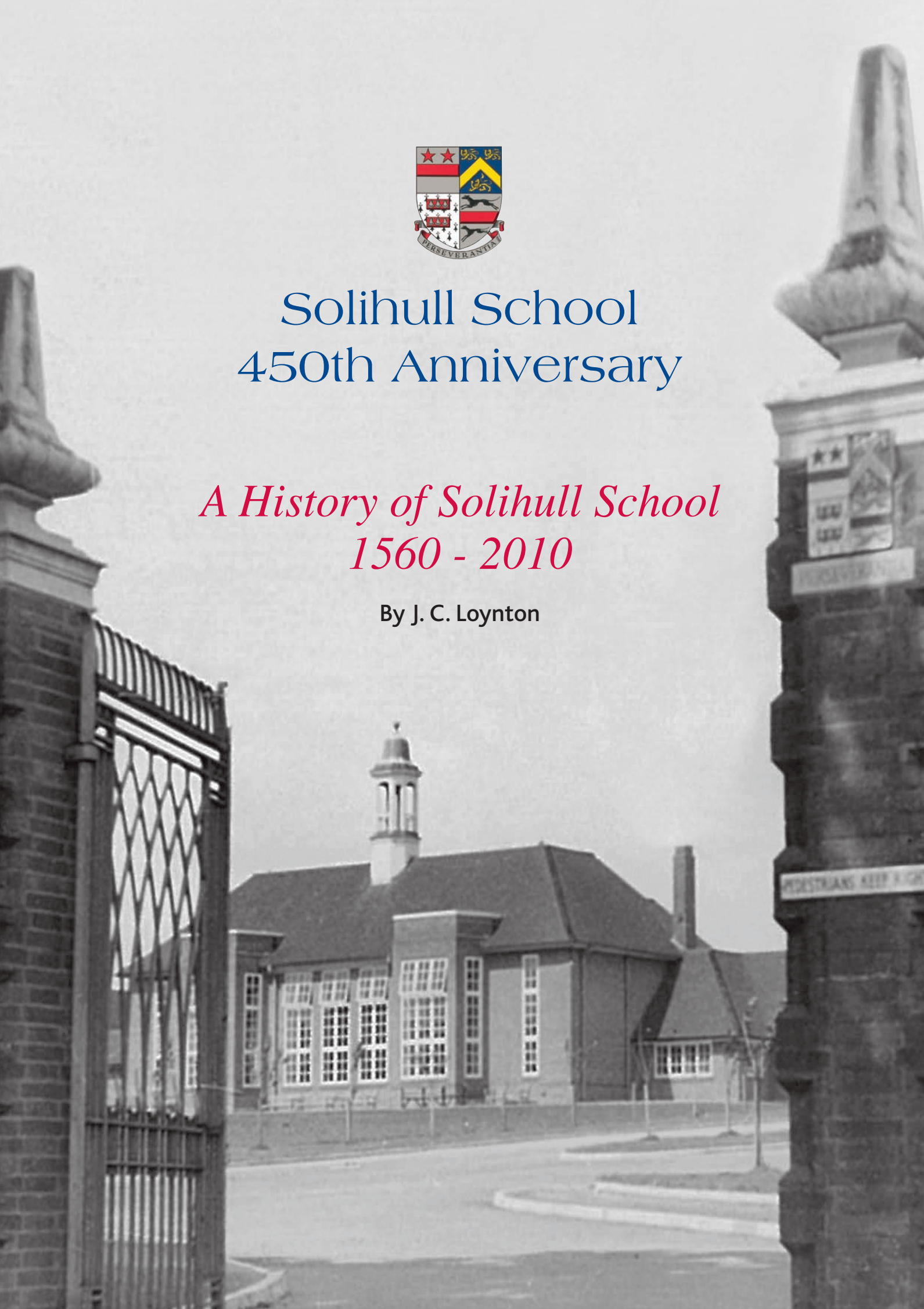




# Solihull School 450th Anniversary

## *A History of Solihull School 1560 - 2010*

By J. C. Loynton



## Foreword



There has not been a published history of Solihull School since John Burman's *Solihull and its School* appeared in 1939 and as part of the celebrations for the School's 450th anniversary year it was appropriate to produce a new, updated, account. The anniversary has been celebrated in various ways, not least by the building of a new Music School, just as the 400th anniversary was commemorated by the building of the Chapel. John Burman's book is very much a history of the foundation and its development since the School was founded in 1560. In the first chapter he notes that in 1939 "*the income from endowments makes only a trifling contribution to the total income of the School.*" It is a tribute to successive governors since 1939 that this has been dramatically altered and many pupils at Solihull School now benefit from their management of the endowment.

I was delighted when John Loynton agreed to undertake the task of writing a new History. He has an excellent knowledge of the School's archives, having taken over from Denis Tomlin as archivist. John's experience as a member of the School's history department for twenty five years meant that he had first hand knowledge of many of the individuals mentioned in the later stages of the book. John also has an excellent knowledge of Solihull and its surroundings and he has made use of the extensive collection of photographs in the archives to illustrate the book. Whilst not being a personal history, the characters, stories and anecdotes emphasise that schools are about individuals and their interaction. The School is indebted to John for the time and energy he has devoted to the production of this new history.

This new history covers all 450 years of the Schools' existence and Solihull School in 2010 is a very different place to that of 1560 or even of John Burman's time. When he wrote there were 602 pupils and in 2010 there are 1000 and they benefit from a host of superb new facilities. Coeducation has been successfully introduced and the School boasts an excellent academic record. The history celebrates 450 years and is a fitting contribution to the anniversary celebrations.

P. J. Griffiths M.A.

September 2010

## **J.C.Loynton M.A. B.Ed.**



After teaching History at Solihull School for 25 years, I was delighted to be asked by Headmaster Phil Griffiths to become the School Archivist and continue the work of Denis Tomlin who had organised the School records so effectively. Another invitation soon followed, to write a History of the School as part of the 450th Anniversary celebrations. This was something that had not been done since John Burman's 1939 Edition 'Solihull and its School;' (updated in 1946, following independence) although an unpublished History 1879-1960 was produced in 1960 by former Head of History Eric Havinden to mark the 400th Anniversary. Reading these works, plus Mr. Bushell's autobiography, provided me with the inspiration to offer a modern version. So armed with the rich variety of material available in the Archives, I set out to record and celebrate some of the life and times of the people who have passed through Solihull School since its creation in 1560. It was a task that turned out to be hugely enjoyable and rewarding. Hopefully it will offer an interesting glimpse of our past to the present generation, and provide some fond memories for former pupils or anyone else interested in Solihull School. 400 years of history is a long time, but is one that has shaped the way we are today, and one which we should be proud of.

## **Acknowledgements**

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*School House today.*



*Bradford House, built in 1799 by Richard Bradford Thompson, a feoffee of the School, a private residence until purchased by the School in 1922.*

## INTRODUCTION

*The Chapel which once bore St Mary's name  
Under Elizabeth a school became!*

“When Richard II was ruling our land, rose a great founder who built a small school”. This is the opening line to the school song written by S E Everitt, set to music by Mr J A Easterling, but not sung since Headmaster H.B.Hitchens took a dislike to it in the early 1950's. In any case, it was not until 1560 that any direct evidence of the creation of Solihull School can be established. The Dissolution of the Chantries of St Katherine and St Mary (and six years later that of St Alphege) with the money redirected to the provision of a school master to offer education in English, Latin and Greek to the sons of Solihull parishioners is the official beginning. Why was the reign of Richard II(1377-1399) selected as the time of the School's creation? Apart from the notion that the older the better, it may have been assumed that since the majority of the charity foundation can be tracked back to Richard's reign, there must have been some provision for education by a chantry priest perhaps as can be proved in other parts of the country. Some education could have been offered in Solihull Church during the late Middle Ages, but no evidence is available, or that any of the chantry donations were linked to the provision of tuition by the priest. But increasing interest in education in 15th century England was well under way, so some form of education before 1560 is not impossible. Education didn't just start with the Reformation, but what the Reformation era did offer was a change of direction to meet the needs of new social aspirations in an expanding economy which accompanied the religious changes. Chantries were abolished as part of the Protestant innovations and the provision of education encouraged, although the Government insisted that all schoolmasters had to be licensed by a Bishop to ensure religious conformity. So, in Solihull, prayers said to speed dead souls into heaven were chanted no more, instead a School was started, The Free Grammar School. Not that medieval ideas were swept away – the foundation was still based on charity, the school was situated close to the church and a rather narrow classical curriculum employed. Unfortunately “They took the ideas of the Reformation but not the curriculum of the Renaissance”. But the School was now a clearly identifiable lay institution administered by a committee (or local parliament) of Feoffees (or governors) comprised of Solihull citizens. The Feoffees were the responsible owners of the school, and also of other amounts of property, from which the school derived its income, known collectively as the Solihull Charity Estate. They had to repair the church, control other elementary schools in the parish, maintain the fire engine, pay the Beadle and the Organist, and see that the Town Hall, the pound, public weighing machine and the stocks were in repair. They also owned the Post Office and the old Workhouse, built in 1742; and oversaw the operation to Turnpike the section of the Warwick Road in 1725-6, which made Solihull a good stopping point for London bound coaches. These Feoffees were eventually replaced by 13 governors under the Endowed Schools Act in 1879. What was legally described as an “original scheme” was modified in 1965 under the Charities Act of 1960; thereafter the management of the School was vested in a board of 16 Governors, and the Foundation changed from the Solihull Charity Estate to Solihull School. In 2007 a new Constitution, formalizing the procedure for 15 Governors to follow was created, including rules for their election, responsibilities, and, for the first time, Governors could enjoy limited liability.

So, in tune with the national trend for a new system, Solihull School was born in 1560 and christened the Free Grammar School. From these humble beginnings Solihull School celebrates its 450th anniversary as one of the most prestigious schools in the Midlands – rich in tradition, proud of its heritage and determined to move forward and contribute to education for another 450 years. This narrative and collection of photographs offers a nostalgic glimpse into some of our 450 years as Solihull School, or as the 1935 Shenstonian rather floridly expressed it, “ as the kaleidoscope of school life reveals its infinite mosaic, so shall we pick out the pieces as we please.”





*The Chantry Chapel in St. Alpheg Church, dissolved to sponsor the Free Grammar School.*



*Malvern House today.*





*Malvern House; The home of the Free Grammar School for 300 years.*



*Inside Malvern House with original timbers.*



## Part I

*... For the use and maintenance of a school of learning within the said parish... And for the education and preferment of orphans or young children to be born within the period. (1574)*

The first Headmaster, or ludimagister or pedagogus as he was called, was Edward Pole who was paid £12 per annum to offer instruction in English, Greek and Latin to the sons or parishioners. In 1574 a lower school was started for younger boys who were taught English, Religion and Basic Arithmetic, presided over by an usher, Barnaby Fetherston, who was paid to teach “*lyttell children*” within the parish. Not a great deal is known about the early Headmasters, although Henry Huddesford gave evidence at Rowington concerning a suspected papist. This area of Warwickshire was quite a hotbed of Roman Catholic intrigue. Robert Catesby leader of the Gunpowder Plotters in 1605, came from Lapworth and priests were hidden at nearby Baddesley Clinton and Coughton Court. Their ‘priest holes’ were fully examined by late 20th century Solihull School pupils on history trips. Several Headmasters came and went until John Horne arrived in 1592 and stayed 43 years, still on a salary of £12 per annum, which was supplemented by the admission of boarders from outside of Solihull who would have paid fees. The School was first situated in the square next to the churchyard wall and then soon after in Park Road, in a timber framed building (christened Malvern House in 1882) which was expanded in 1615 to accommodate Mr Horne and his wife, a few boarders and a modest amount of furniture. The Feoffees issued their requirements, “*the Schoolmaster.... shall be a good scholar... a pious man and of good, sober and honest conversation as becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ; but if he shall prove otherwise, or negligent in his place, and upon admonition shall not reform himself, then the said Feoffees shall remove or displace him and elect and choose another sufficient and able*”. In 1982 the Governors advertised for a Headmaster in similar vein; besides dealing with – “all academic, administration and educational matters .... the Governors will require the high standard of moral, religious and pastoral care based on Church of England teaching be fully maintained”.

Little is known about the Headmasters who came and went in the 17th Century, some being more successful than others – James Horton and John Makepeace covered the Civil War period (1642-1658) but sources are a little contradictory, one Johannes Horton is recorded in the Parish Register as Curate in 1642, who paid 6d for a house in which he was Schoolmaster. He could well have remained as such until 1658 when John Makepeace was elected as Schoolmaster, but apparently stayed only a few months, (although listed on the Headmasters’ Board as being there for 12years) Parish documents, written in court hand record this entry, “Mr. John Makepeace who was elected ‘cheif schoolmaster’ in April, 1658 took his departure the following October, his place being filled by Mr. Biggs.” Henry Biggs was the first to be paid more than £12 p.a. in 1658, the Feoffees recognising inflation at last. Others didn’t fair quite so well, William Hirons was sacked in 1694 and replaced by his deputy, Sam Osborne; George Ward died in office in 1689 and was owed forty-seven weeks salary by the Feoffees. He had fallen out with them and they had reduced his salary from £20 per annum to £13-10s in 1685 and did not restore it until 1687, but they did pay the arrears to his mother after he died. A few years before the Feoffees were keen to limit the number of ‘foreign’ children, i.e. boarders from outside the parish; hence the substantial rise in George Long’s salary of £25 p.a. in 1664. He had to effect repairs and teach properly, to “*fitt them (boys) for the University*” and limit the number of foreign pupils. He was assisted by an Usher, William Blunt, who also helped the Feoffees by, “writing out the levys for the poor, and in casting accounts for the overseers.” He had the job for life but thereafter there was to be, “but one schoolmaster for the whole School.”

After extensive repairs and improvements were made to Malvern House in 1663 the Feoffees provided 1s/6d for ale to celebrate. This would have been enough for four and a half gallons for the workmen to enjoy. The school hours were from 7 am to 11 am, then 1 pm to 5 pm, half days on Saturdays, early finish at 3 pm on

Thursdays. Holidays were a lot shorter than today and the curriculum hadn't changed since 1560. As the 17th century drew to a close, the school seemed in good heart. Headmaster John Hunter, who succeeded after Osborne's interregnum, proved eminently suitable and stayed until 1705, when he moved on to Lichfield Grammar School where he taught Samuel Johnson.

The 18th century saw the arrival of Headmaster, John Crompton, a fine mathematician, classical scholar and strict disciplinarian. His pupils included Christopher Wren, grandson of the great architect of St Paul's, Richard Jago and William Shenstone, after whom the Houses are named. Solihull School offered the chance to learn English Literature, which was quite unusual at the time. In fact boys were withdrawn from King Edward's Birmingham and sent to Solihull School, such was the fine reputation under Crompton. It was this feature of the education that led Shenstone's parents to send William as a boarder in 1724. William and Richard became firm friends and distinguished academics and poets; Jago's epic 'Edge Hill' refers to the strict discipline at Solihull School – *"Hail; Solihull! Respectful I salute... A sterner tyrant rises to my view... with deadliest weapon armed... within these walls, still stained with infant blood"*. It was a mixture of fear and respect for his old schoolmaster. (Times improved, of course; corporal punishment ceased in 1987).

When Crompton left for Market Bosworth Grammar School in 1735, the Feoffees appointed 23 year old Rev. Richard Mashiter, not one Samuel Johnson... *"an ill-tempered gent... whose facial twitches might frighten the boys"*. So Johnson went off to literary fame in London, not to Solihull School. Henry Greswolde of Hillfield Hall was one of the Feoffees who rejected Johnson's application and wrote the letter of refusal. A 19th century commentator wrote that Solihull School Feoffees were *"entertaining an angel unawares!"* Perhaps they were just pleased to be rid of the somewhat overbearing Mr Crompton and couldn't face the equally overbearing Mr Johnson. Maybe Jago's assessment of Crompton as *"a pedagogue morose"* had some truth. Mashiter was followed by his son, Edward, who died in office in 1781. Both Mashiters held livings in local churches - Knowle, Baddesley Clinton, Ettington - during their Headmasterships, a practice that was to continue well into the 20th century.

In 1774 Malvern House was given a serious makeover and extended. Bricks replaced wattle and daub, and as the 18th century drew to a close an account of the Headmaster's life was written – *"he is a sensible man, his principles are honest, his application to books is extensive and his conduct quite irreproachable"*. But he was poor, especially at a time of high prices during the Napoleonic Wars – *"he has found it difficult to procure food and raiment for the passing day"*. This was the lot of Headmaster James Eyre (1781-1813), father of ten, all living at the school house alongside the boarders. As an author, Eyre was a keen annotator critically working on Dr Johnson's Dictionary and publishing his research. Despite a lucrative church living in Wiltshire, he died whilst in office at 65 still short of money.

The early 19th century was traditionally regarded as a time when grammar schools were at a low ebb, offering only "the dry husks of ancient learning" and often employing a schoolmaster who had few, if any, pupils to teach until reform and revitalisation occurred in the second half of the 19th century. Solihull seems to fit their stereotype, although the School Archives possess a maths exercise book dated 1795 and a beautifully illustrated geography book compiled in 1828. So, thanks to Crompton's legacy, more than classical studies must have been offered (probably charged as extras). However, in the first half of the 19th century numbers were low in the senior part of the School and other private schools were providing successful competition (eg one in Bradford House run by Richard Bradford Thompson, a Feoffee!). Nationally grammar schools were described by Lord Kenyon as *"empty walls without scholars and everything neglected except the receipt of salaries and emoluments"*. At Solihull, Headmaster Griffin only ever had three free pupils during his thirty year tenure, despite an annual salary of £100. His second master, Mr Robert Cumber, supplemented his salary by selling inkwells – three for 10½ pence (4p). His successor wanted to whitewash the walls, open the windows and rearrange the desks. He left after a year.

After 1842, in response to an Act of Parliament, curriculum changes were made to include Religious Instruction, History, Geography and Maths. This attracted more boys from elsewhere but no free scholars were taught. The residents of Solihull were aggrieved that not a single Solihull boy was attending the school in 1842 (which later recovered to 13 by 1879). In Mr Griffin's defence it was stated that "*such an education was not one the bulk of inhabitants considered one to be of advantage to their children*". Nevertheless, Headmaster Griffin objected to the changes and resigned. New Headmaster, Rev. George Elliott, was unable to stem the tide of dissatisfaction with the School. A large petition was presented to the Feoffees by local people in March 1850, complaining about the teaching, the discipline and the management of the School. Discipline is referred to as poor, but some boys had been suspended (but hopefully it was not as bad as at Rugby where boys blew up the Headmaster's study door with gunpowder in 1797). But the main complaint was "*the inefficient system of education pursued thereat*". As a result, the master of the Lower School was sacked, Headmaster Elliott resigned and henceforth the Lower School separated and moved to a new schoolroom on the site where St Alphege School is today, next to the church, and became known as the Elementary School – the forerunner of the parish church schools of Solihull today.

The Feoffees defined their objectives for Solihull School – "*to make the school as generally as useful as possible not only to those whose sons require a classical education, but to the sons of the farmers and tradesmen in the parish who required such an education as may be really useful to their station in life*". During this period the first recorded exams were taken in 1838 in the Town Hall, and in line with the Poor Law Amendment Act (of 1834) the Board of Guardians decided that the Workhouse was too small and petitioned the Feoffees to buy land near to the Tanyard, which was fortunately rejected as this was the land upon which the new School was built in 1882. The new Workhouse, built in 1838, occupied the site upon which Solihull Hospital now stands.

An interesting Old Sil from these years whose career offers a flavour of 19th century Solihull society is Lt Col Robert Short (1783-1859) of the East India Co. He and his five brothers attended Solihull School at the turn of the century. Their father was John Short, a surgeon who lived at what is now called Quinet House (named after another surgeon of the 20th century, Paul Quinet) opposite the Barley Mow, (then called the Limerick Castle) Robert was a fine sportsman and after his army career returned to Solihull and served as a JP and a Guardian of the Poor Law Union, purchasing the Lordship of the Manor in 1850. His connections are fascinating. His grandfather was Richard Mashiter, Headmaster until 1769, and his father, the eminent surgeon, was the longest serving Feoffee ever – 57 years. He also owned another familiar Solihull name – Shelley Farm. His younger brother Thomas, also a pupil at Solihull under Dr Eyre, was Second Master at Rugby having been beaten to the Headmastership by Dr Thomas Arnold. He became Vice President of Trinity College, Oxford, and taught Cardinal Newman and Richard Burton, the explorer who searched for, and some say found, the source of the River Nile. His final years were spent in Solihull living in Lode Lane, and dying in 1879 aged 90. Two other brothers served as 19th century Parish Bailiffs. After Robert's death in 1859 the Lordship passed to his nephew, Rev John Couchman, whose family still hold the title. His final resting place is in St Alphege Church.

By the mid-19th century and, in line with the national trend, the Feoffees made the Grammar School fee paying in 1850 - £5 per annum by 1869. Boarders were allowed at £50 per annum but some free places were available to boys from the Elementary School. The tradition of scholarships had begun, later to be extended by the new Local Authority in 1902. Entry qualifications in 1867 were not on academic ability but on who applied first. Numbers were limited to 45, and when a vacancy occurred it was filled from the waiting list.

As 1882 approached the School began to make progress. Building repairs were carried out in 1866, French teaching introduced and gas lighting was installed. Progressive Headmaster Rev. James Bennett (1861-79) deserves the credit for pushing the school in a positive direction, the mid century problems fading away.





*Rev. James Bennett, Headmaster 1861 - 79.*



*The Martha Palmer Charity School in School Lane, later the 'Sanitorium' for the Grammar School.*



*The Martineau Family, 1924.*

A glimpse into 19th century school life is offered by G. A. Martineau of Touchwood Hall who attended the school in the late 1860's, early '70's. He recalled that there were seven or eight boarders and the rest divided into two classes – those who lived in and about the village and those who came from afar. He tells how several boys came to school on their horses or in a trap and he recounts some anecdotes of fooling about with the carriages. He also relates how boys used to throw balls up the chimney in the schoolroom which often used to get stuck. One boy went up the chimney when the Master was out of the room, only to come down covered in soot as the Master re-entered. We don't know the outcome. Then, as now, snow attracted the boys and Martineau recalls rivalry with the local National School – *“with the National School so close, there was of course continual warfare between those boys and our school....a fall of snow and we were all at it, we day boys had to run the gauntlet to get by, as the National School was on the home side of ours; and again when chestnuts were about and acorns ripe, the warfare went on again”*.

Another recollection of life in Malvern House during Mr Bennett's Headmastership (1861-79) is recorded anonymously in the 1905 Shenstonian under the heading 'The Old Order' – *“The old school house had two doors, the big door...which led into the playground and the new school, and a little door, at the top of the remarkable high step, which led into the House. The mind of man could not invent a more narrow, dark or inconvenient way of passing from one room to another than that door, except the twisted passage with steps in the darkest places, which lay behind it. From the School side two doors appeared, side by side and very much alike, one led into the dark passage, the other into a darker cupboard, where cricket things were kept. It was once said once a master – not Mr Bennett – desiring to make a particular dignified exit from the room, opened the wrong door and plunged amongst bats and stumps to the joy of all the beholders. Both cupboard and dark passage served, out of school hours, as cells where large boys could secure small and troublesome persons. The cupboards smelt of tar, earth, decayed leather and oil all flavoured with a surprising mouldiness, also the supply of oxygen was small even for one captive!”*.

Then, as now, the approach of a Headmaster was a cause of trepidation – *“Never did Mr Bennett pass from the dark passage to the school without a decent pause and a jingling of the keys which he always carried. Very rarely was that danger signal unnoticed. First the jingle, then a rattle of the latch, then the door slowly opened, and Mr Bennett came sideways down that high step, and walked deliberately to his desk”*.

The author then moves on to discuss the appearance of masters and pupils – *“The Usher in those days was Mr Lane, afterwards Headmaster of March Grammar School, and after him came Mr Bird. Throughout their period moved a constant succession of French professors of whom Monsieur Bailli, whose English was far from perfect, did not wear a beard, but long whiskers such as a comic Englishman must wear even now on the French stage where they are called favoris”*.

*Whiskers, top-hats and crinolines. These were the distinguishing marks of the ancient times.....Mr Bennett always wore a top hat, he came to school in it and put it on his desk as a convenient receptacle for papers. Mr Bailli always wore a top hat – the shiniest! At least two boys came to school in top hats, such as all our fathers always wore, though most affected felt hats of a clerical appearance, which speedily developed into milking hats under the violent treatment to which they were subjected. Mr Bird did not wear a top-hat, but to make up for that wore a favoris, more magnificent than those of Mr Bailli himself”*.

In “A Step back in Time” by Len Villiers, he recalls his father's time at Solihull Grammar School from 1879-82 under the *“kindly, patriarchal tutelage of the Rev. Dr Wilson”*. After lessons the boarders, under the supervision of a junior master, were allowed to go on long walks around the countryside surrounding Solihull village....a highlight of the summer term was the annual cricket match at Elmdon Hall. The School Team was invited by Squire Alston to play against the team drawn from the Hall guests. Unfortunately no scores or results are recorded. Then in the summer term of 1882, the move to the school premises on the Warwick



Road. Villiers records how his father always spoke with awe of how palatial the place seemed, after the homely feeling of Park Road. The thrill of boarders going home is also recorded in 1884 – *“The term is now drawing to a close and we shall soon be packing our play boxes, and thinking of train money day, and the strains of dulce domum will be heard sung by many voices with real school-boy earnestness and that love of home which is so characteristic of an English boy however far away he may be....one by one they got out at different stations; and only is left to think of the work he has done during the term, and his success in bowling”*.

In 1879 the last meeting of the Feoffees took place, reborn as School Governors, more representative, and subject to greater scrutiny; the administration of the charity revenues was rechristened the Solihull Charity Estate and the lion’s share of the money was to be given entirely to education; contributions to Solihull Church were greatly reduced. The Charity Estate also supported four other local schools – Solihull Girls’ and Infants’ School, Shirley, Bentley Heath and Forshaw Heath Schools.

So the School now appeared to be free to progress and expand like other 19th century Grammar Schools, some of which are now household Public School names - *“in a period of fulfilment and stability”*.

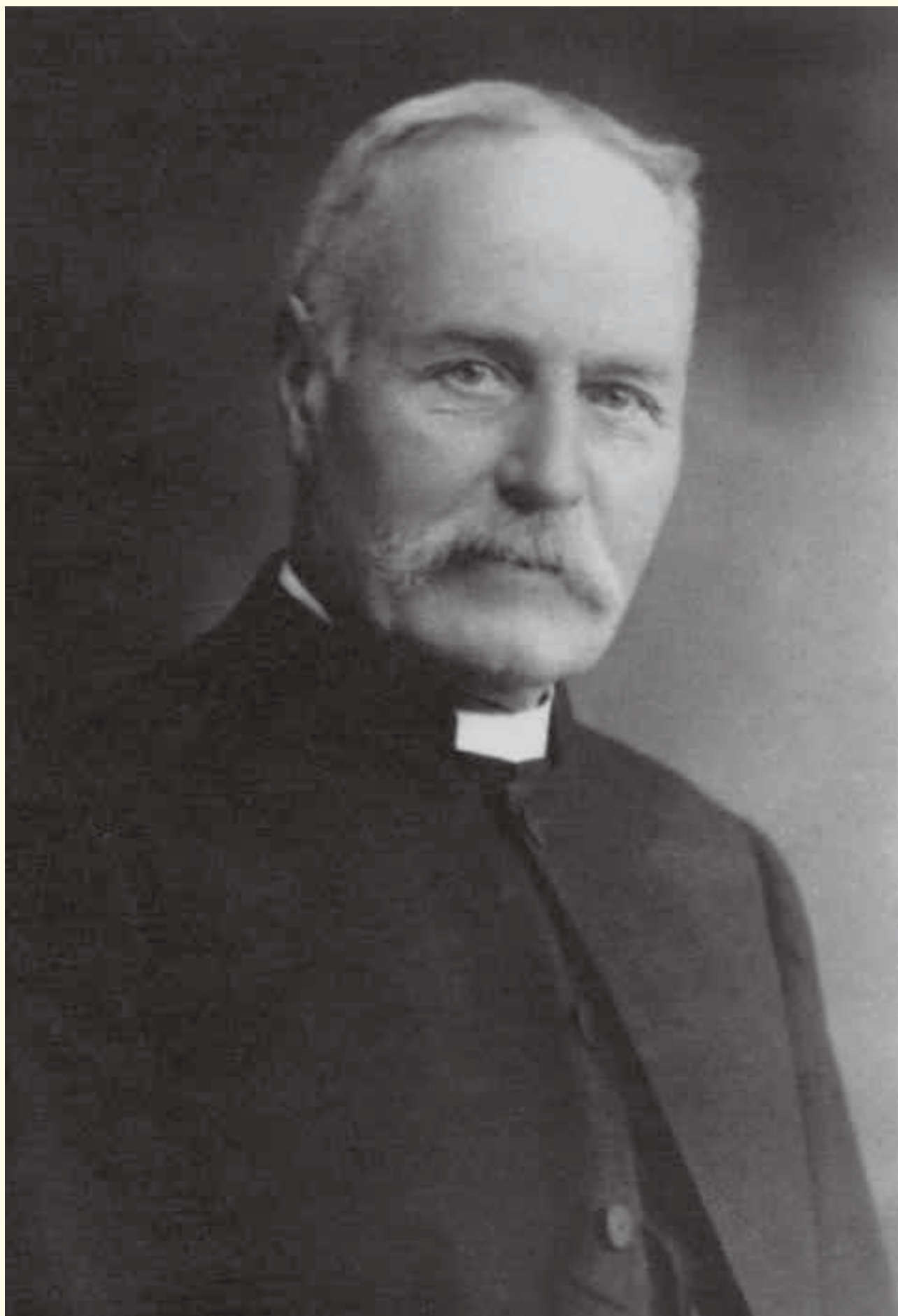
## Part II

*The original premises were closed and the school moved to a new building....then, in accordance with the modern custom of schools of any status. Solihull Grammar School became Solihull School (1913)*

The ethos of the school was now becoming clearly defined, again in line with late 19th century public school ideals, an emphasis on development of character, a school chapel to reinforce Church of England values, a house system, prefects, school uniform, compulsory games, OTC (CCF), Old Boys' Associations, pride in and loyalty to alma mater, wherever in the Empire one may be. Since the Grammar School buildings were too small and decrepit to achieve all this, a new building was required and a new Headmaster, as the Rev. Bennett resigned to become Rector at Lydford in Devon. Rev. Dr Robert Wilson, a Master of Sutton Coldfield Grammar School, was appointed and, according to Burman, *"was a man of outstanding character and personality, both of which he stamped on his new school"*. There were 33 pupils and fees were £7.10s.0d in 1879 when Rev. Dr Wilson began his Headmastership in the old Grammar School and moved into the new School on Tanhouse Close, Warwick Road on the 13th June 1882, a site locally described as two fields and a long narrow pond. The old School was renamed Malvern House and rented out. To finance the new premises on Warwick Road land was sold off in various locations, most notably at Beau Desert which had been given to the Feoffees in 1565. Lloyds Bank also provided a loan of £3,000 towards a total cost of £4,345. Dr Wilson has been described as Solihull School's Thomas Arnold – progressive and inspirational. He invented the motto Perseverantia, redesigned the badge and the School began to march forward into the modern era – the age of building had begun. Mains water was laid on in 1889 and twelve pieces of fire-fighting equipment known as grenades were installed! By 1890 the School had expanded, more land was sold off, including the wrongly named Manor House on the High Street. A Science Laboratory was built by Bragg Bros. and a Gymnasium erected in 1897 (which became the Art Block, which became the Drama Studio which was absorbed by the George Hill building). It cost £3,000, half of which was donated by Dr Wilson himself; nearby a Fives Court was provided. In May the previous year A. V. Bernays became a Governor (Chairman in 1904-08, 1916-21). This began a long and close association between the School and the Bernays and Whitehouse Surgery set up in 1883. Dr Whitehouse was also a School Governor 1920-50 (Chairman 1929-32). Dr Adolphus Vaughan Bernays was also the first President of the Old Boys Club in 1921. His long service to Solihull School was recognised by Mr Thompson in 1938, *"Solihull School has been fortunate in its many benefactors, but no name amongst them is more honoured or more loved than that of Dr. Bernays"*. *"One of the refounders of the present school"*, said Mr Bushell. Two prizes still bear the names of the two doctors – the Whitehouse Prize for Biology and Bernays Prize for Reading – and are presented each year on Speech Day.

His nephew, Frederick George Bernays, had a distinguished career as a pupil 1925-28. Captain of School House, opening bat for the XI, he was also a keen member of the Dramatic Society. The Shenstonian records how he *"mastered the female carriage"* as he often played women in the productions. He visited his uncle's house in the High Street on Sunday evenings, smoking a cigar before returning to the boarding house. His other nephew, Robert, was appointed to the staff by Mr Bushell for two terms before Oxford. He was a fine academic, became an MP and Junior Government Minister but was killed in WWI. Mr Bushell lamented his loss philosophically – *"his death....deprived me of an old pupil who would certainly have achieved Cabinet rank"*. The connection with the Bernays and Whitehouse surgery continues to the present day. Dr Peter Travis acted as Medical Officer for 35 years before his retirement in 2008.

By 1895, the School was full at 120 pupils. Physics and Chemistry were taught thanks to a grant from the Science and Art Department, new facilities for which were provided in 1902, plus additions to School House. The foundation stone of the new block – still visible – was laid by Mrs Wilson, and opened the following year by eminent physicist Sir Oliver Lodge, and thereafter known as the Wilson Building. Another direct grant was



*Rev. R. Wilson, M.A, LL.D. (Dublin), Headmaster 1879 - 1908.*



secured from Central Government following successful exam results in Maths and Science. After the Endowed Schools Act (1898) the Warwickshire LEA increased its influence over the School. Two L.E.A. representatives held two seats on the governing body, increasing to four in 1910. An annual grant was received (£450 in 1909, increased to £650 in 1911) and County scholarships were sponsored - 25% of the intake, reduced to 20% in 1926, but restored to 25% in 1929.

In the 1900's the School buildings were described as follows – *“These include the Headmaster's house, dining hall, dormitories, boarding houses, big school, six classrooms, large chemical and physics laboratories, lecture and balance rooms, furnished on the most modern principles, large and beautiful art room, excellent workshop for carpentry, good library and reading room, dark room for photography, also a very large gymnasium, fitted with every appliance for gymnastic exercises, as well as a Morris tube range, where boys are taught to shoot and handle a rifle. Every boy is taught military drill. There is a detached sanatorium, also a cycle house. There are twenty acres of playing fields with pavilions for Cricket, Football and Hockey, and a Cricket Professional is retained. The sanitation of the School and Houses is as perfect as it can be made. There is accommodation for 200 boys”*.

Boys 8-19 years were eligible for admission, the staff numbered 11 which includes the Head himself, Sgt Major Carty of the O.T.C, and Bursar C H Lockitt. Boys had to pass an entrance examination in Reading, Writing, the first four rules of Arithmetic and the outlines of the Geography of England. Admission also depended upon the submission of a health certificate stating that the boy was free of infection. The school year was organised as it is today into three terms with 13 weeks total holiday time, but no mention is made of any half terms and it was a six day week. *“Boys start in the Lower School where they are taught Divinity, Latin, French, English Grammar and Composition, History, Geography, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Elementary Science, Drawing, Dictation and Writing. Thereafter they are selected for the classical forms in which they are prepared for the universities and professions, or the modern forms where boys are prepared for business. The classical students are taught Divinity, Latin, Greek, French, Maths, English Literature and Composition, Chemistry and Physics, whereas the modern forms are offered Divinity, French, German, Arithmetic, Maths, Literature and Composition, History, Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Drawing, Shorthand, Book keeping and Précis Writing”*. Quite a broad curriculum!

Fees were £19 per term for boarders, with extras recorded at £1 p.a. for dancing tuition and 5 shillings for workshop tuition by a carpenter. Boys from India and the Colonies are charged £80 p.a. all inclusive. Boarders received 6d per week pocket money. Day boys paid £1-10s per term plus £3 dining hall fees and 5 shillings for the carpenter. Domestic arrangements are described as the commissariat (i.e. feeding arrangements), with the Headmaster and his assistant masters having their meals with the boys. The Headmaster's wife, assisted by a Matron, superintends all household arrangements. The dormitories are described as *“well lighted and particularly comfortable...each boy has a separate bed”*. All boys must have a cap and badge, and finally it was requested that parents have their boy's teeth attended to in the holidays by their own dentist.

In November 1906 the HMI advised – *“the bathroom required extension, the Headmaster should have a common room...a highly qualified English master was required, book keeping and shorthand should be eliminated. Science teaching was satisfactory, Mathematics was taught in a very scholarly manner and that discipline was perfectly satisfactory”*.

In 1908 Dr Wilson resigned to become Vicar of Salter Street (which became Tanworth in 1913) until he died in 1930. He is regarded as the driving force as Solihull School entered the 20th century and began its steady development and expansion. He presided over a School that moved to its present location, secured more land in Warwick Road that serves as playing fields today, and established a fine academic and pastoral reputation for the School that still remains. The variety of subjects, the increase in pupils and the improved facilities are



*Solihull Grammar School c.1909.*



*The same view c.1969, J. R. bettridge, keeping wicket, A. N. Payne batting, R. Barnett at deep point, B. A. Reeve and A. K. C. Jones in the covers.*



*Cricket pre-WWI showing the old Pavillion built in 1897.*



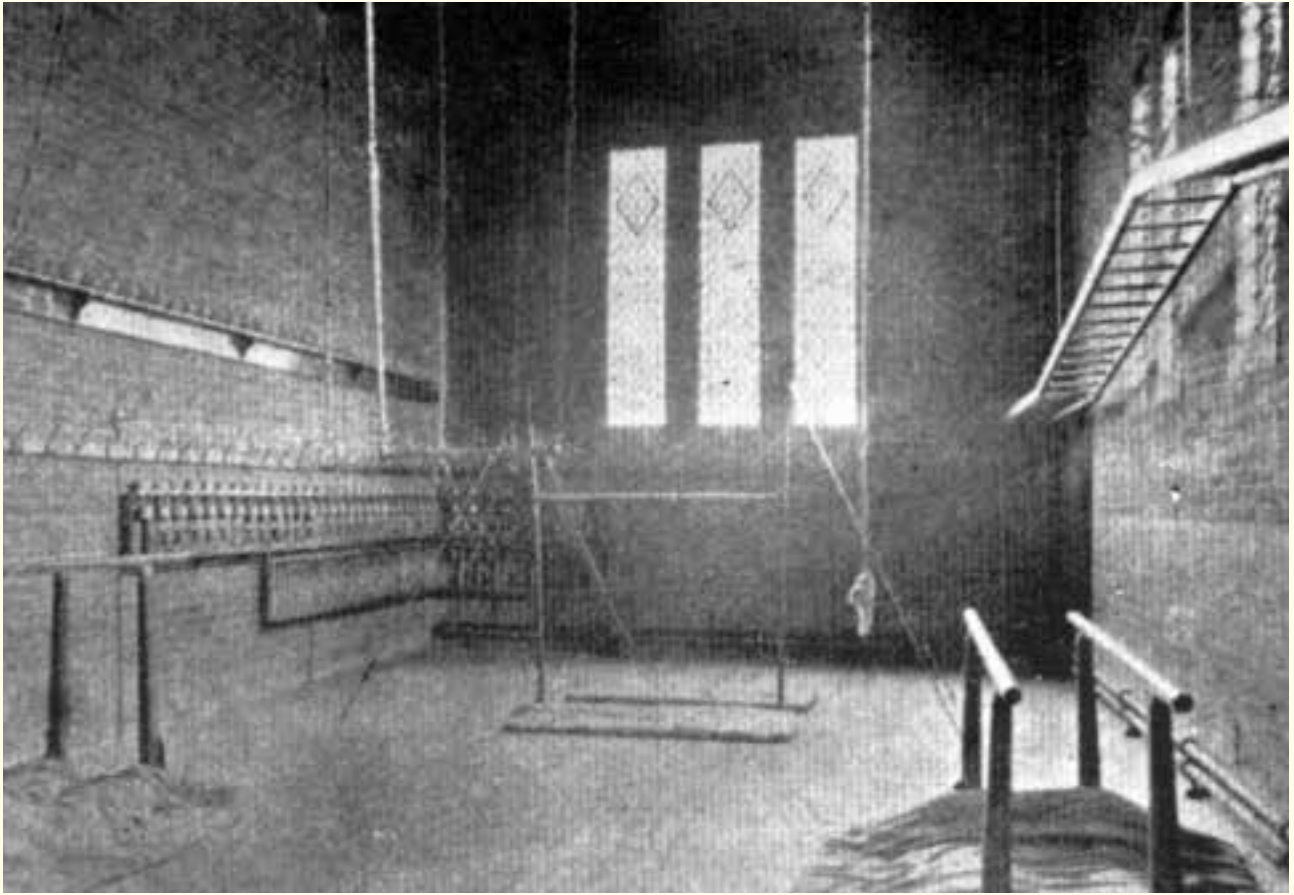


*The Old Quad c.1905.*



*The Old Quad today.*





*The Old Gym.*



*Dining Hall.*



*Dining Hall.*



*Sixth Form room, 1921.*



*Preparatory Form Room, 1924.*



*Pavillion in Old Tower Field.*



*The Workshop, 1924*





*The new School House, built in 1882.*



*The Wilson Building 1902.*



*Looking back to the Old Quad c.1959.*



*The same view today, the entrance to George Hill building.*





*The original Big School or Big School Room c.1908.*



*c.1925, full of the new chairs.*



*Chemistry Laboratory, 1909.*



*Chemical Laboratory, 1909.*



*Rev. A. J. Cooper, M.A., LL.D. (Dublin), B.Sc., Headmaster 1908 - 1920.*

surely testament to his success. In his memoirs, Mr W F Bushell (Headmaster 1920-27) recalls how Dr. Wilson (affectionately nicknamed 'Pat' by the boys) told him of his days in Malvern House – *“he was once addressing the School on a serious matter and with great dignity proceeded to leave the room. Unfortunately he chose a door which led to a china cupboard, with results disastrous both to himself and the crockery inside”*.

A glimpse of what the School was like pre-1908 can be seen on the pages of the school magazine, The Shenstonian, started in 1882. The first edition reveals that the name was selected as a tribute to William Shenstone – *“one of our distinguished sons, and our hope and ambition is that we may prove worthy of the name we bear”*. All future editions have carried a high literary content. The July 1900 edition records that a half day holiday was enjoyed to celebrate the fall of Pretoria and in 1901 it is recorded that L/C W Tibbitts was killed, our only Boer War casualty.

The School was slowly expanding when Rev. A. J. Cooper became Headmaster in 1908. School House was once again extended, in 1909 and in 1910 a new engineering workshop, the domain of Mr. W. Cartwright (1910-1937) was equipped for £100 by the County Council. The hole punch was a particular favourite of the pupils. It was located where the tuck shop is now, and turned into three classrooms in 1947, which were later burnt down by the rat catchers, by accident we assume. Also in 1910 the Governors paid £685 for playing fields which had been rented previously from the church. The coronation of Edward VII on 22nd June 1911 was celebrated with enthusiasm. The OTC joined the parade in Solihull, which made a circular tour from Malvern Park via the High Street, Warwick Road and New Road. Sports and other events continued all day which Solihull pupils enjoyed. They were then awarded a few days extra holiday, by order of the King. Extra holidays had been given for Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations of 1887 and 1897 and Headmaster Cooper's birthday was also marked by a day off – a tradition some would like reinstated! In 1911 *“that versatile pupil P. R. Ansell is awarded Fifth Form Prizes for English, French and, of course, Mathematics”*. He was to be an ever present part of Solihull's history for the next sixty years. It wasn't all work; Rev. Cooper took the pupils to Sanger's Circus that visited Solihull in 1913. In the previous year the England Cricket Team won the Ashes in Australia, captained by Frank Foster, who remains to date Solihull School's most famous cricketer. His photograph and bat were proudly displayed in the dining room for many years.

A preparatory department was established, and in 1913 the word “Grammar” was dropped *“in accordance with the modern custom of schools of any status”*. So, what is recorded in an unofficial, rather prosaic manner – Solihull Grammar School died, and Solihull School was born. The last Shenstonian before the change of name records concern over the situation in Europe – *“the daily papers have been full of vivid and descriptive accounts of the great campaign that has raged in the Balkans, a thing that no one can regard lightly, and which have a great bearing on the future history of Europe”*.

The School was establishing a good academic reputation on the eve of the First World War, but the war called away several masters for military service and good replacements were hard to find. According to previous histories, both academic excellence and discipline appears to have suffered as a result of the war. Certainly before Mr Bushell got to work, day boys had to eat their lunch in a garage and large numbers of younger boys lacked proper supervision. Records of the 1914-1918 years make evocative reading as *“school life continued against the background of war and its ruthlessness, its horror, its devastation are all brought home to us in our little community and while proud to send our members forth, we are constrained to pray for their safe return”*. Football, cricket, librarian, CCF reports etc are found alongside lists of serving Old Sils and, as the war progressed, a list of casualties. *“Our football team has been a splendid one – the record of 49 goals to 9 is one to be proud of. Our role of honour contains more names, token of valuable lives laid down for their country”* (1916). One of the leading pupils of the pre-WW1 era was to put his academic skills to use in developing one of the War's most horrific weapons. R.H.Sproat was Captain of Cricket and Football in 1911-13, and he also found time to edit the Shenstonian. An excellent scientist he won a Scholarship to Selwyn College, Cambridge, but





*The Dining Room c.1921, now the Conference room.*



*In School House C.1924.*



*Cricket first XI, 1916.*



*In School House C.1975.*



*Football first XI, 1916.*



*Cadet Furze, 1904.*

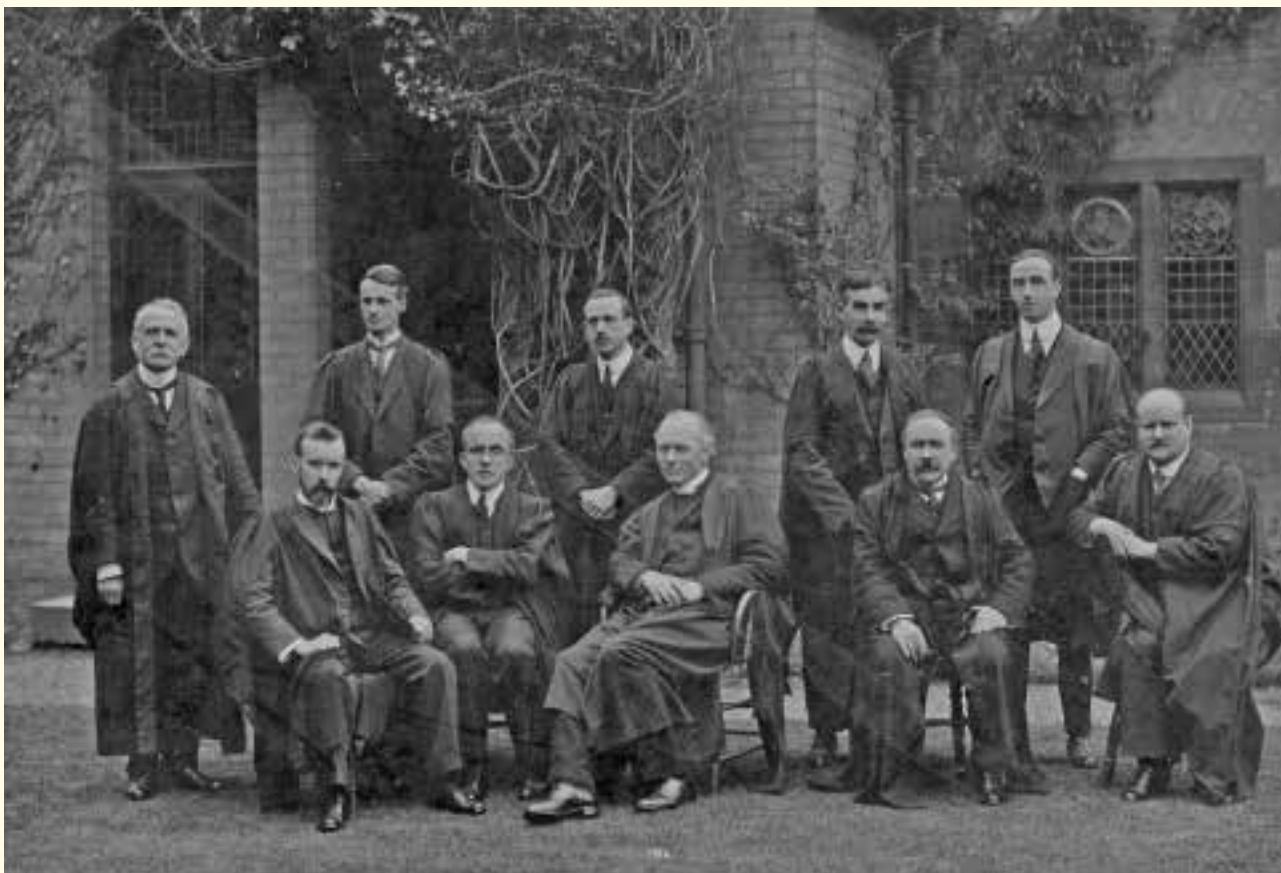


*Preparing for the Remembrance Parade, 1921.*



*The Old Quad, 1916. Wood, Shotter and Wormald on the 1908 Rex motorcycle.*





*Staff, 1916. Left to right; Courtney Woods, W. Mitchley, A. H. Watts, Charlie Ough, Headmaster Dr. A. J. Cooper, Frank Miller, E. P. Guest, R. D. Wright, H. Richards.*



*Cricket first XI, 1915. Watkins (3rd back row) and Arculus (5th back row) were killed in WWI and Quaife (front row left) went on to play for Warwickshire.*



*Cricket first XI, 1919.*



*Football first XI, 1917.*





*Football first XI, 1907-1908.*



*Football first XI, 1915.*

when War broke out he was commissioned in the Staffordshire Regiment. After a lucky escape at Mons, when a shot passed clean through his binoculars, he became a Staff Officer in charge of the poisonous gas section of his Division. His former teacher reflected, “his work in Chemistry at School will serve him in good stead in this capacity.” He was awarded the Croix de Guerre in 1918. The O.T.C. (CCF) made preparations for the real thing, simulated trenches were dug and bayonet practice undertaken. Elsewhere in the school, food was grown on plots and harvest camps took place in Bromsgrove and fruit picking at Pershore. The Shenstonian was reduced in size due to lack of paper but the academic life continued as before alongside the awful reality of war that was to crystallise the attitudes of a generation, not least of those who attended Solihull School during those years. The situation was borne stoically and December 1917 “...we are still at war fighting for the ideas of peace against the machinations of brute force, and our dear ones are still laying down their lives that their friends may live and we know that however black the outlook may seem yet righteousness must triumph, and we are anxious to contribute what we can to the world’s deliverance from bondage”. The determination of the British public to slog it out to the end is not only recorded in general history books but found throughout the pages of the Shenstonian. The first teacher to join up was Mr. M. Jones who served with the West Yorkshire Regiment. The CCF presented him with a field glass on his departure. He was badly wounded in 1916 but survived to continue as a recruitment officer for the Home Office. Sadly, his wounds were too severe and he died in 1918. Pupils remembered his kindly and cheerful disposition and his readiness to give help when needed. Several other masters were called away and there were staff shortages, but the Maths Department was run by Miss Bower – a popular teacher who left in 1921 to continue her career at Birmingham University. The next woman to run a Department was Alex Roll who became Head of Geography in 1994.

Forty-four Old Sils were recorded as being killed in action. They include Lt. Herbert Jackson, 22, School House, Science Prize Winner 1912, Maths Prize Winner 1913, Royal Flying Corps, killed in France in 1917. Captain Clement Martineau, 21, of Touchwood Hall, won prizes for exam merit and Nature Study in 1912 and was CCF leading cadet in 1913, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, killed 1918, buried in Belgium. Lt. J. D. Williamson, 19, School House, killed on the Somme, buried at Thiepval. Lt. Harry Fawdrey, 19, School House, Cadet Corps Yardley Challenge Cup Winner 1914, RAF, killed August 1918, buried in Belgium. These boys had been on CCF camp together in Summer 1914. Sgt. Lawrence Waters, 25, killed second Battle of Ypres 1915, recorded on the Menim Gate as he was never found. Pte. J. H. Watkins, killed in January 1917, buried far from home in Iraq. Finally, Clive Beaufoy, 21, awarded an English Prize in 1912 (Form V), played full back in the first XI football team, volunteer Second Birmingham City Battalion, October 1914, having won the Victor Ludorum on Sports Day, June 1914, wounded at Messine Ridge, April 1918, killed 23rd September 1918.

In 1923 a school trip to Belgium was undertaken and recorded from Ypres. “In the days before the war this town was one of the most beautiful in Belgium. The Cloth Hall was one of the sights of Europe. Now it is a mass of ruins. There is not one building left standing...the ruins of the cloth Hall have been made safe and they will be left as an awful memorial of the Great War”. In 1999 Solihull School history students returned to Ypres. “...it was bombed flat during the war but all its beauty has been painstakingly regenerated through years of restoration. The Menim Gate, where two members of the Fire Service have played the Last Post at 8 pm every night since the end of the Great War and thus we were brought to remember the words, Lest We Forget”.

When the war ended, numbers exceeded two hundred for the first time. Tuition fees were £12 per annum, boarding cost £45 per annum. Rev. Dr Cooper resigned in 1920 due to ill health, and thirty-five year old Mr W F Bushell arrived to lead the school and transform it from – “the good country Grammar school which it had been for so long, into the Public School of the present day”. When he died, Dr Cooper left sufficient money in his will so sponsor a science scholarship at Birmingham University. Mr Bushell’s tenure may have been fairly brief (1921-27) but his achievements were monumental and his name rightly honoured today.



*W. F. Bushell, 1920 - 1927.*





*Miss Bushell and the orchestra, 1923.*



*Mr Bushell and staff, 1924.*



*Re-opening of Malvern House as the Junior School, 1924.*

The First World War was a difficult time for the School, but the 1920's saw considerable development, although financial restraints were still intrusive as Mr Bushell remembered in his memoirs – *“There was no Headmaster’s secretary, there was no Bursar. All these are modern accretions...I had to pay my own Secretary which was not unreasonable...I had to open letters addressed to the Bursar, but I did regard it as unfair when I had to open a letter addressed to the bruiser, Solihull School!”*. Nevertheless his salary was updated from his predecessor’s, and in order to attract better quality teachers staff salaries were paid in line with the Burnham Scale in March 1922. More foundation land was sold so Bradford House,(built in 1799) could be purchased in 1921 for £2,300. Over the years Bradford House served as a boarding house, including accommodation for bachelor masters, provided classrooms, prefects’ room, a book store and was an Air Raid Warden’s post during World War II; even the tuck shop was once based there. It became the Bursar’s HQ in 1934.

The community of Solihull that Mr Bushell entered was that of a small rural village, with narrow lanes and open fields. Some boys still came to school on horses but bicycles began to appear after the War. Traffic was very limited so cross country runs ventured out across Hampton Lane to Berry Hall via Marsh Lane, then onto Henwood Mill and back across the fields. In their leisure time boys could walk up the Warwick Road, past the Workhouse (now the Hospital), the Golden Lion (now the Town House) to Mrs Palmer’s sweet shop – the school’s unofficial tuck shop offering a fine selection of confectionery.

Compulsory games required more playing field space, so land surrounding the school (now the Junior School playing fields and where the Headmaster’s house now stands) was purchased. On the other side there was an area of 21 acres, comprising the old Tanyard cottages all the way up to Union Road on the Warwick Road side and School Lane on the other. Mr Bushell had the foresight and courage to buy the land himself as cautious Governors were reluctant to keep spending. These are now the Bushell fields and the School finally bought them from Mr Bushell in 1931 (minus three acres he had sold to the British Legion). Games could now really flourish; hockey which had been played since 1905 was replaced by football in 1915 but revived in 1923. Rugby replaced football in 1930. A swimming pool was opened in 1930 (by Mrs Waltham with a silver key) thanks to a generous contribution from the Parents’ Association plus £1,300 raised by a Summer Fete in July 1928. The School began to develop an interest in music; the most popular item at concerts was ‘Polly Wally Doodle’ sung by much loved Geography Master, Mr Frank (Chuffy) Miller, playing the banjo, enthusiastically supported in the choruses by the entire audience. He followed this with ‘Take a pair of sparkling eyes’ to even more rapturous applause. There was also a keen interest in the concerts broadcast from Birmingham on the new wireless. In response a Radio Society was formed in 1924. More serious music followed, an orchestra was formed in addition to a CCF Band (of dubious quality) and a choir was trained. From these early initiatives musical excellence at Solihull was to flourish from the 1950’s onward. It was realised that a great variety of intellectual pursuits led to a more solid basis for an academic education. More and more boys looked to a university place and careers thereafter in the professions. The era of academic excellence had truly begun. In 1922 the new library recorded that 100 books per week were being taken out.

In 1923 a boarding house for junior boys opened as Gaywood in Park Avenue, and in 1924 a Prep Department opened in Malvern House, a return to the original site. There pupils were divided into four houses – Arden, Blythe, Malvern and Gaywood – and a grand tea party was held to celebrate. Guest of Honour, Rev. Dr. Wilson, spoke passionately about the progress of the School, and urged the Governors to consider the provision of a School Chapel. 1925 was a year for gifts that are still in use today. As part of Mr. Bushell’s ‘sponsor a chair promotion,’ a fine Headmaster’s chair was presented by the 16 names who appear on the back, the majority of them(including teacher Mr. Blackshaw) were School leavers that year. Mr. Bushell’s own name also appears, as it does he admitted, “on at least 6 to 8 chairs in England and elsewhere.” The great chair has been treated to the odd refurbishment of the seat over the years but is still a precious Solihull School heirloom. It was accompanied by a large oak table that finally retired from service in 2002. The beautifully carved oak lectern that is used in assemblies and on Speech Day was dedicated by the Rector of Solihull in memory of Jack





*Solihull School Hockey, 1924.*



*Dining 1920's style.*



*Big School, 1929.*



*School House, 1923.*



*Remembrance Service, 1921.*





*Preparatory Form Room c.1925.*



*Dormitory, now an Art Room.*



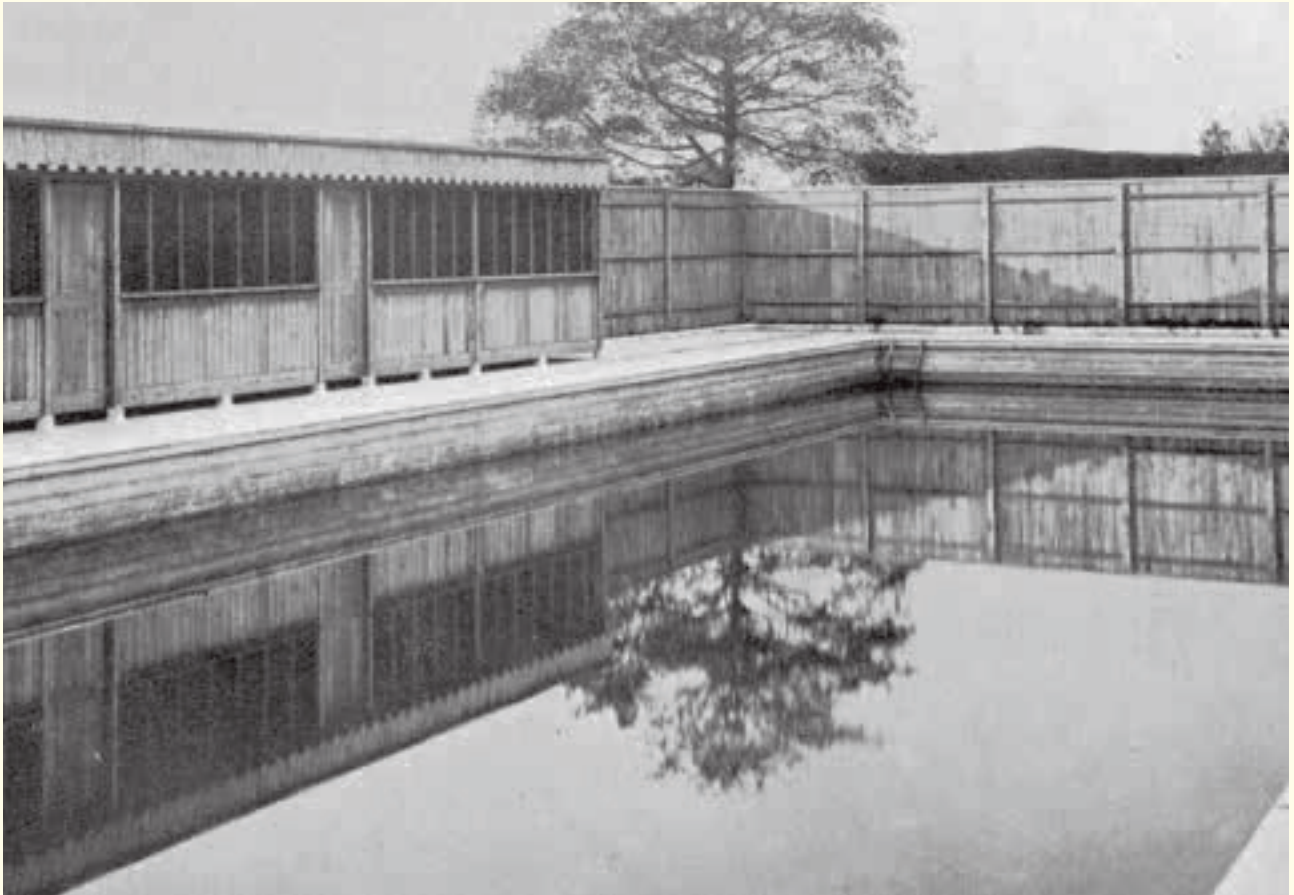
*Two boarders with motor cycle c.1925.*



*Big School Dining Hall, now 6th Form Common Room.*



*Blythe House, February 1926.*



*Swimming Pool, 1930.*



*Swimming Pool c.1964.*





*The Swimming Pool today.*



*Swimming Pool under construction, 1930.*



*Swimming Pool, built 1930.*





*Major S. G. Everitt, School Governor, writer of the School song.*

Waters (School House) who died after an appendix operation on 22nd July 1924. He was 15 and the eldest of several brothers who attended the School. A poem was found among his papers entitled 'Jolly times at Solihull School', outlining his great joy and enthusiasm for his school life. The final lines.... "And in some distant time to come, We'll look back, I suppose, And murmur with a happy smile - Ah! Jolly times were those!" will hopefully apply to all school leavers. Present day pupils should take time to read the inscription on the lectern as a tribute to Jack who died... "a loyal and faithful member of this ancient school." The 1920's were characterized by fine words referring to honour, duty and service in the wake of the Great War. In 1924-5, the names of all School Prefects were recorded on a 'Roll of Honour' in School House in recognition of their service to the School. By 1927 there were three hundred boys, and twenty-three acres of playing fields, but insufficient building to accommodate them. A loan from Warwickshire County Council in 1931 of £20,000 initiated the expansion and construction of the infrastructure of buildings that we are familiar with today – the Thompson Building which included Big School with balconies, a music room; Headmaster's study; Staff Common Room (now the study of the Head of English); and a Library with a Geography classroom above it. The first side of the quad to provide six classrooms was designed by Mr Heywood and built by Sapcote Ltd; so too a new Gym (now the old gym, made from coffin board cut-offs, legend has it!). The original Big School became the dining hall (now the Sixth Form Common Room); before that the dining hall occupied what is now the Conference Room. The original gym became the changing rooms. Such was the excitement at this expansion that a new School song was written by Major S G Everitt to celebrate. This same year saw great sadness as Mr Frank Miller collapsed and died whilst playing cricket on the school fields. Another loan in 1934 of £3,000 provided better kitchens and a much improved cricket pavilion. A new library was created in the area vacated by the diners. In 1935, to honour the Silver Jubilee of King George V, the familiar Vestibule (left entrance door to the front of School House) was presented by 'friends of the School', and it retains its original charm. The quad was extended in 1936 thanks to yet another loan of £16,000 which provided a woodwork room, part of a new science block and sufficient classroom space for the prep school to be transferred back from Malvern House which was finally sold in 1939. Surplus soil from this construction was added to that created by the swimming pool and formed the infamous mound near the pavilion. As the demand for day boy places increased, the number of boarders decreased to 10% by 1939. Gaywood had closed two years earlier. The quad buildings were not complete until 1953.

A member of Jago 1929-34, recalls his school days in the early '30's. He joined the Scouts and attended summer camp on a farm near Stow, and then went in the CCF where he recalls some of the activities. *"I felt queasy confronted with bags of straw to be stabbed with bayonets....Time was chiefly spent on the parade ground square bashing...the uniform was the khaki tunics, breeches, puttees and peaked caps of 1914"*. He didn't take to PE either – *"gym periods were an utter misery, the more so as a new gym hall came into use... I could hang upside down from the wall bars but never succeeded in doing a handstand or climb a rope"*. He didn't like History either, it made no impression – *"save for a somewhat aloof master who sat at his desk forever rolling the ribbons on his academic gown, while delivering a lecture to pupils who were not yet able to pay sufficient attention to benefit. His method of preparing us for the exam was to scour through past papers which invariably called for ten lines on famous personalities and on famous place names. He would spot those that had not been called for some time and dictate lines for us to learn... I cannot remember how successful he was but among the place names he gave us were the Shipka Pass and Batak, the significance of neither of which was apparent until I served in Bulgaria"*. Science was more to his liking – *"I felt very important as the regular operator of the epidiascope for visiting lecturers"*. On one occasion he tried to change the bulb, tripped over the cable, tried to repair it – *"when there followed a blinding flash, a blown main fuse and a large hold in the blade of my penknife. The cable was of course live, and I was lucky to be alive"*. These were the memoirs of Sir Donald Logan, Senior Diplomat and UK Ambassador in Bulgaria and the United Nations, and one of our most distinguished old boys.

It was a generation rich in talent. Oliver Wright (Gaywood and School House) Deputy Head Boy, 1st XI wicket keeper “...who takes the ball quietly, without fuss and can whip off the bails very quickly and with a real sense of style”. He also won prizes for French, German and Rhetoric. Like Sir Donald Logan, Oliver went on to a very distinguished career in the Diplomatic Service. He led the British delegation to Rhodesia in the 1960’s and then became Her Majesty’s Ambassador in Washington, receiving a knighthood in 1974. He retained his connections and affection for his old School all his life and paid this tribute in 1999 – “*A visit to our school does much to dispel pessimism and restore faith. Good as our school was, it is unquestionably better now, in studies, in games and in thought. If Solihull is anything to go by, the world is not such a bad place after all*”.

Sir Oliver’s Head Boy and lifelong friend from the class of ’39 was John Butterfield (Gaywood and Fetherston) or the “*golden lad of our school days*” as he described him. And no wonder – John was not only Head Boy but Captain of Cricket, Rugby, Hockey (“*a good player with plenty of dash*”) and Athletics, as well as being Senior NCO in the CCF. A triple Blue at Oxford (he played real tennis into his 70’s), John went onto a glittering career as Professor of Experimental Medicine at Guy’s Hospital, Vice chancellor of Nottingham University, thereafter Master of Downing College, Cambridge and finally vice chancellor of Cambridge 1983-1985. He received a knighthood in 1978 and a peerage in 1988, taking the title Lord Butterfield of Stechford, his childhood home. He was a regular visitor to Solihull, and paid tribute to the teachers and school friends of his era when he presented the prizes at the Speeches in 1986. His enthusiasm for education never faded and he urged the present generation of pupils to go out into the world and “*make a difference*”.

In a younger year group than Sir Oliver and Lord Butterfield was Ronald (later Sir Ronald) Arculus, (Shenstone) Head Boy 1941 and one of a distinguished family of Silhillians (H. Arculus is on the War Memorial 1914-18), who was also a high ranking diplomat, serving as British Ambassador to Italy 1979-83. He recalled that when he took the Foreign Office exam he overheard the examiner say to a colleague, “*not another candidate from Solihull*”.

Sir Ronald returned to School in 1985 to open the new Modern Languages Department in K Block.

These four notable Old Sils are obviously not the only ones to achieve success; a general history can name a few who represent all Silhillians who have ventured out and contributed to society in so many fields of human endeavour. Like Professor John Bridgewater (School House, 1948-56 Chemistry prize winner), eminent scientist and long time Governor; or Professor Roger Taylor (Bushell House), the first Old Sil. to be elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society; or Professor Richard Weber (1969-76 Fetherston), or Professor Chris Rogers (Shenstone), or Oxford History Professor Richard Cranston (Pole), to name just five more. Future generations will follow; the recipients of the Butterfield Cups for academic endeavour in both the Sixth Form and the Middle School each year continue to represent both the achievements of John Butterfield and that optimism that Oliver Wright mentioned, as we remember the generation that left school and immediately went to war.





*The Thompson Building, built 1931.*



*The new Big School c.1936.*



*Big School c.1948.*



*The Wilson Building, from what was to become the Master's Lawn, 1936.*



*Solihull School c.1936.*











*Mr A. R. Thompson (centre), Headmaster and senior pupils, 1931.*



*The first (ever) XV, 1930.*



*East End of the present Conference Room showing Dr. Wilson's Portrait.*



*Entrance Doors showing Old Boys' War Memorial.*



*Boxing 1930.*



*Football 1st XI, 1922.*



At Easter, 1938 the Scouts, (formed in 1929) went on camp to Germany, hoping, “ for some improvement in the European situation.” It was not to be...

The outbreak of war in September 1939 caused disruption as several masters joined the armed forces, but were replaced by female teachers at Solihull School where very few women had taught before. The earliest recorded was Miss A.E. Payton who taught before the First World War. They included English and Drama Mistress Margaret Isaacs, nick-named Fanny; Historian Miss Steveley and Geography teacher Marjorie Allen (nee Williams). These ladies disappeared after the war but some stayed. Miss M Thompson (1945-67) and Miss M F Bradwell (1951-68) are fondly remembered. Female teachers were to return in due course and now make up 45% of the teaching staff. Activities after dark were restricted as an Air Raid Warden base was set up and manned by senior boys, constantly on watch in case of fire. Geoffrey Rowe joined the Local Defence Volunteers and in his uniform guarded the School car park at weekends; although without ammunition he was at a loss as what to do if anything had happened! During the day if there was an air raid boys had to go to the shelters in an orderly fashion. If there was no time, they had to push the desks together and hide underneath. Once in the shelter they had to stay in there until told to come out. Two boys stayed in there all day not having been told to come out! Trenches were dug, supervised by Sgt Major Barnes, ex Coldstream Guards, in the Hampton Lane field (although they flooded) and classrooms were gas-proofed, but thankfully only minimal damage was done by Hitler's bombs(to the tennis courts) and no casualties were reported. Many boys helped local farmers collect in the harvest and some attended a harvest camp in the Cotswolds organised by the School, and these continued after the war. Potatoes were dug, cabbages weeded and plums sorted for 15s a day. Boys also shovelled coke into the boiler house after a delivery, certainly an activity from a bygone era! So too was shifting snow in the severe winter of 1947.

Sixty-seven Old Sils were killed in action in World War II. Captain George William Griffin, 25, Wiltshire Regiment, killed on 10th August 1944 in the fighting after D-Day, and is buried near Caen. A member of School House, he left in 1934. Trooper S H Taplow, 23, killed 20th September 1944. He was Athletics Captain of Shenstone, a School Prefect and awarded colours for football, athletics and boxing. He served with the 8th Army in the major tank battle at El-Alamein. So, from writing the Shenstonian entry on school athletics to dying in Italy five years later – such was the tragedy of war. Flying Officer Jack Lydell, 24, Shenstone, RAF, 46 Sqn, killed 29th May 1940, shot down by Messerschmitts whilst on patrol, buried in Narvik, Norway. Flt/Lt. Ken Wright, 20, 102 Sqn, missing 26th June 1942, recorded on the Runnymede Memorial as never found. Finally, even after V. E. Day, Staff Sgt. M. H. Sherwood REME died on active service, 1st June 1945. He had been at school 1928-36 in Pole House, passing his school certificate. He perished while trying to save a drowning comrade. His C/O wrote – *“this was typical of his selflessness and of his loyalty and devotion to duty at all times”*. He is buried in Florence War Cemetery. This final entry reminds me of the stated objectives of Solihull School at the 400th anniversary – *“character is regarded as of more importance than attainment, and the qualities that the School aims to encourage are self discipline, teamwork, a spirit of initiative and adventure, a sense of loyalty”*.

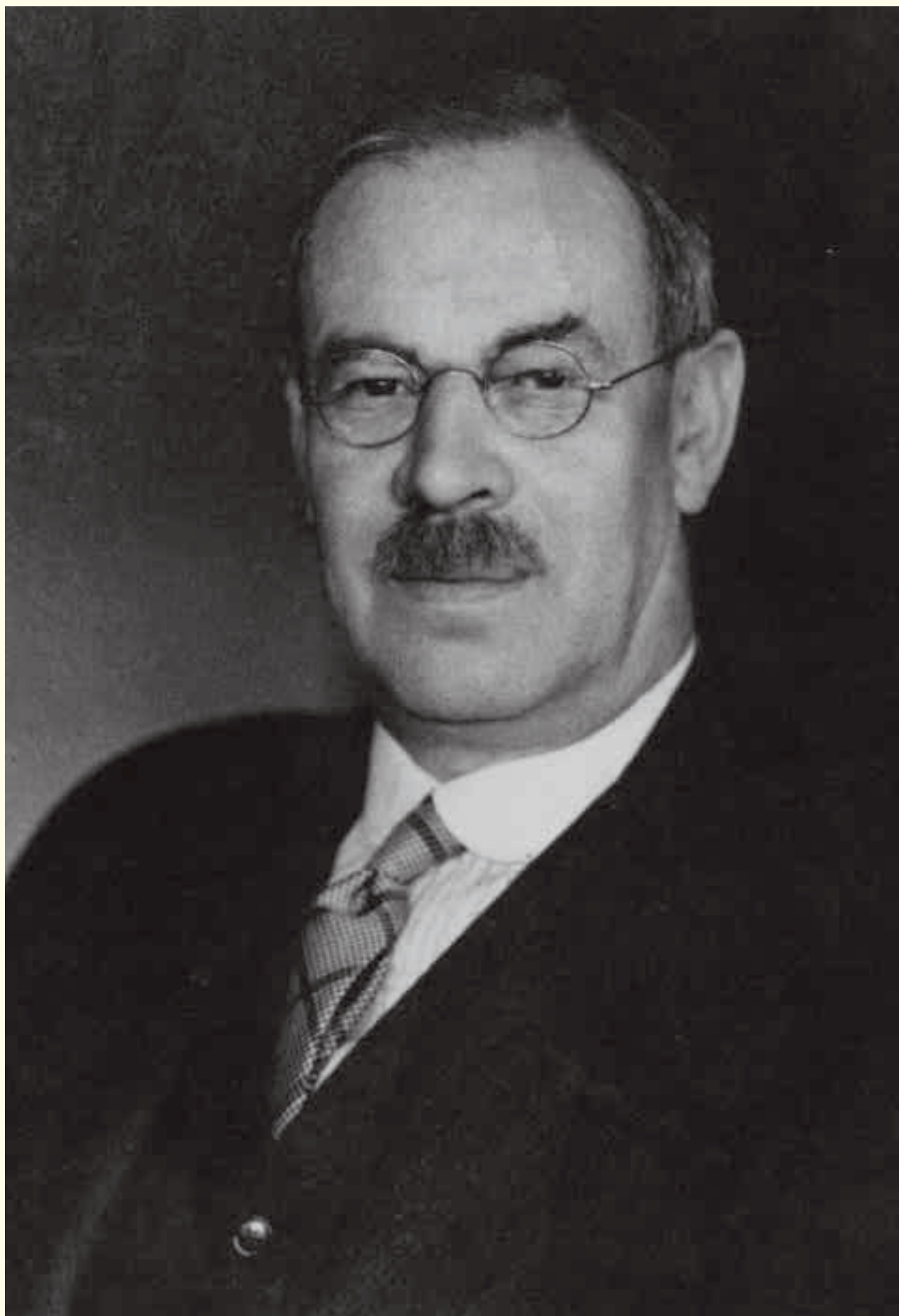
As with World War 1, only a few of the fallen Old Sils have been mentioned, linking their school lives with their supreme sacrifice in war. Every year on Armistice Day the whole School assembles in the quad to pay its respects in a short Service of Remembrance. It is a moving ceremony; the only occasion when the whole School gathers together. Heads are bowed and silence is observed as wreaths are laid at the war memorial. A CCF bugler sounds the Last Post and Reveille. For the One Minute's Silence, Solihull School stands as one in the Act of Remembrance and has done in one form or another since 1919. The CCF were present at the Commemoration of the Solihull War Memorial in 1921 and have taken part in the annual service there ever since. A few are noted here, but we remember them all.



The Headmaster during the war was Mr A. R. Thompson who had succeeded Mr Bushell in 1927. He was another mathematics graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, having taught at Berkhamstead Collegiate School and Bedford Modern School before becoming Headmaster of Dunstable Grammar School in 1921. He took command of Solihull's twenty-four assistant masters, sixteen of whom were Oxbridge graduates, many of whom he inherited from Mr Bushell, including Mr R. B. Wright who had been at Solihull since 1911, becoming Second Master in 1921. He also served as Head of Science and Bursar – always wearing a winged collar! Another tradition, long since gone, was an announcement by the Head Boy on the first day of term, "*letters for Mr Wright*", after which showers of letters containing the fees began to flutter down from the balcony in the Big School.

Mr Thompson was a short, portly man who walked quickly and spoke with authority, gaining the respect of the pupils. He had been a fine cricketer playing for Bedfordshire in his youth. His home was the Headmaster's house (later the dwelling of the boarding house master, and now staff offices), and during the war he could be seen feeding his chickens before School. His wife was Commandant of the Solihull Red Cross Division during the war – a formidable lady by all accounts!

When one era closes and another opens there are always some who favour nostalgia and tradition and others who promote what they see as progress, but Solihull School seems to have met the challenges of the 1930's and 1940's with remarkable stability. The loyalty of many long-term members of staff has been an emerging feature as the story unfolds and some deserve special mention – and not just teachers – and hopefully many of our senior old boys will remember the idiosyncrasies, abilities and dedication with affection – like Mr Vale the school gardener, Mrs Meeks in charge of the tuck shop, and Alf Best (1923-35) veteran of the trenches, PE teacher and Adjutant of the Corps, long before Stan Skippings, of the post War era. – to name but a few. It was the age of the bachelor schoolmaster, Mr W H Mitchley (1915-28), Mr H A Evans French teacher (1924-46), Dr D Macphale (1924-32) Scoutmaster O.C. Trimly (1931-48) F. S. Keech (1920-38) and Mr J. Basil Neale (1921-50) recruited by Mr. Bushell to produce the school play every year, are a few of those who lived and worked at School in that era. Nicknames for teachers are as old as schooling itself and still exist for members of staff today, but that revelation is for a future history. However nicknames were more fashionable years ago – observant, affectionate or cruel – the nicknames are part of our history. Mr Thompson was Tommy or Stache, after a glorious black moustache he once sported, but by 1942 had become "*but a sparse grey replica of its former glory*". R. B. Wright was Slapper, the red faced L J Davies known as Boozer was a former Cambridge Soccer Blue who went on to play for Northampton Town as well as County Cricket for Northamptonshire before teaching at Solihull. He coached both XI's cricket and soccer in the 1920's. Physics teacher L Loxley-Davis was Dapper, and the legendary maths genius P R Ansell was Swatty – perhaps the most famous nickname of all. An ex-pupil of exceptional ability, he made a remarkable contribution to Solihull School for a large part of the 20th century. He was short, of slight build, highly intelligent, gifted teacher, a polymath, and was form master of Shell A for 48 years. After fighting in WWI he returned via Cambridge (as a wrangler) to Solihull in 1924. Many former pupils remember him with great affection and respect, furiously writing on the blackboard, windows wide open on the coldest of days, wearing a tattered gown and often recording "*get it right you fool, get it right*" in exercise books. Bright boy or 'duffer', he spent hours in extra teaching. Boys marvelled at his ability to keep logarithms in his head! Stories about him are plentiful, "*Don't be a numbskull*" was a favourite catchphrase and also "*I can make this foolproof but I can't make it idiot proof*". He entertained boys at his home for cream teas and the teaching of Geometry, with his visual aid, a snooker table. Jim Tomkins writing in 1951 recalled how Mr Ansell visited him in hospital with the gift of a scarf knitted by his sister, such was his kindness. Bruce McGowan spoke eloquently at his memorial service, of his courtesy, kindness, friendliness and dignity. "*Raymond Ansell gave his life to this school and his friends*", he said. He was also a lover of classical music and enthusiastic mountain walker (there is a Lake District Memorial to him on Barrow) and taught well into his '70's, until he died in 1972 – a true legend.



*Mr A. R. Thompson, M.A. (Cantab.), Headmaster 1927 - 1947.*



*Fruit picking camp during WWII, Mac and D. H. Christ (1930 - 67) Physics Master.*



*Walter Wiggs 1922 - 37, Senior English Master, O. C., O. T. C.*



*The Last Post, Remembrance Sunday, 1952.*



*Solihull School staff, 1946.*



Others also remembered from that era were ‘Yarko’ Easterling, (who succeeded long-time music master, Mr Courtenay-Woods, 1891-1922) classicist and music teacher conducting with gusto rather than finesse; he was known for pinching boy’s hair, very painful! He was an enthusiastic CCF officer and Home Guard Captain during the war. Yarko was proud of his extensive collection of railway tickets from around the world. Enjoying a happy retirement in Surrey but doing a bit of part time teaching of girls, he wrote in 1955, *“much more attentive and better behaved than boys!”*

A. L. (Mac) Mackenzie taught German, lived in Bradford House and always kept a cane close by. He became Senior Master in 1954, retiring in 1963 only to be brought back as acting Head between Mr Hitchens’s death and the arrival of Bruce McGowan in summer 1964. Many Old Sils remember ‘Mac’ of whom they have the highest respect. At his memorial service in 1973 former Head Boy Jack Thornton paid this tribute – *“Many of us owe the development of our careers, the whole direction of our lives to the opportunities which Mac created for us”*.

If you look closely there is a small plaque at the base of one of the trees in the centre of the Master’s Lawn in memory of A.L. Mackenzie, Master, 1927-64. L.B. “Bladder” Hutchings was Commander of the CCF, a classical scholar, Rugby coach, Head of Lower School in 1948, and Second Master from 1952 to 1954. After ordination in 1960 he left Solihull to become Vicar of Modbury (Devon) in 1967.

Eric “The Bun” Havinden joined the staff in 1921 as Head of History until 1954; thereafter he became Bursar. A Cambridge man, he was an expert on church architecture, an author and dedicated Silhillian, but could be sarcastic, over-critical and an academic snob. As graduates from universities apart from Oxbridge were appointed, he once commented *“they’ll be giving hoods for catching rabbits”*, when PE staff from Loughborough wore academic dress. Ironic, because his nickname was derived from Bunny Rabbit on account of his prominent ears! Nevertheless, many will remember the slim man with pointed features, rimless glasses and timeless suits ruling Pole with an iron will and serving Solihull School with great distinction. He died in 1973, a gentleman of the old school, but always remembered by several generations of Old Sils.

Another interesting character was ‘Timber’ Johnson, the woodwork teacher (1939-67) He took a more unorthodox route to Solihull School, having owned a shop in Aston before the War, and training to be a teacher at night school classes, gaining City and Guilds qualifications. He was one of the most erudite members of staff, Mr Hitchens recognised his talents and gave him the task of preparing upper sixth boys for the University entrance examinations. The rather eccentric ‘Bertie’ Peek (1928-48) was Master in charge of the Thirds and Shells and well known for wandering off the subject in lessons when encouraged to do so. In a Maths lesson on the 6th June 1944, he confidently predicted that the D-Day Landing was another rehearsal like Dieppe! Colourful characters all. Some also will remember Messrs Norwood, Evans, Hornsey, Christ, Forster, Franklin, Hunter, Duddington, Williams R. F, and Cosser who all gave long service before, during, and for a little time after the War.

In that era, throwing chalk, personal insults, and eccentric behaviour that would end up in the Sunday papers nowadays, was part of ordinary school life and not considered offensive or sinister. And there is absolutely no doubting the sincerity and dedication to the prosperity and welfare of the pupils by the teaching staff, and the deep respect the majority of them commanded. Even Mr Bushell believed in lines as corrective punishment, many boys wrote 100 times *“punctuality is a matter of courtesy”* for him. Sarcasm was always a weapon in the armoury of the teacher. Whilst writing on the board but sensing a lack of concentration, Taff Hughes coolly remarked to one boy *“the only way into university for you lad is through a lavatory window”*. A young Phil Griffiths recalled in 1972 walking into a classroom to observe a boy standing in the waste paper bin. *“Why is he there?”* PJG enquired of the teacher concerned. *“Because he’s rubbish,”* came the reply. PJG quietly withdrew.



*Raymond Ansell.*

The prefects played much more of an important part in the discipline and daily life of the school than now. Before the introduction of the buzzer to indicate the end of each lesson, a prefect would ring a hand bell by the Masters' Common Room. Prefects punished boys for breaches of the school rules, and in the 1930's during morning break each form assembled around the 1st XI cricket pitch for physical exercise under the direction of a prefect; a practice not continued after the war.



## PART III

*Shortly after his assumption of office, Mr Hitchens was elected to the HMC, in consequence of which Solihull took its place among the Public Schools of the kingdom in the present accepted sense of the term.*

F A Kimberley (1955), Governor 1925-69

Both V.E. Day and V.J. Day were greeted enthusiastically, “we pass from war to peace, from a dismal past to a bright future.” However, by 1945 the financial situation of the School was causing concern and both the Ministry of Education and the Warwickshire County Council were not able to offer any practical or acceptable assistance. Direct Grant status was refused by the Labour Government, so in order to maintain the School’s freedom of action, unshackled by either L.E.A or central government interference, the Governors declared the school to be independent on the 1st April 1946, a hugely significant event in the School’s history. Tuition fees were fixed at £48 per annum, with boarding fees £96 by January 1948. By 1949 the School was a member of the H.M.C, the Bursars’ Association and the Governing Bodies Association. Solihull School was now a Public School.

In 1947 Mr Thompson resigned after twenty years at the helm but he often visited the school in his retirement. He was described by John Price as a Headmaster who must not be underrated as his achievements were considerable. The Thompson Building, with its splendid bell tower, is a fine memorial for the man who guided the school through the war years. Many of his former pupils held him in great esteem, regarding his example an inspiration for life. He was presented with a shooting stock by his prefects of 1935 on the occasion of his 80th birthday (1967) and he recalled how... “*so much joy and fellowship had been derived during his teaching life*”. Mr. Thompson’s prefects met up every year from 1935 (except the war years) and continued to do so even after his death in 1972, until 1996, when Alan Lee was guest of honour. The toasts were... “*To those who are no longer with us but not forgotten... To the institution which brought us together, the School*”.

Mr Thompson’s successor was the Sixth Form Master of Clifton College, 36 year old Mr H. Butler Hitchens, former pupil of the royal Masonic School and a scholar of St. Catherine’s College, Cambridge, he had a remarkable and distinguished war record, sharing the distinction of being the youngest Brigadier in the British Army with Enoch Powell. He was director of British Intelligence in Austria and South East Europe and provided two impressive names to act as references for his Headmastership – Dwight D. Eisenhower and Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery. Immediately Mr. Hitchens was keen to promote the School in its new Public School status. The First XI and First XV and their pitches were named Big Side, prefects became Benchers and the Lower School was created in 1948. This included the Shell forms, so called after the parallel age group at Westminster School, who were taught in a shell-shaped alcove. Westminster dates back to 1179 but was refounded in 1560 thanks to an Elizabethan dissolution. Some other schools with a connection to Westminster, however tenuous, have copied the name.

Senior benchers wore blazers edged with red ribbon as well as the former silver pocket and cap badges. They had a common room in Bradford House and could punish younger boys who broke the school rules with lines, essay writing or penalty runs. The Head Boy could cane serious miscreants in ritualised beating sessions in the prefects’ room. Even in the early 1950’s this practice seemed archaic and boys could no longer hit boys after 1959. By then only the Headmaster or Senior Masters used canes, which were gradually replaced by slippers before corporal punishment was consigned to history by the 1980s.

The School was now free from any national or local interference and forged ahead in the post war era. L.E.A sponsored scholarships for fifteen boys plus some assisted places continued, but they had to pass the School’s own 11 plus exam. The number of scholarships was increased to thirty six in 1953 but the assisted places

ceased, for the time being. The late 1950's saw the Governors reorganise the land owed by the Foundation in order to increase potential revenue. Some land had been sold off during and just after the war and some had been compulsory purchased by the Council, but some shrewd deals in the 1960's consolidated the Foundation and enabled the School to expand. The list of properties in Solihull and elsewhere owned by the School is impressive and had considerable potential. As the population of Solihull rapidly expanded the demand for building land also increased and the School was well placed to exploit the value of its foundation for future development.

By 1950 there were 650 pupils so more accommodation was needed. In that year Kineton House on the Warwick Road was purchased and housed boarders and prep form until it closed in 1982 was pulled down and flats built which are rented out today. An ambitious plan was conceived in 1949 at a cost of £70,000 to expand the School. Minor improvements followed; at first the Headmaster's gardens were redesigned, three Army huts were renovated and became classrooms for the Shell Forms as the CCF moved into its new HQ in 1951. The former armoury became a classroom, so too the Lecture theatre soon to be replaced by a new one. In 1950 the air raid shelters were removed and the wooden huts which were used as classrooms were taken away, so too all remnants of the gardens of Bradford House. In their place a new Master's Lawn was laid out between Big School and the Warwick Road. Tucked away in the south-west corner of the Master's Lawn is the peace garden dedicated to the memory of Lara Marshall whose young life was tragically cut short in 1991. This delightful spot that catches the sun in the late afternoon, offers a sanctuary for quiet reflection, and from time to time the Solihull School community has had to cope with an unexpected loss. In recent years we mourned Lara, Bethany Hardy, James Lewis, James Hocum, Justin Child, Alastair Ross and teachers David Grilli and Gerry Reddington. The loss of young people is so very sad, and touches all our hearts. From our history we remember 11year old Stanley Jones who died of an appendicitis in 1938. The Shenstonian recorded, "his brain was quick and retentive, he boxed with courage, he played football with mature skill and judgement. Everything he undertook was carried out with enthusiasm and quiet good humour. His popularity was unsought, but inevitable." In this area of the School, *Tempus tacendi et tempus meminisse*~ A time to be silent, and a time to remember. A loan of £25,000 from the Ministry of Education was secured in 1950, and by 1953 the main entrance was rearranged to lead to the car park. Nearby a Marshall's Lodge had been built. The Field of Mars was constructed as a CCF parade ground in 1951. The Level didn't appear until the mid-1960's (this large playground isn't quite level, it's on a slight slope), and the fourth side of the quad was completed, along with a new Headmaster's wing comprising waiting room, Secretary's and Career Master's offices and the Headmaster's study (formally the sixth form library). The centrepiece of the new building was the War Memorial, now standing alone in front of the Bushell Hall. Cloakrooms, geography rooms, including a lecture room (formally D5) and extended changing rooms were provided. The bridge linking the gym with the changing rooms was also part of this construction. Head Groundsman and cricket coach, George Payne, built the tuck shop next to the swimming pool and overlooking the First XI square, sponsored by the Parents Association. This unique bow windowed structure is now no longer operating as a provider of tuck in this health conscious age; iced buns, meat pies, synthetic cream slices and naughtily addictive cherry drops are consigned to history.

But Mrs Paine, Mrs Snell, and later Mrs Sheila Holder who served in there are not forgotten. 1953 was Coronation year and celebrated wholeheartedly by the School. Four Solihull School CCF cadets proudly attended the Coronation procession as guests of the War Office. The George VI Memorial room, formerly the dining hall, then the library (now the conference room), was created and housed portraits of former Headmasters - the one of Mr Bushell was presented by a group of Old Sils. The panelling that characterises this room was provided in this year and it was used as a Sixth Form Common Room. Mr Hitchens himself presented the honours board that records in gold letters all Headmasters since 1560. Other notable gifts included a garage for the school bus and a Bechstein grand piano for Big School. The teachers donated the Coronation Avenue of trees flanking the new entrance; which were most beautiful in spring, until the 2010 reconstruction.



*The Thompson Building with newly planted Coronation Avenue.*



*Coronation Avenue before the reconstruction of the car park in 2010.*



*In full bloom.*



*Looking across from the North East corner c. 1954.*





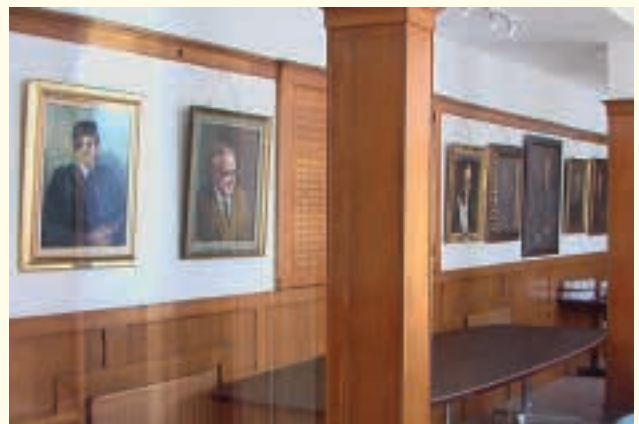
*The Memorial Building pictured in 1999.*



*The Memorial Building, 1953.*



*Presentation of the Queen's portrait, 1952.*



*The Conference Room in School House.*



*Monty, Mr Hitchens and Mrs Martin, 1949.*



*Staff guard of honour, 1949.*



*The School tuck shop, 1949.*



*The School pew in St. Alphage Church, presented by the School in 1954 to celebrate the granting of Solihull's Mayoral Charter.*



The Commemoration Service on the 29th May 1953 was combined with an act of intercession for Queen Elizabeth II held in Big School and relayed to another audience in the Old Gym, after which the Memorial Building was formally opened (named in honour of those recorded on the war memorial). The Appeal committee had been working since November 1946 to finance the bronze war memorial, before 1953 the names of the fallen were recorded in 1935 on oak panels in the new Library in School House (now the Conference Room.) The opening was part of the Coronation celebrations. Tributes were paid by the Present of the Old Sils, B. E. Hatton, and Head Boy W. Danter on how remembering the sacrifice of the fallen could inspire future generations of pupils of Solihull School to move forward towards a better world. Cricket was played, tea and cakes consumed and the School ended the festivities with three days Coronation holiday.

In 1954 five tennis courts were built – four grass and one hard – and nearby the scout hut moved to its present location in 1955. The maintenance staff occupied the vacated site until 2005. 1957 was another significant year, School House kitchens were upgraded and a ceiling fitted to the former Big School in order to provide extra boarding facilities on the first floor (a servery still operates in the sixth form common room which was the result of these improvement. The Art and Psychology Departments now occupy the former dormitories and staff accommodation. Part of Bradford House was converted into music rooms, the first stage of the Music Department's odyssey.

As Britain began to emerge from post war depression the desire for more scientific teaching in schools offered Solihull the chance to secure industrial sponsorship of £20,000 plus a loan of £14,000 negotiated by the Governors which was used to improve pre-war laboratories. One was converted into the lecture Theatre and new ones built. The School now boasted nine laboratories and a workshop relocated near School Lane. Nearby a wooden chapel had been erected in 1954 as temporary spiritual accommodation before the Chapel we know today was built in 1960. This wooden chapel was furnished with pews from a discussed church in Birmingham and provided with an electric organ in 1956. Before this date church facilities had always been provided by St Alphege Parish Church. Each year, on the first day of term the whole school marched up New Road for the term service. This procession, in an unbroken line from the school gates to the church door, was changed in 1961 to June each year as an Act of Commemoration.

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols had started in 1947. As the Public School Anglican ethos developed, a Chaplain had been appointed in 1951 – the Rev R. W. Hallett followed by the ebullient Rev C. H. Sellars in 1953 – who supervised the move into the temporary chapel, which cost £30. By then a more permanent structure was in the planning stage, an operation meticulously organised, unique in the School's history. The School's close association with both the Local Government of Solihull and St Alphege Church is symbolised by the Mayor's pew in the church that bears the School Arms. It was presented by the Governors in 1954 to commemorate the granting of Borough status to Solihull. The Charter Mayor, R. D. Cooper, was also Chairman of Governors at the time. The cost was met by a collection from staff, pupils, Old Boys, parents and Governors – a proud moment indeed.

By the 1950's School life offered much variety. The late 19th century ethos had started to evolve in the 1920's into a more broader philosophy of education (which meant boys playing an active part in the School community and the benefits of informal education were recognised) and was expressing itself in the 1950's. Not just curriculum development, compulsory games and a House system at its zenith, but the encouragement of literary, scientific, musical, dramatic, debating, photographic societies and a Christian Union were started. A whole variety – some of these activities survive; boxing has ceased, but and the Astronomical Society and fencing have been revived recently. The needs of every boy became important, at least in theory, and the culture of something on offer to suit all abilities, ages and personalities was born.





*The Pro-chapel, 1955.*



*Inside the Pro-chapel, 1955.*



*Masters Common Room c.1954. P. R. Ansell, D. H. Tomlin, R. H. Thomas, G. O. Harding.*



*Cloisters in the 1950's.*



*The former gardens of Bradford House c.1954.*



*The Pro-chapel and Fort, 1955.*



As for ordinary School life, boys no longer had to provide their own text books (since the Education Act of 1944) and fountain pens gradually replaced wooden pens with metal nibs dipped in the ink-well sunk into the desk tops. The old desks, with desk and seat, as one unit lasted until the end of the 20th Century; so too the dais that accommodated the Master's desk. The School day was similar to today except that it was a six day week. Assembly started the day's proceedings, Mr Hitchens making a dramatic entrance from the back of Big School resplendent in gown and mortar board accompanied by the Head Boy. Sometimes assemblies were held outside in July in the old Quad. The main difference from today's routine was formality. All teachers wore gowns, in various states of repair; pupils stood when the teacher entered, a practice that lingered on haphazardly until the late 1990's. Assemblies combined a religious service with secular business, hymns were sung, prayers offered and sports reports read out. House assemblies, which included prayers, were a little crowded as they were held in classrooms. As now, the approach of teachers varied. Assessments were frequent and reports written each term but not in so much detail. End of term reports often only offered one word – weak, satisfactory, etc. My favourite one is from a Science report from 1956 which read “*torpid!*” or PRA's comment ... “*we seem to have reached a compromise, he can understand nothing I say, I can read nothing he writes*”.

Many old boys recall that the 1950's offer a glimpse of a world that could be competitive, exciting and rewarding but could also be intimidating and worrying. A copy of the Rules and Regulations plus a school diary was carried at all times filling the inside pockets of blazers. It was essential that a boy knew who to raise his cap to or face punishment. Members of the Boarding House had a unique fellowship, sharing an awareness, as one ex-pupil expressed it, “the dark side of human nature,” as strict discipline was meted out by Duty Benchers. But the loyalties and comradeship are still spoken of today, “we never gave in, we never twitted, we always owned up, we never stole.” It was a world Day boys rarely visited or really understood. Traditional games predominated; one boy suggested introducing table tennis but the sports teacher told him no because it would be too popular! Games were not enjoyed by all; one Old Sil recalls that his front teeth lie somewhere on the school fields. Future Olympic skater John Curry refused to play rugby in case he damaged his ankles; a perceptive and understanding Keith Berridge indulged his wishes. Discipline was strict; poor marks were severely punished, and rote learning, dictation or copying blackboard after blackboard of notes belong to this bygone era. So too having to clean out the swimming pool before use in the freezing water. Mr L. B. Hutchings once sent a boy from his lesson with sufficient money to get his hair cut at the local barbers. However a School Council had been set up in 1948, quite unusually democratic in those days, so that the Headmaster could hear the views of the pupils and explain his own ideas. The Chapel Committee and the Games Committee also included pupils. The School calendar replaced the fixtures card in 1932; it came in booklet form in 1953, edited by D Tustin (who became Bishop of Grimsby) and renamed the School Diary in 1958.

The impression that the presentation of the formal curriculum was rather restricted by today's standards is not the whole picture, or that discipline was irresponsible. The masters' handbook (1955) states that “*discipline is only resented when its application is bad!*” Mr Hitchens insisted on compulsory English lessons for all Sixth formers, taking some himself. Visiting speakers also came every week lecturing on subjects ranging from the International Monetary Fund to Vincent Van Gogh. Every Spring Term a play was performed – Shakespeare, 18th century comedy or a modern production – St Joan, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Androcles and the Lion to name just a few. In 1954 the School made an appearance on the popular radio programme Top of the Form, a sort of radio version of University Challenge for schools. Mr Bushell would have approved, he started General Knowledge classes in the 1920's. Trips to the Lake District, Warwick, London and Stratford all took place in the 1950's and by the end of the decade excursions abroad had expanded. Harry Cooper took trips to Valkenburg and Careers Master John Jammes to Greece. Solihull pupils even ventured as far as Russia and Turkey with him. A remarkable man, John served in the French Resistance during the war and is still revered by former pupils as a great teacher and influential mentor.





*Firing Range c.1923.*



*The modern indoor Firing Range.*



*Terrence Clifford and John Sammuels c.1959.*



*Kineton House, 1952.*



*Art with Mr J. S. Hopkinson, 1954..*



*The RAF Glider c.1957.*



*Big School c.1955. Mr L. Godsall conducting.*



*Solihull School c.1958.*











*School Assembly c.1952.*



*R. Moore, T. Halsted, J. Way, R. Ansell (standing), in the old lower Common Room (now the study of the Head of English), 1955.*



*Gymnastics, 1950's.*



*The Master's Lawn laid out in 1953.*

In the post war years the age profile of the staff changed as younger teachers began to arrive – their teaching methods more imaginative and pupil centred. They were ambitious, but in awe of H.B.H as they learnt their craft. Men like Derek Burrell who taught English and History and became Headmaster of Truro at 33 years old. The flamboyant Guy King-Reynolds “*for whom the classroom was just an extension of the theatre*”, Geographer, Actor and Second Master who became Head of Dauntsey’s after twenty years at Solihull. Another great character was Gordon Heap, who is fondly remembered for his ebullience both in the classroom and on the games field. He moved on to become Headmaster of Sir Thomas Richie’s School Gloucester. They were to be joined by teachers in this era of whom many Old Sils have found memories – Messrs Peyman, Bale, Hughes, Tribe, Smith JR, Reid, Seig, Garnier, Arnold, Hayes, Jammes, Godsall, Way (later Head of Education at Birmingham College of Education), Dewhurst, and Chaplains; Thomas, Davies and Paxman. Also, Griffiths WT, Miss M Bradwell and Miss Thompson. Some others will appear later. An era of modern teaching excellence that future Inspectors have continuously recognised began under H. B. Hitchens.

As the 1950’s came to a close and the swinging sixties arrived, perhaps not as dramatically in Solihull as in London, but change was in the air. Many Old Sils look back to their 1950’s school days with affectionate nostalgia – an age of innocence, choices and temptations were not really available in the age of austerity. Drink meant beer and cider not bingeing on spirits; crafty smoking of tobacco yes; drugs very unlikely but about to be recognised as a potential danger to every pupil in the land. Conventional morality ruled; adolescence was not invented until the 1960’s. “*Christian values were taught, assumed and exemplified*”. And the demand was substantial. In 1960 115 boys were selected from 400, and a waiting list of potential applicants stretched until 1973. Expansion, independence and an increase in numbers gave the School the confidence to improve its Public School status. The building of a chapel was deemed essential to symbolise the Christian values and ethos that the School espoused. Such a large and ambitious building project required substantial financial backing and co-ordinated planning, so a committee was formed comprising representatives from the Old Boys, Parents’ Association, Governors and the School. Enthusiastic fundraising events were held and generous donations flooded in from various sections of not only the School but also from Solihull society. £50,000 was collected, architect C Neville White (OS) prepared the plans and work began in May 1959 on the chosen site on the Hampton Lane side. It was a tight schedule – workmen moved out in the early hours of the morning before the modern but dignified building was consecrated by the Bishop of Birmingham on the 21st June 1960 and dedicated to St Katherine and St Mary in memory of the original chantry chapel that provides for the School’s foundation. The ante-chapel is dedicated to St Alphege, reinforcing the School’s ties with the parish church which are still strong. The current Chaplain, Rev. Canon Andrew Hutchinson is part of St Alphege Parish Clergy. Donations flooded in for fixtures and fittings, although some were transferred from the temporary chapel. Contributions were made by various groups of former pupils. Mr Bushell’s Old Boys gave the processional cross in memory of his sister who had died in 1955 and also money towards the organ. (Incidentally, Miss Bushell had planted the horse chestnut trees in front of School House in 1923). Mr Thompson’s former pupils gave the pulpit and chaplain’s stall, and Mr Hitchen’s Old Boys gave the mural of the Risen Christ which fills the east wall. Many other gifts from staff, parents, old boys and local people were received and adorn the chapel today. The Fawcett Campanile (tower) and bell is named after Mr J Fawcett, one of the original Trustees of the Thanksgiving Appeal. The list of gifts is long and impressive, donated by a wide range of people who were proud to offer their contribution to Solihull School. The huge cost of a pipe organ was offset by the skill of music teacher, Mr Ronald Oliver, who was an organ builder of some renown. He assembled a small team of boys and set to work using pipework purchased cheaply from the derelict Wycliffe Baptist Church in Birmingham, plus parts from the Compton organ in the Gaumont Cinema, Worcester and even more from the one in Bedford Cinema, Liverpool. Mr Oliver’s team built a splendid organ that has (plus some later additions of the Swell organ, choir organ and solo organ) served Solihull School until its restoration in 2006-07.





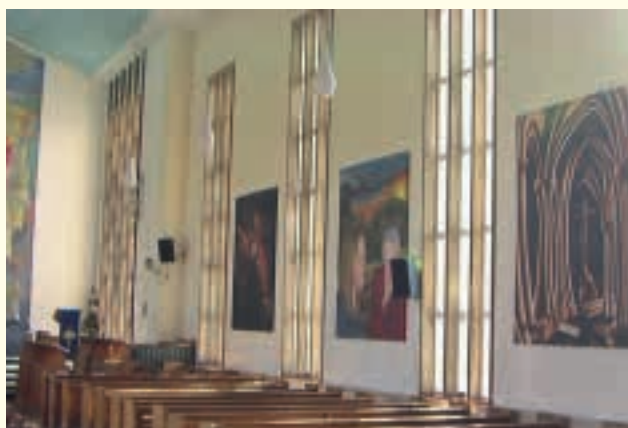
*Chapel opening, 1960.*



*Chapel in Spring.*



*Chapel Choir in the 1990's.*



*The Chapel, 2009.*



*The arrival of the Clergy Procession. The first seven of the Clergy are Old Boys of the School. The procession is led by the Sixth Form Master, the Reverend L. B. Hutchings.*





*The Chapel, 1960.*



*Chapel, 1960.*



*St. Katherine on the South wall of the Chapel.*

Some other features of the Chapel have aroused the curiosity of succeeding generations. The statue above the north-west porch depicts Mary the Mother of Jesus, with the inscription *Magnificat*, carved into the halo. Round the other side the statue is of St. Katherine, (of Alexandra) the patron saint of scholars, rejecting a worldly crown; and telling the points of philosophy on her fingers; perhaps she is reminding me of Voltaire's advice, "the secret of being a bore is to tell everything." So we'll move on.

The generation that planned and built the chapel were rightly proud of the achievement. Mr Hitchens offered his summary... "*an act of witness and an expression of thanks for four hundred years of unbroken history and service*". As we know, the chapel stands on the paved terrace commanding a site in the south-east corner of the grounds and since its Consecration has enjoyed fifty years of activity, fully justifying the aims of its creators. Purpose-built, it has provided the venue for many aspects of School life and the wider School community – assemblies, concerts, speech days, memorial services, weddings, christenings and Christmas and regular Sunday services. The excellence of our chapel choir has been a special feature over the years. The cultural centre may have shifted to the Bushell Hall, but the chapel, still a movingly impressive building in 2010, will continue to play a significant part in the unfolding story of Solihull School. It is still a powerful focal point for our spiritual and religious activities.

The 1960's opened with a celebration of the School's four hundredth anniversary – centred around the opening of the chapel; "*a school with a living tradition*" is how the Birmingham Weekly Post described the School in 1960. Boys wore caps - benchers with a black tassel attached, the Head Boy one with a gold tassel (still used on ceremonial occasions like Speech Day). Senior boys could wear boaters in the summer term. Head Boys are listed in the Conference Room, beginning with H D Kirk in 1920, but the Prefects' boards have gone. Quite when the Tradition began that the Head Boy is the only pupil who is allowed to grow a beard, smoke a pipe and graze his horse on the Headmaster's lawn is uncertain, but they have not been employed for some time! The School numbered eight hundred, a hundred of which were boarders. A fag system operated whereby younger boys were organised into groups responsible for keeping tidy the pavilion, swimming pool, tuck shop, rifle range, changing rooms and Big School. Boarders made their own beds supervised by a Bencher. Senior boys shared studies and TV (BBC only) was available at certain times. At the consecration of the chapel the Bishop of Birmingham preached that the new chapel stood for the belief in the Christian values of the School. The boys he said, "*were precious temples of the Holy Spirit*".

A cricket week also formed part of the celebrations. Many distinguished cricketers of the day took part. The Masters XI included Peter Arculus, Bill Bale, Keith Berridge, Harry Morle and Guy King-Reynolds. The School XI included a young Peter Levenger who went on to become Midland Cricketer of the Year in 1969. Other activities that week included a performance of Hamlet, a ceremonial parade and march past by the CCF, a Commemoration Concert featuring Mozart's Requiem Mass. Various academic displays were on view on Commemoration Day itself, 25th June. The whole School community – staff, pupils, Parents Association, Old Boys – were fully involved in the week's activities, and the pride and spirit and togetherness radiates out from the records of these days, fifty years ago. "*A kinship which has over the years been closely created round the school as a unifying centre and an object of zeal, devotion and love*". The four hundredth anniversary was certainly celebrated with style, and the School could proudly boast that it offered a sound general education based on Christian principles. School policy acknowledged the value of educational psychology, as it was decided that when a boy's mental development was sufficiently advanced, specialisation would follow in a Sixth Form that had 212 pupils in 1960, (although further general training was available).

In October the Duchess of Kent paid a visit to Solihull School – the first by a member of the Royal Family. Unfortunately the wet weather plans had to be employed for three hours, when the Duchess managed to view all of the exhibitions and converse with several boys and masters in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. As her personal standard flew on the top of Big School the Duchess was presented with a glove box designed and





*The Duchess of Kent's visit, 1960.*



*Her Majesty inspects the Navy Section.*



*Headmaster and Benchers, 1962 -1963.*



*The Quad c.1960.*



*Solihull School pupils awaiting the arrival of the Queen.*



*The Queen's visit - tree planting.*





*Her Majesty escorted by Headmaster and Chairman of Governors, 1962.*







made by pupils, then the Head Boy, R L Wigglesworth, offered an address of thanks... *"It has been a wonderful experience and matchless honour for us to have had the opportunity of showing you the School of which we are so proud and some of the things we do here....your Royal Highness the boys will never forget you"*.

Certainly the Quartercentenary offered the opportunity to enjoy excellent publicity. Without doubt the School had made substantial progress since the war and the new Chapel, possibly the last of its kind to be built in an English Public School, was the proud symbol of that progress. The Library was extended and became known as the Kent Library in recognition of the Duchess's visit (now the Lower Common Room.). Another royal visit took place on the 25th May 1962 when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II viewed the new chapel and inspected the CCF, planting a mulberry tree commemorating the occasion as well as talking informally to several pupils. A beautifully choreographed day ended with Her Majesty ordering three days extra holiday, to the delight of every pupil.

This was the zenith of Mr Hitchens's Headmastership and a great moment in the School's history. He cut an impressive figure – tall, dignified and elegantly dressed. He attended the opening of the new Solihull Civic Hall in Homer Road (long gone, part of the Touchwood Complex now occupying the site), which was also on Her Majesty's itinerary, wearing a top hat and cloak, prompting one workman leaning on his shovel to comment... *"... here comes Dr Jekyll!"*. But there is no doubt that this brilliant man, distinguished soldier and charismatic showman advanced the School's reputation and responded to the flavour of the times, creating an image, aspects of which survive today. His sad death on the 21st August 1963 at 53 years of age brought another era to an end. Tributes were written – Mr Hitchens *"guided the school through sixteen years of development since its assumption of independent status .... no man could have addressed himself to the challenge and opportunities of this period with more vigour and imagination"* (Shenstonian 1963). Chris Jacob (1957-62) remembers Mr Hitchens appeared on TV ... *"the sight of our Headmaster being interviewed by some obvious hack journalist out to impress changed very quickly to the Headmaster controlling the entire studio and giving it an introductory lesson in grammar and the correct pronunciation of the English language. His explanation of the roles of Feoffees, Governors and traditions of the School left us yelling for more and the producers desperate to regain control of the interview!"*. Perhaps the best tribute comes from the HMI Report 1961 which described the school curriculum that he designed as... *"a model of variety, flexibility and opportunity, one for the future"*.

A stable staff had emerged during the Hitchens years – Denis Tomlin, Maurice Elwell, Jeff Hancock, Trevor Archer, Keith Berridge, Charles Sellers, Robin Everitt, Laurie Bailey, Rex Thomas, Bob Beech, Harry Cooper, Jack Crawford, Ken Ellison, Ted Halstead, Ian Biggs, Peter Arculus, Harry Morle, Mike Savage, Harry Rickman and David Turnbull. All were to serve the School with long and distinguished careers. Finally, tribute must be paid to the serene and gracious presence of Mrs Martin, the Headmaster's loyal and devoted sister who was always at his side. She had experienced tragedy, her husband had died in WWI, and her son was killed in the Normandy Landings of 1944. She organised her brother's domestic arrangements and acted as hostess on all occasions, the perfect foil for her brother's towering personality. After Solihull, Mrs Martin enjoyed a long and happy retirement in Margate as a companion to her old friend, Miss Cakebread. Some recall that Hitchens was more like a Commanding Officer than a Headmaster, increasingly remote from younger staff although maintaining standards; sending notes if he considered a member of staff needed a haircut! Enter the more liberal years of Bruce McGowan.

## PART IV

*A school is like a kaleidoscope, the picture is one of many shapes and colours and the pattern is always changing”.*

Bruce McGowan (1972)

After the interregnum of A L Mackenzie who had deferred his retirement in Scotland, Bruce McGowan took up the reins of office in April 1964. Educated at King Edward's Birmingham, where he was Head Boy, he eventually graduated in History at Jesus College Cambridge. The war had interrupted his studies and he saw action in Burma and India as an Officer in the Royal Artillery. His teaching career began at King's School, Rochester, then as Head of History at Wallasey Grammar School. In 1957 he became Headmaster and Housemaster at De Aston School, Market Raison. The son of a bishop, Mr McGowan was a lay preacher, rugby referee and keen mountain walker. Mrs. Pat McGowan had been a pupil at King Edward's High School for Girls and they had four children. She gave valuable service to the Marriage Guidance Council during her time at Solihull.

During the 1960's building work continued. In 1965 new lower school classrooms were added to the north-eastern corner of the quad. The Headmaster's house was built in School Lane (later extended in 1996-97) and the cloisters were glazed to offer welcome protection from the elements. And more luxury was offered to the boys – the swimming pool became heated. On the sporting front the purchase of land at Copt Heath provided much extra needed space for games, especially on Saturday afternoons when all age groups above the Shells were involved. A new cricket scoreboard was provided by Geoff Stubbings and the Parents Association.

By 1966 School House ceased to be exclusively for boarders (82 out of 900 pupils) and four classrooms in a new L block were built in the old quadrangle which has somewhat been rearranged with the arrival of the George Hill Building. Still there was a demand for more accommodation, so in 1969 the first two floors of the K block were completed, providing a new refectory and kitchens on the ground floor with Geography rooms and the Language Laboratory, which was later dismantled because it was electrically unsound. A new floor was added to K block to house an up-to-date Languages Department in 1985-86. By the end of the 1960's thanks to the generosity of the Parents Association, the swimming pool acquired a roof so it could be used all year round and new Science Labs were built to provide for the demands of the Nuffield Science Course.

In 1962 as an alternative to CCF, a voluntary service group was formed which operated on Thursday afternoons. This involved social work in the local community; activities included gardening, shopping, playing the piano, generally assisting less fortunate individuals – young and old – to enjoy a little relief from illness, loneliness or boredom. A letter to the Prime Minister was sent congratulating him on his handling of the Profumo crisis, such was the variety of service undertaken! The driving force behind community service, from its creation until his retirement in 1988, was Mr L.C. Bailey, former pupil (during the war), English teacher from 1950 and Master of the Lower School 1977-88. The scope of community service expanded outwards. Mr. Bailey founded the Solihull Young Volunteers in 1964 which joined together 15 schools in pursuit of offering social help and commitment. He chaired both the Solihull School of Social Service and the Birmingham Young Volunteers and urged the creation of a national organisation; speaking on TV, fundraising, lecturing and writing on the subject of community help. In 1972, with Mr. McGowan's blessing, Mr. Bailey started the annual conference of nearly one hundred schools in the HMC to exchange ideas and foster the ideals that lay behind the cause of social involvement and concern.



Since Mr. Bailey's time community service continued to prosper, and at its height in the 1980's and 1990's one hundred and fifty pupils were involved on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. In recent times a dedicated group still operates as part of the Enrichment Programme in the Sixth Form, under the direction of the Chaplain. In the field of social responsibility and charity, Solihull School was a pioneer in the 1960's. Since then many citizens were helped and many pupils gained valuable life experience. As one pupil remembered Monday afternoons. *"spent cutting lawns, gathering apples and talking to my allotted elderly person .... we put on concerts at old folks homes... it was great fun and they loved it"*.

By now school life was so varied that very few, if any, were unable to enjoy their school years. A rich experience was available in so many areas apart from the curriculum – sport, music, drama, CCF, social service, Scouts, visits and trips from the Mediterranean to the Mountain Cottage. Various memoirs record tales of Mr Bailey's production of Robin Hood during which real arrows were fired across the stage! Or Howard Fisher's sardonic wit... *"O level certificates don't come through the post like soap coupons"* or 'Sodium Sid' Arnold's huge thumb, who once warned boys not to go near newly painted radiators, only to walk away with white stripes on his back! Or Bill Bale's cricket wisdom, or Ken Ellison's rendition of a Knight's Tale, or Rex Thomas, a teacher of genius whose history lessons were of the finest quality, or the school dinners served by Kate Keeling and her staff in the new refectory. On the 1st September 1939 Hitler invaded Poland and Kate arrived at Solihull School. She retired in 1984 after 45 years of dedicated and professional expertise. Its legacy was continued by the much respected and well liked Stuart Bailey, boss of the refectory 1987-2006. TV presenter, Michael Burke, recalled his school days in the 1960's... *"Solihull School was great... I managed to manoeuvre myself into the RAF section and visit air stations and do a little flying. Quite good fun!"*. Another boarder in the 1960's recalls the unique team spirit of School House not available to day boys, although rather ancient, rather unpleasant initiation ceremonies still took place. One of the great characters of the 1960's was caretaker, Mr. Fred Rendell, some will still remember his cry of 'yipsentees' as he went about his daily round during first lesson. A great and popular character, Fred was part of the Solihull School scene for many years even after his retirement. He was succeeded by the gentlemanly Mr Clarke, followed by Geoff Wildman who served the school for twenty years before he passed away in 2006. In recent years long and notable service has been offered in other sections of the School by various individuals:- 'faithful domestic helper,' Mrs. Fanny Compton, a well loved Solihull character, who served the School from the end of the 19th Century to her death in 1937, aged 60. After the War, Beth Pitham served for many years in the kitchens and as assistant Matron. Eleanor Chapman, Helen Burton and Beryl Thomas in the Head's wing, June Handy and Norma Gregory in the Bursary; Lab technicians Mr. and Mrs Harwood, Jean Darby, Ann Webb, Diane Hollis, and Hazel Redshaw; plus Jane Inns in the kitchens and Paul Hemming tending the gardens; and still going strong, Ernie Steele in the Maintenance Department. Last but not least, Head Groundsman John Hammond who prepared the pitches for many generations of sportsmen. All played an important role in the running of the School over many years.

The 1960's saw a few modern innovations, like the introduction of Sixth Form dances in conjunction with Solihull High School for Girls (Malvern Hall) presided over by Headmistress Miss Binks and Headmaster Mr McKenzie. Entertainments included a twist competition followed by the hokey-cokey, all completed by 11.45 pm. School uniform slowly evolved from the heavy grey herringbone suits into dark grey suits in winter and blue blazers in summer, plus the maroon cap. Also more tolerance regarding hair length and style appears to have been indulged as Solihull School swayed in the breeze of cultural changes that were occurring in society as a whole, not to mention the political pressures on Independent Schools from the Labour Government. Challenges to traditional authority, the pop culture, free thinking individualism, Solihull School was not in isolation but a generation appears to have escaped virtually unscathed. But the seeds of more critical less accepting attitudes were planted among future undergraduates, voters and parents in these years. The short lived Sixth Form Magazine 'Thought' offered some contemporary critical and satirical material for pupils to read. Discipline remained tight and any unsavoury incidents associated with the 60's image were rare and swiftly and quietly dealt with. The values of the institution were readily accepted by the vast majority of 60's



*Building K block, 1969.*



*The Refectory, opened 1969.*



*K block complete, 1988.*





*L. C. Bailey.*



*The charm of School House: note the archway into the Old Quad c.1965.*



*The CCF in Malta 1962.*



*Rugby team 1964.*



*Prefects Reunion (1935) Dinner, 1967.*



*Michael Burke on the above CCF Camp.*

pupils but the winds of change were blowing away the cherished views of the past, and society would never be the same again. Solihull School would have to respond, adapting the ethos accordingly. The tradition of the boys only school was about to be challenged, and more enlightened methods of discipline not far behind.

On a lighter note, on the 8th February 1971 the first Charity Week began and a full week was given over to raising money for good causes. In 1978 it was condensed into three days, and in recent years into two, and relocated from February to October, but the lively enthusiasm is as strong as ever. At break, lunchtime and after school the pupils organise a wide variety of activities ranging from food stalls, stage shows, car washing to the modern 'Battle of the Bands' competition. The tremendous effort to raise money from which so many worthy causes have benefited over the years is now part of Solihull School's folklore and an eagerly awaited event on the school calendar by each generation of pupils. In nearly forty years it is estimated that Charity Week has provided over £1 million in real terms for charitable causes.

By 1973 and Mr McGowan's departure to Haberdashers' Aske's, the style of headmastership had changed dramatically. A more homely atmosphere for boarders was created and the Sixth Form was given more respect and freedom, having its own centre including a common room in the area vacated by the old dining room. Benchers were elected, pupils were well represented on a management committee to run the centre, and the original set of rules which Mr McGowan had devised are not too dissimilar to those of today. He listened to his staff, encouraged a friendly ambience about the place and was acknowledged as a thoroughly decent man. His hardworking and clear sense of direction had guided Solihull School through the turbulent 60's and early 70's. A school like Solihull, so closely linked to the community, was unlikely to be immune from the drastic changes occurring in the outside world of education, but Mr. McGowan found a way to respond to the challenges whilst preserving the worthwhile traditional values which were a source of the School's strengths. His philosophy was that.... *"pastoral care for each boy as an individual has always been important, and the School is keen to develop body and spirit as well as mind, so that pupils go out into the world well prepared in every sense to live balanced, sensible, useful and happy lives as mature members of the adult community. To this end members of the School are expected to exercise more and more self-discipline as they grow older; they have more freedom but face the fact that this brings with it the necessity for self control"* - a statement has been a guiding light ever since, and one that Mr Bushell would recognise. What time changes is the methods of how to achieve it. His meticulously prepared statement to the Governors (1970) on the future development of the school prepared the way for the next chapter in its development under a new Head, Giles Slaughter.

Mr McGowan's final act was the building of the new Music School which was opened in November 1972. Since the initial impetus in the 1920's, the Music Department had developed so much in the 50's and 60's that its few small rooms in Bradford House were definitely inadequate by 1970; before that the Music Room was what is now the upper common room. The revolution in school music was driven by the enthusiasm, determination and expertise of David Turnbull, who was Director of Music for 34 years (1957-1991). He improved the quality of the school choir and expanded the orchestra both in number and quality. When he began in 1953 it consisted of eleven violins and one piano! Plain-speaking Yorkshire man and Chemistry teacher George Harding once remarked after one performance... *"If that's St Matthew's Passion, he must be bloody livid"*. Mr Turnbull gathered a talented staff of musicians – Jill Spurrell, John Geddes, Jill Godsall and Peter Irving – and *"the tide of musical excellence began to flow"*. Thereafter in its new home described by Mr. Turnbull as... *"an elegant and spacious building which has delighted all who have seen it"* – it had twelve rooms of various sizes to accommodate the ever increasing teaching and practice requirements. Concerts and Recitals became more varied and regular. The excellence of the St Cecilia and Commemoration Concerts became legendary. By 1991, 200 boys and girls were receiving music lessons and the School had three orchestras plus the Chapel Choir, the brilliance of which has shone brightly ever since.





*Hamlet, 1960.*



*The Headmaster's chair stars in 1967 production of Othello.*



*School lunches served by Kath Keeling, 1939 - 1984.*



*Mrs Compton faithful helper of Solihull School c.1900 - 1937.*





*Charity Week, 1995.*



*Charity Week, 1997.*





*David Turnbull.*



*Music School, 1972.*



*CCF inspection, 1972. Headmaster Mr Bruce McGowan.*



*Guest speaker Patrick Moore addresses the Astronomical Society, 1971.*

The 1970's saw the advent of the annual Sixth Form Opera which evolved into the musicals of today, the first being HMS Pinafore in 1976. Mr. Turnbull pioneered modern teaching methods making classroom activity a hands on experience, always hoping to instil a love of music that would last a lifetime. The number of ex-pupils who continued to achieve musical excellence is extensive, and tributes to David Turnbull by many of those former students were numerous and sincere (these included such notable musicians as Messrs Simcock, Briggs and Hale). David retired in 1991 and sadly passed away in 2006. The new Music School bears his name and rightly so. The work continued under Stephen Perrins who has built on the foundations, and musical excellence is one of the flagship activities at Solihull School.

More building work and development of the School was to continue, but we enter the era when building was designed to improve the facilities rather than to merely accommodate an increase in numbers. Constant awareness of the need to provide the very best facilities for the pupils in the competitive world of private education has been a credit to the governing body in recent decades.

Giles Slaughter inherited a school with 967 on the roll and saw through the plans to admit girls into the Sixth Form in his first term, September 1973. Like Mr Hitchens, he was a former pupil of the Royal Masonic School Bushey and thereafter studied history, archaeology and anthropology at King's College, Cambridge. His keen interest in both sport and drama (he had been part of the Cambridge Footlights Review) were to have a great impact on Solihull School. Before Solihull School, he saw National Service in Cyprus in the 1950's. After graduation he started his teaching career at schools in Lichfield, Surrey and Belfast, before becoming Head of History at Stockport Grammar School. After two years he returned to Campbell College, Belfast as Senior House Master and from there to Solihull School. *"Education is the sum of many things, academic training is very important, but cultural and athletic achievements are equally valuable. The girls would make a particular contribution to the cultural side"*. With this philosophy he threw himself into every aspect of life that Solihull School had to offer... *"roaring from study to office, to classroom, to games field, to parental interviews, to opera rehearsals, to bench meeting, to staff meetings, to HMC meetings and to the exhausting round of social events organised by the Parents Association, Old Silhillians and West Midlands society in general"*. The School was to prosper in all aspects of life under his leadership – academic, cultural and sporting. Staff, boys and girls enjoyed a rich and rewarding quality of life during his period in charge as the School adapted well to the 1970's idiom. Some staff still refer to his Headmastership as the golden years, as all the various elements that make up a school were in harmony. The quantum leap, of course, was the admission of girls into the Sixth Form with the newly equipped Centre. Ten girls stepped over the threshold of Solihull School in September 1973 to be welcomed by Mr Slaughter. Masters also offered a warm reception by wearing red roses in their buttonholes. The Headmaster stated that... *"the boys seem to have accepted the girls immediately as full members of the school, and I am sure that this is the role that they will continue to occupy in the future"*. One of the new arrivals, Jeanette Macmillan remarked, *"The boys gave us a few stares this morning but they soon realised that we are quite normal and I am sure we will be accepted into the full life of the school"*. Sixteen year old pupil, Terry Morgan, commented... *"Traditions are meant to be broken and the girls will give a new look to our school, perhaps their presence will encourage the boys to be more courteous and tidier around the school"*. Whether that ever happened is open to conjecture! From these first tentative steps the idea of co-education began to gain momentum, but plans to extend entry of girls throughout the school were rejected in 1981. That would have to wait until 2004-05. Girls were admitted as day pupils only; facilities were not available for any to board, but by now the twilight years of boarding were approaching as the inevitable end of boarding at Solihull School appeared on the horizon.

A catalyst towards the entry of sixth form girls was that Solihull LEA had decided to adopt the comprehensive system for the year 1974-75. This would end 36 LEA sponsored places at Solihull School and bursaries would have to be funded entirely by the Foundation. Also, all sixth form pupils in Solihull schools would have to go to the new Solihull Sixth Form College instead of staying in their Grammar Schools. By admitting girls,



Solihull School could compensate for the loss of the LEA places, offer an alternative to the Sixth Form College as well as providing co-education for those parents who deemed it natural and desirable. The next 37 years were to prove it was a good decision. By 2002, the number of girls coming into the Sixth Form was the same as boys. Without doubt Mr Slaughter's prophecy that girls would enhance the academic and cultural profile of the School certainly came true. Writing in the 1974 *Shenstonian* under the title 'We Ten', Ros Gittings and Ginty Macmillan recalled their experiences... *"Being a girl in a school of boys is not, as one might imagine, all peaches and cream. How unfair it is, for example, that whereas boys can easily escape from unpopular lessons the girls are always conspicuous by their absence. Is it not unkind to force girls to do such things as swimming? For what girl wants to spend 20 minutes ruining her hairstyle and destroying her make up in a savage water fight with ten boys for a pathetic ball"*. However... *"Every cloud has a silver lining. In no other school would a girl find doors opened for her by boys – and even by gallant masters. She can look weak and helpless and always someone would rush to her aid for she is continuously surrounded by males always willing to give their attention"*. The first intake didn't lack a sense of humour! Twenty-five years later Emma Haddleton wrote of her sixth form days in the late 80's... *"And what of being a girl in an all boys school?. Were we a calming and dignified presence on those rough rugby boys? Not really. I dressed like a slob (I thought it was cool) and was called a disgrace and an Oxfam advert by my Sixth Form mistress"*. However, *"academic lessons were an introduction to being treated like an adult"*. And there was much more – Terriers, Community Service, Opera and charity week.... *"At Solihull School I got a taste for the variety that life can offer .... and that provided me with the tools to work in the business world"*, where she was very successful.

At the other end of the school, in September 1973 seven year olds were admitted for the first time and Prep 1 (now J1).was created. Mrs Romaine Instone arrived to be the Form Mistress of the 18 new boys. The Prep Department was under the auspices of Ted Halstead as Head of Lower School, but in 1977 the Junior School became a separate Section. Laurie Bailey succeeded Ted as Master of the Lower School and Brian Curran became Master of the Junior School. The new section of the School emerged with its own identity specialising in the 7-11 age group teaching, whilst preserving its links with the rest of the School. Forms were renamed or created J1, J2, J3 and J4 in 1979. Numbers increased as scholarships into the main School began to be achieved by Junior School boys with successful regularity. Since then, from its location in the north-eastern corner of the Quad, the Junior School has developed and expanded beyond all recognition. It is a school within a school, offering an extensive variety of activities – sporting endeavour, musical enjoyment and drama productions par excellence – preparing boys and girls so well for life in the Senior School. In 1990-91 the Junior School was virtually rebuilt to improve the facilities, making it a completely self-contained unit but always proudly conscious of its role with the greater sphere of Solihull School.

Brian Curran left in 1980 and was replaced by Jack Crawford, a man of vast experience in the Colonial Service prior to his appointment at Solihull in 1958. Jack offered continuity, commanded great respect, and the unique identity of the Junior School flourished during his tenure. Since then former pupils, many of whom lasted the eleven year journey to the Upper Sixth will recall Stephen Cox who presided over the rebuilding. Tim Robinson followed, then Adrian Brindley and now Lindsay Brough who returned to the Junior School in 2002 after her break to raise a family, having started as Miss Richards in 1978 teaching Prep 2. Like the Senior School, the Junior School has enjoyed continuity and stability from its staff, many serving for long periods of time – Malcolm Swain, Romaine Instone, Cath Davies, Rosemary Barralet and Hugh Thomas. Today Mrs Brough presides over a Junior School of 170 pupils and 10 teachers.

Ernest (Ted) Halstead taught at Solihull School for 39 years (1938-77) and he was acknowledged by contemporaries as a schoolmaster of infinite patience, integrity and unfailing humanity. He served in the Royal Navy during the war before resuming his career at Solihull. As Head of Lower School he earned the respect, affection and admiration of the pupils with whom he was so at ease. He shared convivial conversation with them, laughed and encouraged them with an overwhelming optimism whilst maintaining their respect



*Boarding House Soccer team, 1973.*



*Headmaster and Chairman at the CCF inspection, 1974.*



*Girls join the School in 1974.*



*The former Big School became the 6th Form Common Room in 1975.*



*Solihull School c.1978.*



for his honesty and sense of fair play. Pupils knew that they could trust him. As the years went by Ted's wise counsel was eagerly sought by colleagues in the Common room as he inspired all around him with a cheerful confidence in the future. His dedicated approach to teaching and pastoral care is well remembered by Old Sils today. Very few teachers achieve the well deserved and genuine tribute from everyone concerned that the School would never be quite the same without him. Ted Halstead was one such man. Ted passed away aged 89 in 1999.

In 1975 the multi purpose Sports Hall was built on the site of the Big Side tennis courts (which were relocated on the edge of Bushell, near the Scout hut, or more recently opposite the fort). Now basketball, tennis, badminton and five a side football could enjoy spacious accommodation, and the balcony provided an area for table tennis at last. In recent years stamina equipment has also been located up there. The Sports Hall has since expanded to include squash courts, and of course many pupils will remember taking their exams in there.

This same year another important step was made in the School's evolution into a predominantly (then eventually a complete) day school. School on Saturdays ceased and the same curriculum was provided in five days as the number of lessons per day increased from seven to eight. Sport continued on Saturdays, and of course still thrives – a tribute to the keenness of the players and the enthusiasm of the staff.

A good measure of staff enthusiasm was demonstrated on a different stage. Giles Slaughter was keen to see as many pupils as possible become involved in as many activities as possible and he led the way by producing a series of staff performances which he hoped would inspire the pupils to even greater standards of dramatic achievement. The highlight of this was the 1978 production of Aladdin, a spectacular event by all accounts, following on from the success of the previous year's Review 'Staff and Nonsense'. The Headmaster was fortunate to be able to employ the considerable performing talents of Peter Arculus, Roger Flood, David Turnbull, Jill Godsall, Jan Keil and Denis Tomlin to ensure an impact, plus a young Bob Melling who had to climb up high to free the curtains that had got stuck! The strategy worked as the Sixth Form, not to be outdone, successfully presented their own production of 'The Investigator'. The following year the first musical was performed – Salad Days. The annual extravaganza of operas and musicals had begun, and they have thrilled admiring audiences ever since. From Les Miserables to the Sound of Music, from the Magic Flute to South Pacific in 2010, these productions are a terrific showpiece of the talents of Solihull School pupils and a tribute to the effort that they put in, now performed not in the homely surroundings of Big School but in the fabulous arena that is Bushell Hall.

Another showpiece was opened in 1978/9, an extension to the Fort, in order to accommodate the teaching of engineering and technology preparing pupils for careers in industry. (The Fort is so called because it guards the postern gate onto School Lane). Much of the new equipment in the new engineering room was generously sponsored by Parents and Old Sils. Also in that year alterations were made to L Block and School House which provided extra seminar rooms for Sixth Form teaching. A new cricket pavilion (2nd XI) was built courtesy of the Parents Association, who also contributed to the new technological thrust by presenting the school with an Apple micro computer, the first one. (A printer was installed in 1980). The age of computers had begun and electronics was offered at A/O level, and the first computer room with ten video genie micro computers was set up in 1980 – the School would never be the same again.

The year 1981/2 saw the Centenary from the move from Malvern House and it was announced that boarding facilities were no longer to be available in School House. Mr Slaughter lamented... *"Of course the accommodation made available in School House will be put to good use but the building will always be associated with the boys and staff who over many years made it their home and who gave so much back to the community in which they lived. The boarders will be greatly missed and the School will be the poorer for their departure"*.

Well different, certainly. He also reflected on the changing ways of pupils and parents as the 1980's got under way... *"Loyalty, service and unselfishness are not words in very common usage these days but they described qualities essential to the building of a caring society, the kind of society that we would wish the School to be and in which we should all wish to live"*. He needn't have worried. The variety of activities and commitment of both parents and staff would continue but in different ways to suit changing times. The 1980's were to see a new Headmaster, Mr Alan Lee, who continued the work of building a School that would be a pleasure to live and work in. Loyalty and unselfishness were certainly alive and well, one hundred years after the move to Warwick Road. Mr Slaughter left at Christmas 1982 to become Headmaster of University College School, Hampstead. His achievements speak for themselves, his enthusiasm was infectious and his determination to development Solihull School into a citadel of cultural and academic excellence was overwhelming. With clear vision he modernised, he encouraged an atmosphere of involvement and offered total commitment himself. He was eloquent, had immense charm and charisma and was admired by everyone connected to the School, and still is. Described by Denis Tomlin as... *"a Headmaster for all seasons, one who led from the front, unflappable, dignified and astute"*. He was the ultimate people's man, a great ambassador for Solihull School. His ambition to see the School become fully co-educational was not fulfilled until 2005.

Before Alan Lee took over in September 1983 there was an interregnum of two terms when Denis Tomlin took over as Headmaster. This history would not be complete without a tribute to one of the most knowledgeable, best loved, self-effacing and totally dedicated teachers that Solihull School has ever had. From 1952 until his retirement in 1988 Denis saw the School develop and thrive and recorded it all in that alert mind of his. His skills as a raconteur are legendary, his eloquence unrivalled and the warmth of his friendship quite special. Denis could fill his own volume with tales of the School after he arrived from Oxford, via National Service, to teach English and Latin – or so he thought! Armed with Mr Bushell's quotation from Erasmus that the best way to learn was to teach, Denis found himself in the Geography Department, but he coped well enough (most of the time) that promotion to virtually every post in the School followed in rapid succession before he occupied his most famous role, that of Second Master from 1969-1988, an era that was described by Giles Slaughter as *"the Tomlin years"*. Without question, Denis's contribution to Solihull School was immense and every generation that is consulted offers the same verdict. Denis's influence on his pupils is appreciated beyond words. Former pupils treasure their memories of him. One recalled an English lesson when Denis stated that the use of the double negative is an absolute no no!

Every part of school life was touched by him – management, discipline, sport, drama, music, trips – and for each one he has a fund of stories which builds into a wonderful tapestry of the Tomlin years that comes vividly to life when he tells them so eloquently. He relished difficult challenges, enjoyed company but was uncomfortable with recognition and praise. All pupils liked and respected him. None present will ever forget the prolonged applause in Big School after his final assembly. But he did not disappear; he continued to support the school teams on Saturday afternoons, served as an Honorary Governor and was the School Archivist for twenty years, making a confused mass of papers into a coherent catalogue of the School's history. This was a staggering achievement that no-one without his unique knowledge and insight could have done. For this alone Solihull School owes him a great debt. Denis, so well supported by his wife Doris (one time Matron) inspired all of us who were fortunate enough to experience the Tomlin years.





*Before the George Hill building, the rear of School House c.1975.*



*Balcony of the Sports Hall in the modern age.*



*The Pavillion c.1975.*



*The Climbing Wall on the side of the Sports Hall.*



*Staff Common Room, 1970.*



*The Cloisters glazed.*



*Staff production of Aladdin, 1977.*



*P. J. Griffiths in the Quad, 1972.*





*Kineton House.*



*The Boarding House, 1972.*



*The Boarding House, 1972.*



*Brent Wormald and the dawn of the Computer age c.1982.*

## PART V

*GCSE changes have been absorbed successfully and the challenges of Sixth Form modification awaits us in due course. Meanwhile we edge our way, like all schools, towards the National Curriculum and its accompanying devices – but able to exercise discrimination and independence.*

Alan Lee(1989)

When Dr Wilson moved Solihull School across to its present site in 1882 there were 80 pupils. One hundred years later Alan Lee took over with 946 on the roll. The School enjoyed a good academic reputation but the next decade or so was to see Solihull School achieve even better academic success and establish itself into the upper echelons of the new league tables that appeared in the early 1990's. Alan Lee was 46 when he joined the school from Rugby, where he was Second Master. Born in Darlington, County Durham, he was educated at Repton and then gained a first in History at Queen's College, Cambridge. His first teaching appointment was at Pocklington School, York. He then became the Head of History at Bishops Stortford College, Hertfordshire, and then onto Rugby in 1969 as Head of History and Second Master 1973-83. His style was in direct contrast to Mr Slaughter's ebullience – but no less effective. His gentle, thoughtful and courteous approach became just as inspirational, commanding loyalty from both staff and pupils. His high intelligence, incredible memory, a sense of fair play and ability to listen gained respect as he steadily grew into the role of Headmaster with steely determination. He was an astute judge of human nature and had the uncanny knack of understanding both situations and people so very well. He knew every pupil and led by example, working extremely hard, clear in his objective of maintaining Solihull School as a vibrant, caring and successful community.

The pace of change accelerated in the 1980's and this required a positive response from Solihull School. Alan Lee had to face three major upheavals that would increase the pressure on both staff and pupils and drastically alter the nature of the curriculum and its application. The first was the introduction of GCSE in 1986 which merged O levels and CSE. The educational concepts that GCSE offered were embraced enthusiastically by Solihull School, and the staff training required for such a venture was done in harmony with Solihull L.E.A. The departure from an exam system that relied heavily on memory recall and last minute cramming was generally welcomed, as course work, practical assessments and acquisition of skills became more dominant. However, the era of increased workloads on teachers (not to mention pressure on resources and spaces designed for more straightforward instruction) as a result of continuous assessment and internal moderation had begun.

Secondly new style A levels quickly followed those of GCSE and required considerable alterations and modifications in both syllabi and teaching methods, adding to the burden of change. As with GCSE, the advent of course work and internal marking in many subjects changed the face of A levels forever. The national debate of whether the exams became easier or higher grades were more readily obtainable also started in this era, and of course continues today. The answer will not be found here – suffice to say whatever system was imposed, Solihull School pupils and staff worked just as hard to achieve success as in the past and still do.

The third challenge was how to respond to the National curriculum which first appeared in 1988 and its impact on the 7-16 age range. The National curriculum was not compulsory in Independent Schools but the requirements of the Public Exam system meant that Solihull School would have to adopt many of its features. The objectives were laudable... *“to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development at the school and of society, to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life”*. But the demands were formidable and had to be tackled first in Maths and Science, followed by other subjects, as the use of IT was encouraged across the whole curriculum. Also the preservation of the non core lessons and other activities like Terriers, Games, CCF, Social Service had to be accommodated on a timetable under pressure. Programmes of study, key stages, attainment targets and levels were to occupy the minds of the staff



for the next few years as the National Curriculum became entrenched and league tables became a permanent item on the agenda of staff meetings.

The School's response to these revolutionary changes in education was equally dramatic and enterprising. An ambitious building programme in order to accommodate and offer new facilities that were required. The F2 Chemistry laboratory was refurbished and a new storey added. Then an extra storey was added to K Block to house the Modern Languages Department. The Fort was extended in response to the Government policy of placing technology and engineering in the shop window of education. The cost was £248,000 plus £60,000 worth of new equipment. Many generous donations were received to help sponsor the venture. Facilities for engineering, plastics, electronics, mechanics and pneumatics were now available in the splendid new surroundings opened by Sir John Egan, Chairman of Jaguar, on the 12th March 1987. Links with local firms were established as industry and education came closer together at Solihull School.

New squash courts costing £140,000 were built on the side of the Sports Hall thanks to the generosity of former Governor Gordon Wilcox after whom the courts are named. In 1964 the Clovelly Charitable Trust and the E.G. Wilcox Charitable Trust were set up to provide funds for the improvement of the School's facilities. The Astroturf (1999) and part of the building costs of the Alan Lee Pavilion (2002) plus £20,000 in scholarships each year are the products of the Trusts so far. Also in 1988 a major refurbishment of School House took place at a cost of £500,000. Scaffolding shrouded the Victorian building for what seemed like an eternity, but on the 10th March 1989 the opening of the new facilities took place. New classrooms, extended sixth form recreational areas and a career's base were located on the ground floor (once the residence of the Housemaster, the fine old fireplaces and original floor can still be seen). The Art Department moved into a new home on the top floor which used to house the boarders. At the other end of the School, the Headmaster's wing was extended and a new Reception area welcomed visitors and provided a focal point and main entrance to the Thompson Building with extra car parking provided too. The Lower Common Room was enlarged, and the swinging barrier guarding it was removed, all could now pass up or down C corridor with impunity. The old art rooms above the changing rooms were converted into a new Drama Studio. The lighting and sound facilities were donated by the Parents Association. L Block became the Computer Centre remaining until the George Hill building was constructed in 2005 when it was demolished.

The other major building project as the 1990's began was the Junior School. It took 12 months and many boys will remember spending the academic year (1990-1) in temporary accommodation up by the Fort. New classrooms, including special areas for art, design, science and drama, were provided plus a recreation area and its own Assembly Hall. It was the final project undertaken by architect Alan Sadler who had served the School in its ambitious building programme since 1982. The 'new' Junior School was opened on the 18th October 1991 by Sir Adrian Cadbury. It was now fully equipped to expand its numbers and meet the needs of all the educational initiatives which comprised the National Curriculum. The whole range of activities was on triumphant display that night as the Junior School entered a new era.

The next area to be developed and improved was the internal redesign of the Science Block. A new Physics Laboratory (F12) was finished in summer 1995 and the provision of new Biology Laboratories was completed and opened by Dr Mary Archer in September 1997. They included areas for biotechnology, a first floor greenhouse and a splendid new entrance with display cases provided by the Parents' Association. The snake (or snakes) that live there are always a great attraction on Open Days. The total cost of all these improvements was substantial and was provided by careful management of the finances. There was no major appeal for extra funds, and hadn't been since the 1960 chapel project.



*Boarding accomodation was converted into classrooms and a 6th Form Library.*



*Rebuilding School House, 1989.*



*The Fort c.1975.*



*The Technology Department, today known as the Fort.*



The School was forging ahead. The number of pupils had never been higher (995 in 1995) and all the records of these years reports strong academic success, sporting triumphs, musical virtuosity and excellent drama productions to accompany the sustained investment in buildings and equipment, constantly updated and improved – a process that continues until the present day. In 1991 the Solihull News reported... *“The school’s facilities are second to none and are able to meet the demands of the modern Curriculum”*. In 1992 The Daily Telegraph recorded its view of Solihull School... *“strong academic school, good teaching and results, flourishing music and sport...the pupils bright, responsive and confident”*.

An extra problem that Alan Lee had to face was the loss of several longstanding top class members of staff. Ian Biggs left in 1982 – a fine sportsman, in every sense of the word, Career’s Master and a well respected physics teacher. Robin Everett, Head of Maths since 1959, retired in 1984 – a man of great intellect and distinctive voice. Keith Berridge retired in 1985 after 37 years – a much loved Housemaster of Windsor, Head of PE and Games as well as running the CCF since 1975. He also helped many boys pass O level Maths – often against all the odds. Many Old Sils remember their skiing trips with Keith – his kindly approach and, of the encouragement he always gave to his pupils. He taught in the 1940’s and the 1980’s with the same positive relaxed style, adapting to changing times with consummate ease. Sadly, Keith passed away shortly after retiring. 1986 said farewell to Jack Crawford at the age of 72. A true professional, stern but caring, Jack was a Boarding Housemaster, teacher of Maths and History, but best remembered as Head of the Junior School (1980-86). Gruff he appeared, but with a heart of solid gold caring for the well being of his pupils in a manner second to none. He is, to the best of my knowledge, the only member of staff to have a musical written about his life story and performed for his farewell by the Junior School boys. The following year saw Ken Ellison retire – Head of English for 20 years, an excellent scholar, he built up the library and instilled in many generations the correct use of English and a love of literature.

1988 was the year of the ‘gang of four’ who had a combined total of nearly 200 year’s service. Denis Tomlin and Laurie Bailey have already been mentioned but Peter Arculus, Head of Science, was one of the most colourful characters ever. Standards were his watch word, organisation his forte, and acting his passion. His unforgettable performances, both at school and the Heart of England Music Society, are still talked about today whenever Old Sils gather to drink and reminisce. Trevor Archer also had a long and distinguished career as Head of Technology, developing the Fort as the development HQ, and in 1973 he became Master of the Middle School. An ex-RAF pilot, his calm and flexible approach was well respected by both staff and pupils. Trevor acted as Second Master in 1983 to Denis Tomlin and was the last teacher to be Bursar in 1987-8. Continuity in the Fort was provided by Tim Adkin, who followed Mr. Archer(nicknamed Dan) as Head of Design Technology. He was also O/C RAF Section until 1980. Tim’s expertise in his field served the School for 23 years. He co-designed the new Fort in 1988 with architect Alan Sadler. Tim raised the profile of D & T in the School and the facilities never failed to impress the visitors every Open Day. As the 1990’s appeared David Turnbull left in 1991; so too Gerry Tanner, Head of Lower School, and Steven Cox, Head of the Junior School; and in 1994 two other longstanding stalwarts also said goodbye – Roger Beavis and Derrick King. For 29 years Mr. Beavis was a History teacher of style and panache. As House Master of Pole, ‘Jacko’ was much admired for his genuine interest in the pupils and was always fully involved in school affairs, holding several posts during his long career – the complete school master. His indomitable spirit was best expressed as O/C RAF Section for 18 years, at which he excelled. Derrick King was Head of Geography for 25 years, a meticulous and highly professional teacher who guided his subject through endless changes in content and methodology. He laid the foundation for the modern era of Geography teaching.

So Alan Lee lost several long serving and dedicated teachers who had provided continuity and wisdom. They were replaced of course as the staff conveyor belt rolled on but their contribution was considerable and the work they did was built upon by future generations since they were the first to cope with the great changes; and it is a tribute to the professionalism of all members of staff in that period that the success of the School was

undiminished. But the days of the much loved, individualistic, slightly eccentric teacher was coming to an end. Teaching methods had to become more standardised, management was reorganised, increased accountability and appraisal had arrived.

From 1983-1996 Alan Lee guided the Solihull ship through uncharted and unsettled waters, to the new world of educational provision and expectation “*often dressed up in elaborate jargon*”, whilst retaining Solihull’s traditions and identity. The expansion of the facilities and the enthusiastic response to the new ideas and opportunities that presented themselves in rapid succession were the two main reasons for the success of the voyage. Alan Lee had inspired his staff to be positive, advised the Governors as to what was required, and they in turn responded with the wisdom and foresight to keep Solihull School ahead of the times. It was a fitting tribute that in Alan Lee’s last year the exam results were the best ever and Solihull School took its place in the premiership of the School League Tables. When he left he must have privately reflected with satisfaction, the School’s academic reputations, sporting excellence and cultural variety were enriched and applauded in his time. When he retired, Sixth Formers Peter Woolley and Chris McGourty compiled and presented the Headmaster with a scrapbook of his time at Solihull School, signed by every single pupil in the School. No further comment is required. However one last tribute must be recorded – the contribution to the welfare of the School community by Mrs Anne Lee. Her devotion to duty unique, her kindness, hospitality and deep insight into the problems that sometimes faced staff, parents and pupils was amazing. She was always there to help, reassure and listen; the ‘Lee years’ would not have been the same without her patience, charm and dignity. The Lees retired to Malvern, but sadly a cruel illness cut short Alan’s life at the age of 66. At his packed memorial service in Malvern Priory, Jim Woodhouse (former Headmaster of Rugby School) paid tribute to a man of great ability, sensitivity, humour and warmth. For me, he was one of the finest men I have ever met.

As the end of the century approached, school expeditions became global. Trips to Zanzibar, Bolivia, Peru and Tibet, the Scouts in Chile as well as Rugby, Hockey and Cricket tours to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the West Indies all took place. Alan Lee was succeeded by 36 year old Patrick Dereham, who embraced this new worldwide attitude. He acknowledged his fine inheritance on which to build, but he wanted to extend the frontiers for Solihull School pupils. He introduced Mandarin and connected this initiative to forming bridges with local and international business. The style of headmastership had changed again.

Ambitious, articulate, determined, charismatic and focused, Patrick Derham set about meeting the challenges he relished. As a boy he had attended Pangbourne College where the discipline in this former nautical school he described as ‘pre Children’s Act’. He graduated with first class honours in History from Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1979 and taught at Cheam Prep School and then at Radley where he was Head of History and Housemaster. He was accompanied to Solihull by his wife Alison who began teaching in the Junior School, initiating the Special Needs programme; plus their two children. Patrick Derham was keen to enhance the academic impetus and profile of the School and in 1998 the commendation system was introduced and the Butterfield Cups for academic endeavour. Pupils were also encouraged to enter the Fulcrum Challenge, Young Enterprise, Young United Nations conference and the Engineering Education Scheme. The Keil poetry competition was started and named after its benefactor, Mrs Jan Keil, Girls Tutor and Modern Language Teacher 1995-97. The highlight of 1998 was the CCF Centenary Celebrations, recorded elsewhere and the China Day attended by Douglas Hurd, Foreign Secretary in Mrs Thatcher’s Government and Mr Wang, a representative of the Chinese Embassy. The idea was to promote greater student understanding of China and all of its mysteries, fascinations and potential economic opportunities. Another famous guest was BBC correspondent, Kate Adie.

In 1999 the School underwent a full week’s internal inspection, the first for many years. The HMC Inspectors concluded... “*This is a good school, whose great strength is the quality of all round education it provides in an academic setting. Parents and pupils place great value on this quality and the rich extracurricular life, which*





*Anne and Alan Lee.*



*Former Dormitories, now the Art Room.*



*New Headmaster's Wing, 1988.*



*Solihull School c.1992.*





*Staff (1970 - 1975) Reunion, 1999.*



*Reunion of Heads and Deputies (1983 - 1996).*



*The last Boarders, 1988. Housemaster R. J. Melling (later Second Master).*





*The Junior School from the Quad.*



*A Man For All Seasons, 1995.*



*Kiss Me Kate, 1996.*



*The traditional desks c.2001.*



*complements the academic study. There is a strong sense of community. Relations between the pupils and their teachers are very good and the school enjoys usually strong support from parents and past pupils*". So all was well; the pupils were the real stars, responding with a pride in their School that carried the day. The Sixth Form Centre saw another refurbishment and redecoration as the numbers increased at that end of the School. Two other memorable events took place in 1998-9. The 25th anniversary of girls joining the School was celebrated with at least one girl from every year group since 1973/4 present. The other reunion was for pupils who left in 1939. It was a very special and moving occasion that included a wreath laying ceremony at the War Memorial to remember fallen classmates and friends.

The psychological impact of the year 2000 offered the whole country reason to reflect and ponder and the Headmaster was in that mood when he addressed Speech Day that year. Looking back over 440 years of Solihull School and its efforts to produce well-rounded individuals, he compared the skills and values on offer to those of the Renaissance where our story began. But he also looked forward, quoting T S Eliot... *"the river flows, the seasons turn the sparrow and the starling have no time to waste. If men do not build how shall they live"* and what a building it was to be. From the laying of the foundation stone on the 14th March 2001 to the opening in 2002 the Bushell Hall emerged, changing the School's landscape and providing a magnificent theatre which at last could do justice to the splendid productions that required such a venue. The whole School could now assemble under the same roof. Big School was converted into an impressive library and study area. The famous old balconies were no more, as the upstairs area was converted into a second story for the Library, plus two new computer classrooms and an extended Upper Common Room behind. Both projects costing £3.2 million were clear evidence that the School was *"ambitious, dynamic and not content to rest on its laurels"*.

Patrick Derham did not see the opening of these ventures; he left in 2001 to become Headmaster of Rugby School. His aim had been to continue the work of previous times, that of providing education in its broadest sense, of the highest quality. He had a keen eye for what the future required and he never wavered in his determination to promote the name of Solihull School. His love of and mastery of History often led him to use poignant quotes to emphasise his points in speeches, staff meetings and assemblies – but the quote that sums up his approach, is by Poet Philip Larkin... *"onwards, upward and outwards, not backwards, downwards and inwards"*. Patrick Derham's five year reign ended with the School still successful, certainly expanded and with its heart and soul intact, ready to face the 21st century.

From 1996-2001 several long serving and distinguished staff retired. 1996 saw the departure of Richard Costard after 27 years as Sixth Form Master. It was he who more than anyone inspired and presided over the dramatic changes in Sixth Form accommodation and education in the modern era. Richard did the jobs that are now occupied by four people – as well as Sixth Form Master he was the first Warden of the Sixth Form Centre, Director of General Studies and Head of History, which was his original appointment in 1967. His knowledge and expertise in history impressed the brightest of scholars and his enthusiasm for sailing is well remembered by old boys and girls.

Another fine scholar also said goodbye that year – John Ditchfield who had been Head of Classics since 1967. He organised over forty trips to Italy and Greece, starting the tradition of the annual Classics Tour – a feature that is still going strong today. The following year said farewell to five well known members of staff. Mike Williams, geographer, co-founder of Snowdonia School, Senior Housemaster of Jago and rugby coach. Many old boys remember his Easter cruises on the Norfolk Broads. Sadly Mike died in 2000 at the young age of 60. Romaine Instone served as teacher of Prep One (J1) for 24 years, and her influential contribution to the development of the Junior School as it emerged from the shadows of the Lower School was outstanding. Many sixth formers remembered their days in J1 with great affection. Romaine was the first female CCF Officer, encouraging girls to participate and go on camp. One of the great personalities of the staff, Romaine

remembered every single boy she ever taught, and when they reached the sixth form, they too knew that she remembered what they were like in J1.

Jan Keil was the Girls Tutor for 20 years, a lady of elegance, style and a pillar of the Common Room who made the first girls welcome and looked after the welfare of succeeding generations. She initiated the French trips to Normandy in the 1980's. Mike Sansbury was Head of German for 22 years and inspired his pupils with a mixture of strict discipline and brilliant exposition of his subject. Old Boys still talk of the giant ex-paratrooper, his motorbike and his irrepressible pursuit of linguistic excellence. Mike Savage left after 37 years, almost his entire career. Like others of his generation Mike occupied many posts as his service unfolded – most notably Senior Housemaster and finally Head of Lower School in 1991. A fine athlete, Mike coached sailing, and in terms of national and international honours won by Old Sils it must be our most successful sport. He was also President of the Mountain Club, leading many expeditions O/C CCF Naval Section and spent countless hours painting and decorating when the Mountain Cottage went through its many extensions and refurbishments carried out by working parties of staff and parents. Mike Savage was another teacher who required several staff to take over his duties when he left. The days of several senior posts held by the same person was over.

Finally, Peter Wrenn, much loved Chaplain 1971-97. His role as Chaplain was so good that each step along the path to a more secular age was hardly noticed. Peter's sermons and assemblies were never dull and always relevant to the times. Nor were his lessons when he was not called away on another duty. He was the school counsellor before the idea or role was invented. It was he more than anyone else who provided staff and pupils with optimism and belief in what's right, injected into his listener via his gentle, self-effacing humour. Peter became, and still is, a Solihull School institution. Like the present Chaplain Father Andrew, Peter is in demand for our baptisms, marriages, funerals and memorial services. Old Boys (and staff) still relate endless stories about him, but no member of staff has ever enjoyed such unique respect and affection.

In 1999 one of the longest serving members of staff retired. Harry Rickman, who succeeded Denis Tomlin as Second Master in 1988, began teaching in 1960 and served five Solihull Headmasters. He was Boarding House Master for nine years and then took over responsibility for the operas when Giles Slaughter left, producing 16 in all. Many generations of pupils benefited from the well-organised, solidly reliable and dedicated service of a man who saw Solihull School change and develop over four decades.

The Maths Department lost two experienced teachers – Andy Gosling and Jenny Clark – who joined the staff in 1976 and 1978 respectively. Two great personalities of the Rickman era left in 2001 – Roger Flood and Arthur Brooker. 'Floodie', a local boy and former pupil personified Solihull School in his time there (1964-2001) – a great maths teacher, international hockey player, avid mountain walker, climbing Snowdon 170 times! He was always in the vanguard of the worldwide trips that were undertaken as the Millennium dawned. For years he was the architect of the school timetable and had the distinction of being the last Fifth Form Master as the pastoral revolution of John Claughton's time abolished the post.

Arthur Brooker, best known as Master of the Middle School, served Solihull School for 32 years. A stickler for correctness in all things, Arthur is fondly remembered for a dry sense of humour and totally professional approach.



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*Staff taken c.1990. Messrs Tomlin, Archer, Everitt, Beach, Wall (OS), Morle.*



*Girls Reunion, 1998.*



## Part VI

*They have brought a new vitality and a different dimension to Solihull School,  
and it is a better place for that.*

P J Griffiths, 2006

By 26th April the great enterprise of the Bushell Hall and the new Kent Library were officially open for business. Mr Robert Taylor, Lord Lt. of West Midlands performed the opening ceremony; it was a proud moment. Both had been in use for several months and there is no doubt that these two projects have enhanced and enriched the life of the school. Enhancing the quality of life of the pupils by means of an all round education was close to the heart of the new Headmaster, John Cloughton, who took over in September 2001. A classical scholar of exceptional brilliance and cricketer of considerable ability, John Cloughton soon stamped his personality on Solihull School. Liberal minded, friendly, perspicacious, he adapted from his former role as Housemaster at Eton with ease. His self-deprecating charm was an instant hit with pupils, parents and staff. A former pupil of King Edward's Birmingham, he captained the Oxford University Cricket XI as well as achieving a first in classics at Merton College. He scored a century on his first class debut in 1976, then played full time for Warwickshire in 1980. After a short and not very happy time as a Merchant Banker, he taught Classics at Bradfield College and then on to Eton in 1984. He was married to ex-ballet dancer, Alexandra, with three sons when he arrived at Solihull School.

The first round of curriculum 2000 which changed the face of A levels was complete by 2002. The creation of AS exams meant that LVI pupils had to study four subjects and then select three for A2 qualification the following year. Sixth form academic life certainly changed. January modules appeared on the calendar, exams could be taken over and over again until satisfaction was achieved and coursework formed a considerable part. Cynics had a field day, as John Cloughton lamented... *"everyone talks of skills, no-one talks of education"*. That said, Solihull School's activities in music, drama, travel and sport prospered in the ever expanding facilities of the early 21st century, and university entrance was as successful as ever.

In 2002 an unusual step was taken. Solihull School became twinned with Small Heath School, Birmingham, sponsored by the Government's Independent/State School partnership initiative. The venture offers the opportunity for pupils of both Schools to meet and exchange ideas and aspirations in our multi-cultural society. Small Heath School could avail themselves of some of the facilities of Solihull.

John Cloughton's headmastership saw more building projects. In 2003 a new pavilion named after Alan Lee was built to replace the traditional Cricket one, at a cost of £1.5 million. This new structure dominates the area in which it stands and offers panoramic views across the cricket square and rugby and hockey pitches. It has excellent facilities – a serving hatch which offers hospitality to faithful supporters and visiting teams, a spacious assembly area, seminar rooms, trophy cabinets and a balcony; and downstairs - changing rooms and medical room. It provides the focal point for the entire School Sports programme.

In 2004 the old CCF huts were replaced by the Outdoor Pursuits Building, combining facilities for CCF, Terriers, Duke of Edinburgh and sailing. Not even the most diehard traditionalist missed the ramshackle collection of sheds and garages that nestled in the far corner of the Field of Mars, guarded at one time by a flightless Hawker Hunter aircraft, positioned on the lawn bordering Warwick Road until its removal in 1966.

The years 2001-2005 saw several staff changes as some long serving teachers departed. Barry Thomas's career began in 1969 as a boarding House Tutor and his various activities included Snowdonia School, skiing, weight training, lifesaving and singing in the Chapel choir (and with Roger Flood when given the chance). Perhaps he

is best remembered for his work with the Scouts running the activity for many years with unrelenting energy and enthusiasm.

Barry Chacksfield started in 1952 as a pupil and returned to teach Modern Languages in 1974. He ran this department for 24 years before becoming both Sixth Form Master and first Director of Studies. A man of great intellect and charm, witty and approachable, Barry's contribution to Solihull School over a period of great academic change was invaluable.

Seven long-serving teachers left in 2003 as the staff connection the Hitchens and McGowan eras began to close. Laurie Bradley, Head of Art and presided over extensive changes in location and curriculum and expanded the Department considerably, left after 33 years. Laurie sadly passed away in 2007. David Harding, dedicated Maths teacher and Middle School Housemaster for 34 years, also left. Hundred of pupils benefited from the many hours he spent coaching and running Badminton. So too, David Miller, Shenstone Housemaster and Officer Commanding the CCF after Keith Berridge – a wise and patient teacher who served Solihull for 32 years, and presided over the change from compulsory CCF to its present voluntary state.

Mike Dodgeon – classicist, author and Duke of Edinburgh supremo (1972-2003). Teaching boys to sing Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer in Latin – unforgettable. John Lloyd, Head of Physics 1973-2003 was a great influence in the classroom, the Common Room, the rugby field and the cricket pitch. Physics was his passion and he transmitted this to his pupils to believe in the subject and themselves. (Mr. 'Coulomb' was sadly missed).

R M Melhuish 1975-2003, one of the most popular teachers of the modern era, Bob (he was Bob was to everyone) made lessons lively, exciting and enjoyable. He conveyed a passion for literature to the pupils in a unique way, and they loved it. Untidy, with handwriting that no-one could read, but a director of 18 productions and an inspiration to those of more avant garde creative persuasion. The "sons of Bob", Stuart Lee the most famous so far, are out there, taking a swipe at convention. His editorship of the Shenstonian 1979-2003 is a great legacy – of a free spirit. Tony Dunn, Head of English, great showman, raconteur, Schools' Inspector and one of the great personalities of modern times. Some of his lessons were unforgettable, and his comments legendary, but no teacher's discipline was better than that of Mr Dunn. Pupils even spoke his name with respect and reverence. The harder he was the more they loved him... *"Remember, gentlemen, period 8 never has to end..."*

Martin Ayers left in 2004 (the last from the 1960's) and several jobs had to be filled. He was one of the most dedicated teachers ever. He ran Snowdonia Schools, Mountain Club expeditions, Cricket teams, Chess (every Friday evening) and was Chapel Warden during his 35 years – as well as being an outstanding Mathematician. Les Garrett also retired in 2004, Head of Economics since 1974, one year after it split from the History Department. Genial and knowledgeable, Les guided his Department's progress through the many changes with self-effacing efficiency. He contributed a great deal to School Rugby too as master in charge for many seasons.

Also, in 2005 the Junior School was given a make-over and improved utilisation of the original areas was achieved. Finally in 2004, a large new teaching block was planned to occupy the site that included L Block, the old changing rooms, assorted sheds and Lower School toilets, finally consigning the familiar area in the west end of the school to history. 16 new classrooms, primarily for History, Economics, Business Studies, Religious Studies, Classics and ICT were included. The sumptuous building also provided much needed social space for pupils to relax and converse at lunchtimes – welcoming, warm and dry. The massive structure stretches from School House into the Science Block and is named after one of the most influential Governors in the School's history – George Hill.





*Looking back from Bushell Hall to the Thompson Building.*



*The Opening of Bushell hall, 2002. Headmaster John Claughton, Lady Moyoress, Chairman John Price and Lord Lt. Robert Taylor.*



*The re-vitalised Quad, 2009.*



*The impressive Bushell Hall.*



*Inside the Bushell Hall.*



A major change occurred in the House System which was diluted in terms of pastoral responsibility and replaced by increased involvement by the Form Teacher, supported by an expanded and tiered structure of Year Heads, Section Heads, leading to the Senior Management Team. Some teachers were still assigned to Houses but House Masters and Tutors were abolished. Inter-house competition continued but the House structure no longer enjoyed such a high profile in the school. The science of management had arrived! Although, perhaps not as passionately as before, identification with one's house is still relevant to many pupils and their parents.

2004/5 was another year when the School was inspected. The official conclusion was... *"Solihull School achieves with conspicuous success its aim of educating the whole person, offering an exceptional range of high quality activities, which enrich the broad, innovative curriculum, and lead to excellent in standards of pupils"*. The evidence to support this was overwhelming, - high quality lessons, conscientious staff, excellent facilities and pupils who once again rose magnificently to the occasion. Inspectors are only there for a few days and see a cameo, but a community that unites to show off, with pride how good it is cannot be manufactured, the bottom line is that Solihull School is an educational institution of exceptional quality however it is assessed. Hopefully a look at its history shows how that has been achieved as much as any Inspection Report. The summary of a 1960's inspection by Guy King-Reynolds links two eras perfectly... *"The normal friendly and relaxed relationships between teachers and taught crystallised into a solid entente of mutual support and assistance in the face of the invasion by HM's Inspectors"*.

The most historic event came in 2005 when Solihull School was to become fully co-educational, 30 or so years after girls first entered the 6th Form. Opinions varied, and for whatever reasons the Governors based their decision, as the 450th Anniversary is celebrated, the School of 2010 appears perfectly at ease with its new creation. The Reformation of the 16th Century when the school was founded was revolutionary; Solihull School becoming co-educational has occurred as a natural, almost unnoticed evolution, well suited to the modern world. As John Claughton noted at the time... *"Independent schools with a similar profile to Solihull, urban, academic, traditional – had reaped huge benefits in going co-educational. It has made this school richer, more varied, more normal, happier"*.

There are of course some ramifications of becoming co-educational – a more subtle change from the rough and tumble ethos of boys' schools perhaps; a smaller pool from which to select traditional sports teams; new facilities required, and how to treat boys and girls differently in class at the height of adolescence - the latter being a tough challenge, but one that was met with professionalism of the highest order. The staff had gone co-ed some time before; by 2005 35% of the teachers were women. The girls that had entered the Junior School and the Thirds that year did not face anything other than welcoming security and support. As one boy put it... *"At first they went round in a big group, like a visiting netball team, but after a bit it was as if the girls had always been in lessons and the school"*.

From its beginnings Solihull School has reflected changes and innovations in society, not caused them. No man is an island, and no school is immune from the social pressures and market forces that society as a whole exerts. The Independent School that does not adapt does not survive.

After only a short time at Solihull John Claughton said farewell in 2005 and returned to King Edward's, where his academic life began. As he said goodbye he reflected. *"I was tremendously scared in my first years that I couldn't have an impact on the School, but now that I feel this School is a different place from four years ago, it is a warmer and more human School and to that extent, although I have made lots of mistakes on the way, it proves that you can be a passionate Headmaster"*.



*The Kent Library, now the Lower Common Room.*



*The final Assembly in Big School, 2002.*



*Big School converted into the new Library, 2002.*



*The Kent Library, formerly Big School.*



*Solihull School c.2004.*









John Claughton's deep-rooted and heartfelt humanity touched the pupils in a unique way and he departed with a classical reference:

*"When you start on your journey to Ithaca,  
Then pray that the road is long,  
Full of adventure, full of knowledge".*

Everyone wished him well. The Governors expected his road at Solihull to be longer and were taken somewhat unawares by their Headmaster's exit. They assumed a crisis, but to borrow a line from Shakespeare... *"out of this nettle danger we pluck this flower, safely"*.

They turned to the most reliable and safest option to guide the momentous change in the School's long history – Philip J Griffiths, after 33 years at Solihull, became Headmaster; crisis over.. *"for this relief, much thanks"*. (Hamlet)

During the last five years the School has completed its ambitious building programme with the opening of the new Music School, its 450th Anniversary present to itself. The series of building projects has enhanced the School and changed its appearance quite dramatically over the last three decades. Mr. Griffiths has seen all of these developments since his arrival in 1972 to teach History. A graduate of Liverpool and Birmingham Universities, his steady climb from ordinary teacher to the Headmastership via O/C Army Section of the CCF, Rugby Coach, Housemaster of Windsor, Third Master (the only man ever to hold that post) and Second Master (taking over from Harry Rickman in 1998) has been richly deserved. He is the first non Oxbridge man to be appointed in the School's history, and the first to be selected from the present staff (apart from the odd times when an interregnum was needed as one Headmaster departed and another was on his way). But such a radical change from tradition seemed an entirely natural progression as Mr. Griffiths used his experience and deep understanding of the School to guide it through the first years of co-education, instantly commanding the respect of parents, pupils and staff. Stability was required and the last five years have benefited accordingly from his secure and steady leadership. Building contractors have gone, the social areas and modern classrooms provided by the Alan Lee Pavilion, George Hill Building and the Music School have greatly improved the quality of life for the staff and the pupils, although one possible side effect of the new buildings and the creation of comfortable, separate subject areas is that there is less Common Room togetherness than in the past. Long gone are those heady days of staff plays, and a pipe smoke filled Common Room, where senior members were called Mr. by younger ones and a unique camaraderie existed.

In the lead up to the 450th anniversary, high academic results have been maintained, trips on literally a global scale are prolific (130 took place in 2006/7) and sport is as popular and successful as ever. The Chapel Organ has been painstakingly restored and refurbished in order to accompany the excellence of the Chapel Choir, and the productions in Bushell Hall seem to get better and better. Solihull has sent pupil representatives to the European Youth Parliament, helped to build a school in Sri Lanka, established links with the Wessex School in Chile, raised large amounts of money for charity each year and played competitive sport in over a dozen foreign lands. Former pupils occupy positions in Industry, Politics, the Professions, the Media and the Armed Forces – in every walk of life carrying the knowledge and values they learned at a School that in 2010 exudes a friendly but workmanlike atmosphere that never fails to impress visitors, parents, Old Sils, even Inspectors.

In 2006 some new third Form girls were asked for their thoughts on the first year of co-education at Solihull... *"The very first time I stepped into Solihull School I knew I was welcome"* said Victoria Weaver. *"Now almost at the end of my first year, I am delighted to say that I feel like a girl in a co-ed school"*. Helen-Cara Younan. *"I think it's great being the first girls as the boys don't know how to react. Some of them thought that we all loved pink and we didn't play sports like football but we proved them wrong. We certainly hit Solihull with a bang"*. Georgina Russell. In 2010 as they head towards their GCSE exams the same 'pioneers' of co-education

reflected on their five year passage... *"The boys got used to us ,and we don't sit on opposite sides of the George Hill anymore"*. They were a little more coy on the subject of distractions, but all agreed "that it was certainly a successful experiment".

The general consensus of opinion is that Solihull's change to co-education has been a triumph. Time will tell; educational statistics show that some single sex schools produce better results, especially for girls, but mixed schools tend to be happier, more balanced and more productive for both staff and pupils - everything Solihull School seeks to represent. It started in the 16th Century with the provision of an education that society required at the time, and it enters the 21st Century just as optimistic and innovative, but proud of its history, 450 years is a great achievement.

From 2005 to 2010 a few more long-serving members of staff retired. David Aldis, a fine Mathematics scholar, led that department for 22 years, following on from Robin Everitt and Raymond Ansell. Ron Smith, the cheerful and dedicated Head of Science for 20 years, organising and modernising his department to meet the needs of a changing academic climate. Ron's great spirit of adventure made him a must to have on a School trip, and he is still in demand. In 2008 five more followed – Malcolm Swain, first class rugby player and coach, but most renowned for his 34 years teaching in the Junior School. So many former pupils remember their time in J4S, as one boy put it... *"A Junior School without Mr Swain will be really strange"*. As they got older some went on Golf Tours that Malcolm organised, stories from which are still related when golfing ex pupils meet up.

Gareth Ginns succeeded Keith Berridge in 1985, so the PE and Games Department had remarkable continuity from 1948. Under Gareth's leadership School Games flourished and maintained excellent standards. Brent Wormald, much respected Physics teacher and supremo of the unsung achievement of producing an efficient timetable every year without which no school could function, said goodbye after 35 years service. Byrom Blessed, the creator of IT teaching, also gave the same length of service. He left the same time as Barry Keylock, the first Head and initiator of the Psychology Department. Richard Wiltshire, popular English teacher and Head of Lower School for ten years, and Mark Goatham for the same period, both retired leaving the Senior Management Team somewhat depleted. Both had seen considerable changes during their time, and the demands on such posts is every increasing from an outside world that is only an e-mail or mobile phone call away. There is more contact with parents than ever before, far more legislation to observe, and what was done years ago informally must now be formally recorded, documented and accountable. Indeed, all staff who left from 2000 onwards had seen substantial changes, perhaps more varied and rapid than at any time in the past. All posts of responsibility now carry a heavier workload, and more virtuosity is needed. As well as subject and curriculum knowledge, organisational, managerial and personnel skills are now the standard requirements of the modern teacher, especially Heads of Departments.

The turnover of staff in the last decade before the 450th anniversary has been quite considerable but some stalwarts continue, all having served over twenty years – Bob Melling, Deputy Head; the last Boarding Housemaster, Sean Morgan; Lisa Fair, Martin Brough, Martin Covill, Paul Brattle, John Nixon, John Belcher, Chris Jones, Dave Reardon, Laurie Bengel, Jeremy Troth, Suzanne Wolffe, Merelyn Barrett, Niall Cluley, Peter Irving, Hugh Thomas, Cath Davies, the evergreen Jill Godsall carrying on the family tradition – her father Leslie began teaching music at Solihull School in 1951, and the 'father of the Common Room,' Phil Holt, who began teaching in 1971 and could well challenge Raymond Ansell's record.

And the story continues – after 450 years, not everyone can be mentioned nor every event recorded in such a long period of time. To offer some perspective, on the national scene when great events came and went – the Armada, Civil War, Industrial Revolution, British Empire, Napoleonic Wars, Victorian prosperity, Two World Wars, Cold War and a second millennium – Solihull School was there.





*The Alan Lee Pavillion, 2002.*



*The George Hill Building, 2005.*



*The David Turnbull Music School, 2009.*



*Inside the David Turnbull Music School.*



Thousands of pupils have also come and gone, from the historically iconic like Jago, Shenstone and artist Cecil Aldin to the academically gifted Butterfield, Wright and Ansell. From popular local Butcher Eric Lyons and Midland football grandees Jack Wiseman and Bert Millichip to the musically talented and internationally recognised, Philip Achille, James Barralet, Stephen Webster and Professor John Butt. From sporting heroes Frank Foster, Martin Green, Adrian Ellison, Daniel Caines and Warwickshire's new rising star Richard Johnson, to the instantly recognisable TV presenters Michael Buerk, Richard Hammond and Lizo Mzimba. From the Cadet who stood for four hours on parade in 1909 and was thrilled to be rewarded with a smile from Queen Alexandra as she passed by, to the Captain in the Marines currently serving in Afghanistan who recently returned to give a riveting talk to the CCF.

They represent all who have passed through Solihull School from the first pupils in the Free Grammar School in Malvern House to those who enjoyed the opulent surroundings of Bushell Hall and the George Hill Building, via the Victorian splendour of School House. Yet buildings are only the shells; history is about people and how they shaped the development of their institutions – in this case Solihull School - over 450 years. Future generations will continue the story and hopefully keep in mind as guiding principle what Mr McGowan expressed so eloquently in 1974 .... *"We are greatly blessed by the inheritance past ages have bequeathed us. It adds up to vastly more than mere buildings and endowments. To bring health and success to such an enterprise and found it upon care and concern for every individual is what we are here to do"*.

## The School Badge and House System

A coat of arms quartering the arms of four Solihull families makes up the School crest. The left side (i.e. those of the Odingsells and Dabridgecourt) were added by Headmaster Rev. Dr Wilson in 1882. Thomas Dabridgecourt of Longdon Hall was the first Chairman of the Feoffees. His brother-in-law Thomas Greswolde, was also one of the first Feoffees, and part of that well known family dynasty that appears throughout the School's and Solihull's history. In 1574 Thomas Waring of Berry Hall joined the other two in enfeoffing the land (near to Solihull Church) called 'wiredrawers' and adjoining house "for the use and maintenance of a school of learning within the said parish". Sir William de Odingsells was the founder of the Chantry Chapel of St Alphege of the parish church. Strictly speaking, Solihull school has no coat of arms, since these have to be granted by the Kings of Arms, and an application has not been sought. So Rev. Dr Wilson created the new badge in 1882 in celebration of the move to Warwick Road. Schools are allowed to display the arms of benefactors and founders so, the Badge of Solihull School serves as "a reminder of famous men and our fathers that begat us." Certainly without their charitable generosity there wouldn't be a School', and donations of land proved to be the most valuable investment for the future.



In 1908 the House system was created, by 1911 there were five Houses - School (boarders), Solihull, Shirley, Knowle and Acocks Green. These disappeared during the First World War and re-emerged as Pole, Jago, Shenstone and Fetherston in 1921. School House was sub divided into Nomads and Wanderers until 1933. In 1945 two new houses were created, Wilson and Bushell after the two Headmasters, but these were abandoned in 1948. Windsor was created in 1959, perhaps in celebration of two Royal visits firstly by the Duchess of Kent in 1960 followed by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1962 which must have been planned well in advance. House caps were started in 1954 but not worn in the Senior School since 1980 and in the Junior School after 1991.





*The Mountain Cottage.*



*Henry Fricke and Paul Boulton fixing slates on bathroom roof early 1958.*



*Headmaster H. B. Hitchens at the opening ceremony of the Mountain Cottage, 1958.*



*Mountain Cottage group 1981.*



*50th Anniversary Snowdonia School, 2008.*

## The Mountain Cottage

*“It is our hope that many generations of boys will find there the true love of mountains, good comradeship and a spirit of adventure”.* These were the sentiments that the Fricke family expressed when they made their wonderfully farsighted and generous gift to Solihull School in 1958. The cottage was to be a memorial to David Fricke (Fetherstone 1946-56) who died of leukaemia eight weeks before his twentieth birthday. The 1958 Shenstonian records the efforts that were made to make the cottage suitable for groups of up to eighteen. Working parties of parents, boys and masters produced the infrastructure of the cottage that we know today. The opening ceremony took place on the 27th July which was attended by over one hundred people, including many of the Fricke family, the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors and other members of the School community. After the dedication by the Chaplain, the cottage was formally handed over to the School. Soon afterwards a Mountain Club was founded with the legendary maths maestro Mr P. R. Ansell as President.

Over the years the cottage has been improved, re-equipped and extended by many volunteer workers, including Mr and Mrs Fricke themselves, teachers, Old Sils and parents. In 1980 a new shower and toilet block was added and, thanks to the generous donation of £1,000 by the Old Silhillians Association in 1981, a new study room was built and named the Old Silhillian’s Room. Since then more improvements have been made and new furniture has provided added comfort. In 1971 the concept of Snowdonia School was created whereby every boy (and now girl) in the Shell Forms spends a week at the cottage in order to enjoy the scenic beauty, the history, geography and culture of the region, as well as the benefits of being away from home! Roger Flood was the instigator of the scheme, ably supported by the late Mike Williams and now directed by Martin Covill. Nowadays the cottage is used not only by Snowdonia School but by the Mountain Club, still going strong, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, the CCF and those members of the School community who love the tranquil beauty of North Wales. In 2008 Liz Williamson (nee Fricke), David’s sister, wrote to Mr Griffiths... *“thought you would like to know how much we feel that the intention of the memorial gift to the School has been fulfilled. After all, it is one thing to give the property to the School, but another to make such a success of it. It is hard to put into words but we would like you to know how positively we feel about the fifty year project and the appreciation we have for the energy and commitment of so many people over so many years”.*



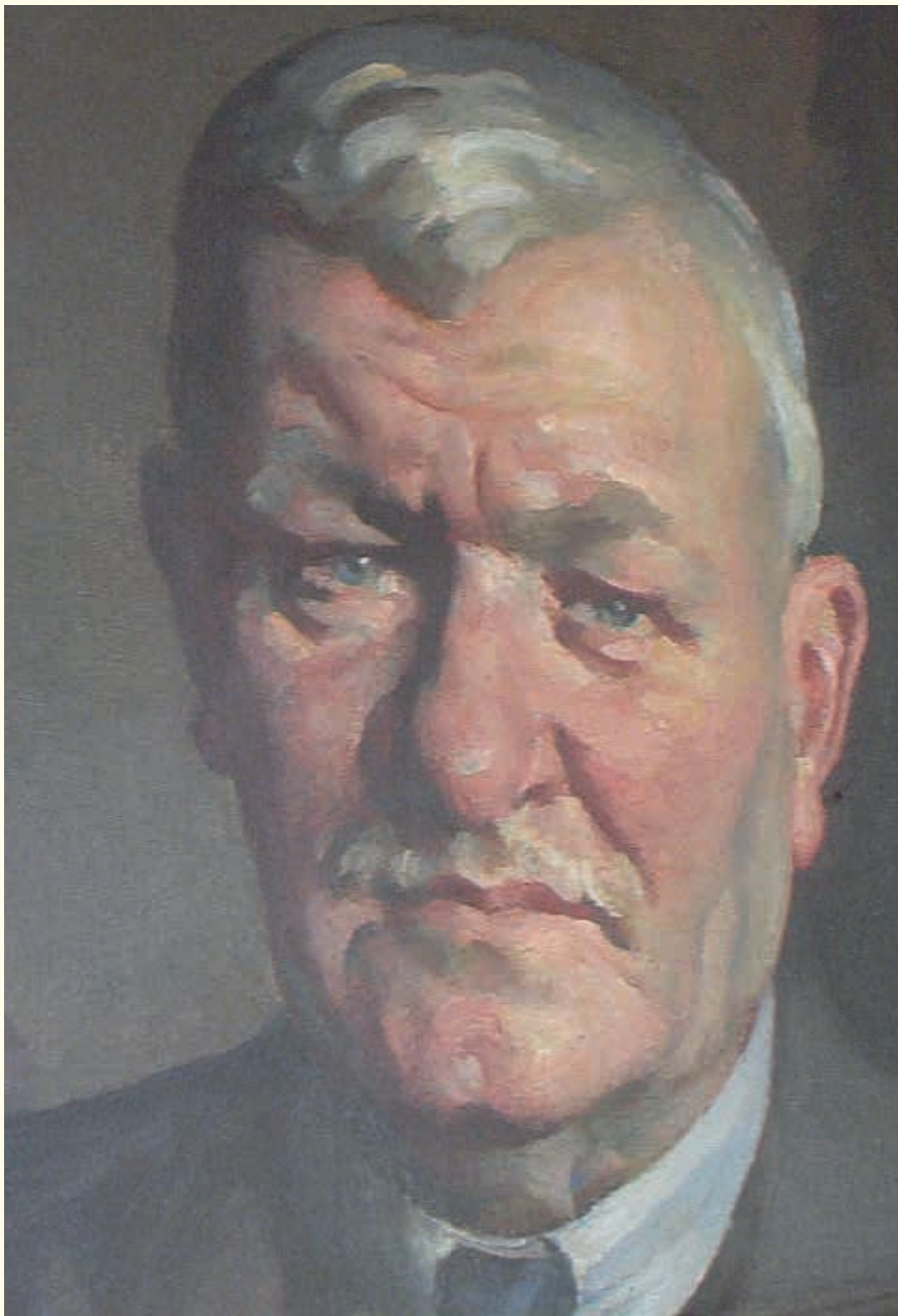
## **W.F. Bushell Headmaster**

In 2002 the new Bushell Hall was opened by the Lord Lt .of the West Midlands. It was named after Mr. Warin Foster Bushell in recognition of his considerable achievements as Headmaster from 1921-1927.

This remarkable man beat seventy applicants for the job and was the first non-clergy man to occupy the post since 1704. His father was Chaplain at Harrow where he was born in 1885. He was educated at Charterhouse and then graduated from King's College Cambridge, in Mathematics. During his time at University he developed an interest in progressive methods of education. He was a great philosopher of teaching methods often quoting Erasmus's famous dictum... "the best way to learn is to teach." He was also a keen student of educational history and a wonderful raconteur. As he entered the teaching profession he looked forward to great improvements in education after WWI. "a fresh breeze blowing" as he called it. This enthusiastic dedication was available to Solihull School after his first post teaching at Gresham's School and then Rossall where he was a Senior House Master. At Solihull, Mr Bushell wanted to turn dry academic learning into a more exciting and practical experience which made the traditional subjects more understandable and meaningful to the pupil. His love of teaching meant that he took up a two thirds timetable himself as well as being a Housemaster, Bursar and Headmaster. His capacity for hard work, serious dedication to school life and ready wit made him immensely popular. He improved the quality of the staff and appointed several masters who were to serve the School for many years. Mr Bushell pays tribute in his memoirs, to all school masters who have served one school for a lifetime and deserve thankful recognition. Mr Bushell stressed the importance of self discipline, moral responsibility and worked hard to improve the academic standard of the school. He started general knowledge lessons, invited outside lecturer's and gave slide shows; teaching for him was... "stimulus and inspiration... in addition to clear exposition". Mr Bushell's personal purchasing of the land for playing fields is perhaps his greatest legacy to Solihull School, for without which there would have been no facility for expansion. He made no financial profit and Solihull School will be forever in his debt.

To solve the problem of accommodating a large audience at Speech Day, Mr Bushell held the gathering outside in the old quad, and invited old boys to donate chairs, which would bear their name. It solved the seating problem and inspired another of his great achievements, the creation of the Old Silhillians Association. Back at school, games were given more planning and organisation, school uniform was standardised and cricket was encouraged by allowing any batsmen who made fifty to plant a tree in the School grounds. Mr. Bushell started Drama, delighting in its merits for education and introduced the cross country paper chase often taking the boarders for a run in the evenings himself. W.F. Bushell was an enthusiastic and inspirational Headmaster - intellectual, progressive and humanitarian. He galvanized pupils, teachers, parents and old boys into the successful institutional unit that we recognise today.

After Solihull, Bushell moved to Natal and then in 1930 to Birkenhead as Headmaster until he retired in 1946. He kept up his connection with Solihull and attended the 50th anniversary of the Old Sils Association in 1971 to great acclaim. He died in 1974 aged 89. My favourite story of him is when he recalled his own schooldays... "I once had to answer a question, what do you know about X, I answered," absolutely nothing. I demanded full marks for an accurate answer, but instead of that was reported to the Headmaster for impertinence!" I think that a man of such creative and original thinking would be delighted with Solihull School today.



*Mr W. F. Bushell, 1920 - 1927. The portrait that now hangs in the entrance to Bushell Hall.*





*CCF Centenary celebrations, 1998.*

## CCF

On May 1998, one of the most spectacular events ever held at School took place to celebrate one hundred years of the Combined Cadet Force. Headmaster Patrick Derham wrote... “ it was a triumph of organisation and meticulous planning and it was good to welcome back so many distinguished former pupils. The sun shone and the whole School enjoyed the experience.” They certainly did, on display was a whole variety of military hardware and equipment- submarine simulators, tanks, planes, battlefield communications, rocket launch systems, field guns. As the Normandy Band from the Queen’s Division opened proceedings, 250 Solihull School Cadets marched forward to be inspected by Air Vice Marshall Peter Harding (OS). At that very moment a Gazelle Helicopter arrived with Vice Admiral Gretton, Director of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, ready to view the Present Arms by the Guard of Honour. Then at the precise moment of shoulder arms a Tornado aircraft, piloting by Flt/Lt Peter Cracroft (O.S.) roared overhead wings back, steeply flying off into the distance, perfect timing, unforgettable moment. Afterwards, a freefall parachuting display by the RAF Falcons entertained the crowd and rides in Puma or Gazelle Helicopters were on offer, another highlight in a truly remarkable day. Finally the Last Post was sounded in the quad as a mark of respect, a quiet reflection on a unique occasion in the history of Solihull School. The contribution of Old Sils serving in the Armed Forces was a great compliment to Solihull CCF and symbolised the benefit that pupils have derived from participation in CCF activities over the years. It was also a triumph for the months of planning by the mastermind of the event, P.J.Griffiths.

Founded in 1898 as the Solihull School Volunteer Corps the first major parade was on Empire Day, 24th May 1903. Cadets travelled to Bull Street Birmingham to join other cadets attached to the Warwickshire Regiment ( now the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers). The Corps took part in the King’s review at Windsor on the 3rd July 1911 and participated in the parade to honour the visit of Princess Margaret to Solihull in 1954. Cadet forces had started in 1859 as the War Office feared the intentions of Napoleon III, and encouraged the formation of defensive volunteer corps. This had been taken up by many leading schools in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, fifty in all by 1889. Increased impetus was given to Cadet Corps by the Boer War and when the Territorial Army was formed in 1908 Public and Grammar schools were invited to provide units of Officer Training Corps under the auspices of the TA. Edward VII was Colonel in Chief and proficiency certificates, annual camps and Inspections began. The War Office took control from 1914-1930 but recognition of the Cadet Force as the OTC’s were collectively named ceased, even the wearing of Regimental badges was forbidden. A voluntary body took over the organisation and was known as the British National Cadet Association(BNCA) until the War Office resumed control in 1939, the BNCA emerging thereafter as the Army Cadet Force Association. By 1948 cadets of the three services joined together to create the Combined Cadet Force. King George VI was its Captain General, succeeded in turn by Elizabeth II. At Solihull School a Royal Naval Section was started in 1949 followed by the Royal Air Force Section in 1952 to form Solihull School CCF.

The RAF Section had instructional aids that included dinghies, canoes, a Hawker Hunter aircraft, (grounded) sitting proudly on a lawn near the Field of Mars until 1966) and a primary glider, that did actually get airborne, until it crashed into the side of the chapel, and was no more. As in the Army Section annual camps took place and adventure training was available in Snowdonia from 1958 to all sections. At its height in the 1960’s the CCF had over 500 cadets and 15 officers - H Morle, H Cooper, K Berridge (Navy), D Wigglesworth, J Jammes, W Bale (RAF) to name but a few.

The subsequent history of the CCF is so well recorded that it would fill a volume of its own. The type of activities have remained fairly traditional, modified with changing times but annual camps, battle camps, adventure training, march and shoot, shooting, weapon training and flying still attract boys and girls and





*CCF Centenary parade, 1998.*



*CCF Centenary, 1998.*



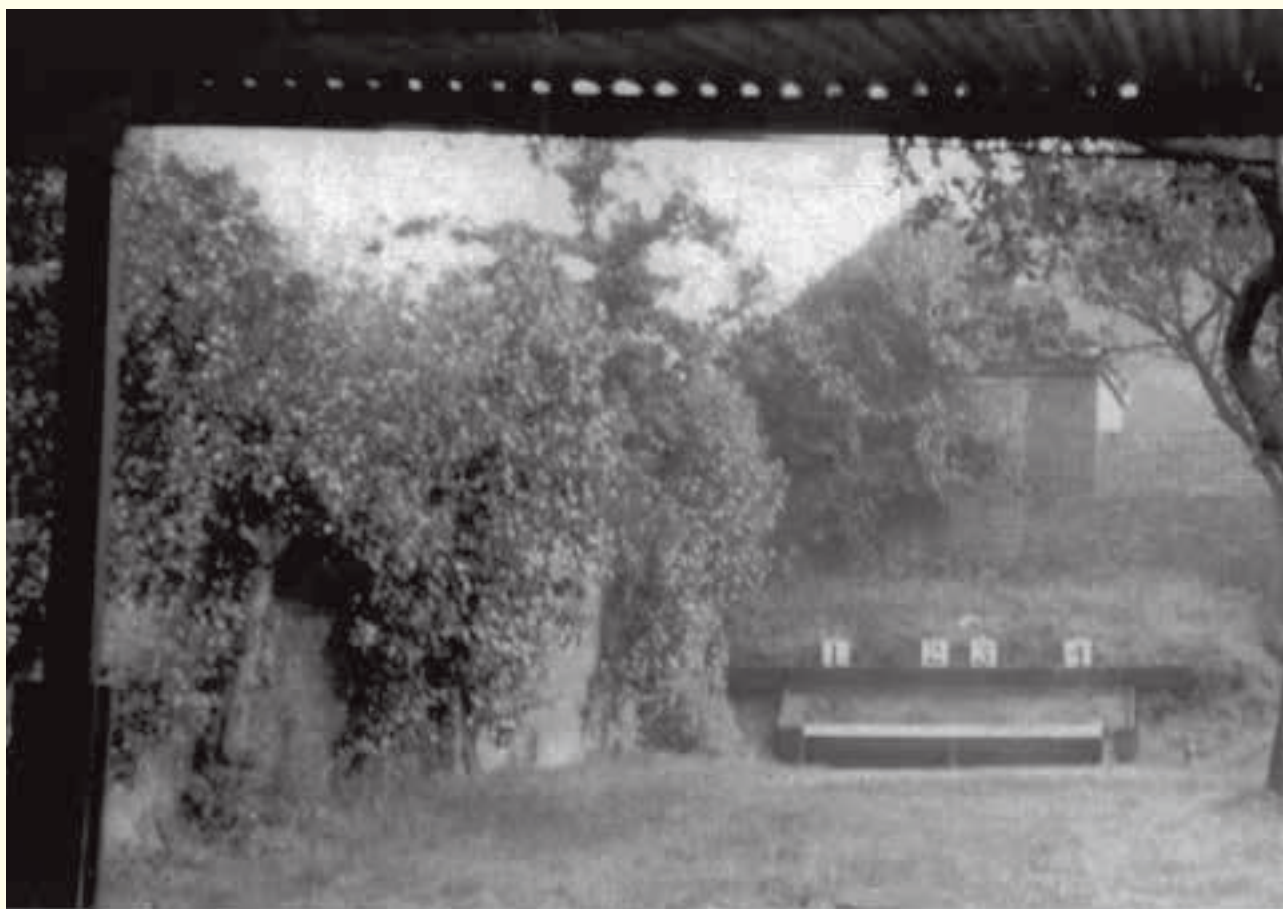


*Keylock and Griffiths stand guard, 1985.*



*CCF H. Q. before the new Outdoor Pursuits Building.*





*Rifle Range, 1930.*



*New Indoor Range.*



*CSM H. A. (Dink) Steele, 1929. A dedicated Silhillian, he later served as Bursar, 1962 - 82.*



*CCF Band, 1927.*



*CCF Camp Strensall, 1928.*

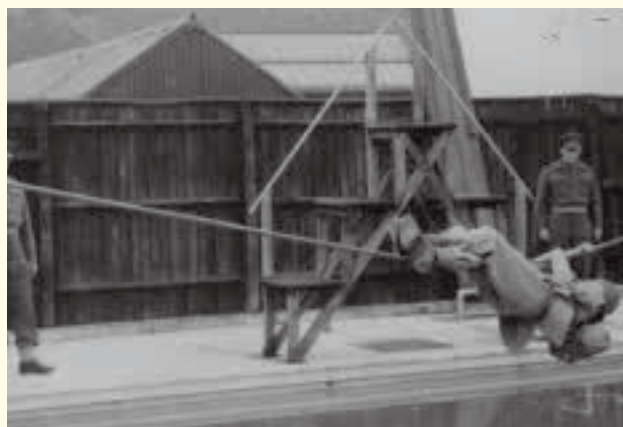




*CCF Cadets c.1915.*



*OTC Mychett, 1922.*



*CCF Activities, 1950.*



*CCF Parade on the Field of Mars, 1949.*



*CCF Inspection, 1948.*



*CCF Inspection, 1955.*



*RAF Camp, 1957 - 8.*





*Glider c1964.*



*Glider c.1957.*

have done for many generations. Annual Inspections, which in the past were grand affairs are now bi-annual and take place on Field Day, so that the emphasis is more on activity rather than drill. The most prestigious Inspections were in 1949 by Field Marshall The Viscount Montgomery and in 1955 by Field Marshall Sir John Harding both Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff at the time.

Up until 1999 the CCF ( or from the 1960's social service) was compulsory for pupils from the lower and Upper 5th - the 6th Form then had the option - and took place on Monday afternoons. Then, like many other schools of similar type, Solihull School CCF became a voluntary unit - slimmer and fitter - parading at 4.30pm to 6.00pm on Monday evenings. There were two main reasons for this change (i) the demands of the curriculum required more space on the timetable; and (ii) the days of compulsion for such activities was simply out of date. It was better to have keen volunteers rather than pressed men. More deep rooted causes were that military service was a chosen rather than a compulsory vocation. Few if any teachers were left who had done National Service themselves. Public and professional perceptions of discipline both in school and society were changing and so was the role of the CCF in a Public School , less high profile and more specialized. However, the CCF emerged from the change healthier than ever, keen pupils/cadets/ NCOs; interested teachers/ officers and good support from the Army and RAF (unfortunately, the Naval section closed in 2001.) helped to preserve an extremely worthwhile activity on offer at Solihull School.

Throughout its history, many Solihull boys and more recently girls had gone on to achieve distinguished careers in the armed forces serving as far afield in time and distance as The Somme and Afghanistan. Over 120 ex-pupils have given their lives for their country and in total Old Sils have been awarded 21 Military Crosses, three Military Medals and one George Medal (Coventry raid).The link with the armed forces is obvious but the main objectives of the CCF are not exclusively designed to provide future service personnel. It offers a glimpse of military life, not just for those intent on a military career, but for future citizens who would understand the value and benefits of having pride in those who served their country.

The CCF at Solihull School is 112 years old and still going strong, offering adventure, responsible discipline and self respect in line with the CCF charter which aims at ... *“providing a structured programme of activities and training opportunities designed to give cadets the chance to gain self confidence and develop strong personal qualities whilst taking part in exciting and challenging activities”*.

## Terriers

In 1953 the Terriers was formed to offer... *“a vivid open experience for boys passing through the school”*. It was prescribed for the Shell Forms and was modelled on a similar organisation at Clifton School. The first master of the Terriers was Bob Beach and the Solihull version evolved into its present form, whereby boys and girls, proudly wearing their distinctive uniform, are offered the opportunity to learn the skills of the ‘open air’. These include climbing, camping, and orienteering challenges. From this concept Snowdonia School was created in 1971. In 2004 the Terriers was transferred to the Third Forms, the same time as the 4th Forms were allowed to join the CCF. The Terriers, always aware of its own independent identity prepares pupils, not necessarily for the CCF as was the case in years gone by, but for outward bound activities, either at School or in later life.



## THE OLD SILHILLIANS ASSOCIATION

Soon after becoming Headmaster Mr Bushell called a meeting of Solihull School Old Boys, and with himself as Chairman and Dr Bernays as President the Old Boys Club was born on 4th March 1921 with 150 members. The first Annual Dinner was held in Big School in December 1921 and, apart from the World War II years, has continued ever since. Cricket, football, tennis and motoring sections were formed but only the football team survived by 1926 in alliance with Silhill FC. By 1927 informal groups were playing football and golf, but with the expansion of the School fields thanks to Mr Bushell's purchases the hockey and cricket sections could use the playing fields until 1949. The previous year the Old Boys obtained the lease from the School Governors on 11 acres in Dingle Lane. This new site was named the Memorial Clubhouse and Grounds in memory of Old Sils killed in WW1, WW2 and the Korean War and opened in 1953. A London branch was formed boasting 50 members by 1950 and a rifle range was built. As the social side was gaining momentum a Ladies Section was started in 1957 and many facilities improved. The Club House was extended two years later. A full-time Groundsman was employed by 1955, and in 1962 John Hammond took up the post. John was to offer distinguished service to the School as Head Groundsman until his retirement in 2003.

It was in 1962 that the transfer to the present site at Copt Heath took place. The School owned 9 acres and the Association 18. A new clubhouse was built and opened in 1966. Squash courts followed in 1968. The new clubhouse was run on more professional lines with a permanent Steward in residence. Many have come and gone over the years. However, the efforts of the members in these early years should not be underestimated in terms of the fundraising and determination to drive the Association forward. Reunion days have been very popular; the first one started in 1936 and the bi-annual over 60's meetings began in 1973. The Association contributed to the financing and finishing of the Chapel in 1960 in the form of raising funds via gifts, covenants and donations. When the Chapel was finished Old Boys presented various items, including money for the Organ. A Font was presented in 1967 and henceforth christenings could take place for the children of former pupils.

In 1971 a grand Jubilee Dinner was held in the new School Refectory to mark the 50th anniversary and the occasion was honoured by the reunion of three Headmasters – McGowan, Thompson and Bushell. The early 1970's saw some realignment as the opening of the M42 necessitated a change of entrance and loss of some land. Extra land in Jacobean Lane was purchased to compensate. A new Steward's house was built in 1974 and an extension to the kitchens and clubroom was carefully planned and carried out. Paul Instone was the hardworking director of the project and the new Instone Room was opened by Imogen Slaughter in June 1980.

The Sports Sections have been very successful over the years. The Hockey Club claims to be the oldest to be officially organised by 1930, followed by Rugby by 1932. Cricket made great strides after the opening of Dingle Lane, although there had been occasional informal matches against the School since 1882 and officially since 1921. By 1950 the HQ of the Golf Society became established at Olton Golf Club. The close association between the Old Sils and Olton is as strong today and both the School and the Old Sils Golf Society is very fortunate to have this connection with such a prestigious Golf Club. Squash had been played at School since 1950 until the new courts were built, and a Rifle club followed in 1951, Swimming in 1965 – the Section helping to sponsor the covering the School pool in 1970. Mini rugby for 6-13 year olds started in 1976 and a basketball section in 1987, but by this time members wishing to play the various sports was in decline. Golden Jubilees came along in the early 1980's but in 1982 the Rugby Club opened its doors to non ex-pupils and was rechristened the Silhillian R.U.F.C. So too the Cricket Club which folded in 1998.

Perhaps the decline in the numbers continuing to play sport in the Association teams is reflective of the changing nature of the School. In recent decades more pupils went off to university than in previous years and were thus



*Old Boys Dinner on the steps of School House, 1924.*



*Old Boys Dinner in Big School, 1925. Now the Sixth Form Centre.*



spread far and wide, not available to play regular local sport. So too in their professional lives Old Sils tend to wander further afield than those of yesteryear, in the 1950's and 60's, who more often than not stayed in the Solihull area, as employment patterns dictated. Also the decline in the numbers boarding at School must also be a factor. The life of a boarder was dominated by sporting activity, not just in official games but informally in spare time. The esprit de corps of a Boarding House is quite special, and that team spirit continued on the rugby, hockey and cricket fields of the Association. Nevertheless the strength of a wide variety of sporting activities under the Association umbrella is the envy of other old boy/girl unions throughout the country.

In recent times the Association has continued to thrive and enjoy a close bond with the School. Successive Headmasters from Giles Slaughter to Phil Griffiths have been supportive and aware of the great value the relationship with the Association has with the School. This is symbolised by the grandfather clock that is in the Headmaster's Wing and was presented by the Association in 1988.

Reunions are still extremely popular and interest in the progress and achievements of the School is as strong as ever. Each year the pages of the Silhillian are full of a wide variety of topics which reflect the health and strength of the Association. All ages are represented in the magazine which celebrates sixty years of publication in 2010. So too the Annual Dinner and London Dinner and, of course, the Sports Club dinners – Hockey, Rugby and Golf - are enjoyable and as successful as ever.

Facilities at the clubhouse have been constantly updated, and the commercial aspect of running such an organisation has required a more businesslike approach and will need careful financial expertise if the future is to be secure. The addition of the synthetic pitch is one example of how facilities can be improved for the members (and for the community at large) as well as increasing income. That future looks, bright there is a healthy stream of school leavers who joined the Association, especially in very recent years, thanks to the support of John Cloughton, and as the School celebrates its 450th anniversary the contribution of the Association is recognised as invaluable and a vital part of the Solihull School community. For example, the help and support given by Old Sils to present day pupils in the arena of work experience has been valuable and extensive. Old Sils in many different fields offer their advice and guidance each year at the School's Career's evening. The Old Silhillians sponsor scholarships, Speech Day prizes and the Lander Osbourne award offers ex-pupils the opportunity to complete a particular piece of research or career advancement whilst at university or in employment.

The original ideas set out in the 1920's still ring true in 2010... *"To enable old Solihull boys (and girls since 1974) to preserve their connection with the School...and to aid the School in any way possible"*. Long may it continue.

## SHENSTONIAN LODGE

The Shenstonian Masonic Lodge was started in September 1935 in a ceremony in Big School, and has promoted a spirit of fellowship between Governors, Parents, Old Sils and members of Staff ever since through the bond of Freemasonry. Shortly afterwards a competition was held at School for Lower and Upper Fifth boys to design the Lodge Banner. It was won by Derek Mulvaney Cook who collected the ten shillings prize and became Worshipful Master 32 years later. The first official member was Mr A. R. Thompson, Headmaster 1927-46, followed by Laboratory Technician Ralph Meeks, a popular character at School for many years, often helping pupils face Chemistry exams with equanimity and a bit of help! Since then several Headmasters and Governors have been members – most notably Mr Hitchens, who was Worshipful Master in 1955 and an enthusiastic supporter of Masonry. So too George Hill, who was Worshipful Master in 1970. Indeed the high watermark of Freemasonry was reached in the 1950's, 60's and 70's and many Lodge members played important roles in the life of the School during that time, and for some time after.

The Lodge played a significant part in raising funds for the building of the Chapel in 1960. In 1985 the Lodge celebrated its 50th Anniversary and it was hoped that... *“A future chronicler will be able to record that the Shenstonian Lodge went from strength to strength from the 1980's onwards”*. Well, it certainly has – membership numbers have been sustained and the Shenstonian Lodge No. 5544 is the largest in Warwickshire. A constant flow of younger members is ensuring future success. Each year at the Speeches, six pupils are presented with the Shenstonian Lodge prizes for initiative and resource. These have been sponsored by the Lodge since 1951 and some recipients have joined the Shenstonian and/or other Masonic Orders. Regular meetings are held at the Old Silhillians Clubhouse, with charitable contribution its main activity. In 2015 a grand meeting of the School Lodges of the country is to be held, and the venue is Solihull School.



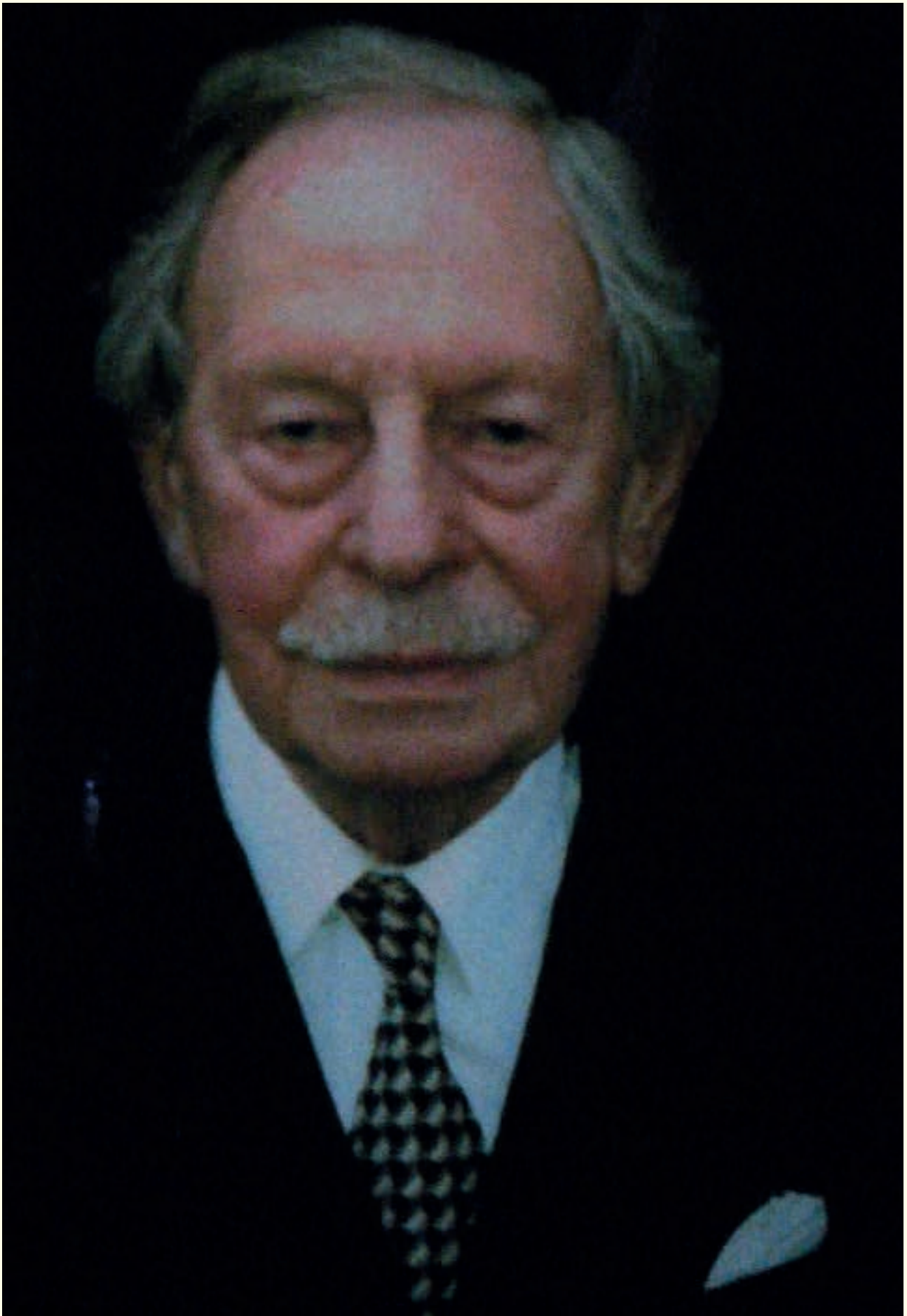
## GEORGE HILL 1914-2005

*“George Hill’s place in the history of Solihull School is secure”.* This was Giles Slaughter’s tribute to the man who gave the School dedicated service as a Governor for 42 years. The spectacular new teaching block bears his name as it was George Hill who skilfully reorganised the property assets and finances in the 1960s thereby ensuring the School’s ability to offer academic scholarships and initiate a building programme which would allow future generations to enjoy excellent, modern facilities. As he stated at the time... *“Since the foundation, income was insignificant, there were debts, new buildings were needed, but there were many assets.....with the assistance of my fellow Governors I managed to turn our assets to good account...my sole ambition was to produce enough income in the foundation to be able to offer scholarships”* in order to... *“maintain high academic standards for Solihull School”* and *“to enable children whose parents could not afford it to have the opportunity of attending”*. Under his stewardship Solihull School emerged as one of the most prosperous in the country.

In all aspects of Solihull School, George Hill was an ever present supporter; to the very end of his life he attended all major events that took place during the academic year. He lived and breathed Solihull School although he had gone to Bromsgrove as a pupil, qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1933, served in the Territorial Army (1935-55) and ended the war as military commander of Wilhelmshaven Submarine Base with the rank of Lt. Colonel. But Solihull School was his destiny. As Treasurer of the Parents’ Association he led the appeal for the funding of the Chapel and he personally presented the statue at the entrance. He later became the P.A. President. He joined the Governing Body in 1962 and became Chairman four years later until 1982; thereafter he was Chairman of the Executive Committee until 2002. As well as the involvement with Solihull (and as a Governor of Tudor Grange and Solihull College of Further Education), George Hill was elected a Solihull Councillor from 1957, serving as Finance Committee Chairman 1963-84. He retired 37 years later from the Silhill Ward in 1994 as ‘the Father of the Council’.

John Claughton paid tribute to George who died on 3rd April 2005 aged 90... *“George Hill was one of the most significant figures in the last century of Solihull School’s history... his wisdom and guidance have been largely responsible for the School’s massive growth in reputation and prosperity... we owe him a great debt”*.

George Hill OBE, JP, FCA, Honorary Old Silhillian, a man of outstanding energy, drive, intelligence, determination and influence who served Solihull School, the modern history of which could well have been very different without him.



*George Hill.*





*Air Vice Marshall John Price.*

## AIR VICE MARSHALL JOHN PRICE

George Hill's successor in 1982 was Air-Vice Marshall John Price who continued the work of improving the School's facilities, on a grand scale. After leaving Solihull in 1948 (Pole) he joined the RAF to begin a very distinguished career, during which he saw active service in Korea. He retired from the RAF in 1984 and then enjoyed an equally successful business career. He joined the Governing Body in 1979, and from 1982 served as Chairman until 2005. He remembers his schooldays with fondness, in particular Mr Havinden's history classes, some of which were of... *"enormous value throughout my life"*.

John Price's term as Chairman occurred at a time of considerable educational change but, mainly in partnership with Alan Lee and then Patrick Derham, the School prospered and invested in several ambitious building projects, the last of which – the George Hill Building – he officially opened in June 2006. He once said that he was more concerned with what lay ahead than what was behind. John Price had the belief (not entirely shared by some of his fellow Governors) that the future was not only extensive building but should embrace co-education, and he had the commitment and determination to accomplish this. When he retired as Chairman his successor, Graham Hughes, paid this tribute... *"The School is financially sound, in good repair, with wonderful modern facilities, a legacy that anyone would be proud of"*. John Price – a man of speed, a man of integrity and practicality, a man of Solihull School in every respect.



## THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

*“An amazing organisation with a real sense of fellowship.” 2009*

This was formed by Mr Thompson in 1930, in order to develop closer relations with staff, pupils and parents in order to help to create a spirit of common purpose – a concept in which Solihull was somewhat of a pioneer at that time. The last 80 years has proved a success and rewarded Mr Thompson's faith in the venture, as the PA has been an invaluable asset in the development of Solihull School. They have no base, but enthusiasm and commitment are their strengths, and large numbers of parents have invested their time and effort over the years, raising funds and providing a link that is essential in any school. The PA has sponsored various improvements to the School, providing items of lasting benefit, ranging from public address systems to a splendid bench in memory of Gerry Reddington; the list is extensive, and covers virtually every aspect of School life. The most recent contribution was the extremely generous provision of recording studio equipment in the new Music School. But the gifts are not confined to just bricks and mortar, material objects, career's advice or annual prizes but, since 1932, in offering help to pupils whose families face unfortunate hardships at one time or another. President W. Watkins expressed his enthusiasm at the scheme's inception ... “Let us all strive our utmost to make the venture a huge success. The cause is splendid, the action unselfish, and history will reserve a place for the interest and sacrifice you have shown.” The scheme is still running successfully today.

The principal method used to raise money is via social events which are as popular as ever – Burns Night (the oldest PA function), Quiz Nights, a Christmas Fayre, Ladies' Supper, Uniform Sales, Sportsman's Dinner, and in 2010 the Anniversary Celebration Ball to mark 450 years of Solihull School. Throughout that time the original ideal of the founders still remains their guiding principle ... “The Association shall foster and support the welfare of Solihull School” ... and ... “provide means for social fellowship amongst the members.”



*Parents' Association Fete, the Lighted Candle race, 1938.*



*Parents' Association Dinner Dance, 1952. President Henry Fricke welcomes the guests.*





Solihull School

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