

CHAPTER V

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

"In our ignorance we believed that the Great War had been the war to end war; and we had very sincere and serious silences for Armistice Days. "(Miss Marian W Graham, April 1926-1931)

"Armistice Day, November 11th," recalls Mrs. Mary Holt, "was solemnly recognised each year by a service in the Hall. Suitable hymns were sung, prayers were read and we all kept the two minute silence. Then one of the male members of staff read the Roll of Honour from the 1914 - 1918 War. The senior boy and girl laid a poppy wreath below the Roll of Honour in the main entrance then, while the two stood with bowed heads, the whole school filed past the memorial."

That solemn ritual continued until well after the Second World War, when there were two Rolls of Honour, two poppy wreaths. Modifications had to be made as the school population grew too large for the file-past to be practicable. One remembers the gradual diminution in the number of those qualified to read the rolls: originally veterans of the '14 - '18 War, then those who had fought in the second, until only National Servicemen remained.

Mrs. Ralph Collinson (nee Eveline Firth) recalls "playing on the grand piano Chopin's 'Funeral March' or Sir Walford Davies's 'Solemn Melody'. All pupils must have noted the dignity and solemnity of the occasion.

One pupil certainly did, and at the risk of undue repetition it seems appropriate here to reproduce yet again a contribution made to "Squirrel" in 1963, which appeared in a modified form in the "Anthology", and which has been occasionally used at the Armistice Day service to bring home to listeners how war affected the ordinary people of their own world.

Mr. William Hoare, while serving in the Western Desert in 1941, "was much taken up with the memory of an equally undistinguished and unknown predecessor who, as the war progressed, became to me a symbol of all the right and goodness which shone through the dark clouds of those years.

"His name was Percy Horsfield and he lived at Booth, and he was one of the Old Boys who gave their lives in the First World War.

"During the years between the wars, the school used to assemble at eleven o'clock on the eleventh day of November to observe the two minutes' silence for the fallen. It was then that Mr. Holden, the headmaster, read out the names of the 37 Old Boys.

"It was not unnatural, I suppose, for me, a soldier on active service, to remember this when I was now myself a candidate for a new list; yet I could but remember this one name Percy Horsfield of Booth. All the other names eluded me.

"I suppose it was the very Englishness of the name that made it stick: Percy -

one of the great names of English history, and Horsfield - it was redolent of Constable's 'Haywain' and Gray's 'Elegy', of muffins and tea and cricket, of the village green and Rotten Row. You couldn't have anything more English.

"This man, killed before I was born, and known only as a name recited from a school platform, this unknown figure, in the hour when several of my classmates had already lost their lives, and many more were to be killed, suddenly became representative of all the vast number of ordinary, unheroic, self-effacing, good people who, without evil or malice or hatred in themselves, are called upon to become a part of all the death and misery and heartbreak of war.

"It was with this in mind that I wrote the following lines. It is an unwieldy and clumsy tribute to all the Old Boys who lost their lives, but I thought it might please any survivors of his generation and mine, each so cruelly decimated in the flower of its manhood:

PERCY HORSFIELD OF BOOTH

Whistling, where the Whitewell wanders
Through the dark, enfolding Pennine hills,
Making his reluctant way to school,
He dreamed all the high-flown dreams
Of boyhood bound by home hearth
And shaped by class-room adventures:
Of Tom Brown at Montezuma;
The lure of far beckoning mountains,
Unconquered yet, and challenging;
Eastern cities and sand-blown forts;
To soar amid the fleecy clouds
And plumb the ocean-depths unknown.
Yet young dreams are airy things,
And, marching by the Somme, he dreamed
Of the old, chuckling Whitewell
Gurgling past the humming mills,
Past his own cottage where Mother
Smooths the soothing linen sheets,
Bakes sad-cake, and brews huge pots of tea.
Thus, trudging through the cloying mud
Of anguished Flanders, forward to meet
The heroes of last year's history books,
The men of Agincourt and Crecy,
Who had left, like him, their noble hearts
In some beloved nook of England,
And ached, like him, in vain, for home.

Now, at one with ten million yesterdays,
He is remembered who was never known;
Whilst we, fodder for tomorrow's guns,
Anonymities in yet unwritten history books,
Listen, heads bowed, to the solemn voice:
'Percy Horsfield, of Booth'."

And so, the like of Percy Horsfield once again set forth to do their duty. The same number of names appeared on a second Roll of Honour at the end of the Second World War.

Mr. G. Waterson tells us, in the last paragraph of his most interesting and helpful reminiscences, and with a lack of sentimentality which is more moving than a more elaborate tribute: "The Second World War, with the educational level needed for aircrews, took its toll of the B.R.G.S. entrants of the thirties. From my form alone Johnnie Mochan, Alf Fox, Bob Seddon and Neville Mitchell were killed serving with the R.A.F., Frank Hicks with the Fleet Air Arm, and Paddy Purcell went down on his first voyage as a radio operator with the Merchant Navy. One can still see Frank Hicks, fair-haired and blue-eyed, looking so innocent, leading teachers on to more and more complicated explanations as he assumed his air of honest puzzlement. His name is still on Waugh's Well, although it must be fifty years since the summer he carved it."

Any pupil who has approached near enough to the grand piano in the Hall will have seen the silver plate attached to its side. In addition to the memorial plaque in the front entrance, this piano was purchased in memory of the former pupils (including one girl) who died in the Second World War.

Protected to a large extent from air activity by its surrounding hills, and by its position a fair distance from any large target, Rossendale became a "reception area," taking evacuees from vulnerable spots. The most obvious of these was Manchester. Upon the declaration of war in 1939, a contingent of girls from Whalley Range High School arrived in the valley. For a short time there was some disruption of school life. Miss D. Moore, writing for "Squirrel" in 1963, tells us how "each child had to share its desk with an opposite number from Whalley Range. One week we spent the mornings in school and the 400 girls of Whalley Range the afternoons. The arrangement was reversed the following week, and so on."

Impressions from the other point of view have been kindly supplied to us by Mrs. Marjorie Amphlett, who was one of the Whalley Range evacuees of that time. She recalls their arrival by train, being billeted in Stacksteads. Of the desk-sharing arrangements, she reveals that "some of the boys used to leave a photo of themselves, with perhaps a note, in their desks, for the girls who would be using the desks that afternoon."

Those old enough to remember the "phoney war" that early period of comparative quiet which lulled many people into a sense of false security will understand why the evacuation arrangements came to an end. "Home-sickness began to

affect quite a lot of the girls, and they started going home to Manchester at week-ends, thus defeating the object of the exercise," says Mrs. Amphlett. She concludes, however: "My friends and I remember our time in Stacksteads and Waterfoot very fondly, and regularly return there for a day out. We look at the school, go to our avenue, look for the Church Hall where it all started, and remember happy days gone by."

Apart from this slight disturbance of only one term's duration, the school must have been fortunate by comparison with many at that time. Further extensions which had been started, including the long-awaited gymnasium, would probably have been abandoned for the duration, but in deference to the local climate the work was completed. An article in "Squirrel" 1963 tells us that "between 1938 and 1941 extensions and alterations produced a gymnasium, dining-hall, domestic science room and the present library in the basement." This last had been the old plumbing-room, which had doubled as an auxiliary gymnasium (mainly for girls) and music-room.

Furthermore there was still a stable nucleus of experienced and devoted staff, mercifully over conscription age, to counteract the rapidly changing staff population which is inevitable in wartime.

Despite the relative safety of the valley, there were air-raid alerts. If one occurred during the night, Mrs. Kathleen Gowers (nee Ruston) tells us "we were allowed to go to school an hour later." Safe region or no, precautions had to be taken. Air-raid shelters were dug on the spare ground where the Biology laboratory now stands. Potential new staff arriving for interview in 1945, when war was over, noticed the Stygian gloom of the basement cloakrooms, from which the packed sandbags had not yet been removed: the basement was prepared as an additional refuge in the event of an air-raid.

As throughout the country, the gas-mask had to be carried on all occasions. "They were more a part of the pupil image than the brief-case or satchel," remarks Mrs. Gowers, whose recollections of this war-time period (two long manuscripts) have been most valuable.

She remembers the frames filled with mounted photographs, set round the Hall to remind those safe within its walls of the ex-pupils serving with the forces. "All too frequently came the announcement from Mr. Holden, in morning assembly, that one of them would not return. Hearing the hymn 'Jesu lover of my soul' brings to mind those sad occasions when it was sung in assembly."

Before the 1944 Education Act, text-books were not normally provided by the school, but had to be purchased. A small grant was made towards this expense to scholarship winners. The second war brought a very serious shortage of paper (amongst many shortages) and text-books were hard to come by. "The beginning of each school year," writes Mrs. Gowers, "witnessed the school basement becoming a second-hand book store. For the unlucky ones who failed to purchase a book at half-price, quarter-price, or just a nominal sum, it meant an interminable wait for a new text-book." Paper was also extremely scarce, had often been re-cycled and was of poor quality. Every scrap had to be used economically. That did not prevent regular examinations being held. Standards had to be maintained, war or no war.

Mrs. Velma Hoyle (nee Birtwistle) recalls being weighed and measured to see if she (being tall for her age) qualified for extra clothing coupons! In connection with coupons, too, we have an amusing anecdote from Mr. Wilson Bury which not only reminds us of the clothing shortages of those years and a few years later, but casts some light upon Mr. Holden, who was strenuously trying to run the school as before, though in the teeth of such difficulties.

"The headmaster," writes Mr. Bury, "announced one morning to the assembled school that the first eleven football team was badly in need of new football shirts. He appealed most earnestly for contributions of half a clothing coupon from those families who could spare such a treasure. My mother was a good needlewoman who made and patched our clothes whenever possible: this being the case, our family was reasonably 'flush' with clothing coupons. I handed over a full coupon and received a very special smile from Mr. Holden. I visualised a smooth passage ahead of me throughout the school!

"Twenty minutes later I and three other boys were ushered out of assembly for talking and sent to stand below the stern gaze of the Headmaster. A further ten minutes and we were receiving our rebuke. Halfway through a sentence he stopped and said:

'You're the boy who brought me a full coupon'. . . There was a long pause while he wrestled with his problem. 'I'm sorry', he finally said. 'I do hope your understand, but you will all have to receive the same punishment'." (Detention).

Miss D. Moore, writing for "Squirrel" 1963, recalls that "All through the war, the staff and senior boys did the fire-watching at school. Two teachers and two boys were on duty every night."

Writing of fire-watching for the "Anthology", the late Mrs. Freda Ebdon remembers no greater hazards than mice and cockroaches. I shall always remember two sixth-form boys brandishing a poker as they chased a mouse the length of the hall, and the time we poured boiling water into a cockroach crevice, and the door was never the same again."

On the same theme, Mr. K. Waterson tells us "the loft ladders were let down, exposing what seemed to be massive storerooms of stationery one could walk round the entire loft."

The same correspondent speaks of the formation of the Air Training Corps. "As it was a Grammar School squadron we all had to qualify for proficiency badges. When we had sewn them on to our uniforms we route-marched through Rawtenstall. This made us the envy of Rawtenstall Town squadron."

More will be heard in a later chapter of the A.T.C. Much of their work comes into the category of extra-curricular activity. One war-time effort which fell to the girls in particular (through perhaps nowadays it might be shared!) was knitting for the forces. Mrs. Gowers tells us that badges were awarded to those who completed a certain number of scarves, gloves, helmets, etc. Other activities undertaken by wartime pupils, in common with those in schools throughout the country, were efforts to raise money in War Weapons Weeks, Warships Week, and to invest in National Savings.

Mr. Harry Pilling, in a contribution to the "Anthology," writing of his schooldays, 1926-1933, remarks: "We were fortunate in having such wonderful teachers." How fortunate, indeed, was the school to have retained a number of those "wonderful teachers" to hold the fort during the years of shortage and hardship. At this point it may be appropriate to insert a bit of "dramatic irony" (in view of what was to come later!) Mr. K. Waterson clearly remembers one of the "old squad," the late Mr. C.S. Duthie, pacing up and down before his physics class, repeating emphatically:

"The atom cannot be split. You cannot split the atom. It is not possible to split the atom."

One may well wonder if there were many schools which suffered as little from call-up and changing of staff at that time.

"There were some comings and goings." says Mrs. Ebdon ("Anthology," 1973) "but a solid phalanx of men and women stood firm; hard-working and caring teachers loyal to the Head (as he to them), to the School, to one another."

CHAPTER VI

THE NEXT QUARTER-CENTURY: WINDS OF CHANGE

"The gap between secondary schools has been greatly narrowed in the last few years. and Mr. Copley would like to see more and more movement between schools, to take away the injustice felt by many pupils who do not go to a grammar school at the age of eleven."(From a report, in "Squirrel" 1969, on an interview with the retiring headmaster.)

During the war, many education authorities had made few or no permanent appointments. Teaching had been a "reserved occupation": once in it, the only way out had been to join the forces. It may be imagined, therefore, in what a state of flux the profession found itself at the end of hostilities.

B.R.G.S. had, as we have seen, been relatively fortunate. Amongst the "ships that passed in the night" in the years 1939-1945, some good sound vessels had found a firm anchorage and served the school well in the ensuing years. Of the Newchurch Grammar School stalwarts, Messrs. Anstey and Owen still survived, as did Mrs. Whittaker (Miss Wrigley of Pupil-Teacher Centre days). Miss Ninness had retired in 1938 and had unfortunately not survived the rigours of wartime.

She had been succeeded as Senior Mistress by Miss Iremonger, who retired as the war ended. In 1945 Miss Phyllis Greenwood became Senior Mistress. Other long-serving staff still on the strength were the two Miss Moores, Miss Margaret, whom Mr. Jackson had dubbed, on her arrival, "the Historic Miss Moore," and Miss Dorothy (Maths.) whom he had called "the Prehistoric," as she was there first.

In the men's staff-room other long-term residents were Messrs. Duthie, Barker, Ebdon and Fielden. Much has been written by former students of Mr. Harry Proudfoot, but he, alas! was not destined to remain. For one week, perhaps, of the first post-war term he took his place, then he fell ill and was obliged to retire. Mr. Owen died at Christmas in that first post-war year. Mr. Holden, of course, still soldiered on. It seems strange that both he and his predecessor had to weather a world war before retiring, and it is notable (and typical) that both of them let three years pass, to settle the school down again, before finally withdrawing their services.

All the coming and going of staff in what had always been such a stable sphere must have been a nightmare to Mr. Holden. The intake of staff in September 1945 was no fewer than eight - a large number at a time when the staff was a great deal smaller than it is now: eight probably meant approximately one-third of the total. Fortunately, of those eight, half were to stay a considerable time and become as devoted to the place as Mr. Holden himself.

There was a good deal of movement of staff for the first few post-war years. Teachers were beginning to look for promotion, and as payments for posts of special responsibility were established, such positions were increasingly sought. Whereas in earlier years marriage or retirement had been the main reasons for departure, professional

ambition now began to assert itself. Also, whilst at one time willingness to stay had been regarded as a virtue, it was considered in some quarters a disadvantage to have "rooted" oneself for too long in one school: a diversity of experience was thought desirable.

Mr. Hugh Owen had "died in harness" in the sense that he had not retired, but his death occurred during the Christmas holiday. Mrs. Marion Whittaker (nee Wrigley), on the other hand, almost literally died at work at home, but with the examination papers she had been marking scattered about her. That was in Spring 1947. Two such losses within fifteen months hit the school hard: these had been two of the pioneer members of the staff, Mr. Owen from Newchurch Grammar School, Mrs. Whittaker the last survivor of the Pupil-Teacher Centre.

There were emergency changes of time-table. Three Fifts were fused into two large forms and continued thus to their examinations. Mr. W.F. Fenwick, a former student, was seconded from the staff of a local primary school to assist temporarily, and the school weathered this storm as it had, and would do, others.

Numbers were rising, and the additions to the buildings, so welcomed at the beginning of the war, were already "bursting at the seams." Prefabricated buildings (designed for a ten-year life and still in use today!) were eventually erected, one pair on the Glen Road side of the gym, another pair on the Mount Avenue side. They were complete with cloakroom accommodation, though without any other amenities, and they were handed over to the First Year pupils, who for some years past had inhabited the "partition" rooms on the Millar Barn Lane side of the hall (rooms 22,23, 25 and 26) where they returned in the 1970's. The new structures had many disadvantages, particularly in winter. Initially they were heated by coke stoves, which could obviously be a source of danger. Pupils were forbidden to touch these: the feeding of them during school time devolved upon the staff, with the inevitable consequences that some stoked and some didn't, so the stoves frequently went out. Experiments with gas and electric radiators led to unacceptable condensation, and eventually, after long struggles, in 1969 the two new units were linked to the main heating system.

Heating, indeed, was frequently a problem. Antiquated boilers would fail, or fuel would run out. Once a desperate deputation braved the lion (Mr. Holden) in his den, pointing out that, whereas staff could (and normally did) move about in a classroom, pupils had to sit shivering, clad in coats, scarves, gloves. He closed the school. But B. R.G. S. was tough, and it took a good deal to frighten them off. Mr. Copley, in his contribution to the "Anthology" of 1973, recalls "that very deep snowfall, shortly after Hitler's war (1947?) Somehow eighty heroic pupils and nine even more heroic teachers managed to get to school by 9.30 a.m. School was abandoned for the day. Next day numbers doubled and, by the third day, school was back to normal."

That was the winter when deep snow lay for about six weeks, and children from outlying farms came to school on sledges. Mrs. Joyce Lowe (nee Howarth), writing of the same wickedly cold spell, remembers that "a leaking drainpipe behind the school caused an enormous cascade of ice to form, which persisted for many weeks." It did indeed, and when at last the thaw came, the curtain of icicles broke the arm of an unfortunate boy

who chanced to pass by just as it detached itself from the building!

Such events, however, were merely incidental. True to the spirit of the prayer which Mr. Holden used frequently to say at assembly, the school had "work to do, and strength to do it." Termly exams., half-term tests continued, as did termly reports. End-of-term assembly still involved the dreaded moment when, as Mrs. Jean Tomlinson recalls "each class stood up in turn, and Mr. Holden read out names and positions, starting with the bottom and working to the top." This exquisite form of torture (and to some it really was!) formed a most effective climax to what should have been a term of honest endeavour, a salutary reminder, perhaps, that better things were expected after the holidays! Woe betide any form-teacher who was swayed by the cajolery of the mob:

"Please will you tell us our positions?" That would have spoiled the surprise!

As the school grew in numbers, the Sixth-form increased in size. In 1946 alone there were twelve Lancashire County Major scholarships awarded, a number exceeded only, if memory serves, by Manchester Grammar School. In addition there were two State and two Cambridge scholarships that year.

All other events became of slight importance when, in the summer of 1948, Mr. E.H. Holden relinquished the Headship he had held with such distinction for twenty-seven years. "The Journal" of 1948 devoted a large number of its pages to coverage of his retirement. No fewer than eight former students wrote tributes to Mr. Holden, as well as the formal acknowledgments from the Governors and the Education Authority. He had served the school from its opening in 1913. Some attempt at an appreciation of his enormous contribution to B.R.G.S. is contained in a later chapter, but it may seem appropriate to quote here the Chairman of Governors of that time, writing thus for the magazine: "It is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Holden has lived for the School."

Certainly he left the place like a well-oiled piece of mechanism for his successor to take over, with a nucleus of experienced staff prepared to continue the good work. They, too, were thankful that the headship had devolved upon one of their own number rather than an outsider, so that things could continue as before in most respects, though perhaps with a slight relaxation of the austere "work for work's sake."

Mr. William Copley's time at B.R.G.S. had of course been interrupted by his war service, but he had been back from the R.A.F. for three years and was well into his stride when the time came for him to take over the headship, and things proceeded smoothly as expected.

Gradually small changes were made. Several old students have expressed appreciation of the short recitals of music offered occasionally after prayers, giving them what in some cases was their first taste of "good" music, thus paving the way to future enjoyment. This was in fact a broadening of the piano recitals begun in 1948 after the unveiling of the War Memorial Grand Piano.

The half-term tests and lists were soon suppressed as an unnecessary addition to staff labours, and eventually reports were issued at Christmas and Summer only, instead of every term. Work did not appear to suffer unduly as a result, and extra-curricular activities continued to thrive.

An experimental Parents' Evening was held, there being no notion of how popular or otherwise such an occasion would be. This was in February 1949. Today's staff, long accustomed to regular visits by parents, will readily imagine the conditions as parents of the whole school converged upon the building! Some staff, including the Head, were besieged until after midnight. The experiment could well be described as a success, but the following year a division was made between juniors and seniors to avoid the vastly long queues.

Whether inspectors had lain quiescent during the war years and had only recently become reactivated, or whether they came to see how the new headmaster was progressing, history does not record; B.R.G.S. had, for whatever reason, a full-scale government inspection in the second year of Mr. Copley's 5 "reign." This had the usual effect of subduing into unnatural quietness almost every class, so that teachers had to reassure them, pointing out that it was not they who stood to lose, but their unfortunate mentors!

As though that were not enough, the authorities in their wisdom elected to send in an invasion of decorators. It was a source of wonderment to all that, with twelve weeks of holiday available in the course of the year, such capers must needs take place in school time. "They remained with us," Mr. Copley complains in the "Anthology", "until well into January, and plastered the school with 'Wet-Paint' notices. Miss Greenwood spent a small fortune on bottles of turpentine, to be kept at strategic points to remove paint from pupils' uniforms." Corridors already too narrow for the numbers using them would be painted, and little chalk warnings would be written on the floor under a painted radiator: then would come break, and a resultant host of stripy children! Nor can we leave unrecorded the brick in the Art Room. For some reason unknown a brick was resting against the skirting-board. It was conscientiously painted by the assiduous decorator and, when removed, disclosed a patch of the old decor.

Time was inevitably whittling away the remnants of the original staff. In 1950 the school lost both Mr. J.G. Anstey and Mr. J.E. Barker. The former had been at Newchurch for six years prior to the opening of the new school, and had been Senior Master at B.R.G.S. since 1936 as well as senior mathematics master. Apart from his war service, 1914-1918, Mr. Barker had taught art at the new secondary school from its inception. Both these men had, during their long service to the school, taken a keen interest in various extra-curricular activities in addition to doing excellent work in the classroom. The "Journal" of 1950 contained several glowing tributes to them, and they will be mentioned further in a later chapter.

Mr. Anstey had been succeeded as Senior Master by Mr. C. S. Duthie, another long-serving member of the staff, but he held the post for only three years, retiring in 1953 and relinquishing the Senior Mastership to Mr. C. Ebdon. The latter retired in 1955 after thirty-five years' service to the school.

There was in fact a considerable amount of change at this time, and not merely on the staff. One minor point was the "rationalisation", at long last, of the form nomenclature, which had for so long harked back to the well-nigh forgotten existence, in

early days, of a junior department. The first move was to re-name the Lower and Upper Thirds as Seconds and Thirds, but it was ultimately decided to go the whole way and start with First Forms.

The old system of sending two fifth forms in for School Certificate after only four years began to be questioned, and eventually one form only was selected for this dubious privilege. Experimentation was rife in the educational world: in the mid-fifties the General Certificate of Education replaced School Certificate. For a brief period it had been decreed that pupils must not sit the examination below the age of sixteen. Fortunately that ruling did not last, for it had the effect of producing a number of pupils who had by-passed the "Ordinary" Level in several subjects and had proceeded to the Lower Sixth with the prospect of having to collect two or three "0" Levels as well as coping with Sixth-Form work. The system proved unsatisfactory, and it was decided to send no form through in four years until the ruling was modified, which it was in a year or two.

It was a time of experiment, a time of change. Successive Education Acts had purported to bring equality of opportunity; the 1944 Act had made it impossible for State education to be purchased for a very modest sum. The changes in the school-leaving examinations were a further attempt to enable the less-academic child to obtain some sort of qualification. Yet still the geese resolutely refused to be transformed into swans.

Those to whom the popular sport of "Knock-the-Grammar-School" seems relatively modern, would perhaps read with some surprise the report, in the "Squirrel", on Speech Day 1953: "Mr. Copley recorded the high level of academic success in external examinations, the variety of courses open to the Sixth form leading to no fewer than thirty-eight different broad professions, and the many additional activities (listed). He also dismissed most effectively the current criticism of Grammar Schools.

pointing out that a school like B.R.G.S. had arisen to meet the needs of the community and represented almost complete equality of opportunity irrespective of income or social status."

Those who remember clearly the setting up of Secondary Modern schools will recall that they were devised to avoid the so-called pressures and "hide-bound" curriculum resulting from public examinations. It had for long been the practice for B.R.G. S. to accept, at the age of twelve plus or thirteen plus, any pupil who had obviously been a "late developer" and who showed outstanding ability. Such pupils (frequently more eager to learn than some of the originally selected ones!) usually made very good progress and achieved sound results at sixteen plus.

In 1959 there was a "drive" to obtain more trainee teachers. The secondary modern schools were combed for likely material, and a whole class of "transfers" came into B. R.G. S., all of whom had some idea of eventually qualifying to teach. Not all of them did so, but most of them stayed the two years planned for their G.C.E. course, then proceeded to the Sixth.

One of this historic band of transfers has written an entertaining account of his entry to B.R.G.S. Mr. John S. Leach has now two children at B.R.G.S., and his wife (nee

Valerie Barnes) is also a former pupil. Having described his "get-up" for interview, he comments: "The thing that disappointed me most was that no-one noticed me at all, when I had spent so much time dressing to shock! ... The thing that struck me on going into the main hall for the first time was the wonderful atmosphere of the place... At first we (Form ST) felt outsiders, but the teachers and other pupils treated us no differently, and it wasn't long before we were well integrated into the school and all its activities - so well integrated that, when I reached the Sixth form, I was made a prefect.

"I am very proud of the legacy I left the school, the Christmas... An orphanage near Bolton had been treated to a trip to the pantomime every Christmas by the local telephone exchange. This exchange had closed, so the treat was to disappear. I asked permission to hold a fete to raise money... and formed a small committee consisting (I apologise if I leave anyone out) of Margaret Heyworth, Jackie Smith, John Slater and Rodney Sellers... Enough money was raised to send the kids to Southport for the day, a pantomime, tea and a gift for each child."

A legacy to be proud of indeed. Mr. Leach's children will no doubt, in their turn, carry on the tradition established by their father's initiative and energy. The fete still takes place every Christmas, and some charitable cause benefits.

It became unnecessary to make these early transfers when the Secondary Modern schools began to enter their pupils for G.C.E., and when the C.S.E. (Certificate of Secondary Education) was set up. Indeed, it was not long before schools which had wished to avoid examination pressures were sending their pupils in for G.C.E. and C.S.E. examinations: they were doing more examinations than the "over-academic" grammar school!

B.R.G.S. opened the doors of its Sixth form to all suitably-qualified sixteen-plus entrants. The rapid growth of the Sixth-form meant an increasingly wide range of subjects on offer. It became virtually a Sixth-form college for the district. Lower down the school, the curriculum was widening, offering more choice at Ordinary Level than hitherto. The setting up in Rawtenstall of a College of Further Education had, as Dr. Milton Ormerod points out, allowed the removal to those premises of the technical classes which had occupied parts of the B.R.G. S. building. Courses in Engineering Drawing, primarily (though not entirely) for the less academic, were introduced. Mr. W. Fielden was in overall charge of this department as well as being Senior Master for two years after Mr. Ebden's departure. His retirement, in 1957, saw the last of the male side of the "Old Guard".

In Summer 1956 "Big" Miss Moore Miss Dorothy Moore, who had taught Maths. and earlier some Physics, for thirty-nine years at B.R.G.S., retired. One year later the school said farewell not only to Mr. Fielden, but to Miss Phyllis Greenwood, who had taught French and Latin since the first days of the new secondary school, and had been Senior Mistress for the last twelve of her years there. 1958 brought the retirement of "Little" Miss Moore (Miss Margaret Moore, who had taught History since her appointment in 1921). Mr. Holden had died in 1957: an era had ended.

However, the staff was not in a perennial state of flux. As school, and

consequently staff, grew steadily larger, there was inevitably more coming and going, yet there was already a nucleus of "stayers", some of whom would rival the "Old Guard" in length of service. Old Students were drawn back to their Alma Mater: at one time there were no fewer than eleven about a third of the staff! One of these, Mr. Austin Whipp, appointed to assist Mr. Fielden, succeeded him as Head of Technical Studies and has already served over thirty years at B.R.G.S. Other old students appointed in the late 1950's and still "in residence" are Miss Dorothy Chadwick and Miss Hazel Pretty.

To succeed Miss Greenwood another old student, Miss Mary Dodds, was appointed Senior Mistress in 1957, after thirteen years' service on the staff. Mr. Frank Harding became Senior Master after Mr. Fielden: he had been on the teaching staff for a decade, and being comparatively young, was able to continue in office for much longer than the three previous incumbents. There was no further change of Senior Master until 1977.

Change was, however, forcing its way in from outside. Many authorities had already adopted the long-awaited Comprehensive system. Hair-raising tales were heard of the expedients to which some authorities resorted in over-hasty attempts at reorganisation. One former student, with a responsible post in a Birmingham school, took very early retirement in desperation, after being "reorganised" three times!

After consultation amongst representatives of secondary schools and professional associations during the 1960's, it was decided that the all-through eleven-eighteen comprehensive school offered the greatest benefit to pupils. This decision meant a considerable delay before reorganisation could be fully implemented, as suitable buildings were not available. Alternative schemes were made to appear tempting, but were readily seen to be full of snags.

In this the last decade of Mr. Copley's headship, the wind of change was certainly blowing. For the first time in the memory of "old stagers" on the staff, the offensive word "strike" was beginning to be muttered from time to time. The reorganisation issue, constantly recurring as meetings were held, brought a feeling of insecurity which the school had not experienced.

Such external pressures were happily set aside when, in Autumn 1963, the school celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The "Squirrel" magazine of that year contained many reminiscences from former students: we have acknowledged some material borrowed from this source. On Saturday September 14th School was open from 2.30 pm for a reunion of former pupils which was very well attended. A buffet tea was served, after which came a varied entertainment and finally a dance. The following day a service of thanksgiving was held at St. Nicholas' Church, Newchurch, conducted by former pupils in holy orders.

A Jubilee Appeal was set up to raise money towards the erection, it was originally suggested, of a new science block. The spacious new Biology laboratory was eventually erected on the spare ground near the playing-fields. It was not a "science block", but in fairness it must be pointed out that the upper rooms of the wing of the school hitherto called "the weaving shed" had been modified and modernised in 1961 to

provide yet another science laboratory (to add to the six on the balcony in the main building!) and two small classrooms for Sixth-form teaching.

The year 1965 saw the retirement of Miss Mary Dodds, who was succeeded as Senior Mistress by Miss Jean E. Macleroy, who had been one of the eight staff appointed in 1945, and was to hold the post for the next thirteen years.

The report on Senior Speech Day 1967, published in "Squirrel" 1968, begins as follows: "A warning that education was not like iron and steel - something to be reorganised every time a new party came to power was given by Mr. Copley." Twenty years later, similar comments were made by his successor.

In the same edition of "Squirrel" comes a mention of the Sixth-form Common-room which had been opened in March 1968. This had been the result of much effort on the part of successive Sixth-forms, many of whom had known full well that they would never reap the benefit of their work. "Several previous senior prefects", we are told, "who had helped to raise money for the Common-room fund, were present at the opening ceremony."

Not only money-raising, but real physical labour had been involved in the conversion of a disused boiler-room to an acceptable place for Sixth-form private study and recreation. All too soon the rapidly-expanding Sixth-form would outgrow this cherished and hard-won new amenity, but for the time being it was their pride and joy.

It could also be regarded as Mr. Copley's personal legacy to them. He it was who had encouraged them to complete it, and he saw its triumphant opening just before his own retirement, which is announced in the next edition of "Squirrel". The first public intimation of the Head's intention to retire was made at Senior Speech Day in November 1968.

So ended yet another era in the annals of B.R.G.S. To the pupils of his time, Mr. Copley was B.R.G.S., just as Mr. Holden had been to earlier pupils, and Mr. Jackson before him.

CHAPTER VII

THE SCHOOL TO THE PRESENT DAY

"To destroy this school in order one assumes, to improve the system, is rather like a surgeon diagnosing a minor heart condition in a patient and deciding that the only cure is to transplant the heart from a person in perfect health." (Mr. P.L. Clark writing in "Squirrel" 1982.)

Unlike his three predecessors, Mr. Philip Lane Clark, M.A., F.R.G.S. had not to contend with either the threat or the aftermath of the world wars. Too young to have been involved in fighting, he was however old enough to have seen service three years in the R.A.F. as an education officer on a short service commission.

Peace may have reigned (albeit at times uneasily) on the international scene, but a sort of internecine strife made itself felt at this time on the educational front. Much of it was due, either directly or indirectly, to re-organisation. Locally, this was hanging fire. A firm decision of the working-party in the mid-sixties had committed Rossendale to

11-18 comprehensive schools, and Haslingden High School resulted from the amalgamation of the Grammar and Secondary Modern schools in that area. New buildings were available, and only two schools were involved.

Neighbouring Whitworth took its own decision, renamed its only secondary school, began to run it as an 11-16 comprehensive school and ceased to send 11+ entrants to B.R.G.S. The existence of this school was to cause difficulties later. Whitworth, which had previously tended to look to Rochdale as its centre, became part of Rossendale when boundaries were reorganised. This meant that there was already, in the new Borough of Rossendale, one of the 11-16 comprehensive schools so much desired by the County, who favoured a tertiary college system based on the College of Further Education at Accrington with its branch in Rawtenstall.

The result was some pretty fierce in-fighting between the 11 - 18 lobby and the 11 - 16 protagonists. The latter had the big battalions and had more to gain from the tertiary college set-up, whereas every suggested scheme seemed to spell the end of B.R.G.S. not just as a grammar school, but as anything worthwhile, it was felt by many.

This thread of uncertainty and discontent disturbed the usual even tenor of B.R.G.S. life. Teachers' salaries had risen considerably, but some thought them still inadequate. There were increasingly numerous "perks" obtainable for various extra tasks which had hitherto been taken for granted. Talk of strike action, at one time unheard-of in the profession, became almost an accepted thing, and was to culminate in the actual "withdrawal of labour" by some extremist elements.

Mr. Clark had inherited a nucleus of long-serving and experienced staff, plus a goodly number of young keen members who appreciated his efforts to keep the place "on its toes." When he took over, the school numbered over 700 pupils, the staff over 40 teachers, of whom some 12 were former students. Of that staff, 19 members were still at

B.R.G.S. in 1987, eight having retired in the course of Mr. Clark's headship.

The new Headmaster soon became deeply involved in the life of the school, showing a lively interest in all its activities. He once epitomised his own attitude in these words from the platform: "I stand between stability and stagnation." He was, in fact, standing between the Deputy Head, Mr. Frank Harding, and the Senior Mistress, Miss Jean Macleroy. The latter recalls that she turned to Mr. Harding afterwards, extending her hand, and said: "Stability, I presume? meet Stagnation."

It was true, though. Traditions that older staff had feared for were maintained, while new ideas were introduced with not too revolutionary speed. The school continued to thrive.

One of the earliest innovations was the setting-up in February 1970 of a steering committee for a Parent-Teacher Association. The P.T.A. constitution was drawn up in May of the same year, and the first Annual General Meeting took place in October.

Another innovation which was beneficial to the school was the appointment of a Careers Master and Mistress. Hitherto most of the advisory work had been undertaken by the Head and, to a lesser extent, senior staff. With a rapidly-growing Sixth Form, allocated time was badly needed for research into openings. Room 38 in the basement was set aside as a Careers Room. Mr. Collinson, Senior Geography Master, and Mrs. White of the Mathematics Department, were appointed careers teachers, and pioneered this important task.

As has already been stated, Mr. Clark was fortunate in having a number of experienced staff. Another fortunate occurrence was the re-appointment, as bursar and headmaster's secretary, of Mrs. Kathleen Gowers, a former student who had already held the post from 1956-1960. It will be remembered that the previous secretary, Mrs. Edna Gledhill, had left upon her marriage to Mr. Copley after his retirement. To acquire a secretary who "knew the ropes" must have been a considerable relief after the prospect of beginning with a newcomer to the job.

Even so, all did not run too smoothly in that first year. Lengthy absence of staff necessitated changes of time-table. The school was saddened by the death, at Christmas, of Miss Olive Holt who had only been appointed in 1967 to assist Mr. Wild with music. Fortunately at that time Mrs. Eveline Collinson, who had held the music post herself from 1947-1953, was able to fill temporarily the assistant's place. Another former colleague, Mrs. Elizabeth Culley, who had retired in 1968, was pressed back into service when a junior history master obtained a post elsewhere at very short notice.

The triumphant beginning of the careers service was fated to take an early knock: Mrs. White, whose husband was transferred to Norwich, was obliged to leave at Christmas, and Mr. and Mrs. Collinson left the district at the end of the school year. The careers posts were, however, ably filled by Mr. John Maiden and Mrs. Beryl Rowland, and later by Mrs. Shirley Richmond.

Mr. Clark, worried about depleted school funds, decreed that crisps should be sold in the Hall at morning breaks. Third-form pupils were detailed off to leave their lessons slightly early and sell crisps at the beginning of break.

This was one of several money-raising ventures, and it may well be that local criminal elements thought the school must have large hoards of money on its premises. Crisp sales began in March 1970, and in May came the first of a series of burglaries. The door of the Head's room had been smashed in, but he had immediately pinned up the cheerful notice: "Business as usual!"

The new headmaster's first Speech Day, awaited with interest, took place on November 18th, 1969, and was a huge success. One former colleague confessed that she had never expected to attend a prize-giving where the Head's speech had them rolling in the aisles! Yet the sense of occasion was still there, and probably there was a great feeling of reassurance all round. The school was in good hands.

A few days later came a half-day strike by the National Union of Teachers. It was hardly a smooth beginning. However, the new head ploughed sturdily on, taking such things apparently in his stride. The staff was somewhat shaken by his wholesale invitation to sherry and mince-pies at his own home after an early breaking-up on the last afternoon of the Christmas term. That became an institution, the invitation being extended to former staff also, for Mr. Clark was always ready and glad to meet anyone with any interest in the school, and did not forget those who had served there.

The Summer of 1970 saw the formal opening of the new Biology laboratory, the erection of which, on the spare ground opposite the gym. and dining-room extension, had been partially paid for by the Jubilee Fund. Mr. Copley returned on July 10th to declare the premises officially open, and a tablet commemorating the ceremony can be seen in the entrance of the building, which must have added considerably to the facilities of the Science teaching in school. The school rabbits lived there in positive luxury, their requirements attended to even throughout the holidays!

It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that B.R.G.S. had long offered Sixth-form studies to all whose results at 16+ showed them capable of profiting from such work. Mr. Clark announced, in December 1970, his intention of "opening" the Sixth-form completely the following year. In other words, the Sixth-form was to be comprehensive, taking all who were prepared to work. The new departure was looked at askance by the more reactionary members of his staff, but over the years results have not deteriorated as a consequence of his decision.

One attempt was unsuccessful: Mr. Clark suggested forming a School Council. However, such was the apathy amongst the pupils that the scheme fell through. Obviously they preferred to stay governed by a benevolent despot! It seemed to be working. By this time, each form had its captain and vice-captain, proudly wearing metal badges to proclaim their positions. Each form, too, had a form prefect, which meant a greater involvement between the Sixth and the Lower School.

In 1971 came the dinner ticket scheme, which absolved form-teachers from the unpopular task of collecting dinner-money and keeping a dinner-register. It did, however, involve long queues in the Hall on Friday mornings, and extra work for "volunteers" (mainly the secretaries) who undertook the sale of tickets. Like any system, it had its snags: the lost dinner-ticket, the pupil on free dinners who sold his free tickets and spent

the money on less wholesome fare... Yet still it worked well on the whole.

It was typical of Mr. Clark that he regarded the lovely big room allocated to him as excessively large for his requirements. Most people have by now forgotten its fine proportions. Much to the regret of many of the staff, in the holidays of 1971, the room was partitioned, a new cloakroom made, and a good piece of the Head's former room allocated to the secretarial staff, whose living-space Mr. Clark had considered totally inadequate. Subsequent staff-meetings were held in the Library, the diminished room being far too small for a staff far larger than the 30 of Mr. Holden's time.

Mr. Clark was always eager to use to the full any available space in school. The hard-won Sixth-form Common-room had barely accommodated the Upper Sixth: the Lower Sixth had to be excluded. Already at a P.T.A. Committee meeting in 1971, the Head had mentioned the possibility of a Sixth-form unit. Thanks to the generosity of local firms, in reply to an appeal, it was soon possible to allocate to the Sixth the block of two pre-fabricated classrooms on the playing-fields side of the building. One room was furnished with "carrels" for individual study, the other was a recreation-room. The small cloakrooms at each end of the block were also transformed. One eventually became a little kitchen for coffee-making. The one nearer the playing fields was furnished as a study for Mr. Geoffrey Phillips.

Here too, was a major change. The tradition of a school whose Sixth-forms had initially been small, was for the Head and Senior Master to be responsible for Sixth-form boys, the head and Senior Mistress for Sixth-form girls. Naturally the rapid increase in numbers in the Sixth had made this system rather inadequate. For some time an extra form-teacher had been assisting, or more than one if the numbers demanded it.

In 1972 the Head announced that Mr. Geoffrey Phillips was to be Master-in-charge of Sixth-form. Furthermore the Sixth, Upper and Lower, was to be divided into much smaller groups, each with its tutor. This latter change came as a considerable shock to staff accustomed to regard the position of Sixth Form teacher as one denoting seniority and responsibility. They were soon to see comparative newcomers holding the once-coveted position of form-teacher (or tutor) of a sixth-form group. It was logical, of course: these younger teachers had much in common with pupils not much younger than they. Moreover it released~ seasoned campaigners" to deal with potentially more troublesome elements in the lower school. The critics were confounded, and still the school thrived.

By this time numbers had risen to a point where B.R.G.S. was eligible for an extra deputy-head. (It must be mentioned that the former Senior Master was now dignified by this title.) In February 1973 Mr. Harry Gibson, M.A., was appointed as additional deputy and placed in charge of Middle School, his duties beginning in September of that year.

That month also saw the celebration of the school's sixtieth anniversary. The Diamond Jubilee magazine, to which we are indebted for much of the content of this history, took the form of an anthology of reminiscences contributed by former pupils, and was compiled by Miss Dorothy Chadwick, head of History, and herself a former pupil.

There was a well-attended re-union at school on Saturday, September 22nd, followed by a thanksgiving service at the church of St. Nicholas, Newchurch on the Sunday. The functions were perhaps not quite so well-attended as those of 1963, but they nevertheless attracted a large number of former students and staff, and appeared to be much enjoyed. It was a great reassurance to see that, to a large extent, traditions were being maintained whilst progress was being made.

If optimism was uppermost in the mind at that Jubilee week-end it was soon quenched when, a year later, in October 1974, a General Election returned a Labour Government with a mandate to complete reorganisation wherever grammar schools, and consequently selection at 11+, had been retained. A working-party was set up locally to this end. Unlike its counterpart of the 1960's, it wanted 11 - 16 comprehensive schools followed by separate Tertiary or Sixth-form college. The '~fait accompli' of Haslingden High School, already reorganised as an 11-18 school, and functioning successfully, probably prevented any too precipitate action from being taken. The school lived on.

Inevitably there were changes in staff, some staying quite a short time, others being still there at the time of writing. In 1977, Mr. Frank Harding, Senior Deputy Head, announced his intention of retiring in the summer. Much as his decision was regretted, it was with relief that the school learned that Mr. Fred Wild, Head of Music, was to be appointed a Deputy Head to fill the vacant position. Mr. Harding had been at B. R.C.S. for 30 years, and had been Senior Master/Deputy Head since 1958. His forceful personality and keen sense of humour were greatly missed.

Only a year later Miss Jean F. Macleroy, who had been Senior Mistress (lately styled Deputy Head) for thirteen of her 33 years at B.R.G. S., retired also. As a farewell to her, a mini-reunion was held in May, and a service at St. John's Church, Bacup. This time the appointment made was not internal. Her successor was Miss Dorothy Wearden, B.A., a history teacher from St. Theodore's school in Burnley. By her marriage to the Senior Chemistry master, she became, in 1982, Mrs. Eddison Skeels, and she still remains at B.R.G.S. in charge of the girls' welfare and with particular responsibility for the First Year.

It was not until some time afterwards that the beginning of the year 1979 became endowed with its nickname of "the winter of discontent", but how well it earned that name! Certainly it was, to put it mildly, a trying time for B.R.G.S. To start with, the Rossendale weather was at its grimmest, with fall after fall of heavy snow, freezing rain, bitter cold: there was even a fall of snow at the beginning of May. It was the period when various public services went on strike. Water-board employees were not mending bursts, which were unfortunately frequent owing to the severe frosts. One day in January the school was forced to close because caretaking staff withdrew their labour. (Worse was to come later, when in the Spring of the same year the school was forced to close for a walk-out of teaching staff, and the normally non-militants at that!)

During that particularly foul winter, just to add insult to injury, the statutory public meetings were held to present the case for reorganisation on the lines of 11-16 "high schools" with a Sixth-form or Tertiary college. Five meetings took place, one in

each township, and all within a month. There was a great deal of acrimonious discussion, both at the meetings and in the local press.

This should have been a period of real delight for Mr. Clark. He had secured a Schoolmaster-Fellowship which took him to Cambridge for a term, was confident that his elder son would be starting there in the Autumn, and heard in early April that his younger son was to play hockey for England. However, his pleasure could not have been unalloyed: there must have been constant worry about the internal and external troubles besetting the school during his absence. It was a harsh introduction for the senior deputy, Mr. Harry Gibson, who had to take over for one of the most disrupted terms the school had hitherto experienced. It passed, however, and the school soldiered on, still as B.R.G.S. Writing for the 'Squirrel' of that year, Mr. Clark remarked: "Although we cannot expect to retain our grammar school indefinitely, we could at least offer its values to a much wider range of pupils as an 11-18 school."

In the next (1980) edition of 'Squirrel' he was able to write: "Now all is in the melting-pot again and we can look ahead to a few years of calmer climate, conducive to the training of young minds and the generation of happiness in that sheltered environment that is special to B.R.G.S."

Sheltered environment? 1980 saw the discovery of dry-rot in the building walls stripped of plaster down to the brickwork, rooms successively out of use while workmen chipped away. Some Sixth-form classes were held at the Lea Bank centre of the College of Further Education, with much time lost in journeys there and back. The next trauma (inevitably during hard wintry weather!) was the failure of the boilers in January 1981. The Head sent for 35 electric heaters and one crisis more was overcome.

The comprehensive issue had been in abeyance: an uneasy peace had reigned for a while after the General Election of 1979. However, the council elections of May 1981 saw Lancashire County with a Labour majority, and by June there were posters announcing "East Lancashire Grammar Schools face axe." There were radical changes in the composition of governing bodies, the overtones being strongly political. There were, we heard, to be new discussions on reorganisation, though no change was expected before 1984. In March 1982 a governors' meeting, by a narrow majority, voted for the Tertiary College system.

A few days later, a very well-attended Parent-Teacher Association meeting set up an Action Group to further the cause of the 11-18 school. Regular meetings of the Action Committee were held and a petition form was drafted and duplicated ready to receive signatures. Further public meetings were held: four only, this time, as opposed to five in 1979. The Tertiary College system was voted in at County level in the Spring of 1982, but B.R.G.S. Action Committee stuck to its task, continued to meet, to collect signatures for its petition, to circularise old students and other friends of the school. A massive and most impressive document was drawn up, setting forth the achievements and advantages of the school, for the consideration of the Minister of Education (at that time Sir Keith Joseph). The notices of reorganisation were issued in January 1983, and that was the signal for the posting-off to the Minister of all the Campaign literature and

individual letters.

A meeting was arranged with Rossendale's M.P., Mr. David Trippier, one Saturday at his "surgery" in Bacup, and a small party later in London, met Dr. (now Sir) Rhodes Boyson (at that time in the Ministry of Education, and an interested party as a local man whose own old school, Haslingden, was threatened now with the loss of its Sixth-form.)

During this stressful time B.R.G.S. was impoverished by the loss of two very long-serving teachers through retirement Mr. Eric Ward of Bird-Watching Society fame, after thirty-four years in school, and Rev. Jack Cawthorne, Head of Art, who had taken Holy orders whilst still retaining his teaching post. He had given the school thirty-three years' service, and found time in the later years for church work as well.

Also sorely missed, though with a lesser period of service (eighteen years) Mr. John Maiden left the Latin Department and the Careers Department to train for the Methodist ministry. Anyone who had heard John Maiden take morning assembly must surely have felt that he had a vocation. His Careers work was taken over by Mr. David Archer.

Meanwhile the period of uncertainty dragged on, and it was not until August 10th 1983, in the middle of the Summer holidays, that the welcome news at last broke that the Minister for Education and Science had rejected the County's proposals for reorganisation. The new school year began on an optimistic note, especially in view of the seventieth anniversary celebrations planned for the Autumn Term, arrangements for which had been under way for several months.

A very successful, well-attended re-union took place in the afternoon and evening of Saturday, September 10th 1983. One of the highlights of the occasion was the unveiling, by Mr. Copley, of a portrait of himself destined to hang in the hall with those of his predecessors, Mr. Holden and Mr. Jackson. On the following day a thanksgiving service was held, also in the school hall, taken by former pupil Jack Nicholls, now a Canon of Manchester Cathedral. Prayers were led by the Rev. Michael Holt, Vicar of St. John the Evangelist Church, Bacup, a part-time member of the staff for a number of years.

The euphoria of 1983 was short-lived, for the following year brought widespread "teacher action" "withdrawal of goodwill", etc. There were vague rumblings of reorganisation, too: a suggestion that B.R.G.S. could be amalgamated with Alder Grange, Rawtenstall, in its new building. Nothing came of that, however, as County was still hankering after 11-16 schools with Tertiary College.

Reviewing the happenings of the year in "Squirrel", Spring 1985, Mr. Clark commented on the "adaptability und resilience" of his pupils in the face of threats to the school's existence and also "two successive years in which the run-up to summer examinations has been disrupted by 'teacher action,' mercifully alleviated at B.R.G.S. by the fact that teachers, whilst loyal to their union, were endowed with feelings of stronger unity with the pupils they teach."

The continuation of the so-called "action" through 1985 occasioned the

deferment of Senior Speech Day from its normal November date, and cancelled the Carol concert, usually so much enjoyed by so many people.

The Archives Committee, set up so hopefully, met regularly throughout 1985, but made little progress, since once again the prospect of re-organisation (mooted once more in June of that year) tended to overshadow other matters. Keen Archivists from the P.T.A. were, as could be expected, eager protagonists of the "Save the Grammar School" lobby, and this consideration was soon to oust all others, at least for the time being. In fact, only two more Archives meetings took place. Atrocious winter weather caused cancellation of two arranged meetings in February 1986, and by the time the committee was reconvened, the obvious priority was the "Save our Squirrel" Action Committee. There was little point, it was rightly felt, in seeking to write the history of a school which by default, had been allowed to be exterminated!

1986 saw a resurgence of the enthusiasm displayed in the 1982-3 campaign, with a much higher level of organisation, fruit of past experience. It is always invidious to mention names, but three persons in particular stand out Mrs. Jean Booth, Mrs. Bobbie Taylor and Mrs. Mary Abbott. These three members of the P.T.A. had weathered the earlier struggle as mothers of junior children. However, their daughters were still in school, as seniors, when the second campaign had to be fought. And how they fought with fresh reinforcements as enthusiastic as they, notably Mrs. Jackie Carter and Mrs. Ann Barnes. "Have cause, will travel" seemed to be the motto of these indefatigable ladies, frequently supported or at any rate tolerated by their men folk. The petition was carried into every nook and cranny of the district until it had topped the 10,000 signatures aimed at.

This time, a ballot of parents was held, which resulted in 90% support for the retention of the school in its existing form. There were meetings with County officials, with members of parliament: a special journey to London in the Spring of 1987 to present the case to the Junior Education Minister. The re-election, in June 1987, of the Conservative Government, supposed to look favourably upon Grammar Schools, encouraged the workers to hope for a speedy and successful outcome but no. All wondered if, as in 1983, the decision would be made late in the summer holiday.

Meanwhile fell the hammer blow: the unexpected announcement that the Headmaster whose energy had inspired the campaign throughout, was taking early retirement that very term-end. No appointment was being made: the Senior Deputy Head, Mr. Harry Gibson, would take over the Headship temporarily until the post could be suitably filled.

The Ministry of Education did, in fact, decide in favour of retaining B.R.G.S. in its present form, and made its decision known, as before, during the month of August. Yet another battle won, but not necessarily the war!

CHAPTER VIII

P.E. AND SPORT THROUGH THE YEARS

"There will be a never-ending flow of potentially talented games-players in the school. This is shown by the strength of the Old Rossendalians' games teams, which have, over the years, merited the admiration and respect they have gained in the county. If everyone in the school can learn some activity to enjoy throughout active life, then the efforts of the physical education staff are indeed well rewarded." (From a contribution to the "Anthology" by the late Mr. Jack Bridge, P.F. master 1947-58 and former pupil.)

As we have already discovered, the boys of Newchurch Grammar School were to some extent the losers, the girls from the Pupil-Teacher Centre were the gainers, in the transition to the new secondary school. At the Pupil-Teacher Centre, the game of rounders, with its hazard of the ball ending up in the river, seems to have been the sum total of physical education. The boys, on the other hand, had enjoyed the amenities of a well-equipped gymnasium which the new school did not boast.

One advantage, and a considerable one, for the boys was the transferring, along with the Headmaster and other members of staff, of the Newchurch Grammar School Physical Education instructor, Mr. Jack Richardson. This obviously long-suffering and much-loved character said farewell to his gymnasium, and in the restricted conditions of the assembly-hall, with its three climbing-ropes and one vaulting-horse, had not only to put the boys through their paces, but the girls as well!

The Newchurch Grammar School playing-field had been poor, but the new school boasted none better. During the 1914-18 war the school was allowed the use of Rossendale United's football ground at Dark Lane for football and hockey matches. Sports Day was also held there, it appears. ~Its more famous and talented users were away winning the war," points out Mrs. Gwen Kay, in her contribution to the "Anthology". She also mentions Miss P. Greenwood, in those First World War days a junior French mistress, who gave a great deal of her time to the girls' hockey.

Aside from Dark Lane, according to Mr. Harry Howard, "a field opposite Kirk Church served for football and cricket: no facilities for changing and washing".

"To reach the pitch where matches were played, one had to complete a short cross-country run finishing at Newchurch", writes Mr. James R. Holt, "to be confronted by a field no, hardly a field, for grass appeared only in the four corners. One ran from goal to goal as along a sloping roof. Near one end was a well, covered by a large stone slab a real hazard for visiting teams, but worth a couple of goals to the home side, who had learned how to negotiate it!" He adds that despite poor conditions and inadequate equipment "those who were inclined towards physical training spent a very happy time under the direction of Mr. Jack Richardson."

A fairly comprehensive indication of the situation is given by Mrs. L. Ashworth for the "Anthology". "Mr. Richardson... took all the school, girls and boys separately, for



Girls' hockey team in the early days.



And a somewhat later model: Miss H. A. Pretty at right end, back row.



Pioneers of rugby in the 1950s. The XV flanked by Mr. J. Bridge (right) and Mr. R. Collinson. Centre with ball Mr. R. Back, senior maths teacher at time of writing (1988)



*A highly successful junior soccer team with its trophy.
Mr. D. Baron (P.E. Master, 1988) stands third from right, back row.*

P.E. and the boys for games. P.E. was taken in the central hall and the only apparatus we had was a climbing-rope the full height of the hall and a vaulting-horse. . . About 1923 a gym mistress was appointed for the girls, spending three days at Waterfoot and two at Heywood. She also took the girls for games and introduced netball: previously in winter we had played only hockey. In summer our games period was taken up with swimming. An additional room was brought into use for P.E. (the present library, then the night-school's plumbing-room, which already had a "ladder" or climbing-frame, according to Mrs. Gwen Kay's report). At this time wall-bars, a boom and other apparatus were added to the equipment. There was only one tennis-court, this being in the middle terrace, without surround-netting and not very popular. About 1926 two tennis-courts were laid on the bottom terrace and tennis was then played during games periods."

The tradition of a staff versus pupils hockey match seems to have been established early. The last hockey-match of the season was always the First Eleven versus a staff eleven (apparently mixed, Mr. Holden being usually in goal!) There was also a cricket-match, girls versus boys, wherein the latter, obliged to bat left-handed and bowl under-arm, still always won!

Prior to the appointment of Miss Peirson, the part-time games mistress mentioned by Mrs. Ashworth, the task of supervising arrangements for matches seems to have been undertaken by Miss Phyllis Greenwood (later to become Senior Mistress). Mrs. Gwen Kay recalls travelling to Todmorden via Bacup in a waggonette, and the late Mr. Ronald Y. Digby recalls how the boys, because of the steep gradient "had to get off at the 'Bay Horse'... Some of the boys nipped in for a 'smiler'. This was forgotten until the following Monday when Mr. Jackson said from the rostrum: 'A little bird has whispered in my ear'. . . and a few of the boys got the stick.

"When we played at home," he adds nostalgically, "the girls would often make chips for tea."

Match fixtures for the boys in those early days appear to have been largely in the hands of the older pupils, who apparently approached members of staff to accompany the team and to referee or umpire. Mr. Anstey is mentioned as one who frequently travelled with teams.

Important in the school calendar, and one of the earliest public events to take place at the new school, was the annual Sports Day. The House system as it stood in the early days was based on the three townships of Bacup, Rawtenstall and Waterfoot. Intertown rivalry was keen - probably more intense than that generated by the later system introduced in the late 1930's.

"Sports Day", writes Mrs. L. Ashworth, "was one of the big occasions of the year, being held on Saturday afternoon. Prizes were given, e.g. hockey-sticks, tennis-racquets, cricket bats, cameras." Medals later replaced these prizes. The early Sports Days were much more a public occasion, with a brass band on the field and refreshments served - a far cry from the somewhat scrambled affairs of later times, rushing to finish in time for the buses!

A feature of school P.E. which persisted from the earliest days until recently, was the Cross-Country run. The course changed, but the custom remained. Mr. Harry Howard, who entered school in 1916, writes: "I shall always remember the Cross-Country run, which was very arduous. The route was down Townsend Street, under the railway arch, up the hill to Cowpe, across Rough Lee, over the top to drop down into Lench and Holt Mill, across the road and up to Rossendale football field, along to the church, down the footpath to reach Burnley Road and then stagger up Thornfield Avenue to the finish."

Mr. Howard also recalls the acquisition of the new fields near the school. "The students were given the mammoth task of levelling. To this end one or two coal-pit trucks were hired, lines laid to the top of the field, and the soil and debris moved during games periods and lunch-breaks. After some months with little or no result the work was contracted out."

Miss Margaret ("Little") Moore, writing for the "Anthology", recalls of those same fields: "I had only been on the staff a few months when the condition of the so-called playing-fields began to attract our attention. They consisted of two very rough, uneven and undrained fields across the road and were quite inadequate. It was felt that if we, staff and pupils, made an effort to raise some funds, the County authority might be encouraged to find the rest

"It was decided, after much discussion, to hold a 'Cafe chantant' in May 1922... The cafe lasted two days. There were all kinds of attractions: stalls where fancy and household goods were sold, side shows, a dramatic performance by the recently-formed Old Students' Dramatic Society, and an Egyptian room, where ices, soft drinks and peach melbas were served by dusky Egyptian maidens!

"The tea-room was the scene of great activity... At 11 p.m. on the Saturday night we were not sorry to close down, but before going home we (she, Miss Iremonger and Miss Wrigley) collected the fragments that remained... At the Monday morning break these cakes were quickly sold to the ever-hungry hordes! The Cafe had raised about £500... The County agreed to take up the work of laying the new playing-fields."

Amongst her recollections of this money-making venture, Miss Moore speaks of children being given 6d. each to see how much they could make of it, and of one child who bought a bottle of perfume and charged a penny a sniff! Mrs. Laura Ashworth (nee Lister) also remembers receiving sixpence from her form-teacher. "I made coconut macaroons which I sold for a penny each and made £1.10s."

So by communal effort, the school had its fields. However, a sad blow fell in 1926, when Mr. Richardson died suddenly. He had been a most popular figure. Mr. Ernest Willetts remembers him as "older than some of the others but very agile". Apparently he had regularly received the loudest ovation as he mounted the platform on Speech Day. There was a memorial service for him at Bethesda Chapel, which the whole school attended. His memorial picture still hangs in school. His place was taken by a Mr. Dixon of whom we hear little, though he held the post for six years.

Miss Peirson remained in charge of girls' P.E. for ten years, then left to be married and was replaced by Miss Webber, who held the post for only a couple of years. Miss Leeming succeeded her, and then came Miss Joan Evans, who held the post until 1945. By this time the need had been realised for a full-time instructor. Miss Mildred B. Reece, who was appointed in September 1945, remained at B.R.G.S. until Christmas 1953, the longest spell of service since Miss Peirson.

As has already been pointed out elsewhere, wartime conditions led to a shifting population in staff-rooms. Mr. I.G.J. Jenkins (still only a "visiting" instructor) held the post from 1931 to 1941, when he went into the R.A.F. How unfortunate it seems that this young man, after considerable service which included the formation of the school's Air Training Corps, should not have enjoyed the benefits of the new gymnasium, opened in 1941.

Certainly those three gym-less decades must have been extremely difficult for P.E. staff, especially as numbers grew. Yet there seems to have been no lack of enthusiasm for sport. Football, cricket, netball, hockey and tennis were played: not a great many matches took place, but results appear to have been quite creditable. The summer edition of the "Journal" of 1927 reports: "Facilities for games this term have been further increased by the completion of two shale tennis courts. . . The tufts of rank, unsightly weeds have now given place to two neat, trim courts, whose surface of smooth red shale with permanent white lines is a pleasure to behold."

A typical Rossendale summer caused repeated postponement of the "state opening" of this new amenity, but eventually an exhibition mixed doubles match was staged, four pupils on one court and on the other Miss Peirson and the Head, Mr. Holden, versus Miss Greenwood and Mr. Hirst. The courts were in great demand thenceforth, the Old Students having use of them also.

The "Journals" of the years 1926-38 produce interesting side-lights on sport, as on many other activities. Despite the lack of gymnasium, the inter-house competition included gymnastics at that time, and an annual gymnastic competition against Haslingden Grammar School took place. The increase of inter-school sport is evident, lists of matches growing longer in football, cricket and hockey, with tennis making a tentative appearance. The first match, in 1929, was lost, the second in 1930, won and also we note that tennis house-matches were added that year to the other house activities. As always, the weather played a major role in the inter-school games, but the school seems to have held its own in all areas of sport.

Commenting in the "Journal" of December 1927, a writer said of the existing house system (based on residence): "When in years to come the much-ruffled dove of peace has carried the olive-branch into every quarter of the globe... yet there will be one spot which will preserve its venerable prejudices and continue the fight, and that spot will be Rossendale. . . It is a vendetta, war to the knife, and for ever."

Possibly some of the more pacifistically-inclined found such hot rivalry regrettable. Certainly there were more practical objections to the division by regions. One

cannot but feel for the writer (surely a Rawtenstall house-captain!) who in the "Journal" of April 1928, gave the glad tidings: "It has been decided to award the shields for the interhouse competitions on the results of the land-events only... We wish to give swimming a greater importance than it has had in the past. . . and to eliminate. . . any undue advantage that the Bacup Houses possess in having swimming-baths in their town. Two new shields for swimming are to be presented by the Old Students' Association."

Thus was born the annual Swimming Gala, held for the first time in 1928 and won (surprise!) by Bacup. Had some crystal-gazer foreseen that there was to come a Bacupian who, throughout the five years of his school career, was to be the undisputed swimming champion?

The two sports fields opposite the School were, by the late thirties, mature and well-used. Sports Days were held there each year, the public apparently still willing and eager actually to pay (!) for the privilege of attending this event, complete with brass band, refreshments, and civic dignitaries to present the prizes at the end. Perhaps there was a greater professionalism coming: in 1931 the obstacle race and tug-of-war were abandoned from the programme.

"It has been stimulating," says a writer in the "Journal" of September 1938 (the last pre-war "Journal") "to see the building operations proceeding for the extensions to the school to provide a gymnasium and a dining hall." Those extensions, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter, were fortunately not abandoned on the outbreak of war, as some projects had to be.

The constantly increasing numbers on roll had by this time (immediately pre-second war) caught up with and outstripped the playing-field accommodation. Just when the fields "ower t'thrutch" were acquired is not clear, and in any event is immaterial, for they were really of little use until many years later, when the necessary work had been done. The fields must have been available in the late thirties, for their existence was used as a pretext to change the House system, as we learn from a report in the 1938 "Journal":

"The new playing-fields, although they need levelling and laying out and a pavilion for full advantage to be taken of them, have been used this year. Three football pitches have been temporarily marked out on them." (Three pitches? One wonders if perhaps one was for Rugby, for we hear from Mr. G. Waterson that "about this time the gym. teacher Mr. Jenkins made a vain attempt to introduce Rugby. East Lancashire lads would have none of it." They were to take quite kindly- and successfully - to it some years later.) The report continues:

"A large number of pupils can therefore take part in games simultaneously. It has consequently been possible for the school to be divided into four Houses instead of three. This has' many advantages, an important one being that many more pupils can take part in house matches. It has been felt advisable, for some time, to alter the basis of the constitution of the houses, and advantage was taken, when the number of houses was raised to four, to consider no longer the districts from which the pupils come, but place them into four new houses, Brook, Forest, Glen and Moor... names of physical features in which the Forest of Rossendale is rich. . . It will not be difficult to keep the houses

approximately equal in numbers. This is the first year of the new houses and... it has been very successful. There has been keen and healthy rivalry... the results have not been foregone conclusions as was sometimes the case previously, especially in swimming."

Ah! but the report fails to mention some last-minute, behind-the-scenes negotiations which took place before the new houses were finally constituted. This, incidentally, casts yet another interesting side-light on the character of Mr. Holden, supposedly so terrifying, yet apparently reasonably malleable if approached in the right manner (and, perhaps by the right people - the current popular king-pins of school sport!)

Mr. Rowland Rawlinson writes to us: "The school was surprised at Ted's announcement that the three houses, Bacup, Rawtenstall and Waterfoot, would be replaced by four - Brook, Forest, Glen and Moor. The lists of names in the four new houses were eagerly perused. Having found one's new House, the next consideration was to evaluate the potential of athletes, footballers and cricketers. It was soon realised that all the previous year's Sports Day Age Group Champions - apart from Sam Lunt - were now members of Forest House. As Captain of that house, I requested an interview with Mr. Holden, and pointed out the seemingly unfair allocation. At first he was rather angry, thinking that some pupils were suggesting that he had selected names. Then he explained that the names had been taken in order from the registers - first name to Brook, second to Forest, and soon. Selection had been quite fair and unbiased; but since I had informed him of the unexpected result, he would allow me to decide which of the more competent athletes should be moved into a different house. The other House Captains were informed of the method of allocation, and of Ted's decision, and I think they were satisfied. However, the Sports Shield was won by Forest House in that first year with four houses in competition."

A minor point about the new houses may here be mentioned. Just as the old houses had colours suggested by their initial letters - blue for Bacup, red for Rawtenstall and white for Waterfoot - so the colours of the new houses were Blue for Brook, Flame (red) for Forest(a forest fire presumably) Gold for Glen and Mauve for Moor. Sashes and rosettes of the appropriate colours were worn on Sports Day, but when House shirts of mauve became unobtainable, green was substituted.

School football in particular was enjoying great success in the middle 1930's, the first eleven regularly triumphing, sometimes over all-boys' schools with more players to choose from. Mr. Holden took great pride in the achievements of the teams. At that time much store was set by team games. There was far less activity outside school, and enthusiasm was consequently high, both for school and house teams, in athletics and all sports.

It is apparent from records that sport continued unabated throughout the Second World War, with the exception of swimming. Probably owing to transport difficulties, there were no visits to Bacup Baths in games periods, as had been the normal practice.

The boys lost their P.E. master, Mr. Jenkins~ in 1941, when he joined the R.A.F. It was a most fortunate coincidence that, in the same year, a young geographer joined the Staff Mr. C. S. Howard. He was exempt from military service for medical reasons, yet

was prepared to take on a good amount of the boys' P.E. and sport' in addition to his normal teaching and also running the A.T.C. He was still doing so when the war ended.

As has been stated earlier, the girls' P.E. mistress, Miss J. Evans, was replaced in 1945 by Miss Mildred Reece. This, of course, was a full-time appointment, and needed to be, numbers having greatly increased. For the boys, however, part-timers had to cope as best they could. The afore-mentioned Mr. Howard held the fort valiantly. Mr. Alec Hutchinson, a former student, was brought in to help, and continued to do so until the Spring of 1948, when he left to train for teaching. Another geographer, Mr. Henshall, returned from R.A.F. service, also assisted, and there were no doubt others, too.

Certainly the boys' games were by no means neglected. If there had been any doubt about the enthusiasm in those days (and for a good few years later) one only had to teach in extension classrooms early in the Autumn Term. Former students whose University term had not yet begun would be crowding up to the changing-rooms to join the Wednesday afternoon Sixth-form games periods. Not a bad tribute to those who were "stopping the gap".

The fields "over the Glen" were still another world to the girls. It was firmly decreed that, as there was no pavilion, girls could not be taken there. The existence of the fields was, however, made clear on odd occasions, such as the evening after school when a fairly new member of staff encountered a weary-looking group of Sixth-form boys, arms linked, plodding up Townsend Street singing "Nellie Dean"! Their muddy garb was sufficient evidence of where they had been, for it was to be many years before the Glen fields were anything but a mud-bath.

Miss Reece, therefore, had fewer opportunities to extend the girls' games than had her male counterpart with the boys' activities. The late Mr. Jack Bridge arrived on the scene first as a student on teaching-practice, having served in the Royal Navy and decided to make P.E. teaching his career. A former pupil, his reputation was well established at B.R.G. S., for he it was who had, from his first swimming-gala, held the title of school swimming champion.

In that sphere at least, the girls reaped some benefit from his advent, for he soon started a mixed swimming-club which proved popular and successful. Pupils were entered for R.L. S. S. examinations, and the first Scholar Instructor's Certificate was awarded in 1949, together with the Award of Merit. During Jack Bridge's eleven years in school, enthusiasm was maintained, and year after year saw the award of innumerable medals and certificates to both boys and girls.

The advances in the field of sport at that time could make a history in themselves, and must of necessity be dealt with fairly briefly. Mr. Bridge was fortunate in taking over at a time when such men as Messrs. Cliff Howard and Alec Hutchinson had kept up the enthusiasm of the boys, and also at a time when there were young colleagues willing and able to help. At that stage, too, the ultra-sophistication had not yet set in: most of the Sixth still enjoyed their games.

As a good all-rounder, swimmer, water-polo player and cricketer for the town teams, the new P.E. master set about widening the scope of P.E. and games. Fifteen years

after "vaulting ambition" (appropriate to the job!) had taken him from B. R.G. S. to a deputy headship, a headship, administrative work, a Master's degree and another headship, he wrote, for the "Anthology", a most interesting and comprehensive account of the development of school P.E. in his time. He speaks of the experimental introduction of Rugby, in the teaching of which he was assisted by Mr. Ralph Collinson and later by the late Mr. H.E. Trip. Basketball began to be popular, and has been so ever since, both boys and girls taking readily to it.

The School magazine of 1954, as a preface to its Sports section, has the following paragraph: 'The new playing-fields across the Glen, so urgently needed by the School to relieve the over-worked pitches adjacent to the building, were fit for limited use this year. When the project is fully developed there will be soccer, rugger and hockey pitches available for winter games and a cricket square for summer. Unfortunately the necessary changing and store rooms are not yet built, which fact seriously curtails the use we can make of this welcome addition to the amenities of the School.'

Whilst quoting from school magazines, it may at this point be appropriate to mention a few facts, culled from the 1953 magazine, in a "pep-talk" by the P.E. master. Amongst other distinctions, he mentions two Cambridge blues, John Kidd and Alan Hobson, for football and boxing respectively. In cricket, Winston Place, a Lancashire County player, had played for M.C.C. against the West Indies (and scored a century, incidentally!) and the late Peter Barcroft was with Lancashire County ground staff. In athletics he mentions Bob Beecroft "now recognised as one of England's most promising young runners.

B.R.G.S. boys continued to swell the ranks of the towns' cricket teams in the Lancashire League. It was a vintage period for cricket. In 1949 two boys played for Lancashire Schoolboys, and by 1953 five more had been thus honoured. In one single season School contributed three boys to the County Schoolboys' team, one being the captain, (Gordon Kemble), and another, Jim Rushton, was later to play for England schoolboys.

Nor was football neglected. In particular there was, in 1949, an excellent junior eleven which reached the final of the "Daily Dispatch" shield, whilst in the same year B.R.G.S. had five players in the Rawtenstall schoolboys' team. The 1956-57 season was brilliant, the first eleven scoring 106 goals with only 17 against them. "How we won the 'Free Press' Shield," triumphs an anonymous reporter in the 1957 magazine, and the same issue carries a report of the final of the "News Chronicle and Daily Dispatch" tournament, in which our junior team, coached by Mr. Bridge and Mr. Edward Hartley, was defeated by Barrow Grammar School.

Towards the end of his "reign", Jack Bridge demanded that greater advantage should be taken of the fields over the Glen. Hitherto gym. and games classes had consisted of two forms. It was decreed that a whole age-group should go to games together. The difficulties of supervision were dismissed with scorn: there were plenty of active young masters keen to join in a game of soccer or cricket and to do the odd bit of coaching. Unfortunately the same did not necessarily apply to the female of the species.

Yet again, the girls were the losers. It was still forbidden for them to go over the Glen (though this taboo was sometimes disregarded in desperation when one single hockey-pitch proved slightly inadequate for forty players!)

Miss Reece had left in 1953, and after Mrs. Ralph Collinson (nee Eveline Firth, a former student and teacher of music) had filled a two-term gap, Miss M. Thomas had taken her place. At the same time the girls were fortunate in the arrival of Miss Joan Putman, appointed to teach Latin, but also a keen and extremely competent hockey player - one of the few really able to do justice to the new system of "everybody out"!

Summer games for the girls would have been an insuperable problem, but fortunately arrangements were made for School to use the Edgeside Park courts, as the two in front of school would have been totally inadequate for the larger numbers. Juniors were happy to play rounders, but Seniors regarded it as "kids' stuff".

In 1958 Miss Fennell replaced Miss Thomas, but stayed only for a couple of years, being replaced by Miss Goulding, who all too soon became Mrs. Knowles and left in the Spring of 1962. School was fortunate in securing the services, for girls' P.E., of Miss Judith Bradshaw, who only three or four years previously had been active in games as a pupil. By this time, too, another former pupil, Miss Hazel Pretty, had joined the maths staff and gave invaluable help with hockey. Miss Bradshaw's stay was brief: after three years she was swept into matrimony by chemistry master Mr. Tony Brand and left when he took a post elsewhere.

From 1965 to 1987 Miss B.J. Harrison, now Mrs. Wenter, held the post of girls' P.E. instructress. She has recently taken early retirement after her record "innings", and has been replaced by Mrs. Schofield.

The boys also had some changes of instructor. Mr. Bridge was succeeded by Mr. R. Butterworth in 1958, and the latter gave place in 1963 to Mr. Newman, who stayed only three years. Despite the relative shortness of their tenure, these two masters kept up the boys' P.E., all branches of which seem to have flourished with the exception of Rugby, which appears to have been on the wane by about 1967.

The two longest-serving P.E. teachers, therefore, began their work at B.R.G.S. within a year or so of each other. In 1966 yet another former pupil took over the boys' P.E. - Mr. David Baron, a young man who, as that year's magazine points out "not long ago was a distinguished member of our 1st eleven soccer team." He had, too, in his early days, been one of the excellent junior players who had been so successful in inter-school matches.

These two newly-appointed teachers, unlike their counterparts of the 1920s, came to a school well-equipped with a good gym., good playing-fields (tennis -courts inadequate, though) and plenty of tradition of success, particularly in boys' games.

Unfortunately, there was a changing atmosphere at this time. Team-games were losing popularity as individualism flourished. Once it became no longer compulsory for Sixth-formers to take games, it soon became "not done" for those majestic creatures to cavort about on a muddy pitch. Thus the powerful influence of keen older pupils was soon lost. In addition, the reorganisation of education meant that, in many instances, only

younger teams could be fielded. Soon it became the norm for older pupils to be unavailable" for Saturday matches, as they took week-end jobs for extra pocket-money. It was certainly not the most heartening time for a P.E. teacher to take on a demanding job in a large school.

Apart from Rugby, however, which ceased to be officially played after 1967, all other sports have continued, though not on quite such a grand scale, as the available talent was much more restricted. Basketball, probably because it is naturally less affected by Rossendale's notorious weather, seems to have flourished more consistently than any other game.

Just as his predecessor, Mr. Copley, introduced badminton into the school shortly after he took the Headship, so Mr. Clark, on his arrival in 1969, began a boys' hockey club. Not only did this attract many boys, but it seems to have acted as a fillip (no pun intended!) to the girls' hockey, which rallied from its doldrums and showed marked signs of revival. By 1977 we hear of an under-14 team winning a tournament.

Boys' hockey rapidly became something of a legend. It must not have been easy to find opponents: a good deal of travelling was involved. The first team to play matches was an under-14 team, tirelessly coached from its first-year days, and seeing action in season 1971-72. The following season saw three team-members taking part in County trials and one (Philip Taylor) selected. Alyn Lamb eventually played for England, as did Mr. Clark's son Nicholas, the latter on a regular basis after leaving school. To play for the County, after that, seemed an everyday thing. In the 1980-81 season B.R.G. S. had six boys in the County under-14 team, six in the under-15's, three in the under-16's, three (including the captain) in the under- 19's. Five played for North-West of England teams, and Clark for England under-19. That in one season! In all, by 1987, B.R.G.S. hockey had produced six England players no mean achievement in a school where boys' hockey, prior to 1969, had been restricted to a few skirmishes, largely for fun.

The novelty, the almost instant success of the Head's new venture somewhat dimmed the aspects of other sports for a time. They were there, however, just the same. As new staff came, new enthusiasm would arise. Mr. Baron found a trusty lieutenant in Mr. John Maiden, who gave much-needed help with cricket. Mr. Tony Fuller was keen on cross-country, himself a runner. Mr. Hulme took an interest in badminton, which had flagged after Mr. Copley's departure. Mr. Geoff. Phillips consistently helped to push on the basketball teams to greater heights.

In soccer, our younger boys kept up the B.R.G.S. tradition of supplying a creditable number of players to the local schoolboys' team - five or six a season. The under-14 team won the "Free Press" shield in 1970, and in the 1980-81 season one under-15 boy played for Lancashire.

An attempt in season 1972-73 to revive Rugby seems to have failed. Cricket, however, kept up its strength. There, too, tradition was maintained, the school regularly supplying a respectable number of players to the local schoolboys' team. B.R.G.S. under-15 team won the Rossendale Knock-out Cup in 1980, and the following season saw two boys playing for Lancashire schoolboys. One of them, John Kershaw, played the

following season both for Lancashire and the North West of England, and the under-15 team won both the League and the Knock-out Cup. Season 1983-84 brought John Kershaw, by now in the Upper-Sixth, the distinction of captaining Lancashire Schools under- 19 team, being re-engaged as captain for the following season, and being top scorer in a North of England team. Jonathon Benn had a similar distinction the following season.

Continuity of coaching by Messrs. Baron and Phillips ensured the success of basketball teams from year to year. Playing in the North-East Lancashire League, the teams at various stages have won trophy after trophy, younger players moving up year by year to replace those who left. It has surely been one of the most successful sports B. R.G. S. has known. Eventually a girls' basketball team came into being, in the early 1980s, and in its second season this team won the newly-formed Under- 16 League. In the 1983-84 season, Alison Sutcliffe played for North and North-West England in Under- 17 teams.

A mixed badminton team emerged in the mid-seventies and survived to win a local tournament in 1984.

Another aspect of sport where both boys and girls were involved was cross-country and athletics. Sports Day had never ceased to be an important date in the B.R.G.S. calendar, albeit with a great deal less of the pomp and circumstance that had attended it in the early years. Having long since outgrown the school fields, it was from 1970 held at the Marl Pits sports area. Apart from the inter-house rivalry of the internal school sports, there has been much keener competition in recent years between schools and at County and International level.

Mrs. Wenter achieved great success in this sphere of sport with the girls. B.R.G.S. runners would represent Rossendale, and on their success at that level would depend their selection for Lancashire. In the 1975-76 season, Carol Caine was selected for the County team, Helen Graham ran for Lancashire in three successive years, and Vanessa Hamlet in two successive years. In season 1976-77 four B.R.G.S. girls including the Greenwood sisters, Heather and Alison, ran in League and National events.

With the able assistance of Miss H.A. Pretty, a former Lancashire County player, girls' hockey began to rally. The inevitable problem of Saturday jobs prevented its complete resurgence, but there was evidence of greater enthusiasm. Further assistance has come with the recent appointment to the staff of Miss Heather Bowden, formerly a keen hockey-player at B.R.G.S. A few girls have been selected for County trials, and one was recently chosen for an East Lancashire side.

The advent of Mrs. P. Kaveny in 1979 suddenly brought netball into focus. Netball had normally been regarded as a poor substitute for hockey, played by those who could not be fitted on to an over-crowded pitch. Furthermore, B.R.G.S. girls had a bad habit of playing netball to basketball rules, which created considerable confusion, particularly for an umpire not too well-versed in the rules of either game! However, some transfers from other schools were used to the game, and in quite a short time its speed and skill appealed to a good number of girls. In the 1981-82 season the second-year team won

the trophy for their section in the local league, and held it for three successive years. The Lower-sixth team won the second division of the Rossendale Ladies' Summer League for the 1986-87 season.

Netball started in town and came to B.R.G.S. Rugby Football, not a local tradition, started nearly 40 years ago at B.R.G.S. and "caught on" in Rossendale: there is now a Rossendale Rugby Club. May we hope that the Rossendale Hockey Club will keep up men S hockey even if it ceases to be played at school? The school has proved, over the years, that it has room for many varied talents in sport, and can offer a wide range of opportunities in this sphere just as in the academic areas.