

Schools Remembered

1932 to 1977

George Coward

SCHOOLS REMEMBERED 1932 - 1977

Although I said in my 'Memories 1912-46' that "the only good thing to come out of the Education Office at Barrow was my future wife Ruth", what happened *outside* was more uplifting and sometimes quite enjoyable. I refer to my possession of a motor cycle, the only motorised vehicle owned by the twelve members of the Office Staff, apart from the Director's Rover '12' EO4 004, a situation seized upon very readily by J.H.Willis Esq., Director of Education. He assumed that, in the absence of any school telephones, 'a mobile clerical assistant' would act as his 'private messenger'. He thereupon arranged for me to have access to petrol from the Corporation pump, ostensibly for calling at schools and on School Managers with urgent messages from 'His Highness'.

Getting to know the twenty seven Council School Heads and the Managers of the nine 'non-provided Roman Catholic and Church of England Schools' was a useful social experience. Often when I called at a school the Head would say, "Oh dear, what have I done wrong this time?" The slightest error in an attendance return or a mistake in a requisition for school supplies or 'over spending', was jumped on immediately and an abrasive memo demanding 'a corrected return and an apology' was sent directly to the 'offending Head'.

It was interesting for me to see how the different Heads reacted to what must have been to them 'unprofessional attacks on their competence and integrity'. Also I was able to feel how the atmosphere changed from school to school. For instance, Mr.Bond at Victoria Central ran his school like an army camp and as a consequence, suffered a mutiny amongst the male members of his staff! On the other hand, Miss E.S.Whyte at Alfred Barrow Central Girls had a happy relationship and was liked and respected by all. She would

say to me, "Here, I have amended my requisition but tell the old so-and-so I can't cut it any more".

When Willis had sent back Sister Dolores' (St.Mary's Roman Catholic School) incorrect attendance return for the second time, she told me, "This is terrible - here are the month's figures, please work it out for me and I'll sign it, for I was always hopeless at maths!"

When Miss Child, the Headteacher at the Girls Grammar School, died suddenly I had to deliver an urgent message to the Deputy Head. I was shown to her room where Miss Hillier was giving a group of girls a real old 'dressing down'. She saw me standing in the doorway but ranted on at the miscreants until red in the face, then, "Dismiss! away you go and don't let it happen again". They filed out looking very sheepish and Miss Hillier turned to me quite calmly, smiled sweetly and said, "Sorry if you were embarrassed - that was put on for their benefit. You know in this job you have to be a good actor!!"

Visiting Alfred Barrow Boys to investigate an order for new science equipment, I was told to "see the Science Teacher responsible and have the requisition 'adjusted' to the Director's limits". I saw Mr.C.M.Parker, Headmaster, and he took me down to the Labs. We had a happy relationship as he had taught me Maths. at the Grammar School along with his son Colin eight years previously. The Science master showed me around the two Labs. and I watched with interest the work being done and the busy and happy environment. Whilst the master struggled painfully to 'cut his

requirements as directed', I wished that I could change places with this chap. Little did I dream then that in twelve years, after an awful Second World War, I should have a Science Lab. of my own and the use of two more at Kirkham Grange School near Blackpool.

In one way I suppose I was fortunate being able to escape

from the restrictive atmosphere and ever-present tension in the Education Office, and often welcomed a visit to a school whatever the weather. During a thunderstorm in the Summer of 1936, I was ordered to call at Sacred Heart School with a 'Teachers Agreement Form' to be signed by the Head and the Correspondent Manager. I liked Sister Alphonsus, a fairly young nun who was always welcoming, and as I parked my motor bike near the school wall, there was a brilliant flash of lightning and the iron cross on the end of the church was struck and came crashing down into the playground a few yards away from me. I ran into school and explained that the loud bang was the cross from the church falling into the playground. I showed her the Agreement Form and as it was still raining heavily, offered to take it along to the Manager and tell him about the church cross. Now I digress: thirty years later in 1966 at Penwortham County Secondary School, the French teacher, (Mike Fenech) announced that he was to attend a conference for French Assistants at the Technical College, Barrow- in-Furness. When he returned, he came to me and said, "I have a special message for you. At the conference I sat next to Sister Alphonsus who is Head of Sacred Heart School. When I said that we had a Barrovian on the staff at Penwortham, name of George Coward, she said, "I well remember Mr.Coward, he used to call at our school. Tell him that this summer we had a thunderstorm and the lightning again knocked down the iron cross from the church. However, it has been replaced with a wooden one this time". My best friend at Penwortham, Arthur Porter (Maths) who knew of some of my wartime experiences remarked, "George's life has been made up of a series of coincidences some of which are almost beyond belief", (but Ruth told him they were all true!!)

At the end of one Christmas Term, the Director ordered me to go to St.Mary's Presbytery with a Teacher's Agreement Form and not leave until it had been completed and signed by the Correspondent. When I arrived just before noon, I was ushered in by the Irish maid who said, "The Reverend Father

is in conference but I will tell him you are here". I sat in the waiting room next to an electric fire and the maid returned bearing a tray with a glass of wine, a mince pie and a piece of Christmas cake. "With the Reverend Father's compliments and he will see you as soon as his lunch is over!! I well remember the warm room and the generous hospitality and drifted off to sleep. The maid woke me up with, "Father McKenna will see you now". I rose in a daze, looked at my watch - it was 2 o'clock and I was due at the Office at 1.15!! The Reverend McKenna apologised for keeping me waiting but I thanked him for the 'Christmas cheer' and came away with the Agreement Form duly completed. There was no Christmas spirit when I got back to the Office (having missed my own lunch) and got a blast from the boss for wasting "his and my time!!"

My aunt (by marriage) Adela Grenfell, was the Headmistress of Cambridge Street Juniors and my cousin, John Snell, was Headmaster of Roose Junior and Infants. I never once mentioned the relationship to the Director, knowing full well that he would lecture me on showing no favours to those Heads!

The school Caretakers in those days had a rent-free house built next to the school and really did 'take care', not like the present day when the Caretaker (so called) can live up to two miles from the school and often does not even know when his school has been burnt down!!

Our Caretakers were a rough-and-ready mixed bunch and arrived en masse on Friday mornings for their pay packets, cleaning materials and Izal disinfectant which had to be poured from a five gallon drum into various cans and bottles. Mr.W.N.Williams, our Supervisor of Caretakers, had quite a job serving them as the queue of thirty six stretched from the office right down the corridor towards the main entrance hall. They were a noisy lot and the Director would ring for me to tell them to be quiet or "he would send them away minus their

pay". There were a lot of rude remarks and ribald comments, hoping he might hear, but they usually calmed down. On one occasion when Mr.Williams was absent, I was instructed to take over and hand out the pay packets but "accept no requests for any materials unless the Caretaker produced the official requisition signed by the Headteacher"!!

Whilst paying out, I heard the old Caretaker of Rawlinson Street School (George Ratcliffe) say to Raymond W.Walker, Caretaker of Risedale School, "I'll be round to see you tomorrow morning to stick my elbow in one of your hives". Innocently I asked, "Why do that?" They both chortled, "It's the screws. Old George comes every six months and the bee stings get rid of his rheumatics for half a year - why don't you come round tomorrow morning and see for yourself". Why not?? So on Saturday morning, I drove up to Risedale School, parked my motor bike and walked up to the gardens where the two old boys were looking at the hives. Ray Walker said, "Come and look at these", and opened a hive to show me his 'English bees'. He then took me across to another hive with his 'Italian bees'. They swarmed out in a cloud - all over me. Those two rogues yelled, "Run for it, they can smell the others"- and did I run. I went down the lane at full speed, kicked up my motor bike and shot off up Park Drive at sixty miles an hour. That was my first encounter with bees and I called at the chemists in Roose Road who squeezed out the stings and covered them with a paste of bicarbonate of soda. A lesson that I never forgot!!

Later, Ray Walker called at the office to say he was sorry they had played a trick on me and hoped there was no ill feeling, and lent me a copy of his most precious possession. Indeed it was precious - an original copy of 'Prisoner of the Red Desert' by Lawrence of Arabia and inscribed on the title page "To my dear friend Raymond Walker, Bosun of the Monitor H.M.S.Terror without whose capable assistance this book could never have been written", signed "Lawrence of Arabia" 1916. It was a fascinating story of war in the desert

and having returned it to the Caretaker, I was unable to find another copy for myself.

THE 'POST WAR' YEARS

The war experiences are described in my "Memories", so I pass now to my other educational activities from 1946 onwards.

It was tempting to be offered the Deputy's job at Barrow but I had a horror of becoming desk-bound again so I applied and was accepted for Teacher Training College. Initially, it was one year at Bamber Bridge followed by a two year Science Teachers Course at the Harris College in Preston (now Central Lancashire University). I started to apply for Science posts and was surprised to receive two invitations for the same day, one in the morning at Balshaws Grammar School, Leyland and the other in the afternoon at Kirkham Grammar School, near Blackpool. I had to take an early train from Barrow to Preston and by bus to Leyland in order to attend both interviews on the same day. The Headmaster of Balshaws had a set of traffic lights on his study door which I thought was rather odd and when he interviewed me, I was aware of a somewhat distant and unfriendly character only interested in filling a vacancy, not at all concerned with my education or past experience, so I quickly mentioned my afternoon appointment at Kirkham. "Ah", he said, "I know Dennis Norwood. I'll give him a call". So he asked me to stay whilst he spoke to Mr.Norwood. "I've a young Science teacher here and I'm offering him the post but he is due to see you this afternoon, so please let me know the result of the interview". He then, to my surprise, said "Whatever you decide may I wish you good luck for the future"!

With that, I took a bus to Kirkham and what a difference!! I was shown into a lovely comfortable study, made to feel

welcome and "Do let's have a cup of tea before we begin". Dennis Norwood with his calm manner and cheerful expression reminded me of my father (who died when I was seventeen) and he asked me first to talk about what I had done in the Education Department, during my War service, and how my teacher training had gone. Then he asked me about sport - would I be prepared to coach cricket and rugger (which I enjoyed) and finally as an extra, take my own form for RI (of which I knew very little but would try!!) Thereupon he declared "You have just earned a new post. I'm sure you will be happy with us. I'll just tell Vic Oldland that I have captured his Science man".

Thus it was on the 12th January, 1948 I began work at Kirkham Grammar School teaching General Science to Years One, Two and Three and Physics and Chemistry to Years Four and Five. I found a good friend in Jim Howells, who had been with me in the Lower VI at Barrow but lost contact when I had to go to work at Barrow Steelworks and Jim went to University sponsored by his well-to-do relatives!

There was a sort of 'pecking order' in the staffroom at Kirkham Grammar School; the easy chairs in an arc around the fireplace were occupied solely by the Heads of Department, the next row of ordinary wooden chairs by the older staff whilst the six 'newcomers' either stood at the back or rested on the long library-style table!

However, Dennis Norwood was a real gentleman (my first impressions were justified!) He would come at 8.55 a.m., knock on the staffroom door, call "Ready for assembly gentlemen!" and we would troop out in twos led by the Deputy Head, George Barton, who was Head of Mathematics. The Head Prefect was 'on stage' and called the school to attention as the staff processed down the

aisle and up onto the stage where the chairs were arranged in two rows. Mr.Norwood usually took 'morning service' with a

short address, prayers and two hymns. He was a keen musician (as well as historian) and had valuable support from Mr.Murray, B.Mus. who was in charge of music throughout the school. If either hymn was badly rendered, Mr.Norwood would exclaim, "That was dreadful - everyone back here at 4.0 p.m. and we will practice until we get it right!!" Thus is was that good singing became a priority at Kirkham and our school choir won the trophy at Lytham Musical Festival for three years in succession!

Syd Crane was in charge of P.E. and we made a good team when he discovered that we had both served in H.M.S. Malaya during the War. He took the first teams for cricket and rugger and put me in charge of the second team rugger as coach and manager. I had to make up the fixtures, take the team by coach to play Blackpool Grammar School; St.Josephs, Blackpool; Rossall; Hutton Grammar School; Preston Grammar School and, to my amusement, to win at Balshaws Grammar School, Leyland! After Saturday morning classes, the school turned out to watch the games if played 'at home' or if played away, Syd and I had to report back to Mr.Norwood on our return and Mrs.Norwood kindly produced tea and cakes while we gave our account of 'how the match went'.

In my second year, the second fifteen won all their matches except one which was at St.Joseph's, Blackpool, in strange circumstances just before the Christmas holidays. Their second team was coached by Brother Ring, a monk in a full-length brown habit. As was the custom, the visiting coach acted as linesman and Brother Ring was the referee. Hardly had the game got under way when it began to snow. Brother Ring's habit turned from brown to white and when he blew his whistle for half-time, (Kirkham were leading by about three points), the snow was about two inches deep. We asked the two team captains if they would like to call it a draw but they both said "Play on". The second half was a disaster for Kirkham Grammar School with the snow now three or four

inches in depth. Brother Ring with frozen fingers dropped his whistle which disappeared in the snow. Whilst he was frantically poking around trying to find it, his team ran in three tries and won the game! When I reported back to Mr.Norwood, he remarked, "It could only happen like that at St.Joseph's. Anyway, it was a change to lose - it was getting to be boring winning every Saturday"!! Ha Ha!!

Our last match with Blackpool Grammar School saw a strange coincidence which was imprinted on my memory. Our team captain, Mallinson, was a big rangy forward and a strong scrummager. During the second half in a maul he was accidentally kicked in the face and the blood poured from a broken nose. I rushed him into the pavilion for first aid and 'phoned for an ambulance. It arrived in a few minutes and the driver rushed in with his two helpers and exclaimed, "Good God, it's my son" and Mr.Mallinson, whom I had met at parents evenings, took his boy off to hospital in Blackpool!

Back to school and Science lessons! The Science staff made a good team. Mr.Mobley (Physics and Head of Science) was a delightful character - wise and understanding and with a droll sense of humour. He would button-hole a boy walking down the corridor and say, "Tell me - what do you know?" Taken unawares, the usual answer was "Nothing sir!" Mr.Morley then said, "That's a great pity - come to my Lab. at 4 o'clock and you will learn something"!!

The Chemistry teachers Mr.Birdsall and later Mr.Bentley, were very friendly and helpful; only the Biology teacher was (at first) awkward and resentful of my using his Lab. for General Science. When he discovered my blackboard work and read a few of my form's lab. reports, he became quite friendly and actually congratulated me following a bout of uncontrolled mayhem in the Dining Room when I rang the ships bell for silence and warned "that the next 'loud mouth' would eat his meal standing up in the corridor". It worked well

and that bell was a blessing!

Mr.Norwood appointed me Housemaster in charge of 'Preston House', the other houses being 'School', 'Fylde', 'Lytham', 'Blackpool' and 'Kirkham'. The competition was keen! As Kirkham was a boarding school (fifty or sixty boarders and two hundred and forty day pupils), it was the practice once a month for a Housemaster to 'work the weekend' to relieve Syd Crane, Master of School House, by taking games on Saturday and School House to Kirkham Public Baths on Sunday morning followed by Prep. on Sunday afternoon. After being six years away from home, Ruth used to say "You might as well move your bed to Kirkham". However, we both enjoyed the social life, quite new to us, and often won at 'Military Whist' evenings. Mr.Norwood invited Ruth to come to our Annual Swimming Gala and present the prizes at Kirkham Baths. This was quite an occasion and the first time we had seen the 'Butterfly Stroke' in a competition. Ruth was sprayed with bath water from the 'high dives' so a large plastic sheet was wrapped round her. The presentation was made with a short speech and the Blackpool Captain (Mallinson of the 'broken nose fame') received the trophy.

Having had a successful 'Winter tour' with the second fifteen Rugby team, I was asked to take over the second eleven at cricket and also, with Mr.Stevenson, to act as umpire for Staff v Boys matches at the end of term with parents and 'friends of the school' invited. I occasionally took my young daughter, Cynthia, to watch the cricket and the athletics on 'Sports Day' which she enjoyed as a day out while Ruth did the week's shopping. The Boys often won mainly because our next door neighbours (the Gardener's family) had a son, James, who was Captain of Preston House and a 'demon bowler'. He had no difficulty in 'skittling out' most of the Staff members. However, one gallant batsman who played for the Staff was the Reverend T.L.Walsh, Vicar of Kirkham, and School Chaplain. Here again was another strange coincidence. When twenty four years later we moved

to our retirement home in the tiny village of Firsthwaite in Cumbria, we joined St.Peter's Church and in the absence of our Vicar we had an old retired Vicar to take a morning service. At the end of the service, having been appointed Churchwarden, I accompanied the visiting Vicar into the vestry and said, "I'm sure I met you a long time ago, it could have been Preston or Kirkham". He replied, "Of course, Kirkham - I was Vicar and School Chaplain". "That's right, now I remember, you played cricket for K.G.S. Staff against the school. I was umpire and gave you 'out'. You also came in a sporty car with two front bumpers covered in badges". "Ah yes!", he replied, "that was my son's doing. He collected car badges from every country he visited". From then on we had many friendly visits from the Reverend Tom Walsh.

In addition to being Master of School House and P.E. teacher, Syd Crane was a good linguist and taught French and German. He organised three school visits for thirty boys to Brittany on successive years. He invited me and another master on two occasions and I arranged for Ruth and Cynthia to accompany us.

All three visits were a great success and we became very friendly with the staff of the Hotel Beau Soleil in St.Quay Portrieux and also with the Denis family at the 'digs' in their cottage 'Etoile de Mer'. Monsieur Denis had been a merchant seaman before the War but was now retired and had a large garden. The potato patch looked rather miserable and I said, "What is wrong avec les pommes de terre?" He replied, "C'est la scarabe Colorado" - Great Scott! there were dozens of them and I told him, "If we found any in England there was a reward of ten shillings for every beetle caught and sent to the Ministry of Agriculture". "Ah", he said, "no reward here - we plant one row of potatoes for us and one row for the beetle". Ten years later, Ruth and I drove across France to collect Cynthia at the Hotel near Grenoble where she had been employed after completing her studies at Grenoble University. We returned to Brittany and called at the Hotel

Beau Soleil and were greeted by Madame Dasencourt (now eighty years old) who remembered us and greeted us warmly.

Back to school at Kirkham, Mr.Norwood asked me to take charge of the School Cadet Force with a recently re-equipped rifle range and new .22 rifles and targets. I was given the last period on Friday afternoons for target practice and it produced some very fine 'shots'. We had army-type discipline (shades of my Home Guard company!) and appointed a sergeant, corporal and lance- corporal from the Cadet Force, judged on character and results. The lads really enjoyed the practices and in competition with other Lancashire Cadets, our sergeant won the award for the best Cadet of the year.

I had a long talk with a former College friend, Jack Diamond (also ex Barrow Grammar School) who was then teaching at Ruskin School in Coniston and was a well-known fell walker and mountaineer. He said he would be willing to come to Kirkham Grammar School and meet the Fifth and Sixth form boys with the idea of forming a fell walking and climbing club. So I put the idea to Mr.Norwood who was delighted and arranged for Jack to come down and give his talk, which turned out to be a splendid account of fell walkers and climbers in the Lake District with illustrated slides.

We had no difficulty in recruiting a party of some eighteen boys who would be willing to purchase the appropriate dress and equipment and meet the expense of a holiday in Lakeland staying at Youth Hostels.

In five years, with one week at Easter, Summer and Winter, our party travelled up to Coniston and Jack led us off into the mountains. We often returned via the Langdales and called for refreshments at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel and chatted with Sid Cross, the manager, who was a very experienced climber. Lancashire Education Committee got to know of our efforts and invited Jack and me to join a party of like-minded teachers on a course at Brathay Hall to work for

a Certificate to show that we were competent and properly equipped to take school parties into the mountains. About twenty of us turned up and spent a week during the Christmas holidays out on the fells during the day and listening to lectures in the evening. The gathering included a Professor from Bristol University, a Chief Inspector of Schools (a Scot) and Inspector of P.E. for Lancashire schools. All went well until the last excursion - a climb over 'Jack's Rake' (narrow and quite dangerous) up on to 'Harrison' and the Langdale Pikes. On reaching Pike 'O Stickle, we encountered a snowstorm which became a blizzard and the Chief Inspector turned blue and collapsed. We

tried first aid treatment but it was obvious that he was exhausted and unable to walk, so we tied several army capes together as a sort of hammock and took it in turns, four of us at a time, to carry him down Dungeon Ghyll to the Old Hotel and a warm welcome from Sid Cross. What a relief when the old boy opened his eyes, regained his colour, and when asked if he would like something to drink said, "Yes please - a Drambuie would be just fine". He would not have the doctor and when fully warmed, was fit to return to Brathay Hall. However, the Professor who turned out to be in charge of the course and was driving the mini-bus in company with two cars, insisted that 'as it was our last night together', he would treat us to some refreshment at the Rothay Hotel. We got quite a shock when we reached the Hotel for he called for "drinks all round" also "hot pies" and when they called "Time" at 10 o'clock, we expected him to drive us back to Brathay Hall. But no! he was quite merry and drove us to the Swan at Grasmere. "We're O.K. here until 11 o'clock". (How did he know that?) Well we had more drinks and Jack (who rarely imbibed) was worried that the Professor wouldn't be fit enough to drive back and asked around if there was another mini-bus driver amongst us! The Professor said "Let's go" and we piled into the mini-bus and he drove out of the car park and followed the two cars back to base, forgetting to switch on his lights until we were well on the way!

On our last Summer excursion, we agreed to meet at the Y.H.A. in Ambleside ready for an attack on Esk House and Green Gable then down into Borrowdale ending at the Keswick Y.H.A. some twenty four miles in all. Leaving Ambleside, our lads spotted a fairground in full swing - "Oh sir, let's have a look round". So we all looked and our sergeant in the Cadet Force stopped at a shooting gallery with five table tennis balls bobbing up and down on jets of water. The notice read "Five shots for one shilling - three hits win a prize". Our 'best shot' paid his shilling and in quick succession shot all five balls down with five shots. The man in charge said, "Good Lord, I've never seen that done before - take one of the top prizes". Our sergeant said, "It's my mother's birthday next week so I'll take the china teaset in the large fancy box". He shared out some of his clothes from his rucksack and packed in the tea set. Jack and I tried to persuade him to accept something less bulky but his mind was made up. Off we set for the Langdale Valley, up Rossett Ghyll and past Esk House. We stopped for a rest half-way up Green Gable when our sharpshooter slipped and rolled down a grassy slope. We heard a tinkling sound when he arose and muttering under his breath, he took out the box from his rucksack. Sadly the tea set was shattered and he silently lifted a large slate and buried the broken china, rather tearfully I suspect.

At the end of the Christmas term I had applied and been appointed to Penwortham County Secondary School near Preston as Head of Science with an increase in salary. The Staff at K.G.S. gave me a happy end-of-term party and the K.G.S. Fell Walking and Mountaineering members presented me with 'Professor Skene's Flower Book' which I treasure to this day! In a way I was sorry to leave Kirkham, but having just reached forty years of age, I knew it was time for a move and a chance to build up my own department in a new school.

AND SO TO PENWORTHAM:

The new Headmaster, Mr.R.Summers, made a faux pas right at the start by calling a staff meeting for the twenty-one teachers on Thursday, 1st January, 1953 at 10.0 a.m. when all were on holiday and several out of town - a New Years Day holiday in the North and Scotland but not in the South where the Head had lived! Only a handful of Staff turned up so we had to meet again when the school actually opened on Monday, 5th January. After this unpromising start, we learned that only basic equipment had been installed such as light, power and water and sums of money were being allocated to 'each Department' for school stationery, books and equipment. For this we had to submit requisitions not exceeding in value the amount allocated. For two Laboratories and one prep. room, I received the magnificent sum of £100 which covered only basic science equipment we had to wait a long time for text books and the more expensive scientific apparatus. I was fortunate in that having worked for several years with electrical apparatus, during and after the War, I was able to construct model electric motors, dynamos, wiring boards etc. from simple materials which cost very little to make.

The chief difference between KGS and Penwortham was the type of curriculum and ultimate aims and objectives. At KGS it was 'exam orientated' and every month tests were held and the boys' results were recorded in 'Form Orders'. Each term and at the year end, the examinations were conducted in all the main subjects and the two poorest performers were demoted to a lower form and the two from the lower form were promoted. Also there was a Lower and Upper Sixth preparing pupils for University entrance.

At Penwortham, we had mixed classes with even numbers of boys and girls; groups of girls for Domestic Science, Needlework and Dressmaking, Typing and Shorthand and separate P.E. and Games teachers. In the first two years we

had no exams and during an official visit by the Director of Education, his assistant, the Chairman of the Governors and the local Inspector of Schools, I was told by Mr.Brownlee, (Inspector) rather unkindly I thought, "We don't want any Grammar School ideas here - this is a new concept, a modern curriculum and no exams"! However, he reckoned without his new Head and his Heads of Department! We could see that the pupils and parents were expecting great things from this new school and one year later, we introduced Royal Society of Arts exams. for commercial subjects and Lancashire and Yorkshire Exam. Board syllabus in all the main subjects. Five years on, we had increased in numbers from the original three hundred to six hundred and some thirty-five staff members. Terminal exams. and Reports to be ready for Parents Evenings were the order of the day and the old Lancashire and Yorkshire syllabus was scrapped and work began in each main subject on the Northern University Exam Board syllabus. So well did the new scheme work, that each year several 'top performers' were transferred to Hutton and Kirkham Grammar Schools with parental choice.

Mr.Summers was quick to realise the potential of our pupils in the middle class residential area with most parents anxious for their youngsters to 'do well at school'. He therefore had an agreement with the Head at Hutton to take into the Sixth Form any of our Fifth formers with five or more 'O' levels and so opened the doors to University for those dedicated students. I often wondered what Inspector Brownlee would have said if he knew that in one year two of our boys were accepted at Liverpool University, a girl at Belfast and the Head Prefect went into the Treasurer's

Department at Lancashire County Hall and ultimately became Assistant Treasurer. We once met in Preston and he told me that we was now making out the pay cheques for all the teachers who had taught him at Penwortham! - perhaps Mr.Brownlee's too??

Jack Diamond came to school and gave a splendid illustrated talk on fell walking and mountaineering which was well received by all the Fifth form groups. However, Mr.Summers, being in charge of a 'mixed' secondary school, for the first time objected strongly to 'mixed parties of boys and girls going on organised trips into Lakeland together', so we compromised by having two sections - the 'Boys Group' with the Head of Science and the Boys P.E. Department and the 'Girls Group' with the Head of Commercial subjects and the Girls P.E. Department. We booked at different Y.H.As and soon had two flourishing outdoor holiday groups. As at Kirkham only the keenest, well-equipped types were accepted, always with parental approval and occasionally we managed to obtain a small grant to pay the fares for a boy or girl from a poor family. One such boy was Barry Brome, who was the eldest of eleven children, a fine type who in later life became a Bombardier in the British Army. The amusing thing (for our Staff) was that for the next ten years we had a 'little Brome' in school. I never met the father, but the mother, who was immensely proud of Barry, came to Parents' Evenings and told that Mr.Brome was a plumber and always very busy! (smiles all round!!)

We kept to the same routine which had worked so well with the Kirkham boys and travelled up to the Lake District either by coach or train. On one occasion, we were to meet Jack at Windermere so the fell walkers all met at Preston Railway Station. All looked fit and well-equipped except one. He was rather a tall, languid character called Winfield who turned up in 'a pin striped suit and winkle picker shoes'. He had his rucksack for sure, but the boys roared with laughter when he appeared. When asked "What has happened", he said, "The home has had burglars who made off with my climbing boots and all my gear". Thereupon we agreed that he should come with us and 'no more cracks please about his appearance'! We met Jack as arranged and made our way to Grasmere. It was Easter and the lake looked cold but we decided to use the stepping stones at the southern end and approached in

single file. About half way across, there was a terrific gust of wind and we all knelt down to avoid the blast, but being tall and caught off balance, poor Winfield was blown into the lake. It wasn't very deep and he was quickly dragged out and helped to the far bank. He was turning blue and shivering with cold so we took off his suit and wet pullover and lent him two dry ones and told him to run ahead of us to Silver How. When we caught up with him fairly high up, he had dried out remarkably well and was happy to continue. The route took us over Silver How and into the Langdale Valley, then over the North East shoulder of Wetherlam and on to Coniston Moor on the way to the Copper Mines Youth Hostel. On the moor, we had to cross a bog with a path marked by very slippery slates. Half way across there was a loud splash and with a yell, Winfield fell into the bog. We wasn't so badly soaked this time but it was one of the highlights of that excursion and the lads got out their route maps and marked the spot on the moor as "Winnies Water".

Jack had his eye on an old tumbledown quarryman's hut on the South West shoulder of Coniston Old Man and called in a local builder (and mountaineer!) John Barr of Torver to check the feasibility of acquiring the ruin and building it into a 'climbing hut' for fell walking parties. John Barr was quite keen and

reported that it could be done and he was willing to do the dry-stone walling and beams if we could provide the roof, door and window frames. Mr. Summers was in favour and negotiated a loan of £50 from the Lancashire Education Committee (provided it was used for Lancashire Schools!). So work went on all Summer and a small rental was paid to the Land Agent and John Barr was paid too.

The following year, a door, window frames, cement and sand and corrugated roofing sheets arrived at Coniston Station. Our boys were thrilled with the idea of completing the 'Penwortham Hut' and we organised parties to meet at the

station in the Summer holidays and 'hump' everything 1,200 feet up the 'Old Man'. Great interest was aroused in the 'Hut Project' and we were given a cooking stove (paraffin burners), cans of paraffin, a chemical toilet, washhand stand with enamel bowl, a wardrobe and kitchen equipment including, cups, plates and cutlery.

One sunny afternoon we were all organised for a 'big lift' taking up the kitchen equipment. Jim Dawson (P.E.) and I were carrying the wardrobe at the front of the procession when a couple of walkers came towards us. "Great Scott", said the man, "where are you going with that, for goodness sake?" "Don't worry", replied Jim cheerfully, "the kitchen sink is coming just around the next bend". We stopped for a rest and Jim took some photos of the boys just to show how the job was done!!

We nailed on those corrugated sheets with three inch nails and thought it was a good tight roof, but the following October there were some terrific gales and the roofing sheets were blown off and deposited half way up 'the Old Man'. We went up at half term and collected them and what a job we had straightening them all again. Jack then obtained some ships hawsers from a scrapyard, a dozen iron spikes and a seven pound hammer. We fastened the hawsers over the corrugated sheets and wired them to the iron spikes. (The roof was still on twenty one years later when I retired). However, sadly, Jack died only two years after the Hut was completed (at the early age of forty six) and was buried in Torver Churchyard with a simple slate memorial shaped like Pillar Rock, one of Jack's first climbs.

We contacted a great friend of Jack's (Len Brown) who worked at Vickers in Barrow and he made a fine stainless steel plate inscribed "THE JACK DIAMOND HUT" and we had a short ceremony when we fitted the plate on the door in memory of our 'lost leader'. For ten years more Jim Dawson and I ran the club and brought in four new members of staff.

Our most valuable addition was Andrew Dalby, a classical scholar and historian, who became our chief guide and navigator. With map and compass he was 'spot on' even in foggy conditions and had a wonderful memory for train and bus timetables, which never failed us!!

On one occasion we had stayed overnight at the 'J.D.Hut' and about to set off towards Dow Crag. However, the mist had come down and Andrew said, "Let's just wait a while to see if the wind changes and the mist lifts". Jim, quite impatient to be off, put on his rucksack and said, "I'll just reconnoitre the route". A minute or so later, there was a loud yell and cries of "Help". Andrew led the way out and we discovered that Jim had walked over the rim of Cove Quarry - a hundred and fifty feet deep - but his rucksack had by a miracle caught on a tree stump some twenty feet below the rim. We collected the long climbing rope from the hut, tied a noose and managed to lasso Jim as he dangled in space. We all hauled on the rope and soon had him up with only slight cuts

and bruises, but he was shaking like a leaf, deadly white with shock, so we escorted him back to the hut for 'a brew up'. As he recovered, he told the boys who were quite shocked, "Now that's a lesson for all us - never walk out in the mist on your own and know the route before you start". He paid a fine tribute to Andrew and said, "You were right Andrew. In future I will always keep close behind you". I hope one day that Andrew might read this as it could have ended in a tragedy and we all believed Jim was saved by a miracle!!

When Jim was appointed to the Maths. Department at Bolton School, I asked the new P.E.teacher to take on the fell walkers together with the woodwork teacher and gradually gave up mountaineering. Instead I started a 'Science Club', meeting on Fridays in the main Lab. from 4.00 to 5.00 p.m.

NIGHT SCHOOL AHOY!

Shortly afterwards, the Divisional Education Authority decided to use our school from September to Easter as an Evening Institute. They advertised for a Headmaster for the seven months session at a salary of £250. As the Lancashire teachers were then earning £1,200 a year, the idea of being tied for seven months for £250 was not so attractive and only one applied. He ran it for a short time then the advertisement appeared once more with the Authority indicating that three evenings a week from 7.00 to 9.00 p.m at the current rate of £3.7.6d. per session was equivalent to the rate being paid to Certificated Teachers.

Mr.Summers was in favour of 'keeping tabs' on his school by night as well as by day, that is, supervised by one of his own Staff, so, after talking it over with my wife, I agreed to take the job for one year. In the event the salary was increased and I continued as Headteacher of Penwortham Evening Institute for five years. We enrolled seven hundred and fifty evening students (one hundred and fifty more than the Day School!) and I appointed in May each year, fifty part-time teachers. (Fifteen more than the Day School staff!) Every room in the school was used by the Evening Classes and we had problems sorting out the accommodation. When everything was working smoothly there was a full inspection by a team of Inspectors for Lancashire schools with the Divisional Education Officer. They reported that the classes were well organised and with one exception, they approved of my choice of staff. I was surprised that they singled out the teacher of the French Conversation class who came with excellent references but was an East Coast Scot. He had an excellent English accent but the H.M.s objected to "his Scottish intonation and he would have to go at the end of the session". For me a most distasteful decision. They also objected to the lighting throughout the school. In fact I had already protested to Mr.Summers that the lighting everywhere

was inadequate for evening work. The rascal had gone round with the Caretaker (Wilf Maleham) with a large basket and removed two of the sixty watt lamps from every original cluster of three!! He said "to keep within his budget". The result was the damning report from the Inspectors. Even when the missing lamp bulbs were put back, the light was still poor so I suggested that the County Council be asked to have the system checked with a light meter. Mr.Summers reluctantly agreed and two lighting experts came and I took them round the corridors and all the rooms where they took readings at desk or table level and made a detailed report. When he saw the report, the Head was speechless. In the Needlework and Dressmaking rooms, the lighting at table level was only two candle power (instead of ten) and in

the other rooms and Laboratories, it was only one candlepower!! Of course the report went to the Divisional Officer and a team of electricians descended on the school and put modern strip lighting in most of the 'work rooms' and new ceiling lights in all of the classrooms and corridors. That 'put paid' to Mr.Ronnie Summers 'economy lighting'!!

Divisional Office told me that it was 'traditional' for Evening Institutes to "put on an Exhibition of Arts and Crafts at the end of the session" and that "reasonable expenses would be met". The Art Department, Woodwork and Metalwork staff were most co-operative and between them put on a good show which we opened to the public at Easter. When I made out the list of 'reasonable expenses' for art and craft materials and some decorative plants and shrubs, I expected to be reimbursed at once in cash. Imagine my disgust when the impertinent secretary (Miss Macer) at the Divisional Office came on the 'phone and said, "Flog the Petty Cash account and if there's any more, we will pay it next session". Admin. 1960's variety!!

We collected the pennies eventually but I told them "If you want an exhibition next year, get some other Institute to do it",

and they did just that!!

BACK TO "DAY SCHOOL"

Apart from the Headmaster and Tom Crook who took care of the older remedial class of eighteen pupils, Arthur Porter, Tom Gray and I were the only ex-servicemen from the RAF and Royal Navy. Mr.Summers had been an Army Intelligence Officer in Burma and Tom in the Eighth Army in North Africa and Italy where he was severely wounded at Anzio and repatriated. We thought that the academic life at Penwortham was getting too serious and lacking in vitality and did our best to 'liven things up'.

The Chairman of Governors (old George Bath) was then over eighty years of age and took the chair at all Governors meetings and made the welcoming speech at Parents' Evenings and school special events. When on stage, old George stood at the desk with the microphone with the staff ranged in chairs behind him. Arthur and I made out little slips of paper and ran a lottery (one shilling a go!) on how long his speech would last. Arthur held the slips and I had the stopwatch.

The Chairman always began by thanking the staff for all their dedicated work but when he came to the Caretaker, he could never remember the name. Instead of Maleham we had an amusing range from Baylom to Salom and could he talk! Twenty to twenty five minutes was not unusual! For all his rhetoric, the Chairman was a great supporter of the Staff and pupils and often walked round on his own 'keeping his eye on things'. One Winter, the heat was not reaching the Labs. when suddenly the door opened and Mr.Bath appeared. "Heavens it's cold in here. What's Mr.Statham (for Maleham) doing about the heating?" He thereupon fished out a key from his waistcoat pocket and proceeded to let the air out of all the

radiators in the six Labs. which were on a separate block at the end of the heating system. As the heat slowly built up, he came to me and said, waving his radiator key, "Most useful. Every Caretaker should have one. I'll tell Mr. Slalom when I see him"!! On another occasion, he presented me with an antique Davy lamp inscribed with his father's name and dates, a survivor from one of the Wigan coal mines. I thanked him and the lamp was used to great effect in Science lessons when we were dealing with coal gas

and explosive mixtures. It was even more useful when the coal gas was phased out and we changed to natural gas in the 1970s.

The Chairman persuaded the Governors to re-equip the Gymnasium and provided body-building apparatus and a boxing ring complete with stands, ropes and sets of gloves. The Metalwork master (Tom Gray) and myself had in the past boxed as amateurs, so between us we organised the senior boys for boxing on Friday afternoons with 'two minute rounds'.

It proved very popular as all the contestants were volunteers and were taught self-defence when countering an aggressive opponent. Our most accomplished member was only fifteen when he joined and at sixteen, we entered him in the Junior Boxing Championship at Charnock Richard and he won easily. Any school bully was challenged to 'two rounds with our champion' and, as the news spread, bullying amongst the boys faded away. Sadly, to the cost of school discipline, the HMIs at the next 'General Inspection' disapproved strongly of boxing and reluctantly we were obliged to abandon the project.

The Chairman and staff members canvassed very hard for a school swimming pool which would then have cost between five and six thousand pounds. However, the Lancashire Education Authority said "much too expensive" and against all our protestations, built two squash courts which benefitted the

local adult population and the majority of our pupils were denied swimming lessons as part of the curriculum! At age ninety, Mr.Bath had a stroke but made a wonderful recovery and continued as Chairman of the School Governors until he 'retired' at ninety-four.

"THREE EAGER BEAVERS"

The Rural Science Lab. was next to mine and pupils going to the school garden and hen huts had to pass through. The Rural Science teacher (Mr.Bernard Coulton) would often send a boy to water the pot plants, feed the hens or some other task during a lesson. One such boy, always the first to volunteer, was quick off the mark but often too eager! One afternoon, Bernard said to me, "I'm just going to ask my form for a volunteer to go down to the hen's cabin. Just watch what happens". He left the door ajar and I heard him say, "I'd like a volunteer to go down to the hens", and 'eager beaver' shot past me and out of the main Lab. at full speed. A few minutes later he knocked to come back in. When I asked "What do you want", he replied, "I don't know, I forgot to ask Mr.Coulton". Bernard poked his head round the door and gave me a sly grin!

Also in the Fifth Year, in the Physics Department I had an 'eager beaver', always willing to tackle any job. He was a tall and well-proportioned sixteen year old so that when we started to measure 'horse power' and 'boy power' by work done, I asked our 'eager beaver' to go down to the Gym. and ask the P.E. teacher if we could borrow the weight-lifters bar and weights. He disappeared and shortly afterwards returned with the bar and weights which were adjusted so that a boy could lift them a certain distance in a given time. The lesson being over, I asked our volunteer if he would return the 'wagon wheels' to the Gym. and thank the P.E. master for the loan. Just as the bell sounded for break, I went down the corridor towards the Gym. where a crowd had gathered. The 'eager

'beaver' in a hurry to be first at the Tuck Shop had rammed the Gym. door at speed and smashed an eight inch hole in it. Mr.Summers and the P.E. teacher 'were not

amused'. They felt better about it when the lad offered to pay for the damage but in the event, our Woodwork teacher did a good repair job on the door.

Our third 'eager beaver' had been more than a handful at the Junior School. We learned that he had climbed onto the school roof one night and had fallen through a skylight, breaking one of his legs and was found lying on the floor by the Caretaker. When he arrived in my Lab. I kept a close eye on him, but even so, during an experiment using methylated alcohol he poured some in the sink and threw in a lighted match. He shouted "Fire" as the flame billowed out, singeing him. I grabbed the nearest fire extinguisher, put out the flames and squirted the budding arsonist for good measure. He had the good sense to return after having cleaned himself, and to apologise for his 'stupid behaviour'.

The following term, the Headmaster decided that the school should have a mini-bus. The Parent Teachers' Association had offered to give a grant towards the cost and the rest would be raised by a sponsored walk by all six hundred pupils from Penwortham along the banks of the River Ribble and back across country South of the school. All proceeded smoothly until we came to a cliff rising some thirty feet above the muddy river bank. Our 'eager beaver' (ex arsonist) stood on the cliff shouting to his form mates, "Who dares to jump off here?" They told him not to be so stupid but he took a running jump shouting "Geronimo" and dropped knee deep into the mud. The tide was coming in and the water rose to meet him. The mud held him and several of his pals climbed down and tried to free him but he was firmly held. I noticed an old boat a hundred or so yards away on the river bank and sent two boys to see if there was a rope. They were lucky and we looped it round his torso and dragged him

out of the river, covered in evil-smelling mud. I told him he could not go home on the school 'bus in that state but to run back to school and ask the Caretaker to let him clean himself up and perhaps dry off in the boiler room. The Staff were surprised when, on leaving school, he took a 'catering course' and eventually became a chef at the 'Tickled Trout' restaurant. All vowed never to dine there - but I once did, and it was a very good meal indeed! Jeremy 'made good' after all!

"LITTLE BENNY"

When I had a Third Year form, a small character known to all as 'Little Benny' would be missing from school on Friday afternoon. As I marked the register and noted his absence, "Anyone know where Benny is?" and the chorus was "Gone fishing". Now my next door neighbour in Penwortham was the School Attendance Officer so I asked him to keep an eye open for Benny. It was quite true - he had a favourite spot on the River Ribble and my neighbour caught him in the act.

About this time, exercise books, pens, pencils and rulers were disappearing mysteriously from the stationery cupboard and only the Caretaker had the key. One evening in Winter, I was working late and Mr. Maleham came and said he could hear strange noises coming from the stationery cupboard. He asked me to take the key and open the cupboard while he would go outside and check the small 12" x 10" window. I opened the cupboard door, switched on the light and saw a tiny figure hanging by his legs busy loading school stationery into a satchel. He yelled "Don't let me fall", so I grabbed him and lowered him to the floor while Mr. Maleham collared the 'holder-up'. Of course, it was 'Little

Benny' who had been pressed into service by 'Butch', a well-known local layabout who had been in trouble previously. Strange to say, 'Butch' had kept a note of all his transactions, having sold the articles to some of our pupils, and his

notebook was handed over to the Probation Officer. Benny survived with a severe 'ticking off' which was perhaps only fair!

"EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED"

The First Year Remedial Class (R1), usually sixteen or eighteen new entrants, had a well-qualified and gifted teacher (Mrs.Good) who took them for most subjects since she had been trained for that type of teaching. Some were of low IQ but occasionally, there appeared poor achievers who would do well with the proper encouragement. Such a one was Billy Coulston who could not read at eleven years and could barely write his own name. He was almost angelic in appearance - a round smiling face, blue eyes and a mop of fine golden curls. The residents of R1 made fun with Billy and one afternoon while teacher left the room for a minute or two, they pushed Billy into a cupboard and locked the door. It was almost home time - the class all stood, said a little prayer and dismissed. As teacher was about to leave the classroom, she heard a faint knocking sound from the cupboard. When she opened it, Billy was in tears and had been too afraid to cry out. Mrs.Good comforted him, then sent him on his way home thinking surely now he will be alright. Ten minutes later, Billy was back in the charge of an irate householder who alleged that "This innocent looking kid has thrown half a brick through my front window". How frustration can build up unsuspected aggression in such a normally gentle being! Billy progressed from R1 to R2. then rapidly up the school and did well in the exams in the Fifth Year. Some years later, just before the end of afternoon school, there was a knock on the Lab. door. I was surprised to find a fine six footer there. "Remember me?", he said. "Of course", those bright blue eyes and tight curly blonde hair, "you must be Billy Coulston". He told me he had called to see 'his old teachers' and to thank them for what they had done for him! He had trained at Whittington Hospital near Preston and was now an SRN and in charge of one of the men's wards. We went to see the Headmaster and he agreed

that Billy could come and give a talk to the Fifth Year about his work at the Hospital and his future prospects. He came and his talk was a new experience for our school leavers who enjoyed the occasion and asked lots of questions at the close.

SCIENCE MUSEUM - THAT WAS!

The Rural Science teacher and myself had collected quite a number of unusual specimens and we agreed to set up a 'native museum' on a set of shelves in the R.S.Lab. I had two dried scorpions (one yellow and one red) and some locusts from North Africa, all in plastic boxes. We had also green lizards from Italy, a grass snake and an adder, some elephants' teeth and skulls of mice, cats, dogs, sheep and horses which the Biology Department made use of. In the large General Science Lab. there were two tanks, one with tropical fish and the other with goldfish.

Returning from holiday after Christmas, I went up to the Labs. before school re-opened and was dismayed to find the 'museum' shelves empty and the tropical fish lying dead on the bottom of the tank. The goldfish were still alive and as the Caretaker had agreed to feed them, I hurried down to see what had

happened. My first thoughts were of a 'power cut' and the Headmaster starting his spring cleaning early. The Caretaker was rather shamefaced and said, "The Headmaster came down in the holiday and switched off all the power points including the Labs. to economise on electricity". Then he ordered the Caretaker to take the trolley with a bin and remove all the 'old stuff' from the shelves in the R.S.Lab. All had gone in the waste collection and ironically it included a beautiful case of tropical butterflies from Malaysia presented to the school by the Headmaster's 'best friend'. We seldom had cause for complaint but this time I really 'had a go' at the Head and told him how his interference and 'false economy'

had infuriated the whole of the Science Department and was a slur on the goodwill of his 'best friend'. He had the decency to apologise and offered to restock the tropical fish tank but it took a long time for the Science Department to forgive him.

The Deputy Head, who had also been a Science Teacher, was equally disgusted and remarked, "You know what Ronnie's big failing is? It's not that he's mean or cheeeseparing, he's downright parsimonious", which became a catchword amongst the WHOLE PENWORTHAM STAFF.

Some time later, my pal Arthur Porter and I decided to ask the Head if he would agree to us running a 'Draw' on the results of the Grand National to be run at Aintree. He surprised us by saying, "Go ahead and save me a ticket". Arthur went round collecting the shillings and I made out the draw tickets. When Arthur asked the Head for one shilling for the horse he had drawn, "Sorry I don't carry any spare change, ask the school secretary", but he kept the ticket!

To be considered 'fair and above board', we asked the popular Domestic Science teacher to draw the names and numbers and by some strange trick of fate, drew the winning horse (last out) for herself, the second was mine and Arthur had the third! Loud cries of "fiddle" and "fix" but everyone knew it was just a 'fluke' because it is almost impossible to forecast one winner in the National, never mind three!! By the time the 'Derby' came round, we let the Head make the draw with much less embarrassing results for the Promoters!!

THREE PROBLEM BOYS

One of my Science pupils, I shall call 'M', leaving the Lab. at the end of afternoon school tripped over his satchel and rolled down two flights of stone steps. He was badly hurt and lay quite still, so I kept watch while one of the Staff ran to telephone for an ambulance. It arrived quite quickly and the

men were pleased that we had not attempted to move him. It was a long time before he returned to school. I had a shock when he handed me a letter and a cardboard box. The letter was addressed to me and stated that "M. has developed diabetes as the result of his fall and as I was his Science master, would I please give him his insulin injections. It's all in the box". The Headmaster was quite as shocked as me and I waited while he telephoned the School Medical Officer and arranged for the school nurse to come and give 'M' his injection. (I suppose nowadays the school would be sued).

On a warm Summer afternoon with all quiet within, I heard a loud banging in the cycle shed right outside the Physics Lab. Wondering what could be wrong, I left the class all working on a problem and went around to see what whas happening. What a

strange sight it was. Kneeling down by the side of a very handsome bicycle was 'H', a Fourth Year boy from the farm in the adjoining field. He had a seven pound hammer in his right hand and was hammering a six inch nail through the valve of the rear wheel and so fastening the bicycle to the concrete base. I shouted, "Stop that at once - what is going on here". "Oh sir" and weeping, he dropped his hammer and stood up. "It's all Jack W's fault. He beat me up before school this morning. He's bigger than me so I'm paying him back by wrecking his bike". We put a stop to the bullying but 'H', the farmer's boy, had to buy a new rear wheel for Jack's bike.

Our Chief Biologist was a good teacher with a practical approach to the subject and we had made up a programme of outdoor activities and school visits. The Fifth Year had already visited the town's reservoirs and water processing plants when he asked if I would accompany him with the boys' group to the Public Abbatoir. As this was an entirely new venture, I readily agreed and suitably clad, we hired a coach and parked just inside the main gates of the building. A guide met us and took our party to the cattle pens at the rear of the

building. He was a clear speaker and as we moved through the series of buildings, he described each process and obviously knew how it all worked. The boys were undaunted by the slaughter process and flensing of the carcasses in rapid succession. The huge refrigerator rooms with carcasses swinging from pulleys travelling around the building gave quite a spectacle of a small part of the nation's food supply. Thanking the guide, we climbed back into the coach and fortunately, (though unfortunately for someone), our Biologist stood up at the front and asked the driver to wait a few minutes while he asked a few questions about what the boys had seen and remembered. As he spoke, there was a banging on the front door of the coach and a red-faced operative brandishing a knife then leapt into the coach! Our Biologist asked him if anything was wrong and he exploded, "Yes it is!! One of these jokers here has nicked two of these flensing knives, sharper than a razor and very dangerous". I stood up and said, "Mr.'R'. will start at the front, I will start at the rear and we will strip every boy one at a time until we find those knives". There was dead silence for a moment, then a boy stood up, walked to the front of the coach and pulled up his trousers and said, "Are these what you are looking for?" He had pushed the knives down each of his stockings and managed to avoid cutting his legs. The man took the knives and threatened, "You haven't heard the last of this"!

We reported the matter to the Headmaster who said the boy must write a letter admitting the theft and making an apology. However, two days later we received a letter from the Town Clerk's Department telling us 'in legal terms' that in future our school would be banned from visits to any of the Corporation's institutions. A copy was also being forwarded to the Chief Education Officer giving reasons for the ban. The Head was furious and decided that "as the boy was responsible, he should be punished and as Head of Science, I should interview his parents and ask whether the school or his father should mete out the punishment". When I arrived at the home, the mother (whom I recognised from parents'

evenings) invited me in. She said her husband would be home shortly from the Electricity Works so I awaited his arrival. His lad had not told them anything and both were shocked when I showed them the letter banning our school from visits including the Electricity Works where he was employed. "Tell Mr.Summers I will deal with my son". What happened after that we were not informed, but the boy was withdrawn from school and no more was heard of him, but that 'ban' lasted for three years more!!

WHO IS THAT MAN??

The first case of mistaken identity occurred thus:

One sunny day, a lorry arrived at school with four beehives. Apparently they were a gift from the County Agricultural Committee complete with bees and ancillary equipment. The Head of Maths. volunteered to take care of them (as his father had once kept bees) but the Rural Science man would (for reasons unknown) not go near them. Also before the War, I had had an encounter with a swarm of angry bees (Memories 1912-46) and was at least wary of them.

One hot Summer's day, just before break, I was walking down the corridor towards the main entrance when a man hurried in with a rather bloated face and I asked "Do you want someone?" "It's me Smithy, I've been stung". I rang to tell the Head and the Deputy ran out, collected Mr.Smith and rushed in his car to the nearest chemist who removed the stings and treated his face, neck and head with a paste of sodium bicarbonate. We learned later that our beekeeper had seen a swarm leave the hive and settle on a nearby apple tree. He grabbed a box, gloves and net, but before he could put them on, they suddenly settled on his head with disastrous results! When he was appointed to a Headship soon afterwards, Mr.Summers asked the Science Staff for a volunteer to "take over the bees". No one volunteered so I suggested to the

Head that if Mr.Wan Good, a local teacher and beekeeper who had lived in China and Burma, could be persuaded to come and give a series of demonstrations in practical beekeeping, I would consider taking them on!

His wife, Mrs.Good, was in charge of Remedial Year One and acted as go-between for school and her husband. Mr.Good came after school on Fridays; no doubt he was an expert and I soon learned to recognise queens, workers and drones and how to handle them confidently and without being stung.

"FIERY JACK"

We were all sorry to see our Rural Science man (Bernard Coulton) leave for a Headship at Poulton-le-Fylde. His successor was appointed by a committee of Governors together with the Headmaster. For the first time in years, I was absent from school for two weeks with a severe bout of influenza and missed the new appointment. When I returned to school, I walked towards my Lab. and was met by a group of my Fifth Form. "Morning Sir! You won't like what you will see inside your Lab." The sight of my former spick and span No.1.Laboratory, the 'pride and joy' of our cleaner (Mrs.Diggle) was a burnt out shell. Only the roller type blackboard at the far end had escaped and two of my boys who were ART STUDENTS had made a life size drawing of a character called "Fiery Jack" (see the reproduction) who was busy setting fire to the Lab. They told me, before I could speak to the Head or the new teacher, that he had attempted to 'brew up' on the window sill and leaving the Lab., the wind had blown the curtains over his camping gas cooker and caught fire. The Lab. was well alright when the Fire Brigade arrived and put out the blaze.

"Jack" was a short, 'Charlie Chaplinesque' figure with baggy trousers and oversize wellington boots. I realised at

once that he was quite out of his depth in our Science Team and he opted out of most voluntary tasks. The committee had engaged him for one year's probationary service. A few months after the big fire, he spilled a Winchester of methylated spirit in the Rural Sciences Lab. and set fire to the bench. Luckily we were able to contain the fire using the extinguishers. At the 'full inspection' after the fires "Jack" was asked to 'look for another post' and left at the end of his probationary year! (Fired??)

EDUCATIONAL VISITS - IN 'SCHOOL TIME'

Having been 'banned' from visits to local Electricity Works and Water Works because of one boy's folly in attempting to steal knives from the local Abattoir, I started to look further afield. Together with my close friend Arthur Porter, we organised a series of school visits during the Summer Term. These were in addition to the 'holiday outings' by the Fell Walking and Mountaineering Club to the Lake District and, by kind permission of the Headmaster, were held in 'school time', duly certificated and insured.

The Fifth Year excursion was to Jodrell Bank where we met Sir Bernard Lovell and his staff. We listened to the illustrated lecture and learned a great deal about the stars and use of the radio telescope. From there we went to Manchester Airport and settled in the visitors lounge with splendid views of the planes landing and taking off. A well-dressed official-looking man approached us and asked if we were in charge of these young people. Wondering what was coming next, we answered "Yes, a Fifth Year from from Penwortham near Preston". "Good", he replied. "I am the Agent for 'The Rolling Stones' pop group and I will pay each one £1 if they will come down and cheer the Rolling Stones as they leave the plane. The photographers are all there and I have permission to organise the crowd scene".

Of course 'our lot' were delighted at the prospect and would gladly, given the opportunity, have cheered the pop group for the fun of it. In the event the plane stopped right in front of us, but the Rolling Stones had to come down the steps three or four times, waving and being cheered 'before they got it right'. We saw it later that night on T.V. but they had edited the film because the group and our cheering Fifth Year appeared only once!!

Having learned that the B.N.F.L. were allowing school parties to visit the Windscale and Culder Works at Sellafield, Arthur and I organised a coach trip at the end of a Summer term. Our driver took the scenic route up the winding, undulating West coast road and had to stop frequently as the violent up and down movement upset quite a number of stomachs! At Sellafield, we were shown into reception and calmed down by a lady who welcomed us and gave us a talk on what we would see. Then, suitably 'kitted out' to prevent contamination by dust particles, we were escorted by a guide around the works to see operators handling radioactive substances by remote control. Finally we ascended to the top of No.2. Reactor Pile. Suddenly as the guide was explaining how the control rods were used, there was a 'Red Alert' and red lights started flashing. The guide shouted, "Quickly everyone downstairs. It's a radiation leak". We hurried back to the 'decontamination room' and into the Reception Area. Quite an exciting and novel experience for all of us. Often in the future I wondered if it really had been 'a leak' or whether it was just a 'practice run' for the benefit of visitors.

Another exploit, a 'one-off' for most of our Penwortham pupils, was a Third Form visit to Vickers Shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness to see the launch of the first atomic submarine to be

christened "Dreadnought" and launched by H.M. the Queen. My brother, who was a foreman, had worked on Dreadnought

from the beginning and arranged for our party to be close to the launching platform to get a good view and take some photos (if allowed). As it happened, the notices said "No cameras allowed in the Yard" so we left them in the coach. However, the good news was that we were positioned right in front of Dreadnought's bows and sheltered by the tall launching platform from a sudden shower of rain. Our party were delighted when the Duke of Edinburgh, who had been standing next to the Queen, leaned right over the balcony and shouted, "Hello down there! Are you managing to keep out of the rain?" They all chorused, "Yes, thank you your Highness", a simple little incident but long to be remembered!! The photograph of our party in the coach, returning from Barrow, has been reproduced from the original taken thirty years ago.

"GOING COMPREHENSIVE"

For a long time our school had been growing year by year until it became a 'six form entry' with nine hundred pupils and more than fifty staff. In the 1970s rumours were rife that the Lancashire Secondary Schools were all to 'go Comprehensive'. We had heard of schools where the Staff had to be re-deployed and in some cases became redundant. So, towards the end of March, I used one of my Lancashire Education Department letterheads and typed a message "To Staff Members of Lancashire Maintained Secondary Schools" notifying them that on re-organisation, all Staff members engagements would end and they must apply for reinstatement at the new school, and I dated it 1st APRIL, 1974. I put it up on the Staff Noticeboard early on the morning of the 1st April and the Music Teacher, who was the first to arrive, read it and said to me, "I'm going to protest - this notice is a disgrace. I've been a Music Teacher for nearly twenty years - they can't do this to me!!" As more members drifted in, the arguments increased but my pal Arthur came over to me and said, "Was it you??" I replied, "Who else? just look at the DATE". He came back laughing just as the Head came in and read it. "Funny", said he, "I've not had that notice

officially". "No", whispered Arthur, "it's dated today!!". The Head came over to me grinning, "I should've known - it was bound to be one of you two to pull an 'April Fool' on the Staff and it seems to have worked very well!!" But the Staff were mortified at being 'April Fooled' and had it in for Arthur and me and at the end of term when reports were being made out, they concocted two outrageous ones with rude remarks for every subject and pinned them up on the Staff Noticeboard. They really were very funny, so we had a good laugh and decided to 'call it quits'.

Then began the most traumatic period in our school life. The whole school was invaded by scores of workmen and I could not have anticipated that they would even attempt to remodel the classrooms to make them 'OPEN PLAN' and to do away with all the corridors WHILE THE PUPILS WERE STILL IN THEM. The noise, dust and smoke created a terrible problem and the Head, who had suffered with asthma, had to walk round school wearing a surgical mask. On one occasion, I had to take a form in the lower school when three pneumatic drills opened up just as I began the lesson - one on the roof and two outside. I rushed out of the room and went straight to the Head's study. "I thought you had an agreement with the contractors only to use the drills after 4 o'clock!" He replied "Because its Friday they are in a hurry to finish those rooms today". "Right", said I, "in that case, I'm taking my form for a 'nature walk' in the woods and we won't be back until 4 o'clock".

The contractor consistently ignored the Headmaster's requests and for the whole of the Summer term we suffered from the noise and air pollution. We did not need to apply for the posts in the new school after all the rumours and in some cases mental anxiety.

Apart from the change of name to Penwortham Priory High

School, with the extensions, a new Fifth and Sixth Form block and a new Science building with six new Labs., two 'prep rooms' and a central office with a desk and easy chair and a plaque on the door 'Head of Science', I had been provided with a desk and chair but I rarely sat there for more than a few minutes. As soon as I brought out some marking or changes in timetable or requisition forms, the Head would come in, "Ah there you are, now you have a free moment come along, something important has come up". It was always the same, free periods or what is euphemistically called 'non contact time' was outside my experience. There was always some teacher absent or on a course somewhere and no 'supply teachers' were ever available when required. I had looked forward to my last year 1976-77, thinking that surely things are bound to improve, when one of my male assistants (Physics and Chemistry 'O' level) developed Hepatitis B and was absent for two terms. There was no one available to take his two 'O' level forms so I had to take them on in addition to my own exam forms.

Bearing in mind that the school was now being enlarged from nine hundred to twelve hundred places and forty-five to seventy- five Staff members, the speed with which the changes were made were, for the older Staff, mind-boggling. I have often been asked what was it like for the Staff changing to a completely new system after twenty years in a stable environment. To answer in only one word, it was 'traumatic', and I will attempt to explain why this was so from the point of view of the Head of a Department (Science), House Master and full time teacher for twenty-five years.

Perhaps the easiest way to explain what the changeover meant in the 1970s, would be a comparative statement showing the relative strengths and weaknesses as perceived at that time:-

County Secondary

Staffing: 45

Meet in one room. Family atmosphere. Morning Assembly: all attend short prayers, hymn and notices. Form teachers take turns on stage at the lectern.

Pupils: 300 boys/300 girls

Arrival at school. Lines in playground. 4 staff on playground duty. Entry to school by single file. Inspection of hands and footwear. (Dirty ones to toilet block for cleaning). Corridors and classrooms clean and tidy. Caretaker and cleaners contented. No litter or graffiti.

Form rooms

Self contained: door to corridor with 'porthole'. Quiet. Easy to concentrate. Practical rooms: Boys: Woodwork and metalwork basic tools and machinery. Domestic Science (Girls) 2 large rooms and flat for 4 girls at one time.

Lessons

"Class teaching". Set curriculum, limited choice for pupils. No calculators or computers. Shortage of text books. Good blackboard technique essential.

Laboratories

3 plus 1 prep room. Basic equipment. Technical apparatus mostly 'home made'. Safety equipment: 2 Fire extinguishers and 1 asbestos blanket only. Shortage of text books and work sheets.

Sport and Fitness

Gym: Boys: basic equipment. Table of exercises/basketball

and football practice. Girls: wallbars, netball, music and movement.

Games

House system: 6 Houses. Encourages loyalty to House and Captain. Competition between Houses encourages excellence. Everyone must take part (unless ill/infirm). Annual Sports: Silver Trophy (Governors) awarded each year. Playground: Games and Break supervised by staff.

School Meals

2 sittings. Staff sat at tables with pupils. Table manners checked and meal eaten quietly. Discipline and behaviour good.

"Correction" and Punishment agreed with Headmaster. Headmaster: serious offence - bullying, theft, attack on teacher - either cane or parents called on. Heads of Department: Detention for minor offences - bad work/rudeness. More serious - cheating, lying - slipper! Girls: usually detention or extra work.

County Comprehensive (at the changeover)

Staffing: 75 Too many for one room - segregated.

Assembly main hall and also in Gym. 18 new teachers 'agnostics' refused to attend assembly. Heads of Department to take two forms each. Notices but no hymns.

Pupils: 600 boys/600 girls

Arrival: 'en masse'. Like a football crowd. No lines. Mass entry. No inspection of hands and footwear. Muddy tracks down corridors and into classrooms. Parquet flooring of Hall

and Gym in a mess. Caretaker and cleaners mutinous. Litter scattered everywhere. Graffiti on walls for first time in 20 years.

Form Rooms

'Open plan'. Constant movement in and out. No corridor - open to fields. Lack of concentration.

Design and Technology: Many expensive machines and new techniques.

One Group: Girls 'Home Economics' (No cooking and Housecraft - flat closed)

Lessons

'Selected groups'. Wide curriculum with pupil able to choose. Calculators allowed in maths lessons and exams. Also computers available for group work. Work sheets, folders and text books available. Minimum use of blackboard.

Laboratories

6 plus 2 prep rooms. Expensive equipment: 'Nuffield' science. Technical apparatus available. Safety: Goggles and gloves for pupils and staff. Extinguishers for (1) electrical and (2) gas/normal fires. No shortage books/work sheets.

Sport and Fitness

Gym: Group work but pupils can 'opt out'. Video programmes available - 'rhythmic exercises'. Modern lightweight equipment. No boxing or weight lifting but Judo allowed. No House system - Year Groups. No loyalty to year group. No competition lack-lustre performance. Pupils can 'opt out' of all games. Playground: No organised games. No supervision by staff at break.

School Meals

3 or 4 sittings: Staff absent. Paid part-time dinner ladies. No discipline. Rowdy sessions. Behaviour lax. Table manners not checked.

Punishment

No cane or slipper allowed. No detention. 10 buses at 3.15 then due at local works 4.0 p.m. For non-serious offences, extra work could be set but the new policy is 'pastoral care' - 'phone calls or staff visits to parents of offending pupils (in their own time!)

Of course that was twenty years ago!! I blamed the sudden change from a small school with experienced teachers and a strong code of imposed discipline to a large school with many new inexperienced teachers and a 'go-as-you-please' mentality and the hope that pupil 'self-discipline' might eventually take place.

On the occasion of the school's 40th Birthday, I revisited the school and met staff, pupils and 'old scholars'. Everything had changed for the better. I did a tour with my former Head of Biology and saw the well-equipped Labs. and high-tech. apparatus. The atmosphere was a happy one and as for academic results, the Penwortham Priory High School came high up in those (controversial) League Tables. Ruth and I came away with the feeling that here was a well organised school offering wonderful opportunities for all pupils who were willing to give of their best and put to good use such talents as they possessed.

RETIREMENT LOOMS AHEAD

After searching in the Summer holidays, we found our

retirement bungalow at Firstthwaite, so we moved (at least Ruth did!) on 31st October, 1976 eight months before I was due to retire. I went into digs at Penwortham until Christmas, and then in New Longton until July 1977. I came home by train at weekends and Ruth met me with the car at 5.00 p.m. on Fridays and took me back to Grange Station at 7.0 a.m. on Monday. Ruth being on her own got to know the local folk but worked herself to a standstill, painting, decorating and tiling as the bungalow was unfinished.

At the end of the Summer term, the Headmaster discussed my retirement and asked "Would I prefer a wallet and cheque, or a gold watch?" He was taken aback when I replied, "Thank you but no! I would much prefer a beehive and a colony of bees". He was lost for a moment and then said, "Of course, Wan Good - the beekeeper, I'll ask Mrs. Good (on the Staff) to make enquiries".

When the day of my departure arrived, the Staff were all 'on' stage' and the school crowded into the Main Hall with my Form in front. The Headmaster said a few words suitable for the occasion and gave me the envelope containing the receipt for the beehive. Then from the Science Department a sealed box, "to be opened only when I arrived home". My Lab. Assistant (and her husband, a former pupil!) knowing of my appointment as a Churchwarden; a Revised English Bible. My own form; an International Sea and Lake fishing rod and reel. The four girls from my Physics group who had gained 'O' level Physics, an inscribed tankard. I made a short speech of thanks and the school gave me 'three cheers' and waving farewell, I departed with the feeling I had had some thirty years previously as I was 'demobbed' from the Royal Navy - "so this is it - the end of another era".

