'REMEMBERED WITH ADVANTAGES'

BRIGG GRAMMAR SCHOOL 1941 – 48: MEMOIRS

My dictionary defines 'Memoirs' as 'a written account of one's memory of certain events and people, so at least I'm starting on the right lines. Somehow in the late spring of 1941 I had nearly passed the Scholarship examination and been put on the 'interview' list. I paid my first official visit to Brigg Grammar School some few weeks later and, having been interviewed by three people and having read certain passages and answered questions on them, I was awarded a Lindsey Junior Scholarship. I still have the certificate, signed by 'F.J.Birkbeck', which confirms it was tenable at 'Brigg Grammar'. My parents were pleased, especially my father, who dreamed I might have opportunities he had never had. He had never taken an examination in his life: he was an experienced driver when driving tests were introduced and I'm not counting any tests he took as a Special Constable during the war to see if he were competent to deal with gas contamination. I was the first in our immediate family to have a full secondary education, since my father had left school at fourteen and five years later he was in France, wounded at Ypres. Nor did I have any close family members who had been to Grammar School to give me some hints of what I might expect.

As a pupil at Glebe Road School I derided and despised most 'grammer gogs' – definitely 'er' in our pronunciation. I was familiar with the badged blazer, badged cap, grey trousers, grey or white shirt and school tie that comprised the uniform. Safe in a group of contemporaries, I shouted scornful epithets at the 'grammer gogs' I passed on our respective ways to school. Occasionally we would try to snatch the cap of some small, inoffensive junior and then play football with it in the dusty street. From the vantage point of the choir stalls at St. John's Parish Church I surveyed the assembled ranks of the boarders who had to attend Matins each Sunday in term time. They were usually accompanied by the slight, tonsured figure of J.T. Daughton, the Headmaster. He in turn was often accompanied by the imposingly large and behatted Mrs Daughton, who could have been cast as Violet Elizabeth's mother in the 'Just William' stories. Rarely did their daughter Betty come, since I think she went away to school, and Mr Gaze, the master in the boarding house, came only in the absence of the Head. I smirked in disdain as the boarders were crocodiled back to School House after the service with the senior boys as prefects chivvying and snapping at the younger ones to keep in line and keep up, just as if they were a flock of sheep being coerced by sheepdogs.

I had also had closer and potentially more dangerous connections before I became a member of the School. As a nine/ten year old I often played in the area of rough ground behind Woodbine Avenue that adjoined the Grammar School playing field. Because there were venerable, climbable trees from which we had hung swinging ropes just on the other side of the dividing hedge, we often strayed through the hedge to play on the school field. The boarders naturally strongly resented these incursions on to their land and tried to take retaliatory action. But we had a clear view of the approach of any vengeful group from the boarding house across the field and could easily slip away and take refuge in the back garden of one of our number who lived in Woodbine Avenue: here we were untouchable. However, on one occasion, using a clever strategy, the party of boarders thirsting for revenge went the long way round by Glebe Road and planned to come at us from the rear. Fortunately we were warned in time and managed to reach the haven of the back garden. The boarders were livid in their frustration, as from a safe twenty feet distance we hurled abuse at each other: they were 'snooty grammer gogs' and we were 'snotty council house oicks'. It was a stand-off and at last they departed. As they made their way over the rough ground to the school field, they spotted a den we had made. Their enraged leader (whom I later learned was Johnny Duerdin – I kept out of his way at BGS) took great pleasure in trashing it before being the last to make his way back to the boarding house.

And so it was in the summer of 1941 I was still a 'council house oick' but also an incipient 'grammer gog'. I had visited Walter Shaw's shop in the Market Place and been fitted out with blazer, new short grey trousers, grey socks topped with two rings of dark and light blue and a school tie of the same colours. There was also a navy blue cap, bearing the escutcheon of the Nelthorpe family with a gold crescent on the left and in the middle an upright, jewelled sword on which was superimposed a small shield, featuring what I later discovered was 'the bloody hand of Ulster'. I also had a quartered football shirt that was a hand-me-down from Billy McKaill, who lived in Central Square and who had outgrown it. Cash's name tapes had been purchased ready for my mother to sew on everything I was to take to school. Secretly I was impressed to see my name 'John A. Rhodes' in bold red capitals and repeated some forty times on the narrow, white tape.

Brigg Grammar School was the making of me, even if it took some years. Yet it was literally very nearly the death of me, before my first term started. My friend, John Rands, was already at BGS in the prep. department and so was able to use the swimming bath during the summer holidays. The bath was open on occasions in the morning, though there was never any adult supervision. Dad, who sang in the Brigg Choral Society of which Daughton the Head was a member, had been granted permission for me to use the bath too. One August morning John Rands and I went along. There were some eight much bigger boys there already; all were Brigg lads and therefore 'Anchors', members of the House I was destined to join. Some were in the pool, which was surrounded by a large wooden fence, while others were standing around the sides. The deep, six foot end was nearer the rudimentary wooden changing room and the shallow 3' 6"end

was some fifteen yards down the bath. We changed and I emerged in a woollen, knitted costume somewhat apprehensively. I had never been in water deeper than the eighteen inches of the Scarborough boating/paddling lake. It wasn't a particularly sunny morning and, nervously hugging my towel, I stared at the dark, unwelcoming water. Suddenly my towel was snatched away from me and I was given a sharp push. I was taken completely by surprise and with an almighty splash I found myself totally immersed in water. I had been standing near the deep end and was well out of my depth. I rose to the surface once, spluttering, frantically beating my arms and gasping for breath. I was sinking for the third time when someone had the presence of mind to grab me and haul me up and I was helped to scramble out of the bath, breathless, shaken and water in every orifice. I lay by the side of the pool, coughing, panting to get my breath back and ashen faced. It is well over sixty years since that episode, but I have never gained any confidence or pleasure in being immersed in water: I remain the only one in my family who can't swim and has no real desire to do so. It could so easily have ended in tragedy, but I had survived.

Thus early in September, kitted out in my new school uniform and running a gauntlet of taunts from my erstwhile classmates at Glebe Road School, I made my way up the drive from Grammar School Road, round the Physics lab corner and into the main quadrangle. I stood in a group of equally nervous newcomers and looked around me in dazed awe. The bigger boys were really young men, nearly eighteen years old. I had never seen so many older boys together before and was both impressed and perturbed, for we had been fed pernicious rumours of how new boys were ceremoniously initiated into the school by having their heads ducked in the sinks of the cloakrooms or plunged down a basin in the toilets and the chain pulled. A gowned master appeared and with the help of prefects we new boys were shepherded into the School Hall. This was in reality two classrooms with a dividing partition concertinaed back against the wall. There was a small dais, a grand piano under a green baize cover and on the wall a large painting of Sir John Nelthorpe in mid-seventeenth century armour. It was he who had caused the School to be founded in 1669. In 1941 the School numbered 324, of whom just over sixty were new boys like myself. The catchment area was from Scunthorpe in the west to near Grimsby in the east, from Ferriby in the north to Hemswell and Grayingham in the south, with the boarders from even further afield.

We had already been graded into forms and when the names were read out, I found myself allocated to 3A along with 33 other boys. Our form room was an old wooden army hut away from main school, beyond the swimming bath and adjoining the back gardens of the houses in Glebe Road. Tradition held that all the huts (1A and 2A in the prep department were housed in the other double hut) had been condemned after the end of the First World War. Our form teacher was Mr Pratt. The hut was raised up on a brick stand and we ascended by three steps. There was a blackboard affixed to the end wall and this was supplemented by a freestanding board and easel. Thirty odd heavy wooden desks with seats attached were arranged in pairs. There was a large, locked cupboard containing fresh exercise books and other items. On top of this cupboard were half a dozen or so solid geometrical shapes in wood and painted battleship grey – square, cylinder, cone and two strange beasts we were told were tetrahedron and octahedron. I can't remember if a rare dodecahedron lurked in the background. The master's desk stood at the front not far from the main feature of the room – a cast iron, enclosed coke stove with its attendant coke-scuttle and small shovel and surrounded by a large mesh guard. We had electric light, but this was our sole source of heat. There was a small detachable piece in the top of the stove, whose metal flue went up and through the roof, and the monster was fed by means of this hole. Near the base was a hinged flap through which it could be riddled. On winter mornings grey/black smoke billowed into the air. We couldn't control the temperature – we shivered or overheated – and the atmosphere was often flavoured with gaseous fumes. Sometimes the stove became overheated if the flue was left open and the cast iron casing would glow red hot. This was useful at morning break (for we could remain in the form room unsupervised) because Jack Clark sold penny buns, fresh every morning from Lyon's bakery. Jack Clark's was recognised as the unofficial School Tuck Shop and was situated opposite the School on the other side of Grammar School Road. When the bell rang for morning break there was a rush pall mall, a mad dash heedlessly across the road to wait our turn in a disorderly queue for our bun – usually singular, because there was a war on. Members of 3A could take their bun back to their form room and having broken it in half and impaled the half on a fully opened compass point could toast it against the stove, once the guard had been temporarily removed and the bottom aperture opened. The old fashioned brass compasses made ideal toasting forks and the lesson after break was conducted in an atmosphere redolent of fresh toast from October to Easter.

Many things about BGS were new and sometimes inconvenient, but we bore them all with a true Lincolnshire stoicism. The school day was from 9a.m. to 12.45 with a short morning break and from 2p.m. to 3.30p.m., but the school week was different: we attended on Saturday mornings (12.30 finish) and had Wednesday afternoons free. This was largely to make life more tolerable for the boarders, but it made possible two afternoons for school sporting events. It also enabled two School detentions to be held each week. A few words about the BGS system of punishment might not be out of place here. There was corporal punishment in the form of a cane, administered usually by the Head and just occasionally by the Senior Master, 'Bumper Knight'. I was caned only once at BGS, when I inadvertently hit the Head himself as he emerged round the Physics lab corner with a snowball, after he had specifically banned such activities near buildings. I was told to report forthwith to his study, where I bent down and received three of the best. Some staff would at times clip ears or hurl a board rubber. There were also lines, given quite freely by staff and prefects – 'I must not be impertinent to my betters', a hundred times and for the next day. Then there was detention on Wednesday and

Saturday afternoons. Names of miscreants were read out in assembly and you had to report to Room 2 at 2p.m. for either an hour or two hours, depending upon the nature of the crime. You could be put in detention for fighting with other boys, for fancied impertinence, poor or copied work, lateness to school or lessons and any behaviour staff deemed un-Briggensian. In my first four years I must have done detention some ten times. Sometimes you had to sit quietly hands on head, sometimes you were set to copy passages from a book or tables were to be written out or earlier poor work redone. Sometimes litter around the school or on the school field had to be cleared up. Staff took detention on a rota basis and you knew those staff who were so stern you dare not breathe audibly and those who were more lax and you could hold a whispered conversation with other detainees. 'Tiger' Richards was one of the more amenable and when I was in detention on the Saturday there was to be a big parade through the town on the occasion of 'Wings for Victory Week',. we persuaded him to escort us down town so we could all see the parade.

Another thing that I had to get used to was that most masters wore academic gowns and had to be addressed as 'sir'. It was also strange that I was now in a 'form' and not a 'class'. Different subjects were taught by different staff, though in the first year our form teacher took us for English grammar and two thirds of the Maths curriculum. In all 3A had six male teachers and in 1941 a real novelty : Mrs Chapman had that term been appointed the first lady teacher in main school and taught us Geography. I had to cope with three completely new subjects – Physics, Chemistry and French. English featured Grammar and Composition as well as Literature and Maths now embraced Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry. Scripture was called Divinity, but History and Geography were recognisable old friends. And we had Drawing.

Often our lessons were punctuated by prolonged, piercing squeals. Our form room adjoined gardens and at the bottom of the gardens more than one householder kept a pig during the war years. The pig-killer was a frequent visitor with his long barrow on which the pig was slaughtered. We couldn't see what was happening, but once the pig's throat was cut, we heard its squeals. They grew to a resounding crescendo and then became fainter as the last life-blood was pumped out by raising and lowering its hind leg. In the ensuing silence we could hear the carcass being scrubbed in boiling water. Later Orsino's lines in *Twelfth Night* (It had a dying fall; O, it came o'er my ear like a sweet sound) recalled these events and seemed inappropriate.

Reports were single sheets and issued each term. Parents were informed of the number of pupils in the form and the position in the form of the particular child. Positions in every subject were written down and the member of staff made brief – very brief and not very meaningful by modern criteria – comments, such as 'Fair', 'Very sound', or in my case 'Could do better'. There was an entry for conduct ('Satisfactory') and room for a form teacher's remarks and, over a cyclo-styled signature, those of the Headmaster: 'Generally satisfactory' on my first report. The report indicated the beginning and end of the following term and boarders were reminded on each report that they had to return the previous evening. Finally at the bottom of the report printed in bold was the stern admonition that **'No boy will be admitted at the beginning of term unless he is in the possession of a Health Certificate'.** However, I can't remember ever producing such a document.

On my first report I was placed twentieth out of thirty four and at Easter fifteenth. However, this was as good as it got and for terms I struggled. In the Summer Term we had more formal examinations and I was thirtieth out of thirty three. There had already been some small adjustments between 3A and 3B. I forget who had been relegated, but we had been joined by my former classmate at Glebe Road, Don France, who had mistakenly been cast in to 3B at the initial selection. I knew he was bright and consistently over the next four years he was awarded the form prize presented at the Annual Speech Day. I must have been considered for relegation from the 'A' form, but somehow I managed to hang in there, scraping along near the bottom of the form throughout my years in the Lower IVth and the Upper IVth. My father even prevailed upon Headmaster Daughton to give me a private pep-pull-your-socks-up talk one morning in the summer holidays of '43. I was overawed and tearful, but it failed to have the desired effect.

The change in my academic fortunes was as sudden as it was unexpected. In September 1944 a new Headmaster arrived and Cale Matthews decided the School needed a kick-start to dispel any torpor that had established itself in Daughton's twilight years. The three termly reports and major examinations at the end of the school year were deemed insufficient and the new Head instituted a system of half-termly marks in each of the subjects, which were then totalled to give a form position. These positions were read out one morning assembly before the whole school: it was a clarion call to wake up and work harder or be publicly shamed. In October the first set of results were read out and when Lower VA positions were announced, I couldn't believe my ears. Instead of being three from the bottom, I was third (equal) from the top! This was earth-shattering and even the staff were incredulous. I cannot account for it. I thought it might be a result of some crass arithmetical error by our form teacher, Malcolm Gaze, who was no mathematician. But the entire results were tabulated and placed on the school notice board for all to see and check. The new wake up call seemed to have worked for me and though I could not maintain those heady heights, for the rest of my time I never sank below half way in the form and in the Upper Fifth was always in the top six. I went on to gain a thoroughly commendable

School Certificate (with exemption from matriculation) and finally a Lindsey Senior Scholarship on my results at Higher School Certificate. All the painful plodding and hesitant efforts brought about a fine late flowering of my academic abilities. My reports changed from 'Rather weak' through 'Has made progress' to 'Has worked with much keenness'. From termly subject positions that rarely ventured into the teens, I received the occasional top position in History or Latin when I was in the Fifth form.

I was never a self-confident student with an eager, incisive mind, asking pertinent questions and offering original ideas. My young mind was indeed a *tabula rasa* - indeed more *rasa* than most – but it received things like an overused piece of blotting paper, which soaked up a disparate mass, became over full and left messy blotches. However, I persevered through a tunnel of ignorance and eventually emerged into the light, understanding much (but by no means all) of what I was taught. I accepted that my teachers knew best and tried to assimilate their offerings. Winston Churchill questioned his teacher at Harrow about the use of the Vocative case in Latin on the grounds that *tabla* as vocative singular was meaningless as he never addressed a table. At Brigg Grammar School I was much more accepting : if 'Tiger' Richards said a table had to be addressed, then that table had to be addressed!

Latin was a subject I enjoyed, probably because when we started it in Lower IVA it was new to us all and there was a level playing field. *LATIN FOR TODAY BOOK I* is still firmly embedded in my mind and the delights of *Discipuli, picturam spectate* (Students, look at the map) remain. It was comforting to have confirmed that *Britannia est insula* and that *Germania non est insula*. It was enlightening to discover that *Italia est paeninsula* - i.e. almost an island – and from such beginnings stems a lifelong interest in derivations, word structures and etymology generally. Not all of us liked Latin and I rattled off with the others doggerel about Latin killing off all the Romans and now killing me, but in reality I found it fascinating. I revelled in the classical tales that were new to me about winged horses, three-headed dogs and women with snakes in their hair. I was particularly impressed by the myth of Ceres and Proserpina and the vivid engraving in the text book that showed Pluto, the God of the Underworld, lashing the three dark, fiery steeds that pulled his chariot and heading back to Hades, having abducted Proserpina. As twelve/thirteen year olds we noted the innuendo when Atalanta was described as a 'fast maiden' and we sniggered when we translated that Murcius Scaevola thrust his hand into a brazier, which we pronounced 'brassiere'. I let the names roll around my tongue - 'Quintus Fabius Maximus, Cunctator - and built up a large vocabulary, whose strong similarities to contemporary English words staggered me. I learnt my declensions and my tenses, being initiated in the mysteries of plu-perfects and jussive subjunctives, which were fascinating new concepts for consideration. I memorised Tiger's long list of Latin Rules that he dictated to us and even took to translating small Latin text books that I picked up for sixpence in the second hand bookshops on the Steep Hill in Lincoln. My efforts were rewarded by a 'Credit' at School Cert., good marks at Higher and a lifelong delight in trying to decipher Latin epitaphs in churches. 'Tiger' Richards was a dedicated teacher, not too strong on disciplining refractory pupils, but caring and encouraging to those who wanted to learn. He gave Jack White and I, his two candidates in Latin for Higher, extra coaching in his garden at home while his lately married wife served us with home-made lemonade. He contributed splendidly to any success I may have had at BGS.

Another new subject and one that impressed my erstwhile friends at Glebe Road and my father, who had spent some time in France during WWI without picking up much of a vocabulary, was French. This was the language of our supposed allies and I could now make sense of the short italicised fragments that appeared in my *Hotspur* or *Wizard* as spoken by the brave Maquis – *Mon Dieu, une bombe!* 'Sam Prague' (our name either separately or together for Mr Gregory) started us off and then 'Chips' Morris took over. We toiled over irregular verbs and learning vocabulary, including that mysterious new element 'gender'. Why was a table feminine and a cupboard masculine, simply because it started with a vowel? I slowly came to terms with future perfects and subjunctives in French and I developed skills in making good guesses at words I didn't know in French unseens. The one thing I didn't get much practice in was speaking the stuff and, of course, we never had the chance to try it out on the other side of the Channel. In the 40s little attention was paid to the oral side - it wasn't tested at School Cert. I still think in English, try to remember the French equivalents for the individual words and then try to string them together in some halting sequence. I continued to take French at a subsidiary level in the Sixth Form and could dash off translations of French verse as well as prose. I remember we even made up a version in French of the then current favourite *Don't fence me in.* The Sixth Form room would ring for weeks with the sounds of *Ne m'enferme pas,* delivered out of tune and in execrable accents.

I found Maths difficult and never shone at this subject. I found it strange to hypothesise – let *x* be the number of boys and *y* the number of girls in the class: I knew there were 31 boys in our class – and no girls. I was baffled by the fact that the square on the hypotenuse should equal the squares of the other two sides, even when I had painstakingly blocked it out on graph paper. I could never put my finger on the right line of figures in working out logarithms and the complexity of co-sines and tangents was unnerving. I had set off on my mathematical journey in Form 3A complete with new pencil case, containing protractor, set squares and compasses, but by the time I had reached Upper VA my mind was cluttered with uncomprehended theorems and formulae. In my first year Messrs. Pratt and Watts tried to instruct me in the basics and then in Lower IVA I was taught by 'Slunk' Illingworth, whose temper was always on a short fuse and who gloated at my inadequacies. He marked in green ink, which ought to signify something Freudian. Then for three years I had 'Bumper' Knight, second master and an institution at BGS. I remember that in his first

Speech Day address ‘Stan’ Matthews paid a handsome tribute to the debt he owed Knight in settling in to the School and spoke of leaning ‘on Abraham’s bosom’, which parents thought a risky allusion and which passed over our heads. ‘Bumper’ never faltered in trying to enlighten my ignorance. He forgave me when my next door neighbour, who studied algebra at night school, completed a particularly difficult assignment and I presented it as my own : I was one of only two who could do it. Even when in Algebra at mock School Cert., I realised a risible 13%, he didn’t quail. It was entirely due to his patient efforts that I gained a ‘Credit’ in the real School Cert., which was an essential ingredient of a ‘matric’, without which education at degree level was impossible. I owe him a great deal and I think my result shows his supreme ability to accomplish the impossible.

Science also was difficult. The subject in my time was divided into Physics and Chemistry, taught in two adjacent labs near where the change of lesson bell was rung. Biology was only for girls and was not taught in my time at BGS, so I never had any lessons in the birds and the bees, nor in sex education, an area as taboo for grammar school masters as it was for my parents. My introduction to Chemistry came from a young master called Cobbold, whom rumour said had been invalided out of the commandos. At his first lesson he declared he would stand no nonsense from little boys. As he spoke, he had a strong iron clamp in his hands, which he proceeded to bend double and then straighten before our fascinated and awed gaze. We agreed silently we would give him no trouble. Once when I was near the back of the class and my attention had manifestly strayed in the middle of his demonstration and explanation of some chemical reaction, he hurled a wooden blackboard rubber in my direction. Sensing it just in time, I ducked. The board rubber continued on its way and crashed into a large demi-john of distilled water. The glass shattered and the liquid contents flooded the floor. It seemed most unfair that I had to clear up the mess. He gained his revenge a little later. I was now permanently seated at the front and we were to learn about hydrogen sulphide, of which I was in blissful ignorance. Did we know what it smelt like? No? Would we like to find out? I showed some interest in this and leaned forward, whereupon he opened the clamp as I inhaled deeply. As I recoiled violently, gasping, choking and with tears in my eyes, he said ‘Well, now you know it smells of rotten eggs!’ – and I also knew why the subject was called in our schoolboy slang of the period ‘Stinks’. Cobbold departed after his convalescence, whether back to the commandos I know not, and he was replaced by ‘Jock’ Ketterick, a gnarled Scots seafarer, who had been torpedoed in the Atlantic and then released on health grounds from the Merchant Navy. He stayed years at BGS and died in harness. Judging by Sixth Form Chemistry results he was an able teacher, but to me his subject was uncongenial. When at the onset of School Cert., we had a simple choice between Chemistry and Geography, there was no contest. I dropped the subject with alacrity and have remained ignorant; while I do recognise the meaning of H_2O and H_2SO_4, the principles of the periodic table and valency escape me.

‘Blood’ Thumwood took me for Physics right up to School Cert. Again it had been a straight choice – Physics or Woodwork – and my liking and aptitude for Woodwork were even less than those for Physics. (‘Timber’ Watts was relieved and could see improved results in Woodwork at School Cert.) I still have Physics exercise books in which my lack of urgency and interest is plainly visible. The time-hallowed three part structure of *Object of Experiment, Method* and *Conclusion* was invariably incomplete. The heading is underlined and the purpose carefully written down; so is the *Conclusion*, where I have written down at dictation what we were supposed to have discovered from our observations. However, in the section devoted to *Method* there is usually a hotchpotch uncompleted drawings and half-completed, meaningless data. I could draw a fine Bunsen burner with the aid of my celluloid stencil, but that was as far as it went. Nevertheless, by the time I had been exposed to five years of half-understood Physics I was deemed to have merited a weak pass at School Cert.

A pass was also the result of my artistic efforts. Cabourne, a precursor of Arthur Lowe’s Captain Mainwaring in *Dad’s Army*, was a main stay of BGS. He had overseen the Preparatory Department and when that closed about 1942, he became the Senior (and sole) Art master. The subject was called ‘Drawing’ on the report and I couldn’t draw. My efforts were pitiable and out of perspective, no matter how much I held up my pencil and squinted along its line into the distance. However, under ‘Cabby’ my lifelong delight in Lettering was nurtured and the words on my ‘Wings for Victory’ poster were impeccably presented: it was unfortunate that my supposed Lancaster looked like a pregnant, flying pig, dropping ‘sausage’ bombs. I enjoyed the half year that was devoted to Heraldry. I copied the armorial bearings of cities and noble families in considerable numbers. I even designed a shield for Ancholme House – pike proper on field *d’or* over wavy bands *azure*. I loved the archaic language and revelled in *bar sinister, chevron gules* and *lion passant gardant.* But I was not able to use these skills in School Cert and my attempts to present pierrots at an end of pier show are best consigned to utter oblivion. Nevertheless, I rose to the dizzy heights of Chairman of the School Art Society, as the magazine bears witness, and I did the lettering in a Memorial Book, dedicated to those Old Boys who died for their country 1941-45.

History and Geography were both subjects I studied for seven years. My first Geography teacher was BGS’s first female teacher. ‘Ma’ Chapman, otherwise known as ‘Fanny’, was a small, well-rounded figure with whom we took no liberties. She was followed by the wife of ‘Jimmy’ Jarvis, on active service fighting fires. ‘Ma’ Jarvis, alternatively also known as ‘Fanny’ – originality was not our strong suit, we stuck with the familiar – was equally strict and we had to listen carefully to decipher her high pitched, Welsh warbling. However, in Upper IVA we were taught by ‘Sid’ Walker,

a Leeds graduate and a desperate choice, since there had been no other candidate. His classes played up, partly in retaliation for his unutterably boring methods of teaching: we wrote down questions and answers on a particular topic at his dictation in wearisome detail. 'What are the climatic conditions of Outer Mongolia?' 'The climatic conditions of Outer Mongolia are…..,' we didn't learn much under him and he never seemed to learn. At least four times a term he would push open the door to our classroom to have a waste paper basket and its contents fall on his head and during the lesson half of us would request permission to leave the room for urgent relief – and permission was never refused. 'Sid' didn't last the year at BGS and suffered a breakdown, from which he recuperated by taking a manual job at Brigg Sugar Factory. The onset of the School Cert. Course brought 'Ma' Haigh, at first known as 'Fanny' but subsequently universally known as 'Whisky'. She was a youngish maiden lady, but not all that attractive and of an uncertain temper. She would at times slap us hard around the head for inattention or indifferent work. Most of us accepted this as the natural order of things, especially from an ageing spinster – she must have been nearly thirty. So we sat in stunned silence when one day Hugh Avery, who had been soundly cuffed around the ears, stood up and out of his desk and, towering over the lady, told her firmly that she was not allowed to do that and he would report her to the Headmaster, whereupon Hugh marched out of the room. Presumably he knew what he was talking about, because his father was head of an elementary school in Scunthorpe, but I don't think anything very much came of this startling event. 'Whisky' did, however, revise her approach. She began to wear more make up and fresh aromas began to circulate – it wasn't Pond's *Lily of the Valley* that Mother favoured and which I presented on her birthday. Moreover she took to sitting on the teacher's desk and swinging her crossed legs. This was to draw our attention to the fact that she was wearing those new, priceless objects of American origin – nylons. We preferred the earlier, combative model and were uncertain of her intentions. We put our heads down and gave more attention to our books. As a whole the class did well in Geography at School Cert. In the Sixth Form, I took only the Physical paper in Geography and the newly 'demobbed' Ernie Urry was the teacher. I learned about millibars, contour levels and cumulo-nimbus with him.

I was lucky enough to have 'Toddy' Henthorn to teach me History for most of my time at BGS. I filled innumerable exercise books with maps, drawings and notes from representations of an Ancient Briton and his life-style to the intricacies of Italian Re-unification. I also must have written over a hundred essays on such riveting topics as Gladstone and Home Rule and Bismarck's Foreign Policy. Henthorn had an encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject, but his teaching style was idiosyncratic. In the Sixth Form (which in History meant five of us) he would settle himself comfortably in the chair behind the teacher's table. He would then reach out for copies of *Illustrated London News and The Spectator* that were usually there and would open his file of notes, though he never seemed to consult them. As he flicked through the pages of these magazines and gave careful attention to anything that caught his interest, he would be dilating in a conversational tone on the Schleswig-Holstein question or the relationship between Queen Victoria and her Prime Minister, Disraeli. We would be furiously scribbling notes down in rough. We had earlier been trained in Toddy's way of writing notes with underlined main headings, sub headings and salient points in Roman-numerical order. We then had to make sense of our notes and write them up cogently and coherently in our exercise books. The method would today be castigated, but it was most successful and History results were always exceptional. Mind you, it helped hat he was also an excellent tipster, spotting questions and topics that could well appear on the paper. At HSC he gave us eight suggestions for both English and European History. In European all eight were on the final paper; in English he was less successful, spotting only five, but then we had to attempt only four questions in the three hour paper. 'Toddy' was also my Housemaster and a person I revered.

An E.S.Thompson took our form for two terms in History and the designated topic was the Civil War. I remember I enjoyed drawing rectangles and crayoning them in different colours to distinguish Cromwell's model army from the ranks of the Royalists and the cavalry from the infantry. I used to put a rectangle on the adjoining page to signify Prince Rupert, who had gone haring off into the next county in pursuit of a few disordered Roundheads. Then for one term there was a Mr Burridge (I think), who was a young ex-service man waiting to go up to Oxford to read History - or the other way round. He failed to hold my interest and had some difficulty in controlling the class. I met him some ten years later when he was a temporary lecturer at the Oxford University Education Department and he ineffectually tried to demonstrate how to use a Gestetner machine to a group of us.

When Cale Matthews arrived, he decided to do some limited teaching to get to know the feel of the School and he took LVA for History. He was an extrovert in the classroom and gave graphic descriptions of Wellington's Peninsular campaigns and Napoleon's tactics at Waterloo. Corn Laws and the Reform Bills were also part of Stan's brief. However, he was keen to widen our interests and would read extracts from historical novels to us: he introduced me to the incomparable C.S.Forrester. Not all the extracts were historical, for it was from his lips that I first heard of the events at the cricket match in A.G.McDonnell's *England, Their England.* It was a relaxed and entertaining time in his History classes, but it also meant that 'Toddy' Henthorn had to do much catching up the next year and drive us hard to ensure we were ready for School Cert.

At that time five periods of English per week were the norm and I jumped through all the hoops that comprised the English secondary curriculum. I learned to do Clause Analysis, to compile lists of irregular plurals (like 'appendices', 'criteria' and 'formulae'), and I unfailingly knew where to place the apostrophe. I did uninteresting comprehensions

about cathedrals with 'Rupert' Pratt and learned rudimentary skills in making précis. In Literature I struggled through *A Tale of Two Cities* with 'Tiger' Richards and met not only the witches in *Macbeth* but also the conspirators in *Julius Caesar.* One afternoon our form, and Don France in particular, was convulsed when someone suggested Shakespeare's name could easily have been 'Willie Wagajavelin'. We made our hilarity last – and managed to escape having to memorise the *Tomorrow and tomorrow* speech. I also have a vivid recollection of a Shakespeare lesson outside in the open air, actually on the pavilion steps, where we were to enact the murder of Caesar and its consequences. I had been detailed to be Mark Anthony. Flourishing a ruler for my sword and jabbing it into the supposed wounds that had treacherously killed Jack White, I besought members of UIVA to lend me their ears with eloquent effect. Malcolm Gaze took us for School Cert. and his selection from the Cambridge Board's set books now seem less than inspired: *Eothen* by A.W.Kinglake, *Strife* by Galsworthy, a book of narrative verse (I can't remember the poems, but it had a light brown cover) and *As You Like It*. This was not a selection to set the blood racing. However, I persevered and found favour with the Examiners.

In addition to the academic subjects our curriculum also included 'Manual Instruction', which curiously metamorphosed itself into 'Handicraft' on the report form of 1942. Of course, it was universally referred to as 'Woodwork' and was taught by 'Willie' Watts (otherwise known as 'Timber'), who had had joined the School as a permanent member of staff with me in September 1941. My grandfather had been a master wheelwright and still retained his manual skills in the 1940s when he was well over eighty. Unfortunately his prowess was entirely absent in the next two generations. My three years of labouring in the subject were littered with a variety of joints that would never join, even with a liberal application of the foul-smelling glue that bubbled in a crusted pot at one end of the ill-adapted Woodwork room on the other side of Grammar School Road. My attempt at the frame of a small stool, which was to have a sea grass bottom, was never remotely finished: indeed it never stood squarely on four sound legs. My version of a watch stand did have two pieces of wood at what purported to be right angles but were nearer 70 degrees and there was a hook screwed into place more or less in the right position. The trouble was that no-one in my immediate circle possessed a pocket watch. However, at home I still have a very useful relic of my woodworking days at BGS. It started off to be a candlestick and is stained and retains a sheen of beeswax. Alas, the upright is out of all proportion to the badly bevelled base, since I had to have three or four goes at the crucial mortise and tenon joint, sawing off the early poor efforts and starting afresh to produce a reasonable mortise, or was it tenon? When I came to bore a hole in the top to hold the candle, I broke the 'bit' of the brace and bit and was forbidden to try again or gouge a more rounded hole. For over sixty years it has served my various homes as a door-stop. My one limited success was to make in the Autumn Term of 1944 a Tommy gun as a Christmas present for my younger brother. The body was recognisably gun-shaped if you used a vivid imagination and a piece of dowelling projected almost horizontally at the front. On the side you turned a ratcheted wheel of my own design with a handle like my mother's old fashioned whisk. When rotated, this produced a fine rat-a-tat-tat against a piece of springy plywood screwed above the wheel. It is no wonder I did not pursue my study of the subject.

So in the summer of1946 I took my School Cert. and was pleasantly surprised at the results that gave me exemption from matriculation. I think the staff was dumbfounded by my comparative success. Don France, of course, gained the best SC of our year and probably Alan Riggott the second best, but Jack White and I gained equal third. I had Distinction grades in English Literature and History, Credits in English Language, Latin, French, Geography and – *mirabile dictu* – Maths, together with passes in Art and Physics. In those days you had to gain passes in at least five given subjects to gain a School Cert. and had to reach Credit standard in some five or six subjects (which had to include Eng.Lang., a foreign language, and Maths, but fortunately not a Science) to be awarded a 'matric'. The pass standard required a mark in excess of 33%, a credit was over 50% and a distinction reputedly over 75%. BGS had a good reputation throughout Lincolnshire for its academic success. It was a 'good' school and it certainly served me very well indeed. Yet when I consider the results overall they were not as good as they should have been. The School took about the top 20% over a wide catchment area and streamed the boys into A or B forms. Not even all the boys in the A form managed to impress the Cambridge examiners sufficiently well in at least five subjects to be awarded a School Cert, notwithstanding a low 'pass' mark. In the B form it was considered a good year if five or six gained their School Cert. And this with the top 20%. When I was a Comprehensive School Head, Governors and Parents expected well over 50% to gain five A - C passes at G.C.E., which meant over 45% in each subject.

My parents had been most supportive in their attitude while I was in main school at BGS, even if what I was doing was completely outside their experience. They – or rather Dad – decided that I should stay on into the Sixth Form, although at considerable cost to their standard of living: it was some years before that little Standard 8 was purchased. So in September 1946 in a bigger blazer and new long trousers, white shirt and school tie, I entered the Sixth Form and 'our' room that was in the corner by the chemmy lab and was also the School library. The cap was not now obligatory and had not been for two years: I had mixed feelings about this, because in my comics the seniors at public schools wore splendid, tasselled versions. The Lower Sixth (divided into Modern and Science according to which subjects were to be studied for Higher School Certificate) totalled less than a dozen and there were far fewer in the Upper Sixth. We were a select band, vaguely conscious of our special status. J.C.White ('Jack'), R.J.H.Sumpter ('Sally'), A.G.West ('Aggie' or 'Barrow') and myself ('Effie') formed the Modern group and in the second year we were joined by R.H.M.Markarian

('Mac'), who had stayed on a further year to gain improved grades and entrance to Oxford University. The Science group comprised D.W.France ('Don'), a newcomer, J.C.M.Lyon ('Leo'), A.N.Jones ('Jonah') and B.S.Organ ('Brin') and maybe one or two more who didn't last the course. They were hardly economic groups, but we received some almost individualised teaching and thrived under the attention.

At HSC you took subjects at one of three levels: Subsidiary (one paper, one point and long discontinued), Ordinary (two papers, two points and equivalent to modern 'A' level) and Advanced (three papers, three points and equivalent to the old 'S' level). You could take a maximum of nine points and I, for want of more cautious advice, took the lot. I chose to take English at Advanced level, and History and Latin at Ordinary level. As the Physical Geography paper was supposedly more compact than that for Regional Geography and the French to English paper easier than the English to French paper, it was decided for me that I should take those papers.

I blossomed in the Sixth Form. I was encouraged to have and defend my own views, but I was only too content to accept the views and opinions put forward by my teachers. I found the subjects interesting and, since there was no television and my social activities were severely circumscribed by lack of opportunity and on financial grounds – half a crown a week did not go very far – I worked hard. I relished the greater intimacy of Sixth Form teaching and a new relationship with staff, who had been aloof and Olympian before. All this was encouraged by the Head. It was as though Zeus, a new Apollo, Poseidon and Mars had come down from the Greek mountain and walked among us.

'Nero' Romans had been appointed Senior English master from September 1946. He was unlike any other English teacher I had had. He had pitted features, smoked a pungent briar pipe and wore a sports coat and corduroys, not a well worn suit. It was rumoured that he had been in 'intelligence' during the war. He hailed from Gloucestershire and was a keen adherent of the county's cricket team. I supported Yorkshire equally strongly and many were the spirited conversations we had during the summer term over the fortunes of our respective teams as the season progressed. I remember gloating when Yorkshire built up a seemingly unassailable lead over Gloucestershire and was chagrined when Tom Goddard went to work on a sticky Bristol wicket in the final innings, gaining a notable though narrow victory. 'Nero' obviously loved the canon of English Literature and he revealed unsuspected glories to me from the majesty of King Lear to the inventiveness of the 'tun of lard', Falstaff, from the wonder of Dickens to the stern morality of George Eliot. I read Romantic poetry for the first time and immersed myself in the soaring spirit of Shelley, in Wordsworthian mysticism and in the sensuousness of Keats. How I delighted in visualising the 'pillow of my love's fair, ripening breast' and the panting of Porphyro in Madeline's chamber – it had to be all in the mind in the 40s! Then there was Thomas Hardy: not having a major author from his own county, 'Nero's' favourite was from neighbouring Dorset. We admired Gabriel Oak, were in awe of Henchard and fancied Tess together. He read extracts from *Under the Greenwood Tree* at a Christmas concert in wonderfully warm, cidery tones. He contrasted the hesitant Hamlet with that action-man favourite of his, Wally Hammond, the cricketer. He also liked his beer and, after I left school, we would walk over to the *White Horse* at Wrawby for a pint and a discussion of books I was studying at university and life at Oxford. 'Nero' had a distinct formative influence on the course of my life. He, with some help from 'Rupert' Pratt (who took two of the set books in the Lower VIth), was responsible for my main subject. The well known and incomparable 'Toddy' Henthorn and 'Tiger' Richards took us for all the History and Latin papers. 'Chips' Morris with a little help from the new language teacher, 'Steady' Barker, looked after the French and 'Ernie' Urry took us for Physical Geography. I was very lucky in my teachers.

I gained status and became a prefect. I and my contemporaries were the first to wear the new prefects' tie, instituted by 'Stan' Matthews. This was to add another subtle touch towards making BGS more like the public school from which he had come. Gowns for prefects would have been too much for town and pupils, but we wore our ties (which were school ties with a third stripe of red introduced between the alternating bands of light and dark blue) with pride. We had marshalling duties principally at assemblies and at school dinners. We patrolled the cloakrooms at morning break, clearing them on fine days and maintaining some semblance of order among the milling crowds on wet ones. We also read biblical passages at Assembly. I think we may have had a prefects' detention, but I can't be certain. We certainly clipped the ears of cheeky juniors and helped them on their way with a well-directed foot. Our one 'perk' was a free school dinner on the day we were on dinner duty. For me this was Wednesday. I normally went home for dinner – I had always lived within 400 yards of whatever school I attended – so school dinner was a novelty. The prefects supervised the queues and wandered around while the boys were eating and saw to it that they left in an orderly manner, leaving little mess. Then the prefect had his own dinner: this was usually the pick of what was left, but just occasionally there was so little left that a special fry-up had to be quickly set up. The school cook (as opposed to the boarding house cook) was the redoubtable Mrs Fairbanks, who was a member of the Ladies section of Brigg Bowling Club like my mother. Thus I received favourable treatment, especially as it was harder to quantify numbers staying on the Wednesday half day. Any dried up remnants of the cottage pie were scraped into the capacious pig-bin and I had bacon, egg and liver with probably some freshly opened fruit salad that was destined for the dinner ladies' own lunch.

One day early in the summer term of 1947 'Stan' Matthews called all ten members of the Lower Sixth into his room. We hastily reviewed our sins and omissions, but could make no guess at the purpose of these summons. We were thus

thoroughly bemused when he said, 'Well, I suppose you're all thinking about going up to university now'. We gazed at each other dumbfounded. The thought had never entered my head – nobody in our family had been to university or even considered it – nor, I think, had it crossed the mind of any of the others. We were lined up before him in his study and I was at one end. He beamed at me – and his beam always had the hint of a leer, like Tommy Cooper's – and said, 'Where were you thinking of applying then?' At that time I doubt if I could have named more than five universities. I knew there was one in London, but I'd never been there and thought it too large and dangerous a place for a sheltered Brigg lad. There was one across the Humber in Hull, but no 'yeller-belly' ever wanted to go to Hull. I thought there was also one in Sheffield, but I wasn't sure. There were, of course, Oxford and Cambridge, because they rowed in a boat race. I remembered that recently the Oxford crew had been successful on the Tideway and without more thought blurted out 'Oxford, sir'. I think a look of incredulity flitted across his face, but he made no comment and passed on to the next in line. However, he must have taken me at my word, for that autumn I filled in application forms for Oxford Entrance. I knew nothing of Oxford colleges and 'Stan' decided on Wadham. He entered Raif Markarian and Jack White at his own old college of Exeter, but three would have been stretching it. The two Hunt brothers, who were four and five years ahead of me at school, were at Wadham, one reading Physics and one Theology, after starting in Law. So Wadham it was. I think I might have seen the odd past paper, but I had no special coaching or preparation. The English texts we were studying for HSC and what I had done at School Cert. would have to furnish my answers on the specialist papers. The General paper we had to take at HSC would suffice for the Oxford General Paper and for the Essay. The Latin and French unseens were covered by what we were doing in these subjects for Higher.

Thus in early March 1948 my father saw me off at Brigg station and I embarked on my journey to unknown Academe, passing through (to me) uncharted waters. First I had to change at Retford and then, more scaringly, make my way from Kings Cross to Paddington. I had never been to London before and the Underground was cavernously daunting. At Paddington I somehow managed to find the right platform and boarded the train for Oxford, along with a considerable number of mature young men, seemingly far older than my seventeen years six months. Three sat in the same compartment as myself and proceeded to talk loudly, confidently and in refined tones of their public schools, their old students who were gaining plaudits at the colleges for which they too were destined and about their headmasters' friendships with the Masters of the various colleges. My self-confidence ebbed further. At Oxford I walked up to the city, carrying my shabby suitcase, and trudged along The Broad under the critical if battered gaze of the Roman Emperors, whose heads were held high on pillars outside the Sheldonian Theatre. I saw the King's Arms that I had been told was my landmark and turned into South Parks Road to catch my first glimpse of 'Wadh. Coll. In Acad. Oxon.'

I spent three days and three nights there, my mind a mixture of dazed bewilderment and delight in my handsome surroundings that fused into a fervent wish that this might be mine. A porter gave me directions to my rooms (an impressive plural) on a staircase in the main quad. I staggered up the staircase and surveyed the faded grandeur of a sizeable room with two adjoining bedrooms, though on this occasion I was to be the sole occupant. There was, of course, no *en suite* – in fact no water on tap at all and this was worrying. I explored the grounds (being stunned by the magnificent, overarching copper beech in the garden), visited the Chapel (where I invoked help from the Almighty in a silent prayer) and located the Hall, where I ate on my first night and was waited upon by white-coated 'scouts' – with not a woggle between them. Another scout awakened me the next morning, bearing hot water in an ewer for washing and shaving. The latter was not at all necessary, but I lathered and scraped my chin and cheeks. I had breakfast in Hall and after things had been cleared away sat down with some sixty or so others to face whatever the fates had in store. Various 'dons' in academic dress gave out papers to those who were hoping to read their particular subject. I remember some fifteen papers in English being handed out by a relaxed young don, who had a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth, his eyes squinting against the curling smoke, and whose gown had slipped halfway off his shoulders. The College clock struck half past nine, the dons departed and I toiled away for the next three hours on the Shakespeare paper. I had a reasonable knowledge (as I thought) of *King Lear, Henry IV (part i)* and *The Tempest*, my set books for HSC, of *As You Like It* (which I had done for School Cert) and was desperately trying to remember something about *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* we had read in class during the Upper Fourth. One question I could not even attempt: it asked me to comment upon the difficulties in staging Shakespeare, when I had never seen any Shakespearian presentation. To my amazement at noon when the buttery in the crypt opened some dozen candidates left the Hall and returned with pints of beer to lubricate their final thoughts. I could never have done this and anyway I found myself scribbling to the end.

There were six papers altogether. I could just about cope with the French and Latin unseens and can remember that on the general paper I was invited to comment upon Lord Acton's axiom that 'All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Hitler, Mussolini, King Lear, Macbeth, Henry VIII and George III all played some significant part in my response. I can't remember now the one word that appeared as the subject of the Essay paper, but it was during this final paper that it was my turn to be interviewed. I left my half-written paper and the Hall to mount the spiral staircase leading to what I later learned was the Senior Common Room. I knocked on the door and entered to be confronted by a horse-shoe arrangement of some twelve dons in full academic regalia. I was overawed by the black, scarlet and gold-fringed gowns and the multi-hued hoods and hastily tried to unscramble my wits, as I took the vacant seat at the foot of the horseshoe. They were understanding and my questioners concentrated chiefly on what I was doing

for HSC. I did my best to make cogent replies. One questioned the rationale behind lumping Chaucer, Milton, Goldsmith and Lamb on one paper. I answered in all seriousness, 'But that's the Cambridge Board, sir', and received a superior chortle from the assembled dons. I had my ten minutes and then made my way back to the Hall to finish off the Essay paper. That was the end of the College Entrance Examination and I somehow made my way back to Brigg. My mind was still befogged and I could give only sketchy answers to questions about my experiences both at home and at school. I had had a glimpse of a whole new world of learning and gracious surroundings. I could not dare believe that I had done enough to be accepted, but dared to hope and prayed that a miracle might happen.

I was still in bed at the beginning of the Easter holidays and it was my mother's birthday (March 31st) when Dad came into the bedroom bearing a small white envelope, postmarked 'Oxford' and addressed to 'J.A.Rhodes Esq.' I only ever received envelopes on my birthday. I couldn't bring myself to open it, so Dad did. 'You're in,' he said! I took the small sheet of notepaper, headed 'Wadham College' and it informed me that the Warden, C.M.Bowra, 'was happy to say that we shall be pleased to take you in October 1950 and I shall keep a place for you accordingly.' To me a warden was someone who supervised a youth hostel: I had no idea then of the eminence of that small rotund figure, Sir Maurice Bowra, Warden of Wadham, familiar of the *cognescenti* and baiter of Hitler, who was to gain my admiration and warm veneration in the early fifties. My father was pleased, but audibly concerned – 'How are we going to pay for this?' he said. I hastily dressed and went over to school to tell 'Stan'. He beamed at me, but his first words were 'Jack White is going to be even more disappointed', for Jack had already received news that whereas Raif Markarian had gained a place at Exeter, he had not. However, Jack was later offered a place at Pembroke College and we were English freshmen together.

BGS did a fine job on that small Upper Sixth of 1948. Don France went to Cambridge, Jones and Lyon went to Nottingham, West to Sheffield and Markarian, White and myself to Oxford. The previous two years had seen 'Ollie' Kingdon gaining a place at Cambridge and Ken Horton at Nottingham and 'Cec' (pronounced as in pit) Taylor winning a scholarship at Imperial College, London, a tremendous achievement.

By taking the Oxford Entrance exam I had had to start what was also my HSC revision early and so in June I was as well prepared as I could have hoped to be. However, I was as usual nervous in approaching the exams, more especially as in those days you could fail HSC completely if you failed to satisfy the examiners on the General paper. We had been told the cautionary tale several times of the farmer's son who, failing to read the question carefully, had written a fascinating essay on 'Dairies': unfortunately the examiners had set the question on 'Diaries' and refused to grant him an HSC. It was a long wait till the results came out in late August. When they were released, I was on a family holiday at Scarborough for the Cricket Festival and witnessing Don Bradman's final innings in England – he didn't score many, I regret. I had not had the wit to leave a postcard at school, so I returned home unaware and indeed somewhat forgetful of what was being weighed in the balance. We reached Brigg and Aunt Lil had arranged tea for us all. We were eating this when 'Stan' Matthews surprisingly and unexpectedly appeared on his old, large and sturdy bicycle. He had heard we were home and had located us to give me the good tidings that I had been successful at HSC and had in fact been awarded a Lindsey Senior Scholarship. This entitled me to have my fees at Wadham paid and provided £205 per annum – the maximum because of the family's low income – for me to enjoy the delights of academic life at Oxford. And I owed all this to 'Stan' Matthews and the staff at BGS; it was a complete vindication of the system whereby Junior and Senior County Scholarships and the Grammar Schools gave undreamed of opportunities to children from less affluent backgrounds.

For most of my time at BGS there was a war on. I have written elsewhere in more detail about *My War 1939-45.* We took the wartime conditions in our stride. We coped with broken nights when in the first year or so at the school the siren had summoned us from our beds to go to the shelters: I think we may even have had an hour's dispensation and told to arrive at school for ten o'clock on some few occasions. I collected old saucepans and other aluminium objects in the run up to Wings for Victory Week, which in reality was a savings campaign to raise extra funds for the war effort. I also designed an indifferent poster advertising the event: it was displayed – well at the back – in Lacey and Clark's window. I also sang in a special 'Wings for Victory' concert as a member of the School Choir. We sang Purcell's *Fairest Isle* and *Where the bee sucks there suck I,* largely for the words 'And merrily do I fly now'. The previous year we had had a Warships Week when posters had such patriotic slogans as 'Keep the Lion Afloat' and 'Save for the Brave'. The School raised £1008 – 13s – 8d that week. A Physics exercise book I have of the period where I had inadvertently left half a page unused bears the terse and tart comment 'Wasting paper lengthens the War'.

School Assemblies were clouded by the announcement of names of Old Boys who had been killed or were missing in action. Occasionally we saw O.B's visiting the school in their smart uniforms, mainly RAF. The School formed its own branch of the Air Training Corps, Flight no.1542 – but I was never a member. The Scouts continued to meet regularly and undertook various activities to aid the war effort, like collecting waste paper and clearing and chopping wood from Col. Nelthorpe's Scawby 'desmesne' to present a sack of logs to the old and needy at Christmas. The School Magazine, though still published each term, was printed on wartime paper and limited in size. In March 1944 it had a skimpy sixteen pages: it was, the Editor apologised, that or nothing. The magazine contained black-edged boxes, denoting those

Old Boys who had died for their country. It also contained jingoistic poems, such as *Hitler's Nightmare, Siren Song* and *A War Alphabet.* Ironically the latter has a line, *S for our strong base in Singapore*! There was welcome news that J.B.Bell, whose ship had been sunk in the eastern Atlantic and who had been missing for six anxious weeks had been reported safe 'in a British possession'. Mind you, Old Boys could be injured on the home front too. G.R.Wraith was seriously injured working in a quarry, when he was trapped under a Lancaster that failed to rise. The Debating Society continued and in 1941 there was a 'discussion': *That this House considers America should pursue a more vigorous war policy*, which motion was carried by a large majority. *(*As I write this in March 2003, that has a topical if plangent ring!) At the Old Boys' Dinner a special collection raised £9-10s-9d for Red Cross food parcels to be sent to Old Briggensians who were languishing in P.O.W. camps in Germany. O.B's met all over the world in various theatres of war and others recounted how in training in America, Canada or South Africa they found time to explore the prairies, climb Kilimanjaro or visit New York. There was, however, a sad and serious side: the magazine of 1943 contains the names of twenty one Old Boys killed in action and several who were missing. But Old Briggensians were doing their bit for King and Country and one wrote in the magazine, describing a skirmish in graphic detail and yet in a curiously dated, Rockfist Rogan, gung-ho frame of mind. He tells of being on a troopship in early 1943 in the Atlantic, harried by submarines and dogged by a Focke-Wulf fighter bomber. They 'were plodding along nicely when two torpedoes flashed past us' and they played a cat and mouse game in the mist. Then the Focke-Wulf appeared. 'We bade him good morning with a wicked burst of guns. He replied with cannon fire and the swine closed in and let go his torpedo. Then ensued a few terrible seconds, but he missed us. He came back and dropped a couple of bombs and only the expert handling of the ship by the Captain saved us'. The writer concludes on a most sexist, politically incorrect note: 'I must also pay tribute to the women on board. I never heard one frightened scream – I wish they were as good when there is no apparent danger.'

Many of our out of school activities were directed at helping the war effort. Holidays were reorganised so we could set potatoes at Easter and pick them in early October. Headmaster Daughton reported at Speech Day in December 1941 that over two hundred members of the School had assisted in the potato harvest. Others singled (or weeded) beet in Spring and toiled from morning to dusk to bring in the cereal harvest in the summer holidays. I also went on a couple of farm camps, where we stayed for a week in spartan conditions in a decaying country house near Barrow and helped on local farms.

As far as extra-curricular activities went, they were extremely limited in wartime, because staff were under all sorts of pressure from serving in the Home Guard to being ARP wardens, from acting as fire-watchers on the school premises to being auxiliary firemen. However, 'Rupert' Pratt managed to keep a School Orchestra going and I sawed away as a second violin on Speech Days and at various patriotic concerts. The big event was just after the war when the magazine was pleased to note a 'recrudescence' of dramatic activity. The School celebrated Hitler's overthrow by an open air production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was presented between two grass-covered air raid shelters on the edge of the school field. It was a co-production. Gaze directed the scenes involving the lovers, Miss Wright (who taught French) those involving the fairies and 'Chips' Morris the 'rude mechanicals'. I was one of the latter, being selected to play Flute, the bellows mender and so the unfortunate Thisbe too. Most of the players came from the Lower Fifth and Upper Fourth, since those taking public examinations were not considered. Oliver Baudert, our refugee from Holland, was a regal Theseus, so chosen because his modulated English vowels were far superior to the diphthongs of the native 'yeller-bellies'. Robin Sumpter was a most becoming Hippolyta and everyone in memory seems to have been born to play their particular part. I remember best our group of Athenian artisans – 'Jonah' was an interferingly bossy Bottom, Jack White was a long-suffering Peter Quince, 'Enoch' Eccles played Snug and John Cheeseman Starveling. 'Aggie' West was Snout and revelled in portraying the divisive Wall in a cumbersome frame that made him seem Humpty Dumpty and Wall in one. With blacked out front teeth, he gave the audience a cavernous grin and delighted in holding up his two fingers in insulting gestures, as he provided the chink in the wall for the lovers to whisper through. As Flute I (eventually) grabbed my big scene in both hands and died with the most operatic flamboyance. For weeks afterwards I was accosted with the swooping inflexions of my rendering of 'Asleep, my love? What - dead, my dove!' by members of the school wherever I went and the magazine comments upon my 'unlovely appearance'. At first 'Chips'Morris could not get us in the right frame of mind to play this 'lamentable comedy' and we failed to relax. After one stiff rehearsal he took 'Jonah' and myself across to the boarding house and into 'Stan's' drawing room. 'Stan' urged us both to be more relaxed and to 'ham it up'. He seemed to know the parts involving Pyramus and Thisbe by heart and he scrambled about his drawing room carpet, intoning and acting out both our parts. We were invited to try again and this time all inhibitions left us, as we began to enjoy ourselves. At the subsequent public performances we happily went OTT, rivalling the excesses of Miss Hermione Gringold. I now seemed to be type-cast, for the other school production I was in was A.A.Milne's *A Boy Comes Home* in the spring of '47, when I suppose the play's theme of a soldier returning from the 1914-18 war seemed topical. Romans and Morris co-produced it and I was Mrs Higgins, a bad tempered and busty cook. I remember flourishing a rolling pin and having rolled bath towels strapped across my chest. I raised a laugh and left the serious stuff to Raif Markarian, Jack White, Robin Sumpter and Oliver Baudert.

Also in the post war period, when I was in the newly formed Geographical Society, we had a school trip. You must remember that petrol rationing and the presence of German troops all over Europe had completely curtailed the sort of

school trips and foreign jaunts which modern school children take for granted. This trip was to Nottingham, where we visited both the Raleigh cycle factory and Player's cigarette factory. We toured Raleigh's, witnessed the various processes in action and the overalled workers: when I later saw Alan Finney in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* it was with a distinct feeling of *déjà vu*. At Raleigh's we were given a curved metal badge that was affixed to the cycles and represented the gryphon/phoenix trade-mark of the Company – and remains so today. At Player's we received some cigarette cards. The accompanying staff were offered cigarettes, but they didn't smoke. We pupils felt strongly that they could have passed the fags on to us, because most of us had tried out the habit as a rite of passage and one or two were already addicted. I had already given up smoking, but had experimented briefly. This meant I shared five Woodbines with two friends in the warm anonymity of one of the Scunthorpe cinemas, where we occasionally went to enjoy the adventures of Jon Hall or Sabu and to ogle lasciviously the incomparable Maria Montez.

BGS was, of course, in my time a monastic institution and for years girls played no part in my life. School and Church occupied some ninety five per cent of my wakened moments. Eventually the hormones stirred and the testosterone tingled. Instead of ignoring the High School girls, we took notice and our eyes dropped appraisingly below the skirt to assess their legs and ankles : green blazers and gingham dresses were designed to disguise any feminine contours higher up. As far as the relatively few older Convent girls, they rarely excited our attention because they were usually escorted by black and white starched nuns. At morning break we congregated at the Rubicon, which was the small stream that divided the adjoining fields of BGS and BGHS, but prefects were on hand to send us away and when we were prefects this was part of our duty. Fraternising with girls in High School uniform was not only frowned upon, it was expressly forbidden. The boarders and the Brigg lads were the most likely offenders and I well remember 'Toddy' Henthorn giving a fresh, stern warning on the subject at a House assembly when I was a School prefect. Unfortunately that afternoon after school I had been into W.H.Smith's for something and met his elder daughter, Caroline, who was at the High School and a year my junior. I knew Caroline well from Church and the newly founded Church Youth Group, held on a Sunday evening. We were chatting about matters of mutual interest outside Smith's when suddenly 'Toddy' came along on his cycle. We were peremptorily ordered on our respective ways. It seems incredible nowadays that such could have been the mind-set at that time. It was as though the reputations of the two schools could be seriously tarnished in the eyes of the general Brigg population if members of the opposite sex in their full school uniforms were seen together.

However, there was one occasion when fraternisation was officially encouraged. There was a new Headmistress at the High School : in contrast to most of her staff Miss Burt dressed stylishly, had her hair permed and presented an attractive feminine image. For some reason she and 'Stan' decided it would be a good thing for the Lower Sixths of both schools to hold a Social Afternoon – the capitals are fully merited. It was fixed for a Wednesday afternoon in July '47. This was normally a half day for the boys, but not the girls, who had no Saturday morning school. A programme of tennis (of which few of us boys knew anything about), rounders, and a treasure hunt together with tea, arranged by the girls and my Aunt Ethel (High School cook), was set up. The spinsterish staff of the High School looked upon this social experiment with ill-concealed distaste and at the prospect of young males disporting themselves within their hallowed precincts. On the day itself one Sixth Form young lady (M.C.) at the sight of so many in trousers locked herself in a store cupboard and had hysterics. After some two hours she was persuaded out with difficulty and taken home.

'Nero' Romans was our Sixth Form pastoral head and he and 'Stan' made the best of what must have been for them an uncomfortable afternoon. However, for the vast majority of the Sixthformers it was an overwhelming success; indeed so successful that it was never repeated to my knowledge. We boys graciously bowed to the girls' superior expertise in tennis and displayed our greater strength by belting the ball for miles at rounders. We did full justice to the delicious tea and had a seemingly unending number of young ladies to engage in the mildest of flirting. A friend and I became acquainted with two maidens from distant parts, Redbourne and Kirton Lindsey. For a time vague amorous thoughts blossomed. I waved to her on the Vessey's bus as it trundled past from the High School on its way to pick up the members of Nelthorpe House who lived at Scawby and beyond at BGS. That summer holidays I cycled miles to Messingham and Scunthorpe to attend Gymkhanas where Rachel, resplendent in riding Mac and hard hat and mounted on a mighty chestnut, was taking part. But it was a relationship doomed to failure and very temporary heartache.

It is consequently true that sex (of whatever variety) had a minimal role to play in my career at BGS. Biology was not taught then and my sexual knowledge was negligible. I can't remember any rude words scrawled in the toilets. I had heard the words, but had only the sketchiest sense of their meaning. I used them occasionally, as when repeating the mantra about one of my form mates who had an unfortunate surname, 'Alcock – no balls!'

Sport was far more important. Not that I was much good at sport and a willing keenness could not disguise a distinct lack of real talent. As a junior I supported School teams in cricket and football with a zeal verging on fanaticism. Most Wednesday and Saturday afternoons when a match was on I was back at school, cheering on my heroes. Those good at sport were idolised as demi-gods when I was in 3A or the Lower Fourth – oh, my Girdhams, Westobys, Baggotts and Atkinsons of long ago! And when in the summer of 1942 BGS played and beat a public school, Bablake (billeted in the

boarding house after the Coventry blitz) – **I was there!** I rejoiced greatly as 'Bob' Atkinson scored an immaculate and unheard of 69 not out. At school sporting heroes tended to do well at both football and cricket. 'Bob' Atkinson was a very good cricketer and a firm centre half at both School and House level. His mantle was taken over by 'Cec' Taylor, who was an accomplished centre half and both opened the batting for the 1st. XI and kept wicket. Such skills and expertise were quite beyond me, but because of my willingness to attend nets and have a go, I later found a place in School Second XIs at both cricket and football. In my last year I captained each.

In football I kept goal and was reasonably successful in keeping scores down. Three soccer memories stand out. One was going away to play Winteringham G.S. at Grimsby one cold winter Saturday afternoon. We travelled by train and I had an extra sweater and a flask of Camp coffee to keep the very obvious signs of flu at bay. I think I only went because Winteringham was one of the rare co-ed. Grammar Schools and the girls volunteered to serve the teas afterwards. As captain I had to give a vote of thanks to the ladies. The second memory is of a home match against Barton G.S. Barton then, like De Aston, was thought to be of inferior sporting prowess and fit only to compete with BGS Second XIs. Our younger players had played well and we had a comfortable 4-0 lead when near the end we were awarded a penalty. As captain I elected to take it myself and 'toggy-ended' it past the opposing keeper. That was the only goal I ever scored at BGS – and it was most satisfying. My other happy memory is of the Monday night matches when I was a sixthformer. They were played between the School Ist XI and a team mainly of staff, but containing some four members of the 2nd XI in those positions that the staff couldn't fill. They had no one wishing to keep goal, so I played. These matches were very keenly contested and challenges were not shirked - especially not by 'Hacker' Hadow of the Sixth Form and 'Paddy' Paisley, the first and freshly appointed Biology teacher, who confronted each other in mid-field.

I was very keen on cricket and could tell you in minute detail of Yorkshire's progress and success in the County Championship. I read a number of books on cricket and 'Plum'Warner's *Book of Cricket* was the best authority. I purported to be an off-spin bowler and a number seven batsman. One season I experimented with a new bowling action that necessitated wreathing my arms in serpentine motions as I trotted up to bowl. It failed to impress the opposing batsmen and was greeted by derision from my peers and elders. An older Brigg boy' called Batchelor, mimicked my action and referred to me as 'Glamour', meaning all show and no use. For a few weeks the name stuck, but was discarded when I became 'Effie' to my form mates and later to the whole school, staff and pupils alike. I had taken to school a bible that bore the name of an aunt on the inside cover. A so-called friend spotted 'Effie Rhodes' and started calling me 'Effie' derisively. At first I didn't care for the name, but eventually accepted it as a badge of distinction. It could have been much worse. The boy Batchelor I mentioned earlier was, I think, called Hugh, but we all knew him by his nickname and used it constantly. He was 'Fart' as his name was the same as that of a notable firm that canned peas. Back to the cricket……

'Bumper' Knight watched me several times at the nets, but I never did enough to impress him or merit a place in the First XI. I played for and then captained the Second XI and we usually did well, since there were many promising players who had to wait their turn to get into the top team. I rarely troubled the scorers much, but on a favourable wicket I could turn the ball and was good for one or two wickets. My greatest feat was in my last season when we had played six matches, winning four, tying one and losing the first against Barton. Our last match was the return fixture against Barton. We made a disastrous start and when I went in at number seven, we were 9 for 5. Derek Sumpter was at the other end and had begun to see the ball clearly. I blocked away and scampered the occasional single when the ball snicked off the edge of my bat, while Derek scored many cleanly driven boundaries and we ran threes when he lofted the ball into the outfield. After he was out for 31, the other batsmen failed and I was left at 5 not out. However, we had amassed a surprising total of 48 runs. When they went in to bat, our opening bowlers could make no impression. They had reached 27 for 1 wicket and were coasting to victory, when a thunderstorm intervened. It was short but quite violent and halted play, leaving pools on the pitch. It looked as though the match could not be finished. We took an early tea and the sun came out. Miraculously most of the water had drained away and we were able to continue. The hitherto docile pitch had changed its nature completely. My slow off-breaks became possessed of demons and popped like jack in the box. I found myself turning the ball two feet or more and having lbw appeals turned down, because, having pitched well outside the off stump and having beaten the bat, the ball was heading off in the direction of square leg. Nevertheless several balls popped off the bat and offered 'dolly' catches – I even took one myself. The final wicket was taken, fittingly enough, by Derek Sumpter - with some help from me. Their number eleven batsman decided to swipe and go for glory, although we had not realised his intentions. I was fielding in a true captain's position, silly mid off - with emphasis on the first word. The batsman heaved and connected. The ball came flashing at my head. Involuntarily I put up my hands to protect my face and the ball stuck. They were all out for36. A famous victory had been achieved and the magazine has in brackets after their score (Rhodes 5 for 5).

Not only was I a member of BGS and played sport at inter-school level, I was also a member of Ancholme house. In fact I was a rabid green Anchor. The House system was firmly embedded in the ethos of BGS and there was strong rivalry among the various Houses. There was School House (whose Housemaster was by tradition the Headmaster himself) which comprised the boarders. They were probably fewer in number, but had the advantage of being able to practise more at the various sporting events. Yarborough House, under Mr Knight, covered all the boys to the east of

Brigg. Sheffield House (under first Mr Cabourne and then Ernie Urry) consisted of those who came from Broughton and those many who made the journey from Scunthorpe everyday. The Daisy bus service travelled specially from Broughton and the Enterprise and Silver Dawn from Scunthorpe. Nelthorpe House (Mr Morris) was the base for those who lived in Scawby Brook and in all the many villages to the south and west. The last three Houses all had aristocratic pedigrees, having been named after the noble, landed families in the locality. Ancholme House was a newcomer, an upstart carved out of Nelthorpe House when numbers became disproportionate. It had been in existence barely five years when I started in 1941 and the founding Housemaster was 'Toddy' Henthorn. This House harboured all the Brigg lads and was beyond question the best House. Each House had its own colour: School –orangey yellow, Yarborough – black, Sheffield – red, Nelthorpe – blue and Ancholme – green. We all competed in the School's five major sports (football, cricket, cross-country, swimming and athletics) and vied strongly and passionately to win the Cock House Cup. To do well on Sports Day merited a whip-round and a donation from the Housemaster to fetch a crate of Laws' or J.W.White's 'pop' from Jack Clark's Tuck Shop; to have become Cock House demanded three crates.

As I mentioned at the beginning, I can't swim and so never took part in any of the swimming competitions, but I cheered on our heroes with passion – John Dunham, Don France, Mike Silverwood, Bob Stringer, Roy O'Neill to name a few. At cross-country I had no such excuse and an innate aversion for long distance running did not count. My one relative at the School, Cyril Stokes who was four years my senior, had excelled at the sport for Sheffield House, but such expertise had missed our side of the family and I was out of breath and labouring before we reached Sass's and the Monument. BGS was noted for its cross-country running and *The Hull Times* regularly sent a photographer to take pictures of the white-singleted horde coming down the school drive and into Grammar School Road. Exhibitionists (like F.D.Bowskill) used to start off at a sprint and would appear in next week's paper comfortably leading the field at that stage. They had faded before they reached the Grand Cinema. I would walk up St Helen's Lane and stumble slowly round the Bull Field. On the downhill section by Wrawby sandpits I usually managed to break into a trot, but I walked most of Brickyard Lane before breaking into another laboured trot when we re-approached civilisation in Grammar School Road. I felt a sense of achievement if, in a field of fractionally over a hundred, I scraped into the late nineties. One-eyed Ralph Girdham was usually the winner, having tussled with the plucky, pigeon-toed, short-striding Roger Cobb all the way. Girdham was to win the Lincolnshire Open Mile several times in his twenties.

Although my brother was to become Victor Ludorum some years later, such was my athletic prowess that I never once appeared on Sports Day, when the finals were held. I was built for comfort not speed and had no staying power. In my first year I was compulsorily retired in the heats of the High Jump (Div. E), having landed on and broken three precious wooden lathes that were placed across the uprights, in trying to reach the standard height of 3' 6", worth one point to my House. 'Standard' points were awarded for reaching given times, heights and distances at varying age-levels and all these counted towards House points in Athletics. When I was a senior, an extra incentive was introduced and points were also awarded for entering and completing the course. I felt I had to encourage the juniors and put myself down for my full quota of events. This meant that I approached every high hurdle from the side and executed my best scissors jump and that I was lapped by all the other competitors as I puffed and panted my way around the five laps that constituted the mile circuit. That year Ancholme won the Athletics Cup by a mere handful of points from School House. I had done my bit.

I played regularly for the House at cricket and football. In my early years at BGS each House fielded a Ist XI and a 2nd XI. The Ist XI contained all the useful senior players and the 2nd XI contained a mixture of large, strong and clumsily inept older boys with a few willing juniors. This was subsequently changed to a Ist XI and a Junior XI. I can remember the pride when my name first appeared on the notice board to represent Ancholme. The usual goalkeeper in the Upper Vth couldn't play and Rhodes from the Lower IVth was drafted in to play against the 'Nellies' (Nelthorpe House). We played in the waterlogged section of the field not far from the stream. There were no nets and rain had almost obliterated the pitch markings. There was also a strong wind. I had made some routine saves and rolled the ball out to the full backs to whack up field. Twice the ball had gone in well over the top of my head and out of reach, but we had equalised on each occasion. Near the end when we were playing into the teeth of the wind Jack Wright (son of the fish and chip man) attempted a clearance from the penalty area. He launched an almighty 'toggy-ender' at the ball, which flew precipitously high into the air. After it reached the top of its steep parabola, the wind caught it and it turned back on itself. To my horror it began to descend towards our goal and an own goal seemed certain. At that time we played with heavy leather balls and this one was also liberally coated in mud. I was transfixed as it continued on its inexorable course. Suddenly it homed in on me with all the menace of a Scud missile. It struck me amidships, but I grasped it firmly as I was knocked to the ground and all the breath exploded out of me. Still it was a save and we managed a point for the draw. In my last year I was House Football Captain, since we had no one in the Ist XI and I captained the 2nd XI. Our senior team was soundly beaten by School House, who had most members in the School team, but our Juniors showed much promise and won all their matches. If we seniors could beat Yarborough in our final match, we could share the House Football Cup. And we did.

I have mentioned those who started at BGS with me and continued in the various forms up to the Upper Sixth, but after more than sixty years it is amazing how many names of that original 3A I can remember. A substantial number may

now be dead, yet I recall them with smiling morning face coming not too unwillingly to BGS. Their nick names are still mint fresh in my mind as well as the Houses to which they belonged. In Ancholme there was Don France, Jack White, Derek Smith ('Smiffie'), and Ron Howlett, whom 'Chips' Morris tried to call 'Hibou', from some obscure franglais pun on Shakespeare's 'howlet's wing', but it never stuck. School House mustered Alan Riggott ('Riggy'), Alan West ('Aggie'), Robin Sumpter ('Sally'), Bob Hadow ('Hacker' from his tendency to hack your shins on the soccer field) and Charles Eccles ('Enoch'). From Sheffield House there was 'Bunty' Doran, 'Bill' Bradbury, Geoff Beard ('Whiskers'), Gordon Maw ('Wogga'), and from Yarborough 'Bob' Chapman, 'Tinker' Bell, 'Ben' Holah, and John Skipworth , whom 'Tiger' Richards christened 'Scipio' after the Roman general: this stuck only in its shortened form, 'Scip'. There were more Nelthorpes in our form than from any other House. At least three of them had the advantage of having elder brothers either at the School or recently left. There was 'Brin' Creasey, Brian Organ (confusingly also called 'Brin' – we never showed much invention) and George Lawrence, called like his brother 'Punch', who was the number I goalkeeper to my number 2. In addition there was Neville Jones, Hugh Avery ('Birdie'), R.A.Kitchen ('Fritz' – I can't think why), Alan Smeeth ('Smeethy'), Alan McDermott ('Mac'), John Fillingham ('Fill') and Johnny Alcock with his unfortunate name. Finally there was George Woodhead, who had the distinction of gaining his School Certifcate as a married man and a father.

Most of our attention was focussed on our own form, but in the B form I recall John Sennett ('Pod' - from the laxative, senna pods), Peter Robinson, a stylish opening bat ('Pee-Jay' after his initials), 'Fairy' Clark, Gordon Fisher ('Gordie') and Brian Lockwood (another 'Brin'). There were others, but my memory is fitful.

BGS had a most formative influence on all our lives and I recall the Staff with respectful admiration and my contemporaries with genuine affection. The School gave me a good basic knowledge and, more importantly, opened up unimagined prospects. It nurtured me through any difficulties and finally enabled me to reach what potential I had. To use a modern idiom it 'empowered' me. The Staff presented me with models I kept in mind during my own teaching career, for which they must take much responsibility. For over forty years I tried to inculcate the principles and best practices of BGS in the various schools in which I served and aimed to foster the abilities of my students.

Floreat Schol. Grammat. Glan. Briggens 1669, now in its new incarnation as Sir John Nelthorpe School. **Forti – two, three, four, five, six – dine!**

J.A.R.
(March 2003)