. The magazines of those earliest years, if they existed, have not survived. It is in memory alone that these things live. Our gratitude to the writers is great and I have drawn extensively on what they recorded. When one remembers that they are dealing with events nearly seventy years in the past it is surprising how closely their records mesh together. Maybe it is easier to remember things that happened seventy years in the past than things seven years - or even seven months - ago. The uncluttered inquisitive mind of youth snaps up impressions like a camera; and retains the prints.

Tradition, and the school prospectus, had previously named the foundation date of the school as 19 14. Convinced by these accounts that this must be wrong, I undertook some researches of my own.

Fortunately the County of Sussex and the town of Seaford are both interested in the smallest facets of their past. They keep careful records, and amateur researchers are encouraged, not snubbed. Two among many who were helpful were Mr. Rose, of the Lewes District Council, and Miss Joan Astell, Keeper of the Seaford Museum of Local History.

In the course of a long letter, full of facts and suggested lines of research Mr. Rose wrote: "In Pikes Blue Book for Lewes and District there appears, for the years 1904 and 1905, the following entry: 'Seaford House, Crouch Lane: St. Peter's Preparatory School: Taylor, Miss'." I passed on this nugget of information to Miss Astell, who replied: "Seaford House, at the end of the last century, was in the private ownership of a Mrs. H. Holland. I have consulted the local newspapers at that date, and found a reference to the contents of Seaford House being auctioned on 15th March 1902. On October 15th 1902 the house itself was put up for auction, but was withdrawn. This would seem to indicate, fairly strongly, that the school was established there in 1903".

So there was the true date of the founding of St. Peter's, Seaford. It was in this year that Miss Taylor brought her little flock of boarders from Broadstairs to Seaford and established her school in Crouch Lane. Why did she make the move? History is silent on the point. Possibly she felt that Broadstairs was overcrowded with established schools and was looking for room to expand. The school must have grown quite rapidly. A book, preserved in the school archives, awarded to F. H. Bensted as "French prize for Form iii(a) December 1906" suggests that there were a fair number of boys in the school by that date.

It is clear that Miss Taylor regarded Seaford House as a stepping-stone. In 1905 she was already in touch with Mr. Morling, the builder. His application to the Seaford Urban District Council for by-law permission to erect "A residence and schoolhouse near the Alfriston Road" is dated 1st January 1906.

Tradition has it that Mr. Morling, who erected two such buildings, planned them with a fall-back purpose. If they failed as boarding schools for the young they could equally well be used as boarding houses for the elderly. One of them became the home of St. Peter's. The other became Newlands.

By the summer of 1907 the building was ready. For this new venture Miss Taylor brought with her two masters, Mr. Hellard and Mr. Wright, both from St. Peter's, Broadstairs. As soon as the school was settled into its new quarters she took a step which would have outraged the feminists of today. Finding herself with two male partners, she considered it proper to demote herself. She ceased to be Foundress and Principal, and became Matron.

She was a woman worth more than a passing glance. She was a granddaughter of the great Or. Arnold of Rugby. Darrell Blackburn remembers her as "no longer young, but tall, slim and handsome in a mannish way, with clear-cut Nordic features and an especially firm chin. She favoured a severe, manly style of dressing, and her dark hair, parted down the middle, was brushed back flat against the sides of her head to make an inconspicuous knot on the nape of her neck".

Her table talk, "racy and intolerant" must have been of a kind very acceptable to boys, since one of them has been

able to recall it sixty years later:

"Douglas and Percy and Stanley and Sidney are all good aristocratic surnames, but they are *quite* unsuitable as Christian names. Like calling one's house Balmoral or Sandringham."

"What boys' names *do* you like, Miss Taylor?"

"I like sensible names. John and James, Richard and Henry. No, I don't like Francis, but I like Frank. Well, of course Stanton, if Augustus is a family name you will be right to call your son Augustus, but please don't call him Gussie."

Or, speaking of the wife of another headmaster, "I shall have difficulty in being civil to her. I hate the way she goes about in sandals".

Miss Taylor's two partners were both men of mark. Oswald Wright was a more than competent cricketer, who had been in the Malvern eleven in the days of the Fosters. He played several times for Cambridge and, later, for Somerset. G. T. Hellard, from Radley and Oxford, was a rowing blue and soccer enthusiast.

The picture we get of the school in 1910 is of a compact, happy, self-sufficient institution. In some ways it was pleasantly old-fashioned. The boys wore Eton suits and top hats as they marched down to church in Seaford. (This was, of course, long before the days of the school Chapel.) And, says J .B., "It was essentially a bachelor establishment". He makes a further comment which present-day boys may find surprising. "Parents," he says, "were *not* encouraged to visit their sons during term. I can remember only four boys having their father or mother down during the whole of my time at St. Peter's". Term was term and holidays were holidays. They were not encouraged to mix.

The original building was a single, square, three-storey block, without any of the sprawling additions which the growth of numbers from twenty-five to a hundred and fifty has made necessary. The playing field was a quarter of the size it is now. This may have been fortunate since it had to be kept in order "by steady application of hand mower and heavy roller". Mr. Wright looked after the cricket. Mr. Hellard, assisted by a Mr. Lay ton (a later addition to the staff) coached the soccer and hockey teams. With three such able instructors it is not surprising that the sporting reputation of the school grew.

"It was a distinct feather in the cap" says J.B., "for any school to beat St. Peter's at cricket, football or hockey. Just as it used to be the ambition of every County cricket team to beat Yorkshire, so every school in Seaford had the ambition to beat St. Peter's".

It was an ambition that was not often achieved, although there was one traumatic occasion when St. Peter's played hockey against the local girls' school, *The Downs* (now a block of civic offices on the Eastbourne Road). To the fury of the boys, the girls pulled off a narrow victory. The return match appears to have been a blood bath, resulting in an equally narrow victory for St. Peter's. However, a measure of social intercourse was retained, and my family had a letter written in 1921 in which I recorded, "On Saturday we had a dance against the Downs".

Cricket, football and hockey were the staple diet. There was no swimming pool. Bathing took place, off the stony Seaford foreshore, in the grey waters of the English Channel. There was no shooting. The original range was not built until 1913 (there is a picture of it in one of the magazines; it was extended after the war with timbers quietly filched at night from the deserted Army camp on the downs behind the Alfriston Road). There were no squash courts or tennis courts, no judo, archery or rock-climbing. There was, however, Bob Willis.

"He came up from town twice a week and took us in physical training. His idea of P.T. was to make us do some exercises with dumbbells and then to run round and round the playing field. On Thursday evenings he arrived at 5 p.m. dressed in a blue suit, high necked sweater and a cloth cap which blended with a broken nose and cauliflower ears to give him the appearance of an ex-pugilist. I will not say that he taught us boxing; he made no attempt to do so, but made two of us, of roughly the same size, have it out with eight-ounce gloves. No. 3 classroom was the ring, desks having been pushed aside and a chair, basins and towels provided for the young pugilists. Rounds might go on for five minutes or more, depending on how Willis was getting on with some highly improbable yarns about his equally improbable life in sail."

These were the years of the school's untroubled infancy. In 1912 the first crisis occurred. It arose from what was,

on the face of it, a most innocent cause. Mr. Hellard got married.

When I happened to meet Mr. Hellard nearly fifty years later, he could only say, with a retrospective sigh, "It's very difficult for two women to share a house". Miss Taylor may have been prepared to demote herself to Matron and housekeeper, but was certainly not prepared to take a further step down and become assistant-matron and under-housekeeper. She decided to leave. All that we are told is that "she went back to St. Bees, in Cumberland". We are dealing with life, not fiction, and the characters move on and off the stage in an arbitrary way, but I should much like to know the end of her story. Whatever she did, it will have been note-worthy.

Her departure signalled a break-up of the original team. Mr. Wright and Mr. Lay ton both departed at the end of the summer term of 1913. Mr. Wright went back to Broadstairs. Mr. Lay ton moved across to St. David's School, at Blatchington, on the Newhaven side of Sea ford.

St. David's, a smaller school than St. Peter's, had been established there for a year or two. Its proprietors were R. K. Henderson, a Marlburian, and a Mr. Whelan.

In the casual manner in which schools seemed to form and reform in those early days, when Mr. Lay ton moved from St. Peter's to St. David's he took a number of boys with him, (including one of our annalists, John Wright). Mr. Hellard survived these desertions of staff and boys by only a year, and at the end of the summer term 1914 a second rearrangement took place. Messrs. Henderson and Layton, with half the St. David's boys, moved back across Seaford to join St. Peter's. Mr. Whelan kept the other half and formed a school called Kingsmead, which grew and flourished in the 'twenties, but has now, I think, departed. Mr. Hellard went to teach at Winchester, where he subsequently became a house-master.

The situation, therefore, at the outbreak of the First World War, was that Mr. Henderson and Mr. Lay ton had taken over joint enterprise called, at first, 'St. Peter's and St. David's', but soon dropping the second name. The St. David's cap, rings of red, white and green, was abandoned for the simpler green cap with the silver cinque-foil, and the sets which had originally been named, in deference to Mr. Henderson's Marlburian background, Blenheim, Ramilies and Malplaquet became the Reds, Whites and Blues which they remain today.

War time brought inevitable changes. In October 1915 Mr. Lay ton left to join the Army and Mr. Henderson was forced to carry on alone, faced with the problem, common to schools in war-time, of finding staff to help him.

Samuel Urquhart Mackay, a former headmaster of Chudleigh Grammar School, was brought back from retirement, and a Miss Gibson came in to teach the small boys. She was such a strict disciplinarian that they came to the conclusion that she was a German spy (male) in disguise. (Those interested in schoolboy mythology may care to note that when I was at St. Peter's in 1920 two of the staff, one male and one female, were identified by us as German spies. They were alleged to hold clandestine meetings in a small hut at the top of Sea ford Head).

In the summer of 1916 a most interesting man came out of retirement to help. Robert Edward Moyle, mathematician and scientist, a Christ Church man, had had Lewis Carroll as his tutor. After a long career in teaching he had finished as Inspector of Schools for the Devon County Council. Let me hand over here to Bill Acworth, who came to the school in 1916 and is our authority for much of this period.

"Thinking about it, 60-65 years on, my overall feeling is one of contentment at the way we were so fairly treated by everyone. I never remember being bullied; nor, although I very much respected them, was I afraid of any master. There were two in particular, Mr. Moyle ('Moley') and Mr. Mackay. The former took Maths and the latter Latin and English.

"'Moley' was the kindest chap, from whom one learned because he made it all such fun. He also owned a beautiful 3-speed Lea-Francis bike, on which, most trustingly, he allowed some of us to ride. This was a breathtaking joy and excitement. I can remember to this day doing my first gear change - an early experience of jet-travel.

"In some ways the thing which burnt into my mind most deeply was the 'Camp' (strategically close to Newhaven) which held thousands of Canadian and Negro soldiers. In the late autumn of 1918 they were dying like flies of the 'flu epidemic. Two or three times every day there seemed to be a funeral passing along the road behind the wall of our playing field on the way to the cemetery. Wagner's Dead March became a most familiar piece of music."

Other boys recall a lighter moment when, in 1915 Lord Kitchener came up the school drive to review the troops

encamped in the fields round about. He mounted his horse just in front of the school and the boys gave such a patriotic, if high-pitched, cheer that the animal reared up and was within an ace of depositing its distinguished rider on the gravel of the front path.

Before finishing with the war we must note, briefly, the movements of the two principals.

Mr. Layton, as has been mentioned, joined up towards the end of 1915, being posted first to the Lancashire Fusiliers and later to a Trench Mortar Battery, with whom he left for France in June 1916. By the end of the year he was back in England, suffering from shell-shock, and by Easter 1917 was doing light work at the War Office, pending demobilisation.

When this happened Mr. Henderson was free to do his bit. The changeover took place in the middle of the Summer Term 1917. Mr. Layton became, temporarily, headmaster, and Mr. Henderson joined the Household Brigade. He was commissioned into the 3rd Grenadier Guards, and reached France just in time to halt the German offensive of March 1918. One pictures this impressive man raising his right hand and saying "quietly, there. Enough", as he so often said to the boys. He was unlucky not to finish the war, being badly gassed in the German counter offensive of September.

By the end of the year he was back in England and out of hospital, and a reverse change-over took place. Mr. Layton withdrew, with half the boys, to found his own school at Horsham and Mr. Henderson returned to St. Peter's.

"Armistice Day," said Bill Acworth, "is almost photographically imprinted on my memory. With the signing of the Armistice due at 11 a.m. preparations were made after breakfast to hoist the Union Jack above the School Flag on the flagstaff. Unfortunately, the halyard had jammed round the sheave at the mast-head and we had to unstep and lower the mast. This thrilling task was shared by the entire school and I remember the excitement of raising the mast again and the final bang as it went into its tabernacle. Then the hoisting of the two flags, to me of almost equal importance. And finally, at 11 o'clock, the sirens and the whistles and the klaxons".

This makes an appropriate curtain for Part One.

PART TWO

The School in the 'Twenties

by Christopher Pirie-Gordon

When I arrived at St. Peter's in the summer term of 1920 there were still a few patriarchs among the boys who actually remembered Mr. Layton and the great schism (meeting them was like talking to people who remembered the Egg-Kings). They also still talked of the National Peace Celebrations in the summer term of 1919, when Mr. Henderson, by that time back in sole and undisputed charge of his reduced flock, tried and sentenced to death a guy in the form of the Kaiser, which was burnt on top of a huge bonfire, after sentence had been confirmed by acclamation of the school- all nineteen of them.

By the time I arrived the numbers had increased to thirty-five and the staff had been reinforced by the arrival of the great Pat Knox-Shaw and of a really beloved Matron, Margaret Falwasser (of both of whom, more anon).

At that time the school buildings, playing fields and general arrangements were much as described by J.B. in his account in the magazine, but a new dormitory, earlier Miss Taylor's sitting room, now called Marlborough, had appeared next to the new boys dormitory, Nelson. There were two bathrooms, in which every boy had a cold bath every morning (under the personal supervision of the headmaster clad in a red and white striped dressing gown) and an additional classroom, with a billiard table, and four desks for the bottom form, which covered half the area between the Set Room and the Dining Room.

On the site of the existing dining room stood an army hut used for indoor games, the theatre, lectures and Sunday Evensong. In 1921 this hut itself became the dining room, the previous dining room yielding place to the top form, the classroom on the right of the front door as you enter, beyond the Headmaster's study.

A new and much larger army hut of corrugated iron, the ancestor of the complex of rooms between the school proper and the Chapel, took its place. Great was the excitement at breakfast time on a windy March day in 1922 when Sergeant Pink, who took drill and carpentry in the intervals of odd-jobs, came running in to inform a horrified Mr. Henderson that the roof of the new hut was "heaving". It heaved indeed to such good effect that it blew right off and lay pathetically on its back in the kitchen garden, to the delighted fascination (not shared by the authorities) of the boys,

In 1920 the staff, all unmarried, consisted of Mr. Henderson with Pat Knox-Shaw, then only twenty-seven, as Second Master. Irreverent schoolboys called them (but not in their presence) Buggins and Tich, after a well-known musical comedy duo of those days. Then there was the enchanting old Mr. Moyle, who was deservedly loved (he always provided sweets for everyone when he took a walk), a Miss Armitage as Governess for the tiddlers and somebody's elder brother who was so young as to be denied the title of Mister, also for tiddlers and games generally.

Mr. Henderson, or R.K.H., was an impressive figure. Tall, with reddish hair and complexion, close clipped moustache, fortyish, but he could have been any age, and had not changed much when I last saw him in his 'seventies. Mysteriously he contrived to combine the military bearing suitable for the Guards' tie he generally wore, with a scholarly and paternal stoop. His whole manner was a bitter-sweet combination of gentleness and severity. His clothes, generally a tweed jacket and grey flannel trousers, were aged but of superb cut and his Sunday and London wear did credit to Saville Row. The younger mothers found him fascinating. He was an excellent teacher and administrator and events proved him also a pretty shrewd businessman. His gods were games, particularly cricket, and the Classics. We heard of no other interests and I doubt if anyone ever really knew him.

Essentially he was a solitary and the strain proved too great. After a term or so of a sudden psychological allergy to parents (he would retreat to his bedroom at their approach) whom he left to Pat Knox-Shaw, he suffered a breakdown in 1934 and retired at the age of fifty. A canny Scot, he was, like Barkiss, 'a little near' and the school food in his regime was skimpy and substandard. But we all liked and respected him and apart from Pat Knox-Shaw I would not have had any other Headmaster.

Pat is, without question, the outstanding personality in the history of St. Peter's. What was his secret? Why was he so liked and admired by the boys, their parents, and, later, their sons, his staff, his fellow headmasters, and, indeed, all who knew him? He was not particularly brilliant and I doubt if his busy life allowed him the time to be deeply read. But he seemed to know the answer to most questions that came his way and the confidence which he inspired was automatic and complete.

The answer may have been a total absence of self-importance, and of even the most elementary guile or pretence. He treated everyone as equals, especially the boys (until they showed they weren't, when he could become bleak). He taught as though he was giving a briefing to brother officers for an incursion into strange territory where he had had the good fortune to have made a previous reconnaissance, and was consequently able, through no special merit of his own, to give helpful hints. Above all he was amusing. His conversation at table was fun. It was not witty. Wit can be unkind and Pat was never that. Talking to him was soothing to the juvenile ego.

In person he was of middle-height, clean-shaven, with the famous round spectacles, the only thing even mildly school-masterly about him. He could look business-like in London clothes, but tweed jackets and pullovers expressed his personality better.

In the course of six years at school and forty-four years afterwards I never heard a word of criticism of him (his rare punishments were axiomatically just). When one met mutual acquaintances in some remote part of the world and Pat's name was mentioned it was wonderful how faces would light up.

The assistant masters of those days must have been outstanding personalities to have left so clear an impression on me after so many years. There was Mr. Townshend, who was young and rather naughty. He used to draw comic fish on the blackboard until caught by the Headmaster. There was Mr. Knight, now Professor Wilson Knight, a leading Shakespearian expert. He was friendly but saturnine. There was Mr. Forbes whose Irish brogue gave us great joy. He married Miss Watney, the governess of the day and left to found a highly successful school of his own in Lincolnshire. There was a Mr. Grieg, whose father was a Bishop, and who looked like a young Greek god, and knew it. There was Mr. Thompson who was old, had a weakness for marmalade, and never had the right boots on when asked to take a walk. There was Monsieur Souris (I think he really was called that), who arrived twice a week on a tricycle. He had an enormous red moustache and green plus fours and caused inflation in the Golds

market by awarding one automatically for every correct answer. Eventually poor Monsieur Souris' Golds suffered an official devaluation of 75%.

Last, but not least, there was Mr. K., universally known as Kelly. He had a mane of sleek black hair and an angry little moustache. He wore his First War Officer's uniform dyed blue and was the only member of the staff to own a car. He also had the distinction, in that otherwise celibate community, of a wife. He was a man of boundless energy, combined with a total lack of any sense of humour. He sometimes succeeded in irritating boys (and, as I discovered later, his fellow masters as well) to the point of frenzy. On at least two occasions boys, goaded beyond endurance by his sarcasms, reinforced by a barrage of blacks and impositions, threw books at him in class. However, where the idle were concerned he delivered the goods. He had a gift of intruding Latin grammar into the most reluctant and unreceptive minds. He was also a great piano player, and with the aid of a repertoire of Edwardian comic songs would become quite genial at concerts.

The Matron, Margaret Falwasser, was a dear. She came in 1919 and left when Mr. Henderson retired in 1934. She would then have been in her early forties but with her grey hair and 'matronly' clothes seemed far older. She was a cosy comforting person and a great refuge and confidante for everyone who was feeling homesick or unhappy.

She took birthdays very seriously and would not only ask boys to tea on these occasions but also see them through their 'thank you' letters afterwards. In addition to her more than whole-time job she carried on long correspondences with anxious mothers and would add to her shopping by buying (and I suspect also frequently paying for) little gifts for boys to send home. She was universally beloved. I last heard from her some years ago when she wrote to say she was 'starting a new job' which was looking after a centenarian cousin.

She ended up "How old are you these days? I'm 94".

The school was divided, then as now, into three sets, Reds, Whites and Blues, symbolised by the three shell-cases and the three little wooden men on their ladder, presented by my father in the autumn of 1919 and now entering the sixty-first year of their competition in virtue.

I have referred above to blacks and golds and these were the currency in which the little men dealt. Two blacks could be cancelled out by one gold. After lunch each day the Captain of the School, standing on the Headmaster's left, would record the day's bag. Four blacks in one week, if unredeemed by a gold, could result in painful consequences. A double-black, almost always fatal, would be awarded for some grave crime, such as 'Impertinence' or 'Cheating'. Its announcement would be followed by R.K.H.'s prominent blue eyes assuming a fish-like expression and the dread words, "Come and explain". I heard of, but never actually met, a double gold. At the end of the week the score would be added up and the little men moved up and down the ladder accordingly.

Discipline was good and not over-intrusive. There was no bullying, but there were quite a lot of whackings; official ones from R.K.H. and unofficial ones from the set captains. I suppose that, in the mid-twenties when the school numbers had reached fifty or thereabouts, R.K.H. would perform about once a week. While he would occasionally use a cane for major felonies he normally used an extraordinary implement called a 'fives-bat' (when was fives played with a bat?). It was three and a half feet long and had a round wooden head about half the size of a tennis racket, but solid. This exactly fitted a small posterior and produced a highly effective and even sting over the entire target area. It was disappointing, however, since unlike a cane it left no marks, and there were no scars of battle for the returning hero to show an admiring dormitory.

Whackings by the set captains were frowned on by the Headmaster but winked at by other members of the staff. They were even, I think, encouraged by very junior masters where they felt the Headmaster had been too lenient. They were normally given by the set captains to people who got too many blacks, and six with a cane or eight to ten with a hairbrush (when the cane had got lost or broken) would be administered in the Top Form room or the Changing Room on Sunday mornings between the return from church and lunch. I doubt if anyone got hurt very much. The practice seems to have died out completely in the 'thirties.

In those days Hockey was played in the Easter Term, Rugger replacing it a year or two later, and this with Soccer and holy Cricket formed the Trinity of the School's established religion. I remember the awful tone of Mr. Henderson's rebuke one summer day at lunch when some of us were talking about the latest murder trial while he was on the theme of the Test Match at the other end of the table which he suddenly banged and barked out "Whether a criminal be innocent or guilty has no importance compared to what I am discussing, namely whether England's cricket is in decline". We felt like criminals ourselves and talked about Hobbs for the rest of the meal.

There were occasional, if reluctant, releases from the games schedule (which though often tiresome and monotonous did at least, as in J.B.'s day, enable us to win most of our matches). There were mass bicycle rides through Alfriston and Lullington, and cycling up and down the drive was allowed after cricket on summer evenings. There were also expeditions with shrimping nets to Cuckmere in the summer term and regular sea bathing by the Martello tower. For this some went on their bicycles and some in a motor coach, known as the Dot. Mr. Henderson supervised the bathes in person. Clad in what was even then a quite unbelievable Victorian bathing costume complete with skirt, he would urge those who couldn't swim to do so, and those who could to stop.

The 16 July that, at a later stage, was dignified with the title of Founder's Day, was then known more familiarly as "Buggin's Birthday". On that day in 1883 Buggins first saw the light and was sufficiently impressed with the importance of that event to accord one of the rare extra half-holidays in its honour. And it was a real one. If the date fell on a Wednesday or a Saturday or a Sunday, then the festivity took place on the 17th or 18th. Joy was to be unalloyed and no expense was spared. What was then called a charabanc, much nicer than the modern bus or coach as it was open, was hired and off we went through rural Sussex with three whole pennies of our own money to be spent as we wished. First stop Alfriston, then the Potteries at Dicker, then Lewes, on one occasion even Battle Abbey; all fascinating proceedings that were known to be due at some point to culminate in cake and sometimes even strawberries. Finally a return towards dusk, everybody pleasantly tired, "Three cheers for Mr. Henderson ... " and bed. Elementary? Yes, but this was sixty years ago and parents who also had cars were a small minority. It *was* a thrill and we *did* enjoy it and, perhaps most surprising of all today, we were genuinely grateful to Buggins for his treat.

On Saturdays in winter there would be lantern lectures which were cheerful and cosy. One of the fathers was a regular lecturer and his themes of General Gordon, the Navy, the Indian Mutiny, the Crimean War and Garibaldi were very popular and continued, in a strong smell of acetylene, until finally ousted by the cinema.

On Sunday mornings (still wearing Eton suits in the 'twenties) we walked down to the Parish Church for Matins. Each boy was issued with one penny for the collection, of which the illicit retention was sometimes possible for the purchase of sweets on the return walk which, for some reason, was generally unsupervised.

On Sunday evenings before Prayers, Mr. Henderson would read aloud a couple of chapters from some work of JeffTrey Farnol or Conan Doyle and regularly every two or three years, from Anstey's Vice Versa which he enjoyed as much as the boys.

The last day of term was a great occasion. It was called "Label Day".

There were no lessons, which was splendid in itself, and no games which (for the unenthusiastic) was even better. The morning seems to have been devoted to writing luggage labels, special ones with two green and one white stripe in the school colours, one for the hand bag, one for the trunk and one for the wooden "play box". I can't think why this operation should have taken up most of the morning, but it did and became an important ritual.

In the evening there was the traditional end-of-term supper known as a "Pig's Paradise" or "P.P." There were gorgeous viands such as sausage rolls, jellies and trifle, all washed down with lemonade. And you could have as much of it all as you wanted. With the prospect of home the next morning and after thirteen weeks of really very short commons, the occasion seemed as near the acme of human bliss as a ten year old could imagine. Then there was a farewell concert, an interminable "Auld Lang Syne" and equally interminable cheers for each member of the staff. One felt tired, happy and sentimental.

The next morning the 8.35 train to Victoria (I see it is now the 8.33) with R.K.H. brimming over with affability, and properly equipped for London with a bowler hat and beautifully rolled umbrella, carried us noisily back to devoted parents and the joys of home.

Postscript:

The performance of the Southern Railway seems to have been a matter of derision to boys of an earlier era. In a letter to his mother of 1911, William Oakley says: "We leave Seaford at 9.02 on Thursday and get to Victoria at 10.58, *not* at 11.05 as we used to. But allow about ten minutes for blockages and for the driver to pick buttercups".

PART THREE

Some Personalities of the 'Thirties

by Graham Turner

It was in September 1931 that the Southern Railway, its engines still propelled by steam, took me to Seaford. At the station I was thrown into the school bus, and ejected from it with equal lack of ceremony on my arrival at St. Peter's. No-one, I suppose, however long he lives, forgets his first day at boarding school.

The senior boys, David Anderson, Elstob, Davies-Colley, McCracken, Foot, all appeared enormous. The staff gradually acquired recognisable personalities.

First, of course, Rolf Henderson, aloof, erect, quietly spoken and normally benevolent. He regarded himself as the founder of the school. Wrongly, it seems; but he never recognised the regime prior to his own arrival in 1914. Perhaps he *was* the true founder of St. Peter's in its present form, for much of what he created and stood for has survived the passing of time.

Next in importance to a new boy was the matron. Miss Falwasser, a prim grey-haired lady of Victorian manner. She exercised endless care for the young, the sick, and those least able to fend for themselves. If a boy was in the sickroom she would write a letter daily to his parents. When, in my third year at the school, R.K.H. relinquished the headship to Pat Knox-Shaw she, also, retired.

Pat then took over and he and his wife Marjorie, (mother of Margaret Farebrother) made an immediate impact. An improvement in the catering standards did not go un-noticed nor was it unwelcome; as was the general re-painting of the school. But most significant was the awareness that St. Peter's was moving into a new era.

No. 2 under Pat was Basil Talbot, a man of seemingly endless talents and abilities. He taught maths and French, excelled at all games, was the supreme organiser and there was almost no school activity of which he was not part and usually a dominant part. A famous innings of 117 not out for the Staff XI against Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1932 will live long in the memory of everyone who saw it, so will the let-down when he made nought in the next match against Clare.

Trenchard Pickard-Cambridge came into partnership with Pat and Basil. Ex-Army, he was certainly a disciplinarian, something of an autocrat but worked unceasingly to obtain high standards in work or games. His methods were not without their critics. He didn't suffer fools gladly and at times when he was around there appeared to be a surfeit of that commodity.

Terence Russell, himself an Old Boy, had the first period of each day free to attend to the Headmaster's correspondence. Quite how the office work was cleared in forty minutes no one will ever know. After that he taught geography at all levels, junior schools maths, and rigger. I remember the problems he had in trying to get boys to tackle properly. At the end of one winter term he laid on a match between two club sides, to serve as a demonstration for the young. He was himself a full-back of good club standard, and on this day played in that position. Suddenly an opponent broke clear and had only the full-back to beat. In a flash, his own credibility was at stake. It was a tackle he just couldn't afford to miss; he didn't.

Then there was A. Q. Robinson, who taught Latin and English. Known as the Tin-man he did have a curiously robot-like appearance, and might, in later years, have done well in Star Trek. John Anderson, an Old Boy, a natural games player, with a partiality for cream buns; (not that such delicacies found their way to the boys' tea tables). Francis White, who used to enunciate, "By the simple process of elimination, and a modicum of common sense, you will undoubtedly arrive at the correct solution, with the minimum of effort and the maximum of success".

Susan Randolph taught music and introduced a musical appreciation class, intended to impart a wider understanding of music even to those without the ability or the inclination to play an instrument. The school plays, put on each Michaelmas half-term, were under her direction. "Don Quixote", "The Merchant of Venice" and "The Rose and the Ring" were all produced by Susan, and were all of commendable quality and standard.

Most important of all, in his own sphere, was "the Major" - Major W. H.

Apperley. His main charge was shooting; by craft and patience he managed to achieve an almost outrageously high standard, and a record of successes in small-bore rifle competitions which can surely never be equalled?

There were three shields, which were open to all preparatory schools in the United Kingdom; the St. Patrick's, the St. George's and the St Andrew's, shot for at 25, 50 and 100 yards. In the winter term 1935 we won the St. Patrick's Shield, with a record score, won the St. George's Shield and were second, by a single point, in the St. Andrew's. In the following summer term we collected all three, and in the winter term, two out of the three, with the Harvey Haddon trophy as a bonus. In the following term, as a suitable climax, we again won all three, and captured the Earl Haig's sword for the top score in the Empire Shield, a competition open to all private schools in the British Empire.

This was the Major's memorial. I am sure he would have wished for no other.

Shooting was not our only occupation by any means. We played soccer, rugger or cricket according to the season, almost every afternoon. For those who enjoyed such activities that was fine, although in retrospect one wonders if there wasn't a bit too much cricket for those not so inclined.

Generally we more than held our own at games in matches against other schools. In those days there were so many in Sea ford that one hardly had to go outside the town to fill the fixture list. Newlands, Ladycross, Bowden House, Chesterton, and Tyttenhanger were regular opponents, to name only a few. We seemed to come unstuck most often against our nearest neighbour, Ashampstead who, every now and then, managed to produce a lad a bit older and bigger than most. I have a sad recollection of one called Larry scoring no end of tries, all on his own.

And what happened to the St. Peter's boys of that period? Ronnie Bowlby is now Bishop of Newcastle, R. W. Ellis is Headmaster of Marlborough, E. C. Phillips is Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire. In the field of sport we have Peter Blake who captained Oxford at cricket, Tony Friday, a world famous name in Bridge circles; and on the track Donald Campbell, to be remembered with Wallis Hunt, who was allotted the job of being 'father' to me as a new boy, and carried it out somewhat ineffectively. He has since fathered a world champion, in James Hunt.

A final memory for my final year. It was in 1936 that Pat Knox-Shaw initiated the project, so dear to his heart, of building the School Chapel. It was completed just as the war started and in it you will find the school war memorial to those of my generation and earlier generations, who gave their lives.

PART FOUR

St Peter's in the War

by Roger Ellis and John Whittaker

N.B. Since this is a composite effort, readers may be interested to know who is speaking and an initial in the margin indicates this.

R.E. Summer of 1940, grim for many but a magical one for a ten year old. I suppose we had grown accustomed to the idea of war. We started to dig trenches at the beginning of my first term in 1939. There were rumours of spies all through the first winter of the war. Was it my imagination or did we hear the distant rumble of guns in May? Anyway, early in that summer term announcements were made that we were to go home. Cars mysteriously appeared, playboxes and trunks emerged and we were off into limbo of time and space.

And then we foregathered at the Nare Hotel, Veryan, in the depths of Cornwall. It was a sun-drenched summer - just as well, as our classrooms were in the garages, open at one end to the elements, and our play was all outside on the lawn and the beaches. The Nare Hotel is still standing, prosperous and somewhat larger. We went there to look round two or three years ago and the sight of it brought back recollections of school sports on the beaches, and a

huge hornet in one of the hotel bedrooms which we used as dormitories: long Sunday morning walks to Veryan Church through high-banked lanes: and the smell of incense (I fainted in one Service, and was not the only one to go down): games on the lawn in front of the Hotel and the view across the sea (the Hotel stood high) to Nare Head itself, away to the left. I can't remember where we ate, or where the shell cases were. All the immense labours which the staff must have undergone to keep things going passed me by completely. But I do recall enjoying many of my lessons.

Then we moved to Castle Hill, home of Lord and Lady Fortescue at Filleigh, in North Devon. It felt a much more solidly permanent abode. The shell cases stood in the big central room which was at the heart of our life there. My first memory is of clearing the cow-pats off the rugger pitches. The grass was thick and tough and more comfortable to fall on (once the cow-pats were off it) than the closer cropped Seaford turf, especially for a hooker at the bottom of a scrum.

J. W. In the summer there were nets near the house which would not have disgraced those at Seaford. On the lovely lawns, Major Apperley produced gym teams whose members cavorted through the air over the horses brought down from Sussex and we boys performed shows in "Salute the Soldier" and "Wings for Victory" weeks. The Major, too, was not going to be beaten so far as his shooting, of which was so justly proud, was concerned, and a very adequate shooting range was set up above the stables belonging to the big house.

R.E. The view across the road to the monument at the far end of the avenue on the opposite side gave a sense of the spaciousness and grandeur of the Castle Hill of old, and the times when we were allowed to go and help the beaters in the pheasant shoots added a small taste of the life itself. (The entry in the Marlborough College list of rules 'boys need their housemaster's permission to go beating' made immediate sense to me, although my wife looked at it in astonishment).

J. W. The name Oxford Down recalls the severe winter weather we sometimes endured, the benefits arising from it being the proximity of this marvellous hill, where boys hurtled down on toboggans of all shapes and sizes at the most frightening of speeds. Many were the Set races run on these slopes, and the atmosphere and conditions rivalled anything in the fashionable ski-ing resorts of Austria and Switzerland. Cross country runs were a feature of the Autumn and Spring terms when the weather was too bad for games, but these were not the dreary and tortuous affairs that they can sometimes be. Instead they were runs through the many and intriguing byways of the estate, and it was never necessary to endure the same journey twice.

R.E. My lessons, early on, were done in the big room - was it a ballroom? - at the centre of the house where we also assembled. It had a large table at each end, and so two forms worked there with no partition. Much of the teaching was remarkably good in the circumstances. I still love some of the poems which I met for the first time there, and there were books, through which we could browse, easily available, one or two of which stirred my historical imagination. The Fortescues were still living in one wing and I remember Lady Fortescue occasionally, and Lord Fortescue just once or twice, appearing in that room. We must have been well aware of the dignity of it, as we were horrified when a bottle of ink was spilt on the ballroom floor. It was not washable Quink either. I wonder if a faint trace remains, like Rizzio's blood at Holyr06d, to remind visitors of a strange past.

We acted in that room too. All sorts of acting went on, with Nigel Davenport irascible in 'The Crimson Coconut'; a musical review using First World War songs with modern words; and home made sketches from the Old Testament which must have emerged from the brain of a truly avant garde teacher, though we didn't realise it, of course.

Later, we graduated to a separate room when we reached the top form.

Once again, we sat round a table. There was another table at one side. We left games of chess on it and played moves between lessons. We also developed 'the beetle game'. A live beetle was placed in a small ring, chalked out on the table. Around it was a larger ring, and the area was divided into segments. The largest segment was marked with the lowest odds, the smallest with the highest. Bets were laid: the beetle was released and those who had placed their bets on the segment into which the beetle moved 'collected their winnings. I can't remember our currency, but I do recall that two of the beetles which we had collected mated and produced little beetles: also that one of them was christened 'Psittacus Hereford Cow', a tribute more to our Latin scansion than to our grasp of biology. But then, did we actually learn any science at Castle Hill? I don't think I did, anyway.

J. W. Owing to the demands of Active Service the staff was of a somewhat changeable nature and, dare it be said,

quality. The stalwarts remained, embattled but unconquered, Pat, Marjorie, Basil Talbot and the Major. Others came and went, one at least leaving a permanent reminder of his presence. The strange box, with equally strange names on it, which for many years sat on the Master on Duty's desk after breakfast, was the brainchild of a Mr. Stebbing, a marvellous character, with an ever present pipe in his mouth and a seemingly endless flow of ideas emanating from him. He was a genius with his hands and what he could not do with a piece of wood was nobody's business. Then there was a man called 'Maggie' Wood, tall, thin, gaunt and fantastically keen on cycling, so much so that he used to take his bicycle to bed with him. He was always stripping it down into small bits in an effort to get more speed out of it and even in those days his bicycles had more gears on them than seemed possible or even advisable.

A visitor from overseas, Billy Howells, was a renowned games player and his coaching of the Rugger side had to be seen, or rather heard, to be believed. His great cry, which rang round the fields of Devon was "go to town, boys, go to town", all this with a huge cigar sticking out of his mouth. Matches were played against neighbouring schools, petrol rationing allowing, and Westbourne House from West Sussex had in their sides the redoubtable daughter of the headmaster, a girl named Anne Shilcock, who later became a very good Wimbledon tennis player. She was no mean performer on the football or cricket field, and it was no use being too much of a little gentleman with her.

Our dormitories were small, lots of little rooms or cubicles down long passages - presumably in the old servants' quarters. The changing room was downstairs and I seem to remember a large footbath. This comes back because we were there having just come up the hill from the field, when someone told us that the Prince of Wales and the Repulse had been sunk. The most vivid pictures seem to come at moments of shock.

RE The village church at Filleigh, unlike Verryan, I recall with happiness, and I wish I had the pen of Betjeman to do it justice. The hand pump of the organ squeaked. I don't think I was the only boy who let that tell-tale piece of lead sink to the bottom when on pumping duty, to hear the organ wheeze its way into silence; but my sin was especially bad as it happened with me during the National Anthem which we had at the end of every Sunday morning Service. But we loved singing in the choir, and on one exciting occasion four of us, I think, the three Jeremys, Bryans, Cohen and Fisher, and I divided up Mendelssohn's 'Hear my Prayer' and sung it as an anthem, not quite as well as Ernest Lough, I fear. I still, unlike most of my contemporaries and the vast majority of the present generation, find my heart lifting as the Te Deum starts up, for we sang full matins in that church on Sundays. Incidentally, I have heard few people phrase Cranmer's cadences in the Collects as well as Basil Talbot did, though my recollections of that go right back to Seaford.

Basil made Mathematics make sense to me as a non-mathematician in a way that no one at Winchester was ever subsequently able to do. For Pat I have an admiration which, always warm, grows as I realise the background against which he was working, and the conditions that ruled in many prep schools of the day. You ask for memories. That mine of St. Peter's at Castle Hill were mostly sunny is due partly to enjoying life with some good friends but mainly to the level-headed benevolence which spread from Pat through our lives. His shabby corduroys, his pipe, his round glasses which make some men remote but him kindly and wise; mannerisms, like the violent rubbing of the inside of his ear with his little finger, those are the pictures which I can see. There were incidents when his wisdom and strength guided me. He took me down a peg when I wrote as a leaving song a parody of a well known hymn which was unkind to a matron and in bad taste too. But earlier he supported me when the death of my father left me exposed and foolish. His study was a friendly place, though we were properly afraid of him when he was stern. **In** the evening we once or twice gathered with him and Marjorie to listen to and join in Gilbert & Sullivan operas. She did most of the talking. Indeed I don't remember him talking a great deal. But I do now clearly recall a sense of being secure in his presence and under his care. **In** the world as it was and at that age, it was the most valuable benefit he could give us.

EPILOGUE

by Graham Turner

from the School Magazine

It was an evening in August, 1942. I was stationed near Seaford and found time to visit the School. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but I soon found out. I stood for a moment at the gate and gazed at the long grass on the playing fields, the soldier's shirt hanging from the double cubicle window and the coal dump behind the site of the junior nets. I walked up the drive and was confronted by a mystified sergeant of a regiment which had come many hundreds of miles to take up a station, once occupied by the boys of St. Peter's. Having satisfied himself as to who I was and why I was there, he persuaded me to sign the Unit visitors' book, which he found in the Orderly Room, better known as 'Clive'. I then wandered round the School. The dining hall still had two panels left, safe and intact, one recording the name of the boy who got 16 blacks and yet won the Set honours. The fives courts, piled high with wire and camouflage netting, reminded me of a happy afternoon.

In the hut I found the famous 'Dairy Farming in New Zealand' poster, now surrounded by modern pamphlets on careless talk and Savings Groups. I thought back and remembered the queue for eight goodies; the boxing, the wrestling, the skating, the cinema shows, the evening service and the deafening roars of the end of term cheering. I thought of Pollock as 'Shylock', of the beautiful girl that David Crerar made and of To by Tankard as the hind legs of 'Dapple'. The tune of 'One Fish Ball' seemed still to ring round the walls, where parents sat and watched the concerts, breathless as little Willie spoke his much practised lines.

And then the Chapel. I had not seen it before and I was much impressed by its beauty and simplicity. Small, neat, compact, the little rows of pews were vacant, waiting. On the altar I found a Roll of Service - a simple list of humble service - of young fellows who have gone forth to do their duty. Some on that list have achieved fame; others have made the supreme sacrifice. But behind it all, I could not but feel that this was the fruit of seed sown in good ground and that, in the fatal hour, this fruit was good.

Around the School again, I found soldiers working and resting. They seemed interested to know what used to happen where they now toiled and slept. There seemed to be an uncanny sensation in telling a soldier where one spent one's school days. The guard mounting outside the eighth form window and a Bren gun carrier drawing up to the front door were strange scenes in familiar surroundings. The clock, they told me, would not work. I could not help feeling that it was waiting for the School's return.

And so in a few minutes memories of bygone days came back. The dip, the rush for prayers in the morning, first break, quiet time, double golds, B and J, soup after prep, the bathing buses and label days were all things that I had almost forgotten; but they all came back.

When I left St. Peter's in 1936, I think I had a few tears in my eyes. Now I know why.