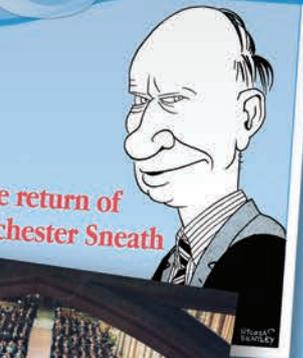


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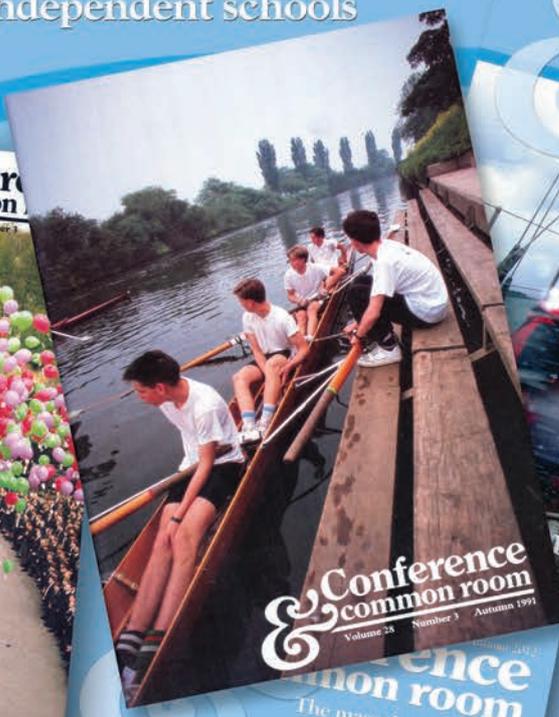
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Although Lindsay Anderson's 1968 film *If...* caused some nervousness at the time in Public School circles and the famous closing shoot-out has made all subsequent Founder's Days seem rather tame, a much more instructive film for independent schools is Stephen Poliakoff's mesmeric *Shooting the past*.

With a cast as eclectic as any school's common room and a collection of photographs to rival the Hulton Collection, the film shows how a picture can indeed be worth a thousand words. The photographs in our school archives contain an infinity of extraordinary – and ordinary – stories. Taken together they offer an uninterrupted visual chronicle of one aspect of our society since the 1880s. These pictures will show what is in fact one school, but the staff, the pupils and parents, the clothes and hair, the faces and the buildings – all will change in a family tree covering as many as six generations in photographs!

Conference & Common Room is in itself, of course, a kind of archive. Reading through the back numbers, most in bound volumes, compiled with characteristic prudence and care by former editor John Blatchly, one can see both innovations and repetitions as the independent educational scene scrolls by. And scrolling by will be the *mot juste*, since every word printed in *C&CR* is now being prepared for storage in an on-line archive to be held by HMC. One of the salutary things about being editor of *C&CR* is the lesson that there is nothing new under the sun. Whatever whizzo scheme one may think of, look back through enough previous numbers and there it will be, the topic you thought that only your fertile mind had generated, marmorealised in cold print.

Fortunately, being editor of *C&CR* is rather like being Beatrix Potter's *Taylor of Gloucester*. A steady supply of well-crafted pieces of work appear on my computer screen at regular intervals, each with a buttonhole or two at the most remaining to be completed by a few final stitches in the editorial twist. Thus it was that two articles on school archives spontaneously appeared for inclusion in this distinctly retrospective issue.

There are, however, quite a few commissioned articles here too, by way of birthday cards. Ian Beer was a Head before *C&CR* was born and is the senior Honorary Associate member of HMC, whilst John Blatchly, Jonty Driver, Nigel Richardson and Andrew Cunningham have all been editors of the magazine. The landscapes and portraits they paint fill in at least some of the back stories of the scene *Conference & Common Room* has sought to cover.

The photographs of Stephen Coyne which appear in this issue pay tribute to a long serving member of the editorial board who did much to improve the visual aspect of *C&CR*. Simon Henderson, the youngest serving HMC Head, bravely took up the challenge of looking ahead. Fifty years ago, almost no one could have imagined the process of computer miniaturisation let alone its worldwide effects. *Dan Dare* may have travelled freely by rocket and aerial car, but he didn't have a smart-phone. Given the pace and range of change over the last half century, who can say what things will be like 'twenty and thirty and forty years on'?

Not everything has changed out of recognition. Some pupils still sit Common Entrance, to the substantial benefit of HMC's coffers, and the grades introduced in 1963 to allow universities to differentiate between A level results are still in place, though camouflaged by stars and no longer alone in the qualifications jungle. Politicians, an interestingly large number of them educated in independent schools, still seem hostile to the independent sector.

Continued overleaf 

Editorial

Recently a certain restlessness seems to have become endemic amongst the civil servants and bird-of-passage politicians who have to deal with education in England, causing widespread uncertainty amongst teachers, pupils and parents and perfectly exemplified by the frequent renaming or rebranding of the department. This has created an atmosphere in which controversialists thrive, from John Rae, the Dean Inge of HMC, to equally eloquent contemporary exponents of the art so well known that they need not be named.

Generally speaking, Heads are generally speaking and Christopher Martin has produced what an organist might describe as 'varied harmonies' to the hymns of praise they regularly sing for their Prize Giving supper. More unsung are deputy heads, whose hours John Snelling has quantified in an article that will not surprise those whose backs they watch. Churchill maintained that a Prime Minister might envy the power exercised by Headmasters: deputy heads might be able to explain why this is.

At the time of writing, a proposal to pay governors generated some hot air and column inches and it is certainly true to say that *governance* is now as prominent as *compliance* in the minds of the inspectors and the inspected. These words, which of themselves, as Gwendolen Fairfax might have said, produce absolutely no vibrations, have gained an ominous resonance in educational circles because of the processes which surround them. In future *C&CR* will hope to address governors' concerns and challenges more directly, together with a wider remit in the secondary independent sector as a whole.

Looking back over the first ten years of *Conference*, Sir Desmond Lee, Headmaster of Winchester, wrote that 'the enemies of independence in education ... have now declared themselves' and that 'at such a time it is vital that all independent schools should stand together.' Since 'this is not something they have been good at in the past ... perhaps *Conference* could give a lead by broadening its scope to cover all Independent Secondary Schools so as to become a journal of independent secondary education.'

Happy to oblige, Sir Desmond!

Conference common room and John Catt

John Catt was the first business manager of Conference & Common Room. In the Summer 1988 issue of C&CR David Warnes wrote: 'His professional and commercial experience were an indispensable asset to Frank Fisher at the time when the magazine, originally entitled Conference, was launched. Successive editors found that their job was made much easier by the help of John and the team of co-workers he gathered around him. His company was, thanks to his inspirational management and willingness to innovate, a nursery of talent.'

Here he is seen holding a ship's decanter, presented to mark his retirement in 1987. With him, from the left, are Stuart Andrews (former editor); Martin Rogers (Chairman of HMC); John Blatchly (editor); and Andrew Milne (former editor). See also page 18.



Challenges, opportunities and obligations

In September 1961, Ian Beer became Headmaster of Ellesmere College at the age of 29, starting a continuing association with HMC that currently stands at 52 years. He therefore pre-dates *Conference & Common Room* and is perfectly placed to fill readers in on the magazine's back-story



Ian Beer

In 1961 I was elected to the HMC on the clear understanding that sixth form numbers at Ellesmere had to double by 1963 or my membership would be cancelled. No school was allowed to advertise in those days, but the IAPS organised a Common Entrance pool in London brilliantly masterminded by Dick Curtis.

Just imagine how vital he was to a young Headmaster looking for pupils! I suggested to HMC that the sixth form would go coed, but no, if we followed that route, I would be expelled from the HMC for accepting girls! My worries increased when the Advisory Centre for Education at Cambridge produced the first league tables of independent schools, created simply by dividing the annual fee by the number of A level passes achieved by the school: value for money! My school was bottom of the list and something had to be done.

I also discovered I was not entirely in step with current Headmasterly thinking. My first divisional meeting discussed the proposed plan from the Oxford and Cambridge Board to increase the oral content of the O level French examination.

All my colleagues were against the idea and the chairman said he would inform the HMC committee of that fact. I had decided to say nothing at all at my first meeting, but this decision was so contrary to my belief that I explained why I was in favour. Silence. The Chairman said "Good, I can tell the committee we are unanimously against the idea." I wished I had kept silent.

Meanwhile it became apparent that the 'powerful' Heads in HMC were getting progressively concerned about the political situation. Robert Birley, Desmond Lee and Walter Hamilton, all with contacts in Westminster, realised the dangers of a progressive Labour government coming into power and that HMC was not prepared either for investigation or for having the spotlight shining upon us at all.

It was time to change: no more 'public schools' but 'independent schools' which would defend their independence to the end. One Headmaster was prominent in the move to change – Frank Fisher. Although advertising was barred, it was decided to invite the national press to the annual conference: a huge decision, and one not approved by all, but our senior colleagues controlled their access and simply told the media what HMC wanted them to know and no more. Nevertheless the gossip columnists of the *Sunday Times* produced an amusing article categorising HMC Heads.

Harold Wilson's Labour government duly came to power and one year later the Public Schools Commission, chaired by John Newsom, was set up by Anthony Crosland, then Secretary of State, to develop 'a national plan for integrating the schools

with the maintained sector'. John Dancy and Tom Howarth were the only HMC Heads on the Commission, a difficult position for them, especially since they held contrasting views. Another member was also a friend of mine, the economics don John Vaizey, later a member of the House of Lords.

Because of the myth that all pupils in HMC schools were very intelligent, selected by a type of 11+ examination, the Common Entrance, Ellesmere College suddenly became the HMC committee's 'flavour of the month' and I was thrust into the limelight to explain that HMC educated all sorts and conditions of boys! So, when the Schools Council was created in 1964, the Headmaster of Eton, Michael McCrum, represented the independent schools on the A level committee and I represented them on the O level committee.

Michael hit the headlines early on by referring to the Council as 'a dog's breakfast' and I was on a steep learning curve. There were between 30 and 40 on my committee and early on the chairman declared that he wanted three new members, preferably female, assistant teachers and all from Wales, as we were short of our quota in all these categories.

As I sat there wondering if I knew of *any* female assistant teachers in Wales, the NUT member rose and proposed three ladies who were immediately appointed and it became apparent that everyone else was in the same position as me! No wonder Margaret Thatcher abolished the Schools Council as soon as she could.

In 1966 John Vaizey asked me to meet him for tea at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford. He came striding into the hotel saying "Ian, we shall not abolish the public schools – they would resurrect themselves in due course – instead we shall pull them down, and distribute every brick and stone across the countryside."

Later he said to me that, having visited so many of the schools, he realised Eton was the best school in the world. Therefore it did not surprise me when he and his wife Marina sent their son Ed to the school and I smile now seeing him working in a Conservative government.

During the 1960s, therefore, there was turmoil within the HMC, partly due to outside political activity, but also because the conference was catching up with internal reorganisations that were long overdue – science, for example, was not introduced to the Common Entrance Examination until 1964. But on top of that there was revolution within our schools!

The Headmaster of Westminster wrote to all his parents requesting that they sent their sons to bed earlier on Sunday evening to be better prepared for the week ahead and so, by

The past

way of protest, the school sat on the ground outside Chapel on Monday morning refusing to go in. The prefects of my second school, Lancing College, informed me that I must not assume that they would tell junior boys to do anything, as they believed they should be free to grow up as they wished.

Lindsay Anderson's film *If...* based on a book about Tonbridge and shot at the director's old school, Cheltenham College, hit the cinemas in 1968, badged with an X certificate, and no school chaplain's role was ever the same! I went to preach at a major public school only to find the cross on the altar had been stolen during the previous night and, at another, every attempt was made to trip me up on the way to the pulpit. At the annual conference, members sat in fear of being asked at the start of proceedings to telephone their school immediately, prompting an infinity of lurid headlines in the collective and individual imagination!

The tone of the conference changed: for a while it was all to do with choice – whether of subjects, or food, or punishment, or worship, or CCF, community service, games and so on and so on. At last the individual was catered for rather than being made to fit in with whatever was on offer, but this transition produced an enormous number of growing pains and difficulties, to which the conference reacted pretty well.

This magazine was created in 1963, though not with the full support of all the schools. Outside HMC many took the lead within SHA or elsewhere. We led the way in national discussions about the teaching of mathematics, Nuffield Science, modern languages and classics. Kurt Hahn gave us the lead over expedition training and community service, both quickly absorbed into our schools and, of course, linked to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The cross-pollination between SHA and HMC was invaluable and many of us would be assiduous attenders at both annual conferences. Teachers moved between the maintained and independent schools to the enrichment of everyone, especially the pupils. With the demise of the Direct Grant scheme the whole horizon changed and HMC became isolated as much through educational philosophy as anything else. At the same time, by abolishing the Direct Grant, the second Wilson government greatly strengthened the private sector as most of the outstanding grammar schools formerly within the scheme chose to become fully independent.

This was something of a windfall since, if one were critical of HMC at this time, it could be said that we did not do enough to oppose the Labour government's education policy, but were too busily engaged with our own affairs – the creation of the Bloxham Project, the creation of ISIS and then, in 1974, the Independent Schools' Joint Council (ISJC). The 'amity dinners' between HMC and GBA officers solved many problems in individual schools and saved several Headships. The work of Derek Seymour, Donald Lindsay and Arthur Hearnden at this time leaves us with a great deal to be thankful for.

When Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 and the 1980 Education Act was passed we had to be involved in even more new ideas. Mrs Thatcher proposed N and F examinations to replace A level, but the HMC academic policy committee conducted detailed research and, in a paper I gave to the AGM at Exeter, the conference unanimously backed a proposal to reject the idea and, as a result, the government decided against it.

In 1980, as chairman of HMC, I got into trouble by signing a letter to *The Times*, together with the presidents and chairmen of all the educational unions, opposing the



suggested publication of examination results, as we believed it would lead to the publication of league tables *etc.* We felt parents could be given results in a different way.

I was immediately summoned to the DES to explain my action personally to the Education Minister, Baroness Young. She was polite but very firm. Did I not realise I should have talked to her in private before signing letters to the papers? Did I not realise the special relationship between HMC and the Conservative party? I said I did not, as I dealt with all politicians equally. However, we did support the amalgamation of O level and CSE to create GCSE in 1988.

One transformative talk given to the annual conference at about this time came from a lady who had carried out research on child abuse in the Army and was very anxious to emphasise that abuse knew no boundaries of social class or rank so that we must be very watchful for it in our schools. That day Heads learnt a great deal and many, in private, admitted to having ignored the subject until that time; it was a huge awakening for many others.

But it was not always serious, as the idea to show us the new St Catherine's College at Oxford proved. Our annual dinner was held in the college and we walked through the new buildings in the dark. I was immediately behind the Master of Haileybury, Bill Stewart, well over six feet tall, and the Headmaster of Eton, Tony Chenevix-Trench, well under six feet, when I heard a splash and both disappeared! Looking carefully ahead of me, I saw Bill deep in the water, but Tony was totally submerged. We rescued them both and they eventually arrived to dine without dinner jackets as both had walked straight into one of the new, unmarked St Catherine's water features.

This magazine grew in popularity over the years as it became more and more a journal to trial ideas, to explain what

different schools were creating and how independence was being used. For this we must thank the editors over 50 years, from Frank Fisher to Tom Wheare. HMC and our schools have changed greatly since the first issue of this magazine and have done so for the better.

Teachers and children are indeed fortunate and privileged to be part of them in 2013, but we must still echo the words of Prof Bryan Thwaites who wrote in the first issue:

...in the future highly-stressed situation of the state system, the public schools are likely, I suggest, to be left very much to their own devices. They would then be presented with the most glorious opportunity of exploiting their independence not so as to preserve for themselves some outmoded place in society but to lead far out in the vanguard of educational experiment... The public schools are uniquely qualified to initiate work ... and I suggest that it is their positive and social duty to do so. It is often argued that they, and their members, are unfairly privileged members of society; let them transmute this privilege by undertaking tasks for the benefit of our educational system as a whole.

That challenge, given to us in September 1963, was taken up by many individuals and many schools, but both the challenge and the opportunity and, dare I say it, the obligation, still remain for us in 2013 and beyond.

Ian Beer is the author of But Headmaster! Episodes from the life of an Independent School Headmaster and a former England Rugby international.



Cricket at Ellesmere College: 'Because of the myth that all pupils in HMC schools were very intelligent, selected by a type of 11+ examination, the Common Entrance, Ellesmere College suddenly became the HMC committee's "flavour of the month" and I was thrust into the limelight to explain that HMC educated all sorts and conditions of boys!'

1963 and all that

‘In the years ahead we may have to defend what we believe to be vital freedoms. We should at least give ourselves this means of doing it’.

So proclaimed Frank Fisher, the Warden of St Edward’s School, Oxford, in October 1963 when rousing his colleagues in a debate at the HMC annual conference entitled ‘Proposed periodical journal’.

The idea of a ‘periodical journal’ had been approved in principle by the HMC committee in March 1963. Thus, at their conference seven months later, members had before them ‘full-scale printed specimen copies’ for consideration. But why was the association choosing this moment to come out in print?

The answer is not hard to find. Even a casual glance though the recorded deliberations of HMC during 1963 makes it clear that members at the time were uneasy about a combination of complex challenges on the social front and menacing storm clouds on the political horizon.

First, there were troubling changes in the wider culture. In a conference debate on Public Schools and Public Service, the Head of Manchester Grammar School, Peter Mason, pointed to an “odd kind of intellectual vacuum”. For while “the ’60s look to be an exciting decade both socially and educationally”, members of HMC “had some excuse for bewilderment when we survey a landscape in which many of the traditional signposts have been uprooted and the general vista reveals what to many looks like a blasted heath furnished with dustbins and the odd kitchen sink.”

Socially and educationally things were indeed on the move. This was Philip Larkin’s *Annus Mirabilis*, for whom

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three...
Between the end of the ‘Chatterley’ ban
And the Beatles’ first LP.

The spring had seen a major controversy in church circles when a provocatively liberal Bishop of Woolwich published a manifesto on how to be *Honest to God*. Long-established institutions in England, including the church and the public schools, were also starting to become accustomed to the advent of biting new print and TV satire.

This led Peter Mason to remark at the HMC conference in the autumn that debates about education were being held “against cynical background music supplied by *Private Eye* and *That Was the Week That Was*”. Moving into the foreground, however, was an emerging pop music revolution for which school pupils were a core audience and Mason’s conference speech occurred in the month that the press coined the term ‘Beatlemania’.

Meanwhile, for seasoned observers of education, it was becoming clear that the Ministry of Education was intent on regaining initiative over what was taught in a majority of



William Richardson

schools. Mason’s predecessor at Manchester Grammar, Eric James, had foreseen in the mid-1950s that the future for public schools lay in a modernised curriculum and greater academic ambition, a task set in train *via* projects supported by the Industrial Fund to update school science facilities.

In the decade that followed, as John Rae later concluded when reviewing the ‘public school revolution’ of 1964-1979, as the schools ‘became less explicitly Christian and more relaxed and informal in their lifestyle, they also became more ruthless and single-minded in their pursuit of academic success’.

In reality, they were already in a relatively strong position. In 1963 two-thirds of boys in HMC schools stayed on into the sixth form to attempt A levels, compared to only half in grammar schools. And while only 54% of these HMC pupils managed to achieve passes in two subjects, this compared to a mere 33% in grammar schools.

What modernisation might mean beyond the James-inspired upgrade of laboratories had become clear in 1962 when the first Nuffield project – Nuffield Physics – was approved by its trustees and began to be trialled in grammar and independent schools alongside the prominent ‘technical activities centre’ opened at Sevenoaks in 1963.

In a parallel development, David Eccles, the Minister of Education, chose this moment to announce the creation of a new body inside the ministry to undertake ‘fundamental

studies in the field of school curricula and examinations'. In due course HMC dispatched the Headmaster of Winchester, Sir Desmond Lee, to represent it at the ministry meetings which led to the creation of the Schools Council in 1964 – the onset of an inexorable political process that a quarter of a century later was to result in the imposition on state schools of a statutory national curriculum.

Simultaneously, the institutional landscape was also changing, for the 1963 HMC conference was hosted by the University of Southampton – according to the HMC chairman, Derek Wigram of Monkton Combe, “one of the most attractive and interesting of the new universities” – and took place in the same month that saw publication of the Robbins report on higher education.

In fact, the conference location was an accident, for the newly-founded Churchill College, Cambridge, had originally been booked, but its buildings proved not to be ready in time. Nevertheless, Southampton was not a complete quirk. The HMC committee had decided not long before that the custom of meeting annually either at Oxford or Cambridge should be changed to accommodate, every third year, convening ‘at some other university’.

When HMC issued its view on Robbins, it was silent on university expansion *per se* but found things to admire among the other recommendations of the enquiry: the broadening of courses; increased residential accommodation; emphasis on the value of sixth form work; rejection of the creation of sixth form colleges; and funding arrangements designed to protect the universities’ ‘proper autonomy’.

At the HMC conference itself, Wigram had instituted a ‘Chairman’s Address’ to replace the more modest tradition of ‘opening remarks’. In giving the end of conference vote of thanks, Walter Hamilton, Headmaster of Rugby, commented on this innovation, describing it as “the full-dress affair which the chairman was compelled to produce”, before hastening to say that, while regretting such a necessity, “I assure you that I recognise the need for it.”

The acknowledgment of this need was the culmination of discussion throughout 1963 about the means by which HMC might also address the spectre of severe political challenge.

The previous year Anthony Crosland had set out, in *The Conservative Enemy*, the case for assimilating the public schools into the state system by allocating most of their places free to parents. Five days before HMC met at Southampton, Lord Denning issued his report on the Profumo affair and the mood of the members was concentrated even more strongly on the likelihood that Crosland could be Minister of Education within the year.

And if all this was not enough, it was becoming clear that political pressure from the Left was combining with the post-war rise of social science in general, and sociology in particular, to focus unprecedented interest and critical attention on the workings of the public schools, especially their role in the socialisation of their own pupils and, indirectly, that of others.

Already, John Dancy, Master of Marlborough, had undertaken his own survey of existing data for *The Public Schools and the Future* (1962), an anatomy of boarding schools discussed in HMC divisions during 1963. In his foreword Dancy said that he knew of ‘no systematic study of public schools by a trained sociologist, anthropologist,

psychologist or even historian’, but this barren landscape was about to be transformed.

For even as HMC was meeting at Southampton in 1963, data was being systematically collected or revised for a first wave of such studies – T J H Bishop’s *Winchester and the Public School Elite* (1967), Ian Weinberg’s *The English Public Schools: the sociology of elite education* (1967) and John Wakeford’s *The Cloistered Elite* (1969).

HMC’s discussion of a ‘periodical journal’ was therefore set in the wider context of a realisation that, to control fast-moving change in cultural and political attitudes, the schools had to become more publicly assertive.

In April 1962 HMC had appointed its first public relations consultant, Colin Wintle, a former pupil of Clifton College and one of a handful of pre-war PR practitioners with an established post-war consultancy. On Wintle’s advice, HMC reconstituted its publicity committee in March 1963 to include both Fisher and Dancy.

At the same time the committee also recommended that a new edition of the *Public School Hymn Book* be renamed *Hymns for Church and School*, despite the north west division later concluding that ‘to prejudiced nostrils a rose would smell no less sour for being called a *Rosa Chinensis*’.

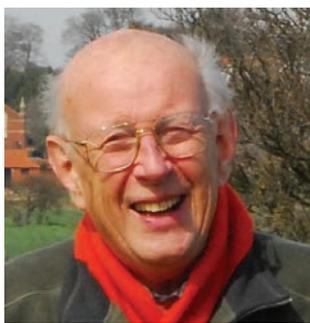
In May the HMC committee renamed its fledgling ‘Publicity’ sub-committee ‘Public Relations’, before proceeding to discuss ‘tactics in presenting the case for Independent education to the public, especially in the circumstances of a General Election’.

In July it accepted a recommendation from this sub-committee that a thorough factual survey be commissioned by an academic of ‘those aspects of Public School education which are at present particularly the subject of public interest and controversy, in order that such information may be available for use in public relations in any future contingency’.

The scene was thus set. On 30th September, 1963, the collected members of HMC, gathered by the Solent at their annual conference, sat together on their first evening to listen to the inaugural chairman’s address. Having apologised for giving it at all, and “at an hour when members have traditionally occupied themselves more entertainingly... I do what I am told”, the Headmaster of Monkton Combe commiserated with his audience. “It is not of our choosing that the public schools are a centre of acute controversy today with words such as ‘abolition’, ‘take-over’, ‘integration’ being bandied about.” What, then, could be more appropriate than the views of some eager members that HMC should have “a regular Journal of our own in which facts and comment can be published”?

The following day, with the ‘pilot issue’ of *Conference* before them, the case for approving its launch was made by Frank Fisher. The chairman thanked Fisher for his “extremely persuasive remarks” and the motion was passed ‘on a show of hands ... with four dissentients’.

William Richardson is the General Secretary of HMC.



John Blatchly

Climbing the ladder

John Blatchly recalls his progress through university into teaching. The good old days? Well not entirely

Although it was wartime, everything seemed very simple in 1942 when my primary school teachers said that I had worked through all they had for me and sent me off to the grammar school where I passed the next nine years. I was not yet ten, but that was a good challenge and, over three years or so, my ambition became clear: I hoped to become Headmaster of a grammar school.

J A Cockshutt was my Headmaster at Sutton Grammar School in Surrey, his eminence confirmed by his sit-up-and-beg motorcar which stood in lonely state on the forecourt. He and his two most senior colleagues were chemists and musicians and they were my role models. Had that trio been great sportsmen it would probably not have made much difference to me, but if the arts had been as strong as the sciences in the school, I might well have become a historian. I am so glad that they were not.

In the sixth form it was chemistry, physics and pure and applied maths for me and, before the results came, I had applied for and been offered places at three London University colleges. When they had my grades, the masters astonished my parents by saying that I should forget London and go for Cambridge. There were no forms: just write to a few colleges and wait!

Pembroke sent for me the day before the Michaelmas Term 1950 began and offered me a place after National Service. Feeling that I should forget all my science in two years of that, I politely declined the offer and enjoyed a first view of the sunlit city.

Trinity Hall first court seen through the entrance gate looked idyllic and someone popped up and asked if he could help. I said that I hoped to go home that evening with a place and he revealed that he was the senior tutor's clerk. If I came back at 2pm, Mr Crawley would see me. He did so by looking over his half-glasses and offered me a place for law or medicine. I ventured that I planned to read natural sciences, at which he looked genuinely sad and said: "Law or medicine, but not natural sciences", and that was that.

Remembering that I had written to Christ's and been told that I would be invited for interview when the senior tutor heard from 'Jacko', I decided to jump the gun and asked at the porters' lodge if I might see Mr Pratt straight away. My stroll through three courts gave that notoriously eccentric don ample time to have tossed piles of applicants' files around his study, building up quite a head of angry steam in the process.

"How dare you arrive unbidden?" were his first words, but things soon got better. "Term begins tomorrow; come straight up", he said, but I dared not hide the fact that I had no Latin. "Oh well, go and waste another three terms at school and we'll see you in a year's time."

Those terms were far from wasted, for Latin from scratch with one Welsh and one Austrian teacher was fascinating and I already had the freedom of the chemistry labs to carry out organic syntheses, crystallising and purifying a wide range of compounds, most of which would be regarded as death-dealing today, if only carcinogenic.

The director of music said that if I wanted him to put on another opera, *Ruddigore* as it happened, I should select the male principals and chorus members and teach them their parts in advance of any master involvement. (What a pity Jonathan Miller scorns Gilbert and Sullivan as 'boring self satisfied English drivel ... UKIP set to music'. It is a first class starting point.)

Cambridge for a committed chemist meant six-day weeks of lectures and labs, but there was also music in abundance. The highlight for me was singing under Boris Ord in the Madrigal Society in the first performance of the *Garland for the Queen* in the Royal Festival Hall the night before the Coronation. Almost all the ten composers of those contemporary equivalents of the *Triumphs of Oriana* came to early rehearsals and we also gave the pieces a second performance in an Albert Hall prom.

Three years of National Service followed, in the Instructor Branch, Royal Navy, teaching boy seamen at HMS Ganges and at the Depot, Royal Marines, Deal where I taught junior musicians musical history and appreciation. This counted in lieu of a Cert Ed and so, in 1957, it was time to apply to schools. I still wanted a grammar school Headship one day, but why not look at the private sector first?

In 1960 I bought a new book called *How to become Headmaster* by R G G Price, with cartoons by Ionicus and published by Anthony Blond, for those seeking a short cut to promotion. I kid myself that I had read it much earlier and I seemed to remember that it included a cartoon with the caption, 'Always start climbing on the best possible ladder'. I was wrong, both about the cartoon and about the route to the top, although that was the one I initially tried to follow. But, in the palmy days of 1957, a top school requiring a junior chemist could recruit a First with a university prize. More to the point, he would also pull his weight on the games field, leaving the older men to drink tea with the lab assistants.

After an interview with A L Maycock at the Cambridge University Appointments Board, a steady stream of particulars of vacancies in HMC schools trickled through. My first interview was at Clifton College, where Headmaster Hammond carried my case up to my room (a courtesy that has become a lifetime's habit for me when greeting guests).

At breakfast his prep-school age children needed help with their Greek irregular verbs, an early morning practice their

father had perhaps acquired when serving with guerillas in 1943. No doubt their verbs were pretty irregular too.

Lee of Winchester and Young of Charterhouse were most kind and said that if only they had *two* vacancies... At Gabbitas and Thring, Powell of Sherborne hired a dingy interview room of double cube proportions (but the floor area was small and the height immense). He never rose from his chair nor shook hands and soon said "You must understand that we have to entertain Shirburnians 24 hours a day and seven days a week." At least I would never have to endure the Gesualdo Singers he ran on Sunday afternoons.

The Head of a leading north London school said that I would teach physics and chemistry to the classical thirds and fourths, that I would take the tenor lead in the opera he produced each year (more UKIP set to music, of course), become a scouter and come out on the games field with him the first week. He would show me what to do.

He would warn me the first time he saw litter on my laboratory floor or any indiscipline, but on the second I would be sacked. When the offer came by post, I declined it, considerately I thought, by telegram followed by a letter. He must surely have broken the typewriter bashing out the most intemperate rebuke I have ever received.

The Master of Marlborough doubted whether my chemical guns would be powerful enough for his ablest scientists (how could he know?), and he and the Heads of Canterbury and Tonbridge didn't need to see me before saying no. I should have kept the letters as souvenirs, but remember their gist clearly.

It was time to try other ladders and perhaps leap from one to the next. Geoffrey Sale at King's School, Bruton, was just off to Rossall when he appointed me at £725 per annum, putting only £675 in writing, leaving me to sort it out

with his successor when I pointed out the shortfall. His rich deep baritone voice was regularly heard on *Thought for the Day*, and he introduced my new physics colleague, also just appointed, as "No games, weak ticker."

My ticker was alright but somehow I avoided the sporting draft. Just as well, because O level chemistry was taken in the lower sixth and A level in the third year, so initially one had to tackle two years' work at both levels in one.

Within a year I became head of science and five years later succeeded David Jewell at Eastbourne College before going by invitation to run science at Charterhouse. Michael Birley and Oliver van Oss taught me all I needed to know about Headmastering and it was off to try that at Ipswich School in 1972.

As we left Bruton, Eastbourne and Charterhouse, we were wined and dined by old boys on the staff, who told us how glad they were to see the back of me, because "You have done your very best to bring down the school we love."

How strange that this happened three times! Admittedly, they were all sportsmen and objected to my efforts in the sciences, something they regarded as not quite the thing. They were unaware of the flood of Nuffield science courses sweeping through HMC schools, largely written and piloted in our schools also. I had involved too many boys in music when I might have been out blowing a whistle and assisting at what an ex-Headmaster friend of mine used to call "pleasures of the body".

Ipswich School reminded me in many ways of my own school at Sutton, but it enjoyed the huge privilege of independence. To my great relief, the sciences were well run and ably taught. Ambition achieved!

John Blatchly was editor of C&CR from 1986-1992 and treasurer of HMC 1990-93.

HERE & THERE

If you have news of topical interest, however brief, for 'Here and There', please email it to Tom Wheare at postmaster@dunbry.plus.com. Items should not exceed 150 words. Good colour photographs are also welcome.

Elizabeth's prize

Oakham School pupil, 18-year-old Elizabeth Bass, has won a prestigious European harp competition in Cardiff.

Elizabeth was one of 39 harpists from around Europe to take part in The Lyon & Healy Awards. Her outstanding ability was recognised and she became the youngest competitor to win one of the four awards of £2000. She plans to use the award to further her musical education, including investing in additional tutoring with professional harpists.

The competition, which took place in Europe for the first time, was the centrepiece of a three-day International Harp Festival held at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff.

"It was a hugely inspiring three days, full of amazing recitals, lectures and master classes. Playing in the competition and in the final recital in front of a packed audience of professional harpists was hugely nerve-wracking, but I was overjoyed to be chosen as one of the winners," Elizabeth said.

"Elizabeth clearly has an exciting musical future ahead of her," said Director of Music, Peter Davis. "We are extremely proud of all her achievements, which include her recent offer of a scholarship to study at London's Royal Academy of Music after she has finished her A Levels at Oakham."



Why me?

C J Driver faced puzzles as a Head from the first moment

When you are appointed Head, you never know exactly what you will be faced with – nor even why you have been appointed. I've been appointed Head of three schools and each time was surprised by what I discovered.

First was Island School, Hong Kong, an international secondary school of some 1400 pupils, all day. Technically comprehensive, it became more like a direct grant school in a rich suburb, in that all pupils were meant to be fluent in English, and Chinese pupils were admitted only if they had been out of the colony for long enough to 'lose their characters', *ie* had forgotten how to write and read Chinese ideograms. It was – and still is, though it has changed its character – a brilliant and exciting school.

My predecessor, who before Island School had been Head of an English grammar school, clearly thought I would manage without benefit of much handover. I had had a week there, a term before my official arrival, to meet some of the main players in the English Schools' Foundation, and had got horribly sunburned on a day's sailing with my predecessor who, as a sideline, ran a little business selling sailing boats.

His handover document consisted of one 29-minute tape, mainly about how to get from the Principal's flat in Stanley on a motor-bike during the rush-hour to the school in Mid-levels above the Victoria barracks. He had also left us his car. He did not explain it had been half-submerged when the tide came into the cellar of the block of flats. I found that out when I put both feet through the floor the first – and last – time I drove it.

He also left me with two disciplinary problems. The sixth form dance at the end of his last term had gone badly wrong. Sorting that was simple. At the end of the first assembly, I asked the sixth form to stay behind. I perched on the edge of the stage to say that there would be no more dances until they themselves had come up with a code of conduct. Of course, what they came up with – rapidly – was much tougher than anything I could have imposed by direct rule.

The other problem was worse. Some idiot had thrown a bottle into the school swimming-pool. There was a drought. If we emptied the pool, we would not be allowed to refill it. The PE staff thought most of the broken glass had been swept up, but couldn't be sure. I decided that a Hong Kong summer without a pool would be a worse disaster than a cut foot.

Quickly I realised that the problems in the school weren't to do with pupils or their parents, but with a multi-talented but ill-disciplined staff. My predecessor (actually rather a nice and kindly man) had told me he hadn't attempted to run staff meetings as meetings. He would just let everyone gather in the staff-room and then allow them to raise any topic. He made no effort to chair the meeting, telling me he regarded it as a 'group therapy session'. Before the end of my first meeting I realised that 'blood-letting' would be a better metaphor.

"Are they always like that?" I asked one of my deputies.

"That was peaceful," she replied.



C J Driver

Next day, one of the more co-operative members of staff (who used to give me a lift into school each day) told me about a John Cleese training film called *Meetings, Bloody Meetings*, which a friend in business had shown him. I arranged to see it for myself. The next staff meeting was held in a lecture theatre, and the sole business was this wonderful, funny, wise film, in which John Cleese is arraigned as an incompetent MD in a court run as he runs his meetings: no agenda, no minutes, regular absences and so on.

From then on, there were no staff meetings without an agenda. I chaired the meeting. When my own conduct was the subject for discussion, I handed over to a deputy. Everyone attended (except those excused by me for good reason). Minutes were kept. No one spoke before being asked to do so. A guillotine on discussion was enforced. No matter could be raised under AOB which took more than two minutes – or it would go on the agenda for the next meeting. (If you ever want to disrupt a meeting, wait for AOB and then raise a stinker.) I can't claim that peace broke out (too many of the staff thought that the 'teachers' action' of the UK – more properly described as 'inaction' – should be exported); but I hope I still have a reputation as a chairman of meetings punctilious to the point of judicial.

My next school was Berkhamsted, in those days still a boys' school, with a prep school, a junior school and a senior school, mainly day but with a strong boarding tradition, running in parallel with a girls' school of similar composition. My predecessor was a Cambridge classic with a First, who had previously run a northern grammar school before moving south, but retaining habits of frugality and control. I shall always remember with gratitude his quiet remark to me as I took over from him, "You will find in the school bank account a considerable sum in credit; I thought you would like to have it to spend."

My gratitude – how many other Heads have inherited overdrafts, even huge debts? – was qualified when I realised how the money had been saved. There came into the Headmaster's study a large and irascible HoD.

"How on earth do you expect me to run a department without paper?"

"What?" I replied. "Why have you run out of paper? Why don't you order some?"

"But you know I can't. You have to order it."

I discovered there were no departmental budgets at all. Everything – down to the supply of pens and paper – was centralised. Even quite minor expenditure required the Head's signature – and he signed nothing without an interview and explanation.

Quickly I realised: this was a fine stallion, marvellously muscled, but he had forgotten how to run. The reins had been held so tight that the school thought standing still was the only mode. All I had to do was to let go of the reins and give the place a gentle kick in the ribs. It took a while to realise it was free to run. Some of the best teaching I have ever seen anywhere happened in that school.

It would have run more freely if it hadn't been shackled to a girls' school, equally capable of running free and fast, but constrained. The schools should have been amalgamated well before I arrived, but apparently the staff of the girls' school had made such a fuss that the governors backed down from the hard decision. The amalgamation happened only under the authority of my successor's successor, Priscilla Chadwick – and that is a different essay.

My next school was Wellington. I hadn't planned to apply there, though I had been looking for a higher peak to climb than Berkhamsted seemed. The myth that Wellington was 'a military school' kept it off the list of places I thought to apply to. A friend nudged me to apply, because a couple of masters there (whom I knew from the edge of rugby fields) had nudged him to nudge me. When I investigated – and did a quiet snoop one Sunday with my wife – it seemed so unlikely that an ex-South African of my particular experience would get anywhere that I decided to try anyway. The closer I got the keener I became.

I thought I had been appointed because I would add a certain flourish – an international panache, an exotic icing to a well-made British cake. In my second year as Master, I said to the Vice-President (as the chairman of governors is called), by then a friend as well as an unflinching ally, "Roly, may I ask you now why the governors appointed me?"

"Oh, simple really," he replied. "You have a reputation as being a bastard about discipline."

If I had known before what I knew by then, I think I would have stayed happily at Berkhamsted, or looked for a third Headship somewhere less demanding. My predecessor at Wellington – a great scholar of national distinction, author of perhaps the best school history ever written – had been told by various housemasters that the school had a drug-problem. "The Wellingtonian doesn't take drugs," he is reputed to have replied.

And of course he was right: the ideal he had in mind – the Wellingtonian of history, hero of battlefield and ruggerpitch, the bolshie captive impossible to subdue, the generous, public-spirited, outgoing and responsible citizen – wouldn't touch drugs (except the best brand of single malt, but then

only when it was appropriate). The problem was that lots of Wellingtonians were taking illegal drugs; and because they thought the staff knew and didn't care, went on taking them. The current attitude to so-called 'soft drugs' didn't help, of course. Cannabis? Giggle, giggle.

I had seen too much of the South African version of cannabis – *dagga* – to share a liberal attitude. Fortunately, even 'soft drugs' were still illegal, so I didn't have to explain that, even if I was wrong that too often they caused the early onset of schizophrenia or depression, they were certainly not a helpful way of revising for A levels. I spelled out a rule and repeated it at the beginning of every term (and more often than that, in various forms): take illegal drugs, bring them into school, pass them on to other pupils, come into school under the influence, the first expectation had to be (if suspicion became conviction) suspension and then expulsion.

Once a Head has drawn a line in the sand to say, "Step over that and I shall shoot", he has no alternative but to fulfil his threat. There can be only one final warning. The alternative is anarchy: "I never mean what I say, old son: anything goes..." I am sure I expelled some very nice children who made one silly mistake and who might have deserved a second chance. I did what I could to find them other schools if I possibly could (but I have to admit that, mainly, when I admitted boys expelled from other schools for similar offences, I often regretted my decisions).

After two miserable years, almost all pupils seemed to realise I meant what I said; and I knew that what I was doing had the support of most (perhaps even all) the staff and the parents (until their own children offended, when of course they wanted compassion and understanding, exactly as I would have wanted for my own children).

The governors never wavered, although the expulsions didn't do much for the reputation of the school and knocked a huge hole in its income. When one of the boys told me he had been offered a joint at a party and had declined it (he said) because his Headmaster was such a bastard I'd expel him if he were found out, I reckoned I'd won a kind of victory. I still count the cost, but hope the battle was necessary.

I used to be asked, sometimes, if I minded taking unpopular decisions. My reply is that, as a large white male ex-South African, opposed to apartheid to the extent of being prepared to go to gaol for my activities, I was well-trained for the unpopularity of Headmastering.

C J Driver, known sometimes even to his pupils as 'Jonty', was editor of C&CR from 1992 to 1999. He has published several volumes of poetry and has two books coming out this year – My brother & I, a short biography and Citizen of Elsewhere, 26 poems.



Nigel Richardson

Time-lapse photography

Nigel Richardson travels to a foreign country in four minutes

Conference & Common Room first appeared almost exactly a decade after two rather different cultural icons: LP Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* and a short BBC documentary *London to Brighton in Four Minutes* (now available on YouTube). What links this trio is just the sort of question that might well appear in the King William's College annual quiz – you read it here first – but it provides a good basis on which to hang what follows.

Hartley began with the assertion that 'the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'. This idea, incidentally, was quickly taken up by grateful examiners setting General Historical Questions papers for seventh-term Oxbridge candidates, just one of many educational landmarks which vanished long ago. But I digress. The railway journey portrayed in the film amazed TV viewers who then were quite unused to time-lapse photography and it did just what it said on the can ... but I overload my metaphors.

Which brings me, at last, to my point. In a country like ours, so accustomed to celebrating anniversaries not merely by the century but even by the millennium, 50 years can seem a very small deal. However, if you take the time-lapse approach to education in the half-century that *C&CR* represents, you realise just how durable the magazine has been and the scale of the changes in schools that it has charted. To illustrate this, there follows my personal equivalent of the four-minute journey down to the South Coast.

I took my O levels in 1963-4, as *C&CR* was born, celebrating the fact that as I turned 16, I would no longer be expected to wear my school cap. A year earlier, in his book *Anatomy of Britain*, Anthony Sampson described HMC Heads as

awesome and formidable men ... wielding immense power, maintaining exact if sometimes irrelevant standards ... figures of massive integrity and moral uprightness: a divorced headmaster is unimaginable. Their way of life combines monasticism with worldly ambition... They are insulated against the outside world... An extraordinary number of them have won the Porson Greek Prize at Oxford, and none of the top ones are scientists.

The Heads of that decade had to run their schools in a social climate that was changing at bewildering speed and often very hostile. The *TES* in 1963 (very different in style and preoccupation from its modern namesake) spoke of how the Beatles represented 'an adolescent obsession which we must understand and turn to advantage'.

It was easier said than done and, at the end of the decade, two notable films, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *If...*, reminded the world that Heads and teachers might not wield such 'immense power' after all. Meanwhile the wider

educational landscape was being transformed by the abolition of most of the grammar schools.

Fast forward into the '70s. The abolition of the Direct Grant (1976) might be seen as the biggest single re-shaper of the independent sector during the five decades of *C&CR*'s existence, along, perhaps, with the move to co-education. I remember this decade for other reasons, too: the past was indeed a distant country.

In my first job (1971: salary £1250 *pa*) staff were paid £200 at the start of term and the termly balance in week nine. With inflation rampant, some bright spark suggested that the £200 might be raised to £300, and I protested that after half-term I would actually be paying money *back*. Then someone else dared to suggest that we all be paid monthly, whereupon a very longstanding member of the common room objected that no gentleman should be insulted in such a way.

It was a very different world in technological terms, too. In the pre-photocopier age, my duplicating stencil had to be re-typed after 50 copies, and when I began a film course for sixth-formers, the second-hand black-and-white TV sets, valiantly converted by a member of the physics department, rarely lasted through an afternoon.

On to the '80s, an era often remembered for the onset of yuppie values, famously described by John Rae:

The schools endorse the priorities of the age: every man for himself in the competition for good A levels, a good university, a well-paid job and a red Porsche to roar up the school drive, scattering your former teachers like nature's rejects in the race of life...

There were increasing winds of change in public exams. A recent BBC News interview with a sixth-former who said that she would be far too stressed ever to contemplate a three-hour A level exam made me wonder: didn't candidates with timetable clashes once take up to *three* full-length papers a day? Was the pre-'80s exam world as tranquil as I remember it?

Probably not for scientists or mathematicians, but in my subject (history) even a few more years put on the O level syllabus – 'Britain 1914-64' becoming 'Britain 1914-70' – seemed a major revolution. (Eat your heart out for such a UK-centric specification, Mr Gove.) Was I the only one who set off towards the new GCSE (1986) with high hopes that coursework, testing skills such as 'empathy', really would be challenging? But that was before the internet gave a new meaning to plagiarism.

By the end of that decade I was briefly a prep school Head as the Children Act arrived (1989). My school took part in the pilot for the pupil questionnaire on a hot afternoon when Common Entrance was over and I worried that they might send it up. They didn't, but I had no idea what a sea-change

in attitudes to child protection the Act would bring; nor how purposefully some staff would try to shoot the messenger who told them that private and unrestricted phoning-out by pupils to parents would now be the norm.

By the '90s I was a senior school Head. How easy it is now to criticise schools for rapid increases in fees, whilst forgetting how under-capitalised some schools, especially former Direct Grant ones, were, or to forget the impact of the Blair government's laudable pay rises for teachers – and the increased employers' NI contributions that quickly followed. It is possible also to wonder whether we should have gone it alone and set up our own exam board, notwithstanding the cost and the risk of accusations of elitism that it would have brought.

The less-distant past is less foreign (and my word limit is running out), so there is space to mention only briefly the large coverage devoted by *C&CR* to *Curriculum 2000*, seemingly such an advance at the time, but now being steadily unpicked. Interesting too, as I observe universities and Heads understandably defending AS levels, to reflect how strongly my generation felt that Years 10 and 12 in schools were times when too many pupils without exams just cruised along. We failed to anticipate a world in which the summer term would be a continuous succession of exams.

The rise and fall of the Diploma as 'qualification of choice' is another example of rapid and costly reversal, albeit one that impinged on the independent sector rather less.

The train pulls into Brighton with time to reflect on only two 'might have beens' equivalent, perhaps, to the different directions determined by sets of railway points, if I may get up steam once again in my metaphorical boiler. First: independent schools have long been accused of profligacy in their building programmes. *C&CR*'s birth in the 1960s coincided with the start of what is sometimes termed the 'spending war' in schools: new sports halls, technology centres and theatres.

More recently the sector has been accused of a lack of educational innovation over recent decades. This seems curious when one thinks what those facilities made possible, or about their contribution to our Olympic success, or the dramatic flowering of non-team and indoor sport, or school drama and music. It was a well-known Labour politician (before the recession) who used to point to independent schools as the benchmark in educational spending terms: if the state had enjoyed a monopoly of school provision over the past 50 years, would it have spent more, or less, on education?

But secondly: if that so-called 'spending war' had *not* taken place, might the sector now be less vulnerable to accusations of being 'posh': an insidious word that crept up on us unawares and which has become one of many examples of slack journalism which afflict the sector?

Which reminds us: *C&CR* began as part of a wider PR initiative that included the foundation of the Independent Schools' Council, to fight off the perceived threat if Labour won the 1964 election. Maybe our forebears were more far-sighted than we sometimes think, even if, in that foreign country of half a century ago, some were still sewing up the trouser pockets of boys who dared to put their hands in them.

Nigel Richardson was a steering group member of C&CR from 1995 to 2002 and editor from 1999. Chairman of HMC in 2007, he is currently completing a biography of its founder, Edward Thring.

HERE & THERE



Mathematics gold medal for Loughborough Grammar School student

The best school mathematician in the whole country: former Mountfields Lodge junior school pupil and present Loughborough Grammar School student Matei Mandache, aged 17, has been awarded a gold medal in the Romanian Master of Mathematics competition held in Bucharest earlier this year.

Romanian-born Matei, who was representing the UK, performed outstandingly in the two very tough examinations, each of which lasted four-and-a-half hours. His superb marks placed him in equal third position out of the 91 contestants, all of whom were from elite Mathematics Olympiad countries around the world.

As a result, Matei won a gold medal, to go with his silver medal from last year's Balkan Mathematical Olympiad in Turkey and a bronze medal from last year's International Mathematical Olympiad in Argentina.

The International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) is the World Championship Mathematics Competition for senior school students and was first held in Romania in 1959 when seven countries took part. There are now over 100 countries spanning five continents involved in the annual competition.

Matei helped the UK to a magnificent third place out of the 15 competing teams, just behind the USA and Russia, and well ahead of host country Romania.

As the top scorer in the UK team, following his perfect marks in both rounds of the British Mathematical Olympiad this year, he is now indisputably the best school mathematician in the UK. Not surprisingly, he has been offered a place to read mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge.

From restraint to razzmatazz

Andrew Cunningham remembers the old horse-drawn marketing

As the only editor of *Conference & Common Room* to have been a teacher rather than a Head, now seems an excellent time to reflect upon some of the changes to hit HMC schools from the perspective of 'Common Room', rather than 'Conference'. Two huge changes over the past 25 years that immediately spring to mind have been the introduction of coursework and the publicity boom.

Publicity, marketing, promotion, PR, call it what you will, the marketing of HMC schools now amounts to big business and it's here to stay. It's hard to imagine it now, in this more streamlined age of sharp suits and slick websites, but a mere generation ago almost every single HMC school was dead-set against publicity: indeed, really rather sniffy about any form of self-promotion; it simply wasn't the done thing, rather vulgar in fact.

Marketing was something that happened to Mars bars. If prospective parents weren't prepared to make the effort to track down the well-worn path to the college, well, so be it and so help them. It was merely a passing trend, a blip in the birth-rate; numbers would be sure to pick up soon. Prospectuses were dull, hastily-put together affairs, with few if any glossy pictures. As for any more overt promotion...

If I shut my eyes I can still visualise the scenes at those early ISIS exhibitions I attended as the school 'PRO' (another archaic term) on behalf of a Midlands boarding-school, newly fallen on harder times. Half-hearted stalls would be hastily erected just before the doors opened. Teachers in charge of said stalls, uncannily like trestle tables, often enough, would be straightening their ties as the punters arrived.

The odd gimmick or two would be dreamed up at the last minute. Suits would be a rarity, cords and elbow patches still glimpsed. Colleagues would chat convivially to each other, only to look rather irritable as they were interrupted by the odd timid enquiry. If they were really lucky, prospective parents might be awarded a pencil with the college crest on it.

How times have changed. Now every self-respecting school has its own marketing director, often a member of the SMT (another import from the board-room); its own lavishly expensive website; its own photographer; its own development director (SMT too); its own Five Year Plan.

Schools are big business, which no one ever really grasped back then, and are marketed accordingly. Websites and prospectuses are re-designed every two years; newsletters and press cuttings chronicle every passing moment of the school day; an infinity of twittered trivia causes tail-backs on the virtual super highways.

A great deal has been gained in this process, of course. It can only be a positive trend if we are more aware of and more



Andrew Cunningham

answerable to the needs of our clientele – realising parents were 'customers' was another quantum leap. And it has to be said that a lot of people within HMC and HMC schools have done an excellent job in promoting a system we all believe in so well, helping ensure the high standing of independent schools amongst the various 'target markets'.

But inevitably good things have been lost too and, while I embrace the need for change and the new slickness and professionalism, having been directly involved in the PR/marketing process for several HMC schools, a part of me still misses, is still wistful for, the old days when amateurism ruled and the Head's secretary was not so much PA as PR, *ie* the Person Responsible for everything no one else wanted, including 'doing' the prospectus.

I miss those quaint displays at those early ISIS exhibitions: the random science projects on display, the mannequins in school uniforms, the sticky toffees. I miss the splutterings of old-style Heads: the lofty attitudes that placed them above the money-grubbing tawdriness of ever having to tout for business. "There are some people who think that publicity is a good idea. I am afraid I am not one of them."

Meanwhile, the biggest single change at the chalk-face has been coursework. Coursework and its never-ceasing demands has scarred the life of tens of thousands of pupils, confronting them with insatiable demands to re-write endless mundane essays. It has given countless headaches, too, to many hundreds of teachers, faced with the constant need to spend whole days 're-editing' the re-writes.

Coursework has given the green light to parents and older siblings to 'help a little'. Perhaps most unforgivably, it has placed teachers in a hugely difficult moral dilemma. Increasingly excellent results are demanded by directors of studies – and how did we ever manage without these? B grades are no longer good enough, yet most members of Set 5 are natural B grade candidates, so how much help do we give them? Where does the grey area end and downright cheating begin?

I remember only too clearly the well-meaning arguments propounded when coursework was first introduced in the late 1980s. It all sounded so reasonable, so convincing, but no-one

Marketing is all.



Photograph Stephen Coyne.

had really bothered to peer down the dark tunnel ahead. Exams were intrinsically unfair, ran the argument. What about the poor pupil who under-performed on the day? What about the pupil with hay-fever, or a sick puppy at home? We needed a continuous assessment system, where the true measure of a boy or girl's ability could be gauged. That would be so much fairer.

In practice, that true measure now means that just about every piece of coursework submitted is of a very high standard indeed. Few self-respecting schools submit B grade coursework anymore – every essay on *Of Mice and Men* is deemed to be a few tweaks shy of a straight A*.

Hence the log-jam at the universities, faced with the task of trying to discriminate between so many applicants with impeccable grades. Is it any wonder that a recent buzz-phrase to hit the system in the past few years has been the need for more 'independent learning'? With so much coursework

re-drafting, fewer and fewer students ever get the chance to read real books anymore.

And the future? There may be more shiny suits in common rooms, more managers, more technology, more sales targets, more qualitative research, more telephone cold-calling, more number-crunching, more virtual teaching, more jargon – more of everything except, perhaps, real schoolmasters and school mistresses – but at least we now know there should be no more coursework. That's a good headline for the Newsletter!

Dr Andrew Cunningham was editor of C&CR from 2003 to 2005. He was director of PR at Uppingham and Cranleigh and now teaches English at Radley College.

Frank Fisher's fascicles

Where it all started, and the men behind it

This magazine rather likes an anniversary. It treated itself to one after ten years and then had two in fairly quick succession when it marked its majority followed four years later by a silver celebration.

It is now 50 years old, the same age as Dr Who and the Daleks, the Robbins Report on Higher Education, which called for university places to 'be available to all who were qualified for them by ability and attainment' and the University of East Anglia.

Philip Larkin has famously associated the year 1963 with creative potency, but the nearest *Conference* got to the Beatles' first LP was, I suspect, in the overspill from the boys' gramophones audible in Frank Fisher's study at St Edward's.

There is no doubting who the father was and the *accoucheurs* were, of course, all men too. Fisher's right hand man was Alan Barker, then Headmaster of The Leys, and an informal 1st XI of Headmasters willingly gathered to form a loose editorial board.

As Colin Badcock wrote in 1984, looking back over 20 years, 'the really remarkable thing was that this unwieldy body of very busy men could produce anything at all. Their strength was that they had contacts, knew the issues and the problems current at the time, and had read all those dreary Black Papers, Green Papers, White Papers. They could get things started, suggest articles and authors, but could really do no more than light the Blue Paper and retire to a safe distance.' For this reason the most important person of all was Mrs Goodsall, Fisher's secretary.

The editorial of Volume One, Number One set out three main objectives that an HMC 'trade' magazine might pursue. First, the publication of articles of educational importance; second, the provision of an arena for the cross-fertilisation of ideas; third, the creation of a more accurate picture of HMC schools in the eyes of the general public.

Probably more to the point, since the general public has never shown the slightest interest in this publication, was the opportunity it would give to put in print a defence 'against any prejudiced, ill-informed or inaccurate attacks that might be made upon us.' Since 'the possibility of a political assault on both the Independent Schools and The Direct Grant Schools cannot be overlooked' it was felt that a sample issue should be made available at the AGM in 1963 – at a price of £1 a copy.

HMC, which had been unable to make up its mind about the concept, was convinced by the reality and a second Volume One, Number One appeared in July, 1964. No doubt members liked the catchy title too – *Conference* – and *Conference* it remained for 25 years.

The 'shot heard round the world' or, at least, round the HMC rookery, which led the more politically aware Headmasters to the conclusion that it was time for the Public Schools to attend to their image, was the Newsom Report, *Half our future*, published in August 1963. Shortly after the first 'proper' number of *Conference* appeared, Harold Wilson formed a Labour Government on the basis of the

four-seat majority the party had won in the General Election of October 1964. Labour went from strength to strength and the Independent sector, as it now began to call itself, faced a period of sustained challenge. At its simplest this can be summed up in the words that Roy Hattersley, then Shadow Education Minister, addressed to a conference of independent school heads in September 1973. "I must, above all else, leave you with no doubts about our serious intention to reduce and eventually to abolish private education in this country."

As it turned out, however, neither committed political hostility nor a prolonged period of acute inflation proved fatal to the fee-paying schools. On the contrary, they became stronger and better organised. They embraced the dark arts of Public Relations, at first with consultants and then with their own information service, ISIS, established in 1972.

What looked like the last word in unity came when the Independent Schools Joint Committee (ISJC) was formed in 1972. The name changed to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) in 1998, but the slimming down of the acronym was not matched by a reduction in activity, which revealed the challenges inherent in operating a 'one-stop-shop' in a sector comprising eight associations and over 1200 schools.

To the surprise of some, it was the governors, led by Michael Edwards and Angela Rumbold, who brought off the most significant and certainly the most remarkable act of unity when, in 2002, the Governing Bodies of Girls Schools Association (GBGSA) and the Governing Bodies Association (GBA), representing boys and co-ed schools, both originally formed in the 1940s, became a single and unified Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS). As yet, HMC and GSA have resisted the temptation to join forces, perhaps dissuaded by the only obvious amalgamated acronym.

Stuart Andrews, who succeeded Frank Fisher as editor, served a long sentence – 14 years – which even a change of headship from Norwich to Clifton did not interrupt. In Volume 15, Number One (February 1978) Stuart published the results of a readership questionnaire. Aimed at finding out what, if anything, common rooms thought of *Conference*, the initiative received replies from only 36 schools at an average of ten per school.

Half claimed to read the magazine occasionally or less often and there were a good many 'belligerent non-readers' as one Head characterised them. However, only 10% thought the content too earnest, half thought they would be sorry to see the editorial discontinued and one maverick maintained that the magazine was admirable as it stood and that its arrival made his day! Volume 20, Number One is a major landmark in this magazine's journey. The format had changed to A4, with apologies to those whose filing systems this would disturb, and this gangling intruder into the ring-binders of the no doubt small band of *Conference* perforators had a new name, *Conference & Common Room* and a new editor, Andrew Milne of King's School, Worcester.



Frank Fisher

This magazine was never cut out for political cut and thrust, if only because of the long period of time that elapsed between each number. If a week is a long time in politics, four months is an eternity, however much people in Westminster and Whitehall might have benefited from reading what our

contributors regularly wrote on those educational issues that impinged on the political arena.

C&CR certainly maintained a continuum of educational wisdom and the exchange of ideas, with more and more coming from the common room, which is still the case. Meanwhile, the chairmen, officers and members of HMC find themselves under scrutiny from an ever-increasing cast of interested parties – politicians, civil servants, inspectors, league table compilers, exam board administrators, Health and Safety operatives and journalists.

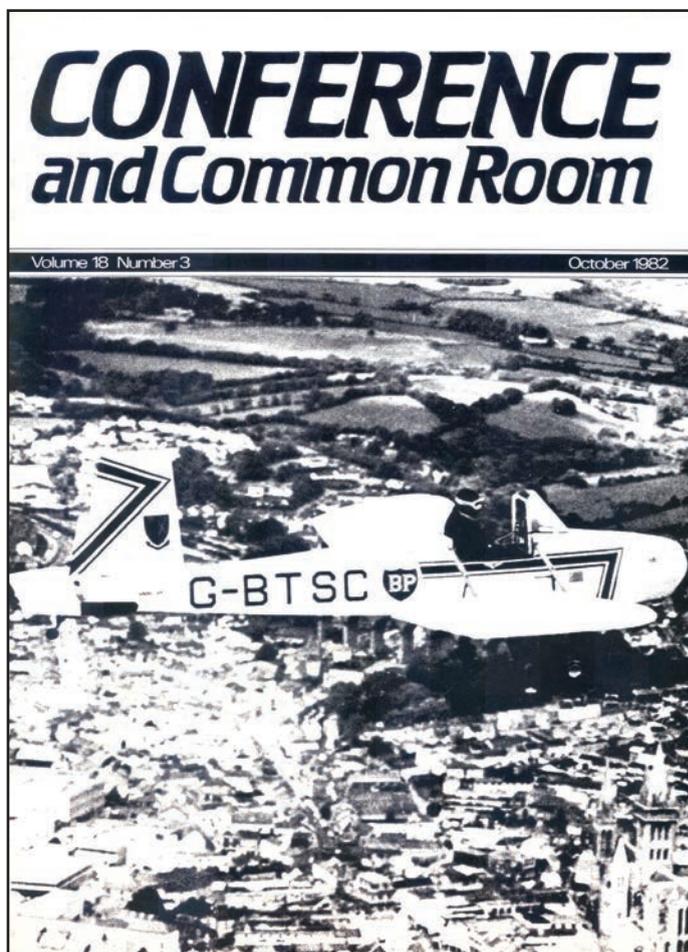
Sensibly HMC now produces a weekly newsletter and plans to produce a regular bulletin focusing on current professional issues, though persuading the mercurial current Secretary of State to stand still long enough to make a proposal and to give due consideration to informed responses will not be easy.

Just as a Prime Minister is no longer likely to emulate Mr Macmillan's stated preference for going to bed early with a Trollope, so 21st century independent school leaders (*sic*) cannot really claim to be taking care of their Continuing Professional Development by leafing through *Conference & Common Room*.

Subjected to the ceaseless demands of the mobile phone, the worldwide web and the internet; the non-stop barrage from water-cannon discharging highly pressurised parental streams of consciousness; the burden of compliance and the inexorable rise of standards, expectations and fees; Heads have little enough time to sit and think, let alone just sit.

On the other hand, governors...

Thinking of a name change: two versions of the cover were produced at the HMC AGM for delegates to discuss.



Archivists and archivistas

Unique and precious: Marie Owens explains why every archive matters

I wonder if you're thinking: archives are about the past and teaching is about the future?

I really hope not. If archives did not exist, the effect on so many aspects of our lives, including education, would be grave and fundamental. If you work in a school that has a considerable history, a good name and an enviable tradition, then it is virtually certain that, not far from where you sit, is a unique and precious archive. Did you know? Who looks after that archive? Are you exploiting that archive in the way successful businesses and organisations do?

Those who use their professional skills today to decide what should be kept, in what format and for how long, and those who keep, preserve and make accessible the records of the past, are often unnoticed and unsung heroes in a society that genuinely cares about education, business, identity and transparency.

Every profession can play the 'what if?' card. If there were no doctors, if there were no teachers... Of course, it's an

unimaginable world. But why do so few people understand the crucial nature of the world's archives and records and of the archivists and record keepers who manage them?

Consider some examples of the record-keeper's work. In the late 1550s, many at court believed that Elizabeth, their young Queen, was preparing to marry her favourite Robert Dudley, despite the fact that he was already married to Amy Robsart. When his wife was found dead at the bottom of a staircase, the scandal made a royal marriage out of the question.

The jury has been out for centuries on who killed Robsart. Recently, historian Chris Skidmore in his book *Death and The Virgin* offered a detailed examination of evidence old and, crucially, new. His great coup was to find and present the coroner's report, for centuries believed lost, but unearthed in The National Archives. Look away now if you don't want to know the answer: the coroner's report does not end all speculation, but the information that Amy had two great 'dyntes' upon her head is certainly a powerful addition to the evidence.

William Shakespeare died in spring 1616. Seven years after his death, his friends and colleagues produced a folio edition of his complete works. Thanks to them and to four centuries of preservation, care and scholarship from all kinds of people, we have about 100 documents relating to William Shakespeare and his immediate family – baptismal records, title deeds, tax certificates, marriage bonds, writs of attachment and court records. And we have 14 words in his own hand: his name signed six times and the words 'by me' on his will.

Ellen Ternan is referred to by her biographer, Claire Tomalin, as the 'invisible woman' because she so nearly never existed in history, though she was Charles Dickens' close friend and almost certainly his mistress for the last 13 years of his life. Scholarship is full of great detective stories and the Dickens/Nelly story is a fine example. For nearly 150 years, scholars, amateur and professional, have teased out little bits of proof, a letter here, a diary there, a formal document here, a written note of a conversation there.

The Hillsborough Independent Panel published their report in September 2012, 23 years after 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives at the Sheffield Wednesday ground. Hillsborough remains the most serious tragedy in UK sporting history.



Sewing the scrap-book.

The Panel's report was the result of a three-year investigation into 450,000 documents from 85 corporate and individual contributors. These documents were scanned and catalogued by archivists, then analysed and reviewed by the Panel and its researchers. Where would the families of the 96 be without the record keepers?

Kathryn Bigelow, talking about her hunt for Osama Bin Laden film *Zero Dark Thirty* said that the single biggest clue to his whereabouts was written on a piece of paper, which had been sitting in a file since 2001.

The most recent census to go online was the one taken in 1911. To achieve this, The National Archives undertook a project, with private partners, which lasted roughly five years including planning. About 350 people were involved. There were 20 months of scanning five days a week, 12 hours a day. 18 million images were captured. Many people still believe that putting something online is a process whereby a photograph is taken and it is magically filed and accessed!

Online records have changed the work of the family historian for ever. It no longer takes years of travel around parishes to consult registers. Most of us can now find our ancestors online, often instantly. Ask anyone who has had a *eureka* moment either in archives or online. The experience is emotional and powerful.

Over Christmas 2011, Marks and Spencer sold more than 2 million boxes of biscuits in a beautiful Victorian tin of the same design that had served Mr Marks and Mr Spencer well over 100 years before. M&S believe so fundamentally in their archive as an inspiration for new business that they have invested in a new Company Archive building at Leeds University.

So, things from the past are interesting and they can be a boon to business. The desire to know where one comes from and who one belongs to is a powerful human emotion. Family history is intensely emotional, addictive and is becoming big business. History is written from all kinds of evidence, much of it found in archives.

Archives are those records that have been selected for ongoing retention, covering all kinds of records, from maps, photos, sound, moving images and manuscripts to contemporary 'born digital' records. Archives are by definition unique. Although there may be printed elements within an archive that may not be the only copy, the majority of material will not exist elsewhere. Things survive because of luck but also because of the skill and professionalism of dedicated and highly intelligent archivists.

Organisations and individuals have always kept records of their activities and this applies to schools and other centres of learning. Take Cheltenham. There are three school archives (Cheltenham College, The Cheltenham Ladies' College and Dean Close School) in one town. They illustrate a great deal, not least the rich heritage of the educational fervour that existed in 19th-century Cheltenham, the story of which would be lost if these archives hadn't survived.

Archives are an asset when they are managed. If you have material in your care that you have at least chosen not to throw away, you have done a good thing. But boxed, out of sight, out of mind, unsorted and unknown material that is neglected is not an archive but an unrealised asset. Ex-pupils for instance, whose names may be found in the school's archives, can play a crucial role in securing the school's future by fund raising or, equally valuably, friend raising.



A Wilson watercolour.

Schools bind people together by pride of belonging and much of the pride is about history and tradition. The Cheltenham Ladies' College archivist spoke on BBC's *Woman's Hour* in the run up to the Olympics. The result was not just to engender a feel-good factor: alumnae responded and donated material to the archive.

In Cheltenham College, Christine Leighton and colleagues undertook to raise awareness of and pride in the life and achievements of old boy and one of Cheltenham's most famous men, Edward Wilson, who died with Captain Scott on the return from the South Pole in 1912. A Wilson scrapbook, with 200 original sketches and watercolours, comprised pictures from the late 1890s and early 1900s.

The scrapbook itself was in a very sad state although the pictures themselves were in excellent condition, the watercolours still as vibrant as when they were first painted because they had been closed away from the light for over 100 years. A crucial part of the restoration, therefore, involved re-sewing the pages in the book. A high quality facsimile was produced and put on exhibition, raising strong public interest.

At a School Archivists' Group Training Day in January 2013, hosted by Cheltenham College and attended by Headmaster Dr Alex Peterken, school archivists and development directors from Birmingham to Devon, Berkshire to Wales, discussed plans to commemorate the World War I centenary.

If this has whetted your appetite about archives, why not take the time to check where your archive – and hopefully your archivist – is situated. I guarantee you two things: you'll be warmly welcomed and you will find something that amazes, informs or touches you.

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The present, looking back

Underneath the archives

Jane Bewick Green looks at how Newcastle-under-Lyme School is cataloguing over 130 years' of education artifacts

A former staff member has taken on the enormous task of sorting and recording an incredible archive of school photos, records, books and old uniforms from Newcastle-under-Lyme School in Staffordshire.

When Graham Jones walked into a storage room in the school to begin the project, he was faced with hundreds of boxes stuffed full of fascinating bits and pieces. With a history going back to the 19th century, Newcastle-under-Lyme School has discovered a rich and historically valuable collection of memories of school life in England over many decades.

For more than a year now, Graham has worked alongside current staff member Bernadette Jones and two 'old girls' – their description – Maureen and Cynthia, to start cataloguing the school's vast archive. As Graham says, they find it "a fascinating project. We're lucky that someone along the way has had the foresight to keep all this material and though it's a mammoth task to sort it all, we're discovering incredible things that build a real insight into what school was like here more than a century ago."

What kind of things? Of course there are thousands of photos. Boys lined up in their uniform for a stiff portrait taken around the time when Queen Victoria adopted the title 'Empress of India'. There are school registers written in beautiful manuscript-style handwriting that must have been laborious work. The names of the girls in the class give away the era – Maude, Constance, Gertrude and Agnes. There are boxes of old uniforms, beautiful books and old contracts relating to school business and employment.

A particularly exciting find was made by a pupil helping to prepare the physics department for an Open Day. He discovered four dusty old books that were published around 1740 and written by Sir Isaac Newton. They contain Newton's laws of motion (the basis of the physics of mechanics) and an account of the principles of gravity (Newton's law of universal gravitation). Over a thousand pages long, these books contain detailed mathematical arguments by the man who 'discovered' gravity and are very valuable in more senses than one.

Documents like payslips have been discovered too, and show that in the 1930s the Headmaster of Newcastle High School (formed in 1874 as a Boys' School) was paid a salary of £1000 per year, whilst the Headmistress of the adjacent Orme Girls' School (formed in 1876) received only £500!

When the two schools merged in 1981 to become Newcastle-under-Lyme School, their archives were dispersed, with no single location. Enquiries from former pupils in search of records, photos and other information soon mounted up and Ian Cartwright, director of external relations at the school, realised it would be a good idea to get some order into the archive.



Graham Jones at work.

Graham Jones has since catalogued 3000 items with the help of Orme Girls' School alumnae, Cynthia Smart and Maureen Leese. As secretary of the Old Girls' Society, Maureen had often found herself fielding questions from former pupils. "I couldn't answer them because there were no records. Now we'll be able to quickly find answers to questions and maybe even photos and records."

Of special interest are the records relating to Francis Kitchener, the first Headmaster of the school and a cousin of the Field Marshal. Francis Kitchener had been an assistant master at Rugby School from 1862 to 1874 and he was much influenced by the Headmaster, Frederick Temple, later Archbishop of Canterbury. When appointed the first Headmaster of the boys' Newcastle High School, Kitchener said that he wanted it to become 'the Rugby of the North Midlands', which meant a high academic reputation and also success in games and other extra curricular activities.

But the school not only reflected the Headmaster's aspirations, it also responded to the character of its location, as Cynthia Smart discovered in the archive. "What has struck me about this project is that I'm looking into a period of history, as well as the experiences of one school. It's interesting to see in

the archives that chemistry and design were to be taught here, because of the proximity of the pottery industry.”

Current pupils are making good use of this remarkable resource. Sixth formers Charlotte Lockett and Will Garside have been working on the archive as part of their community service and last November’s school Remembrance Day Service featured a service pamphlet using records found in the archives.

Will provided photos and detailed biographies of five former pupils who had fought and died in two World Wars. “Seeing

their faces, knowing their names, a bit about them and that they died in war, brought some reality to the Remembrance Service. The archive project has enabled us to bring a little bit of the past into the present, in a moving way.”

It has taken more than a year so far to catalogue a third of the archive, and there’s still much to do, not least in putting the archive on show. Fortunately the Headmaster, Nick Rugg, is passionate about history so it looks as though Graham and his volunteer team may be there some time.

HERE & THERE

If you have news of topical interest, however brief, for ‘Here and There’, please email it to Tom Wheare at postmaster@dunbry.plus.com
Items should not exceed 150 words. Good colour photographs are also welcome.

A kaleidoscope of sound on world-class pianos

On 27th March, 2013, ten pianists, including four Royal Hospital School pupils, two music teachers, one professional pianist, the director of music, the head of academic music and the Headmaster, James Lockwood, played a world premiere of *Pianoscape* by Iain Farrington on ten first-class brand new pianos worth £250,000.

This event was held in the school’s recital hall to celebrate the day that the Royal Hospital School took delivery of the world’s finest piano – the Italian Fazioli Grand of which only 110 are hand-crafted each year in a family-run factory in Rome – as well as two impressive Bechstein Grand pianos and ten Hoffman Uprights to replace some well-loved, but worn, instruments.

Peter Crompton, director of music, said: “The Royal Hospital School has been building upon its strong musical tradition with a commitment to investment in musical

education. A state-of-the-art music school was opened in 2009, a number of music scholarships have been awarded to the most talented pupils joining the School and this new piano scheme will attract even more first-rate musicians and enable our young pianists to develop to an even higher level.”

William Saunders, head of academic music said that *Pianoscape* was the perfect choice to show-case the incredible sound and pitch of these world-class instruments through a kaleidoscope of sounds building from the first simple notes played by the Headmaster to an impressive climax expertly performed by Peter Crompton on the ‘Ferrari-of-pianos’ – the Fazioli.

The new instruments will feature in an inaugural concert at the school’s recital hall from 7pm on Saturday, September 21, 2013.



Living through The Troubles

Henk Kroon interviews Dr Andrew Rowley, author of *Hot under the Collar*

To most at Bedford Modern School who aren't especially well acquainted with Dr Andrew Rowley, it may seem as though he's a regular member of the PPE faculty going about his business. With the roles of head of philosophy and senior sixth form tutor, as well as being the organiser of the Drop In for senior citizens and sitting on the Outreach Committee, you may think that's enough to be getting on with; however that is not the case.

Recently Dr Rowley has finished writing a new book, entitled *Hot Under The Collar*, which came about after being inspired by his students at Bedford Modern School. His students were keen to learn about his experiences in Northern Ireland as a minister during The Troubles.

Dr Rowley used to tell stories of his experiences, some humorous, others not so much, alongside a slide presentation of photographs he had taken at the time. Pictures of bombed homes and buildings were common place amongst the slides and I was curious as to how he got wrapped up in it all in the first place.

When I spoke to him, I wanted to know about his background and his introduction into religion. Having grown up in the East End and leaving school just before his 16th birthday, Dr Rowley was faced with an event which shook him to the core. His older brother, his role model and friend, was killed in a car accident. This was the start of what Dr Rowley describes as his "Ten year quest for answers".

His search began with his simple philosophy "If you want to know something about a car engine you see a mechanic and if you want to know something about life and death you go and see someone in the church". Having experimented with lots of different religions, including Buddhism, as well as practising in martial arts, he eventually moved towards liberal Christianity. In his new found Church, Dr Rowley says it is a place not for beliefs to be forced upon you, but a place where people were encouraged to think for themselves.

He told me how, after he experienced a 'sense of calling', he read for a theology degree in London, and then embarked on training for ministry in Oxford as a mature student. Part of the training involved a placement for eight weeks during a summer holiday. To my surprise, Dr Rowley's placement in Northern Ireland was by choice! He told me the other options could have been Brighton or Horsham, but he opted for Belfast due to its challenging nature and because, he says, "it seemed more real".

However, knowing his personality, this isn't very surprising as he confesses he "always goes for the hard option". When asked what his wider family thought of it all, he replied without a moment's hesitation: "madness". A reasonable enough reaction I suppose.

Having grown up in the 1970s and seen the bombings in Northern Ireland on the television, Dr Rowley and his wife were understandably anxious for what originally started out as one eight-week trip. At the church where he took up his

placement, he describes the people as being "so warm and so desperate for a minister".

Being in a place where religion was such a core part of daily life it was clear the job was going to be a challenge. Being involved in people's lives with births, marriages and deaths during such a critical time gave Dr Rowley a tremendous sense of responsibility. Not only that, he also tells me how he was "privileged to all sorts of information" which he later says he would never ever disclose. "In their last moments, people will tell you things they've never told another soul", he says. This really hit home for me the importance of what Dr Andrew Rowley was doing in Northern Ireland, as well as what all people involved in pastoral care have to deal with.

He was acting as chaplain for the local hospital at the time of the Loughinisland massacre of 1994 and so felt compelled to "meet the survivors as a representative figure of the community". By acting as this figure of confidence, Dr Rowley had to carry the tremendous burden of the secrets of so many for so long.

To him this was all part of the job and he felt privileged to have that sort of contact with people. Having made such an impression on those he ministered, the people asked if he could come back. The request was met with positive spirit and so every holiday for two years he and his family stayed in Belfast.

They never forgot their purpose of serving the people by helping as well as guiding them through their very own personal troubles. During this time, Dr Rowley had also undergone his teacher training, which he is putting to good use today at Bedford Modern School.

Being a religious figure of high social status, I presumed Dr Rowley would feel somewhat threatened or targeted by groups such as the IRA. When I posed the question to him he didn't seem one bit fazed by the prospect. He stresses how he believed in his calling along with the protective power of God and so didn't really think of the possible dangers he may have encountered.

That being said, he appeared very aware of his position and what message he was sending out which, if antagonising, could have led to him being a potential target after all. Despite that, Dr Rowley says that surprisingly there didn't seem to be any hostility from the Catholic population towards him. He really stressed to me the fact that despite religious differences there was a tremendous amount of 'respect for the collar' on both sides. For him that was a very encouraging thought as it did show that peace could be found within a society fuelled on ideological conflict.

As a contrast to what appears like a peaceful relationship between Dr Rowley and the Catholic population, he told me the story of how his son was born in Belfast to the sound of machine-gun fire. This made him wonder how people could be so vicious to one another over political agendas. He describes it as an us or them mentality that was present at the time.



Henk Kroon

He was acting as chaplain for the local hospital at the time of the Loughinisland massacre of 1994 and so felt compelled to “meet the survivors as a representative figure of the community”. By acting as this figure of confidence, Dr Rowley had to carry the tremendous burden of the secrets of so many for so long.

It seems nothing brings people closer together than mutual hatred, and the troubles in Northern Ireland are no exception.

Dr Rowley was bewildered by how, at times, even the nicest of people could be so prejudiced towards one another. As outsiders of Northern Ireland most of us would never think that we ourselves would be the same. However, it is important to realise that beliefs are brought about through cultural expectations.

When there's a conflict such as this, it's hard to distinguish who are the good guys and the bad guys because on both sides there are people fighting for what they believe to be right. The idea of religion, Dr Rowley says, is that it should build up and not destroy and if it cannot do that, it should be silent. It's sad that in the case of Northern Ireland during The Troubles some people felt the need to destroy so they could try and build up again.

However Dr Rowley was amazed by the resilience of those he met and how they could go about their lives so amicably despite the intensely stressful events that were occurring on a daily basis. He also emphasised how there were so many wonderfully warm people on both sides who had just been caught up in something which was out of their control. The way he saw it was that he was there in order to deliver a



Dr Andrew Rowley

positive message to those who needed it most and, it seems, he did not fail.

Dr Rowley's current view on philosophy, he believes, has been brought alive by real-life situations. He feels that when teaching he can relate a lot of philosophical themes to his experiences in Northern Ireland. When teaching religious studies during his early days at Bedford Modern School, he would try to weave in stories from Northern Ireland to demonstrate the themes of conflict and reconciliation.

His time as a minister in Belfast has really shaped Dr Rowley as a person. His quest for answers to the meaning of life seems to have been drawn out through the trials and tribulations he went through during The Troubles. By helping the people of Northern Ireland and then passing those experiences onto the students of Bedford Modern School, it has shown Dr Rowley that his spiritual journey has not only benefitted those he has helped, but also himself.

I am one of many who have been touched by his story which has so many subliminal messages woven in amongst the themes of conflict. Whatever philosophical, religious or political views you may have, there are ideas that everyone can learn from Dr Andrew Rowley's story. To find out about Dr Rowley's own personal account of the events in Northern Ireland, and just how 'hot under the collar' it became, his book can be purchased from:

<http://www.feedaread.com/books/Hot-Under-theCollar-9781782990031.aspx>

It is also available from Amazon and Kindle and all good bookshops (ISBN 9781782990031).

Henk Kroon is a Year 12 student at Bedford Modern School “working towards my A Levels, studying English, history, classical civilisation and biology. This will hopefully allow me to study ancient history at university in a couple of years. After which, I would like to start journalism as a career and become a newspaper columnist. In my free time I am a member of the school rowing team and currently acting as Captain of Boats for the club. This is a great passion of mine and I aim to be able to row for Great Britain at a World Championships sometime during my life.”

The present, looking confused

The right to be consulted, to encourage and to warn

Ian Power thinks teachers should have the same rights as the Queen



Ian Power

Consultations are funny things. Governments love them, schools feel that they should love them, and academics know better. Governments love them because they are all part of the great democratic process; schools feel that they should love them because the marketing people tell them that they are great for gauging customer/client/consumer satisfaction; academics chuckle because they know that politicians have usually made up their minds before they consult, and customers/clients/consumers can never agree on what they really want anyway.

The government consultation on the new EBCs (Engage Brain Cautiously?) was still live when Ofqual wrote to Michael Gove last week expressing grave concerns about the new qualifications. Why bother? The academics know that ministers have already made up their minds.

The schools responded of course, mainly through their professional associations, because they know that they should, and anyway it is always good to be proved right when it all goes wrong (even if the instigators are long gone from office when the proverbial hits the regulatory fan).

We even had a consultation about the 150 regulations in the Independent School Standards: bring on the 'bonfire of the regulations' Mr Gove, we all said. But what did we get? Taps! Yes, come January 2013 we shall still have the current 150 or so regulations *but* with the much-needed and longed-for requirement to label drinking water taps in every school. How did we manage without it?

And as for the ubiquitous bottles that every child feels obliged to sip incessantly to ensure proper hydration, are we to label those too? And who will have the authority to decide what 'drinking' water is and what is, well, what? H₂O or *eau* even? Are we talking about that impure stuff we have at home, the stuff that doesn't come from the Welsh mountains or Swiss alpine valleys? The stuff that thoughtless, uncaring parents make their children drink all the time? Goodness knows, but we had better not consult them: you never know what they might say!

Before we forget that it is the season of goodwill, there must be something in it. Taps are important, and so are EBCs (*Eau*, Bottled and Certified?). Seriously, the Ofqual letter could not spell it out more clearly: Mr Gove's idea of the EBC (Extremely Badly Considered?) just won't work. There are so many contradictions it is hard to know where to start.

The Secretary of State wants something that is 100% reliable, but at the same time he wants open-ended questions to stretch and challenge, which means mark schemes that cannot be rigid and prescriptive, which means there needs to be more tolerance, which means greater variation in the marking, which means

something that is less reliable. It is as simple as E... B... C.

He wants more. He wants something that will be more demanding than the current batch of GCSEs, but he wants the full ability range examined on one set of papers. Has he ever taught mathematics across the full ability range? Has he ever thought about how you set questions for the barely numerate alongside the future Einsteins? Does he know the difference between partial differential equations and partial deferential codswallop? If Ofqual says it won't work then they should know, and he should listen. But will he?

But he wants even more, or to be precise, a lot less. He doesn't want any of that nasty coursework/controlled assessment stuff. No, exam boards need to stick to that terminal (in every sense of the word) assessment with challenging questions that encourage intellectual responses that the rigid (but very reliable) mark schemes don't recognise.

What is more, does he really understand about validity, about the broad range of skills that he wants to encourage and develop the very skill set that employers are crying out for? At least tap labelling is digital (which sounds very modern) *ie* either right or wrong, hot or cold, drinking or poisonous!

Talk about going back to the future. Perhaps it was simply a typo in Whitehall after all? Did he mean BCE instead of EBC? Now that would make sense; a qualification of its time, that is, some time before the birth of Christ! Yes, a qualification fit for purpose, guaranteed to sort out the sheep from the goats, perhaps literally on a Galilean hillside! It is Christmas after all.

If it is Christmas then the New Year is just around the corner and that means hope and resolutions. So what might we hope for in our most optimistic of moments? Here are three New Year resolutions for starters:

No more worthless and time-consuming consultations.

Let the experts tell us what is possible and achievable, not politicians.

Use pilots; otherwise any new qualification is more than likely to crash (if you get my meaning).

And finally, Mr Gove, if you really want to do something truly remarkable, why not hand over the future of English qualifications to a non-political body, one that is not thinking about an election barely two years away, and the almost certain probability that a new Secretary of State will alter the taps or fiddle while the education system burns. Simple? Yes, simple as E... B... C.

Ian Power is the Membership Secretary of HMC and he has not yet recovered from opening his Christmas present 'from all at the Department of Education'.

What exactly do facilitating subjects facilitate?

Graeme May reviews the government's latest A level initiatives

Michael Gove appears to have weathered the first firestorm of protest initiated by his A level proposals, so I suppose we have to start getting ourselves ready for the brave new world of sixth form assessment. Many, of course, would be right in thinking that it's in fact a brave *old* world we're looking at, given that this reform is not so much bright new thinking as an expression of a desire to return to how things were in the 'good old days' before beastly things like modular assessment.

What are the possible advantages of such a return and what might we have lost from a system by then in place for 15 years which most of us seem to have worked out how to turn to our pupils' advantage? We know the devil will be in the detail – and there's a scarcity of that at the moment – but here's what we might be able to see from this vantage point.

A return to linear assessment

In his policy-setting letter to Ofqual, Michael Gove considers the case for linear assessment to be '*compelling*'. I disagree. In my experience, pupils in Year 12 have never worked so hard and been so focused. Looking back through rose-tinted spectacles at how things used to be, we see an image of a Year

12 full of liberal exploration, unshackled by the tyrannical demands of exams. Up to a point – perhaps.

Equally though, for many pupils it was known as a 'doss year' where the minimum amount of work was done secure in the knowledge that it could all be rescued the next year. For some, the time was usefully spent: drama; participating in sport; playing in bands and ensembles; and so on. For others it really was a time to sit around with impunity and do very little.

For the well organised school, the AS/A2 system was no bar to many of the good things from the old system. There was a clear academic focus to the year but, by sidestepping the January sitting in Year 12 (no need for that, I always thought), and bringing the pupils back after summer exams, much could still be achieved in terms of breadth, both inside and outside the classroom.

So, we may grab back some time in Year 12 for extension, breadth, exploration, but schools will have to be all the more disciplined and clear about how they are going to bring this about. It won't just happen.

And what will we have definitely lost? Well, for a start, the helpful backbone of academic focus mentioned above and the

Graeme May: 'Michael Gove appears to have weathered the first firestorm of protest initiated by his A level proposals, so I suppose we have to start getting ourselves ready for the brave new world of sixth form assessment.'



The present, looking confused

loss of what many pupils report to me they really liked having: an interim ‘official’ gauge of achievement half way through an A level course.

It wasn’t permanent – there was chance to put things right the next year – but, goodness me, it did give some pupils a wake-up call like no other when they got that piece of paper in the summer. For the first time we were giving pupils an externally verified marker of progress which I am sure has been part of the reason for the steady climb in grades.

I will confess myself to be on the fence over the issue of resits. Broadly, I have been a fan of them when well controlled. Sitting exams decisive to your future path on just one occasion is surely an unnecessary hostage to fortune. Woe betide the pupil having an off day.

The old fashioned approach favours a risk taking, ‘do or die’ attitude and works against the pupil who works carefully and painstakingly to reach required standards of competency but doesn’t necessarily work best under enormous pressure to produce all the goods at one single point.

Set against that, I know that I have operated a restricted resit policy at my school. We allowed only very limited resitting of AS units in the January of a pupil’s Year 13, though they could take as many AS resits as they liked in the summer. We found this was a good compromise, preserving teaching time and lessening the relentless focus on specific unit requirements.

There will be a loss, too, for the universities, as evidenced by some of the protest in the press following the announcement. Universities have become used to having solid recent data, for the most part, when assessing the ability of candidates.

In his letter, Gove cites evidence from Ofqual that ‘very few universities base offers on AS grades’, preferring to use predicted grades, but the detail of the impact assessment produced by Ofqual (to which Gove’s letter is a response) in fact says that when candidates have similar predicted grades (often the case with candidates applying for the best universities), AS grades/marks *are* used to distinguish between students.

By returning to the old system, universities will be reliant on unstandardised and often optimistic grade predictions from schools, necessarily highly supportive references and a GCSE profile that is of dubious value when considering aptitude for a degree course.

With post qualification application (PQA) rejected by UCAS last year (though it seems by far the most sensible route to me – applying when both you and they *know* what you’ve got), the universities have been put back a step in terms of being able to assess their candidates accurately.

Stand alone AS qualifications

These again are not something fresh and innovative but a return to the past. These can work very well as a broadening measure over one or two years, but can run into trouble when pupils have university offers to meet in their three A levels and continuing with an AS in Year 13 feels like a distraction.

And what about the flexibility offered to pupils who discover that the AS turns out to be their real passion and needs now to be a full AL or *vice versa*? I suspect that this will be harder to find in the new system. It is worth noting that Ofqual’s impact assessment identifies that retaining a link between AS and A level but limiting resitting opportunities was ‘the preferred option of nearly all the organisations interviewed’.

This raises the question of whether Michael Gove is choosing only those parts of the impact assessment that agree with his pre-formed views and ignoring those points that inconveniently do not.

Facilitating subjects

Michael Gove’s letter says that he expects ‘that the first new A levels in facilitating subjects will be developed in time for Ofqual to accredit them so that they are ready for first teaching in September 2015’. And herein lies one of the oddest things about the whole business, compounded by the publication of the absurd ‘facilitating subjects’ league tables in January 2013 in which various excellent schools were, it seems, failing their pupils by daring to have a curriculum that gives a broad offering beyond the narrow range of facilitating subjects. There are two big questions as yet unanswered here:

1. If qualifications are being developed only in ‘facilitating’ subjects for 2015, what happens to everyone else? Do they stick to the old AS/A2 system for now, are they forced into linear implementation but using existing AS/A2 specifications, or do they even exist at all in this Brave New World (and that vision would indeed be a significant departure from the past)?
2. Why is Michael Gove so hung up on ‘facilitating subjects’ anyway? The term was coined by the Russell Group in its *Informed Choices* document, but it is only a *quantitative* measure of how often a particular subject is mentioned as being required for university courses.

What it emphatically is **not** is a *qualitative* measure of relative worth. Through those ludicrous tables (which referred to facilitating subjects as the ‘academic’ subjects with all that that implies about the other subjects) and now the specific development of just those ‘facilitating subjects’ specifications, Gove is in grave danger of appearing to be deliberately marginalising many excellent A level subjects, reducing choice and narrowing the country’s approach to education. Is that really what he can be after?

To return again to Ofqual’s impact assessment, the recommendation there is that ‘the revised specifications should be released at the same time **for all subjects** and this should be done in 2015 or 2016’. The only part of that to have had an impact on Mr Gove appears to be the appeal not to begin in 2014. The rest he has ignored.

There is much more to be said about the impact of and reasons for these changes, and I do recommend a reading of Ofqual’s impact assessment. It seems to me that they’ve done a pretty thorough and commendable job. I’m not quite so sure about the musings of Mr Gove which followed.

*Graeme May is deputy head (academic)
at Abingdon School.*

Documents used in the production of this article:

Impact assessment of A-level reforms, A study commissioned by Ofqual (Ofqual/12/5241, 2 November 12).

Informed Choices, produced by The Russell Group.

Michael Gove’s letter to Glenys Stacey, chief executive of Ofqual, 22 January 2013.



“But they get those lovely long holidays”

Ever wondered how hard independent school deputy heads work? John Snelling did and this is what he found out

John Snelling

Much like their corporate colleagues, senior leaders in UK independent schools work long hours during term time. Unlike their colleagues in the maintained sector, research into their working hours has been limited and the UK and EU legislation that might help them manage their hours does not apply to them.

As part of an MA in Leadership conducted at the Institute of Education in London, I wrote a dissertation entitled ‘A critical analysis of the motivation for the work life balance of deputy and assistant head teachers in London independent schools’. Six deputy heads from London independent schools completed a diary of their working week, the results and analysis of which are outlined below.

Working hours legislation

Teachers in the maintained and independent sector are subject to the same broad working legislation, such as the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act, but there are significant differences in the application of national policies on work life balance (WLB), in particular for senior leaders, for whom much of the legislation does not apply.

The UK even opted out of the EU Social Charter (SC) when EU member states signed up to the 1989 Maastricht Treaty, a key component of which was the European Union Working Time Directive. New Labour came into power in 1997 and adopted the Social Charter a year later and this has been the framework for labour legislation reform ever since.

Real change for teachers in the maintained sector came in 2000 with the introduction of the National WLB Campaign, which led to the creation of the 2003 National Workload

Agreement (NWA) for teachers. The NWA sought to tackle workload issues head on by reducing the workload of teachers.

Part of the agreement saw the removal of 24 routine clerical administrative tasks from teachers, the loss of which made space for the new expectation of 10% Planning, Preparation and Assessment time (PPA) within the school day. The explicit aims of these policy initiatives were to create ‘reasonable’ working lives for teachers in the maintained sector through limiting annual and weekly working hours.

Unfortunately for teachers in the independent sector, neither workload nor working time legislation is a mandatory part of their contracts or conditions and, in any case, the 48-hour maximum working week does not apply to senior leaders. Another component of the EU SC, this benchmark statistic is calculated over a 17-week period and therefore guaranteed to incorporate holiday time, which consequently ‘skews’ average working weeks for all teachers.

This means that, in spite of the holiday work that senior leaders may do, their ‘average’ weekly working hours may not tell the true picture of the term time. The usefulness of the 48-hour maximum working week has been questioned, most recently by junior doctors, partly because it may limit the efforts of some who chose to work longer, but also because it does not factor in the intensity or pace of the work being undertaken.

Thus, even though there is a raft of legislation that applies to their colleagues in the maintained sector, I would argue that deputy and assistant heads in independent schools are in a uniquely vulnerable position, in which the long working



Photograph Stephen Coyne.

The present, looking tired

hours generally expected of them are potentially unregulated and frequently unmonitored.

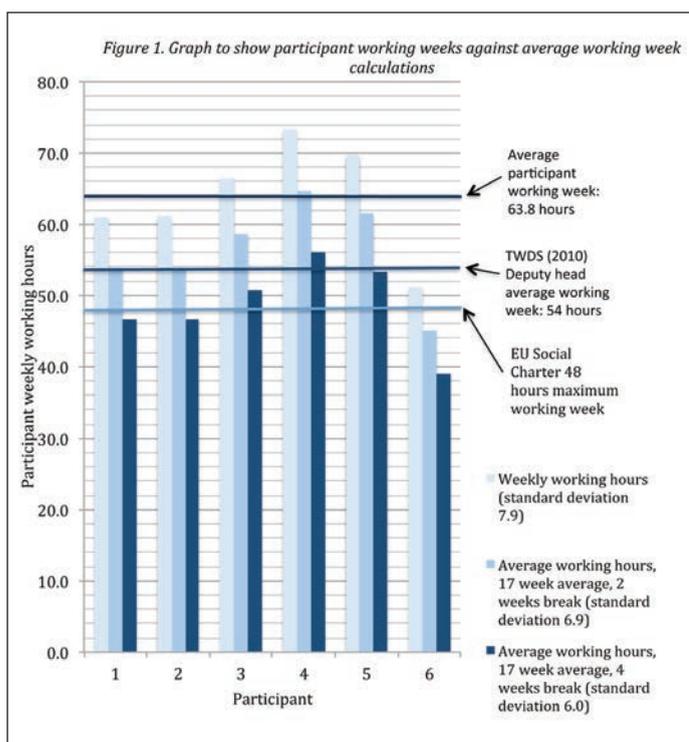
Working hours research

The largest and most regular survey of teachers' working hours in the UK continues to be the Teachers Working Diary Survey (TWDS), which has charted a gradual decrease in the working hours for all teaching staff. The most recent survey (2010) suggests that a deputy head in a UK school in the maintained sector can now expect to work 54 hours per week, down from 59 hours some ten years ago.

The only independent school data available comes from a small survey of ATL members (2004) which suggests 3/5 teachers work more than 50 hours per week, comparable to their maintained sector colleagues, but does not differentiate between classroom teachers and senior leaders.

The reality of their working weeks

Figure 1 shows that all the participants worked considerably longer during the study week than the EU SC maximum working week of 48 hours. All but one participant worked longer than the average working week of deputy heads in the maintained sector recorded as part of the TWDS (2010); and, at an average of 63.8 hours, the difference was significant.

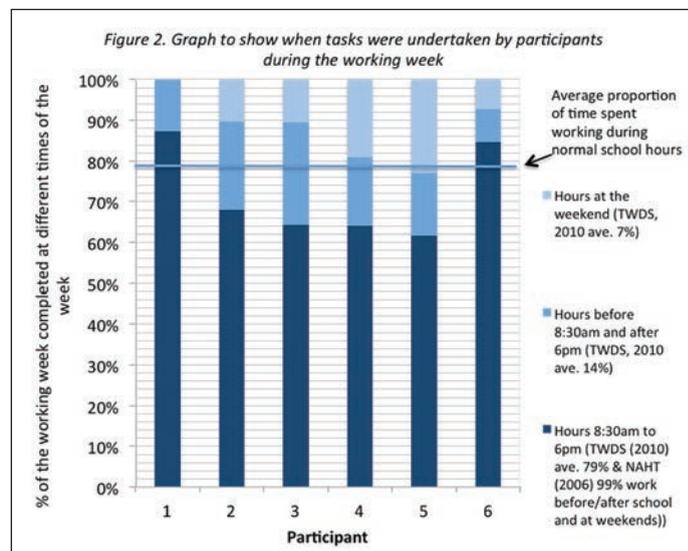


All participants commented that their working week represented a lighter working week, and all but one commented on the fact that their jobs were 'unusual' in that their terms were characterised by a series of peaks and troughs.

The additional calculation of the 'average working week' (based upon a 17 week rolling average) also highlighted that, even when assuming that participants took two of their four weeks break (two weeks at Christmas, one week Spring term half term and the first week at Easter) within a 17 week period, all but one worked longer hours than the maintained sector average.

This is a significant statistic as it is not only the basis of the calculation of the maximum working week but also suggests that, even with longer independent school holidays, all but one

of the participants still worked at least 54 hours – significantly longer than their colleagues in the maintained sector. All worked for a couple of weeks during the summer break with most noting that they didn't see the holidays necessarily as holiday time and that if they are serious about their work then they really ought to be working during July and August. Most saw A level results day as the start of the school year.

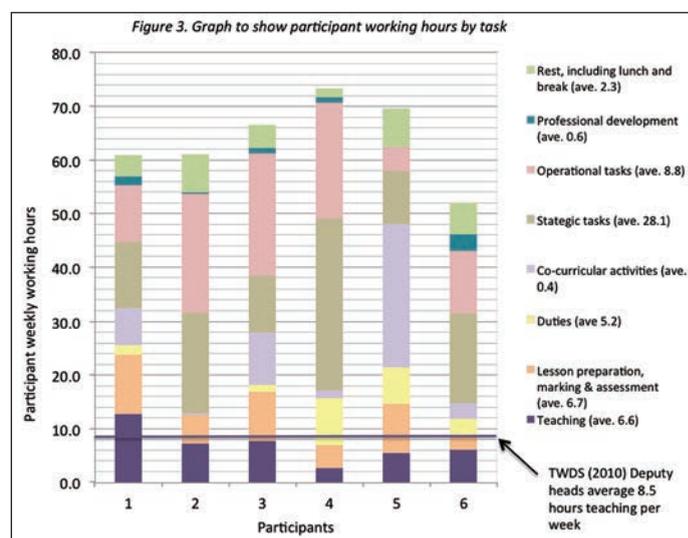


When their work was done

Figure 2 shows when the work was done and highlights the fact that four of the participants worked a significant proportion of their working week at the weekends. Only one of the participants considered that their five day, 60 hour week was usually sufficient to get things done. All but P1 and P6 worked a considerably greater proportion of their week outside school hours than the TWDS (2010) average of 14%. This was often dependent upon the various meetings and events that senior leaders are required to attend throughout the year.

What tasks they did

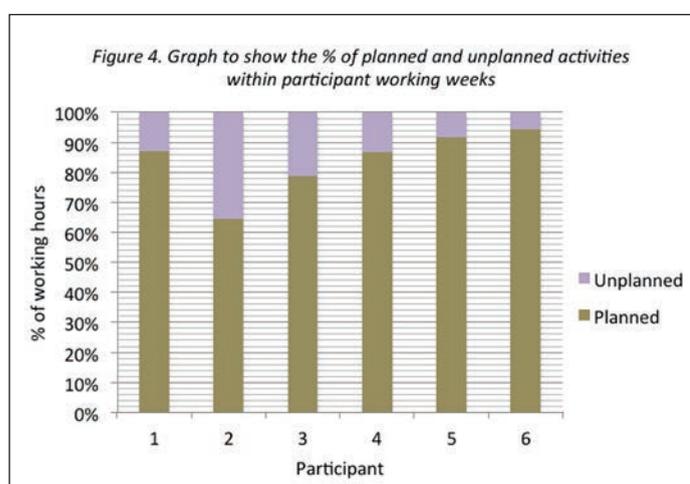
Most interestingly, Figure 3 details the tasks undertaken by the participants throughout the week. All but one taught fewer hours than the TWDS (2010) average for deputy heads which, combined with their long working hours, indicates that they operate on considerably reduced timetables. The amount of time spent on duties and co-curricular activities varied



considerably between participants, an aspect significantly influenced by the nature of their role.

Also heavily influenced by their roles was the balance between strategic and operational tasks, with all but two working longer on their strategic tasks. All participants wrote daily lists of tasks for themselves but these 'known knowns' were usually relegated, not in importance, but in the immediacy in which they needed to be completed or dealt with, by the 'known unknowns', which became operational tasks. This is reflected in the much higher proportion of unplanned tasks undertaken by P2 and P3 as shown in Figure 4.

The most significant factor determining how much forward planning was possible was the particular nature of each deputy head's role, whilst such elements as the location of their office and the degree to which they were seen to operate an open door policy also played an important part.



Conclusions

The work diary data collected highlighted the long hours that all the participants regularly worked, much longer than the average figures collected as part of studies on senior leaders

in the maintained sector, and in many cases higher than the EU SC 48 hour maximum working week. All the participants accepted the long hours and the necessary intensities of their jobs consequent on being both teachers and senior leaders.

I presented the participants with the quantifiable proof of their working hours, believing that this enforced reflection might make them seek solutions for a situation they perceived to be unsustainable, but the evidence only proved to reinforce many of the participants' beliefs in what they did.

All had made the decision to become senior leaders knowing what that would mean for their working lives, and many had worked long hours throughout their working lives. They accepted that it was unrealistic to hope for a positive work life balance during term time, and the conflict I had anticipated in this area had mostly been resolved before they took up their senior leadership roles. In fact the participants often derived a great deal of enjoyment from their work, with some actively enjoying the long hours.

John Snelling is head of geography at Trinity School, Croydon, before which he worked at Norwich School, the Colegio Anglo-Colombiano (Bogota, Colombia) and Wolverhampton Grammar School as a geography teacher.

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Blowing the HMC trumpet

Better to be interesting than boring, argues Bernard Trafford

The old Chinese curse 'may you live in interesting times' seems to have been visited upon education's independent sector recently. Still, one might argue, it's better to be interesting than boring.

For it has been a little boring. Independent schools in general, HMC schools no less nor more than the rest, have been suffering pressure and hostility from government since long before I became HMC's Chairman-elect in 2006. We had been fighting off a Labour government viscerally opposed to everything we stand for.

Secretaries of State had changed with unsettling frequency: even worse, Ed Balls (a former pupil at our very own Nottingham High School) stayed rather longer, implacably hostile to everything we stand for. Lord Adonis offered an olive branch of a kind – but only if we followed his very particular agenda.

That agenda dealt with our somehow earning our respectability by singing from his academies-related hymn-sheet. The populist media still jumps on that bandwagon, suggesting with monotonous regularity that we can only earn the 'spectacular tax-breaks' we're alleged to enjoy by contributing to the master-plan of saving English education (as distinct from provision in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Would things improve with a change of government? Until the 2010 Election it seemed they would: aspirant education supremo Michael Gove applauded the high standards we stand for and maintain and wanted us to be part of a national educational turnaround.

But has anything really changed since the coalition government was formed? Sadly, similarities to our dealings with the old regime outnumber positive developments with

Heads' words

the new. Our Prime Minister and his immediate circle are embarrassed that they went to the best school in the world and never mention it by name. Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister, never gives Westminster School credit for the flying start it gave his education and career: he describes the effect of our sector as "corrosive", but then reveals that he may send his own children to private school.

So well done, HMC's current Chairman-elect! Tim Hands lambasted Clegg publicly, grabbing some useful headlines in February. Next Anthony Seldon gained column inches with his complaint of bias against our pupils at Oxbridge. As it happens, discrimination in those two universities is not something I perceive to be a problem, but Anthony's claim that such bias has become 'the hatred that dare not speak its name' was, if nothing else, a powerful sound-bite picked up by the newspapers. And finally Chairman Chris Ray took the government to task more generally for the complete lack of clarity in its thinking about, and attitude towards, our sector.

There was, in truth, nothing very new about those messages, but for once they seemed to be heard. The Chinese curse seems to be taking effect: our times are certainly challenging, but at last they are interesting, too. Straws are blowing in the wind. In late February, the *Daily Telegraph* even published a hard-hitting editorial criticising the government for its ambivalent attitude to the UK's independent schools:

Politicians on both sides of the divide seem almost paranoid about speaking the truth, which is that the financial autonomy of the independent sector has made it into a beacon of excellence. Its academic results are superb – last summer, almost a third of privately educated teenagers gained straight A grades at A level – and its contribution to Britain's culture profound (more than a third of British medal winners in the 2012 London Olympics were from private schools)...

There is nothing elitist about parents following their 'fundamental instincts' and trying to get the best education for their child. A survey conducted last year found that 57 per cent of the public would send their child to a private school if they could afford it. This is not necessarily a judgment on the state sector, which continues to see exam results improve. Rather, it is an endorsement of the high quality of private schools, their small class sizes and their emphasis on building confidence in young people.

In fine finger-wagging form, the *Telegraph* ended its Leader column by admonishing politicians:

Rather than ignoring or disparaging these great British institutions, politicians should hold them up as an example to learn from. Especially if the politicians in question happen to have attended one.

Wow! Not quite job done, but it was at least a start. Our sector, and HMC in particular, does need to change public opinion which has been coloured and tainted by misinformation, envy and a basic lack of honesty about what the real issues are. "Only in Britain", as all of us say who have travelled abroad and seen other education systems, "only in Britain would politicians conspire to distance themselves from the best schools in the world." And those, remember, are precisely what HMC represents.

So where was former Chairman Martin Stephen coming from,

then? Just when the *Telegraph* had finally weighed in on our side, Martin was in the *Times Educational Supplement* (and picked up by the *Daily Mail*), predicting disaster. We're too expensive and becoming increasingly the realm of the super-rich. And HMC, in particular, doesn't have a sufficiently powerful voice because we insist on changing our Chairman every year.

Let me try to tackle both those arguments. The financial one is tricky. No one can pretend the sector's cheap. Senior day schools charge an average of £11,709 a year, boarding schools £26,340. That's a big whack of after-tax income. No wonder, say commentators, boarding schools increasingly look abroad to attract students.

But is overseas recruitment such a bad thing? Our schools are bringing millions into the UK economy – hence our frustration when the UK Border Agency makes things difficult. Moreover, parents have a wide range of choices in the independent sector, and some of Martin Stephen's concerns are frankly south-east-centric.

Those of us who work in the wilds of the north, in my case a full three-hour train journey from London, find many of our sector's alleged concerns and developments pretty alien. Unsurprisingly our fees, both boarding and day, tend to fall below that national average. Incomes are lower, for sure, but so is the cost of housing. I cannot be the only Head who, for the first time in his long career, has in the last couple of years worked with governors to set an annual fee increase based not on what we'd like to spend in the coming year, but on what we believe parents can afford.

Then there's the sector-wide commitment to bursary help for the vast numbers of boys and girls in HMC schools who couldn't come without huge levels of financial support. It makes business sense, it brings in bright students and it also keeps us in touch with our historical mission.

We are charities because most of us started in a small way, often lost in history, with a benefactor (in my case, probably the Freemen of the City) who wanted to provide low-cost education to local children, founders often recognising that their own wealth and success had come from the humblest of beginnings.

Here again the *Telegraph's* Leader supported our schools:

Many independent schools engage with their local communities and next year Eton will sponsor a non-fee-paying school. Far from being the preserve of 'toffs', many also provide financial support for poorer pupils; in 2012 one third of Oxford University's bursaries to undergraduates from low-income backgrounds were distributed to students from independent schools. Some parents make huge financial sacrifices to send their children to a private school.

Thank you! Clearly we're getting our message across at last. It's significant that HMC now has a communications director and a communications sub-committee refining our message, assuring a level of consistency and coherence that used to be lacking. I was the first Chairman (2007-8) to enjoy the support of that sub-committee's precursor, in those days a somewhat self-selecting group of Heads who had perceived the need for coherence of message. It certainly informed and shaped my year of chairmanship and has gained in expertise and influence ever since. I'm satisfied that HMC's current success in the media stems from that work over years.

So I don't accept Martin's criticism that HMC is weakened by having an annual Chairman who is put out to grass just as he or she is beginning to learn the ropes. To assume that the Chairman of HMC is in some way all-powerful and speaks for, let alone runs, the organisation as a kind of one-man band is, one might suggest, a somewhat Headmagisterial view.

Churchill maintained that 'headmasters are possessed of a power of which we politicians can only dream'. But life has moved on and few of us, I hope, now lay claim to or even desire the awesome potency that Churchill claimed to envy. The HMC Chairman rightly inherits a pair of somewhat clipped wings.

Frankly, we neither want nor need personal agendas at the top of HMC. We want a Head of stature – and we need more women there – to speak for an organisation that really does, through its committee structure and the hard work of members, achieve a consensual and coherent view clearly expressed. The Chairman is not the driver. Instead the driver is the General Secretary, an increasingly authoritative figure over the past decade and now the professional and continuing voice that speaks for HMC.

To see us as pushed hither and thither by a succession of Chairmen is thus to misread the HMC of 2013. It is a highly professional organisation that chooses to have a 'lead professional' as its figurehead – its figurehead and not its executive leader. Persuasive, high-profile Heads are welcome, mavericks are not. Personal agendas have no place. What is needed is a personal commitment to supporting and spreading the message of what HMC stands for.

I'm so long in the tooth now, with 23 years of Headship under my belt, that I could perhaps be forgiven if I were to take a backward-looking or historical view of HMC. But I don't. We need to avoid doing what we accuse the press of doing: painting a picture of independent schools as set in aspic, those same century-old pictures of top hats and boaters trotted out to illustrate our sector. Remember, even the *Telegraph* has started to understand what we are about!

So we HMC members need to move on from our own prejudices. HMC is not dominated by a few big names, the Heads of 'great schools', whatever they may be. It's run with an efficient committee structure by highly committed and experienced professionals.

It's represented by both elected members with hands-on experience of running good schools and a professional staff, all well versed in understanding the big issues, in networking, in quietly influencing policy-makers and grabbing the chance to do so whenever possible. Most frequently and appropriately that tends to be on academic and examination issues, and matters of university entrance – but we can always go further.

Running an independent school is hard work and it's not going to get any easier while the economic situation is so dire. But one of the astonishing features of our sector is that we continue to perform and, according to the ISC census, to thrive, even against such a challenging backdrop. Indeed, it seems that when times are hard and prospects for the young



Bernard Trafford

increasingly bleak, parents are more anxious than ever to invest in their children's future by choosing independent schools – when they can.

We need to be honest and realistic, but optimistic and positive too. We don't need to beat ourselves up about this: we really are doing a great job. And we need to get together and get behind HMC to shout about it rather more loudly than we have done in the past – because we might just start to win a few battles in the war of words.

Bernard Trafford is the Headmaster of the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, and an accomplished jazz trumpeter.

Roger V Mobs, the final solution

Prompted by *C&CR's* focus on archives, the school has discovered a taped coursework supervision in which the deputy head, Mr Kingsley, discusses a piece of creative writing with its Year 11 author, Cassie Forsyth

Mr Kingsley: "Right, Cassie, let's hear what you've written. I gather it's a free-standing riff on the Headmaster's improbable presence on the school art trip."

Cassie Forsyth: "Yes sir, but only on condition that you make no attempts to park your syntactical or genderist tanks on my lawn. Agreed? For the tape, please."

Mr Kingsley: "All right, all right. Just read it, Cassie, and I won't so much as mention Hilary Mantel and the Duchess of Cambridge."

The Giant Rat Of Sumatra – To Await Arrival in which our hero, having fallen over the Reichenbach Falls whilst failing to catch his copy of *Conference & Common Room*, is delivered from his watery demise by the benign mermen Thringo Fuppingham and 'Doctor' Arnold that he might discover Heaven's lack.

And it is written that, propelled by the goodly mermen Thringo and 'The Doctor', Roger V Mobs fell through the rocks of the earth, a mighty painful experience. Sea-nymphs did sing him on his way with ditties strange: "It is a bright cold day in April, Roger, and the mobile phones are pinging 13".

And Roger did hurtle through the fires of hell (in which, verily, did he see five Secretaries of State for Education and two men from OFSTED) until, suddenly, all was silent and he was alone.

Anon, and lo there came a whisper from on high in a stagey German accent:

"Have you filled out the application forms?"

"No, Lord."

"I'm not the Lord. Get the forms."

It is said by some that Roger now walked to an Academy on which the words 'You read it here first' were inscribed in finest gold leaf. It was full of happy people, but the Platonist on reception tapped the sign that said 'Let none but Geometers enter here' and waved him away.

Some, more sceptical, say that Roger never got near the Groves of Academe but instead found himself on the wrong side of the tracks where an old sign reading 'Privatised Education Providers, (formerly The Admiral Benbow) M. Gove prop.' swung creakily above a dilapidated building empty except for Tony Crosland and a civil servant.

And Mobs saw that it was far from good so he cleared off. Still more say the building was home to but one schoolboy left behind alone at Christmas, and that it was he who handed Mobs the application forms. Men cannot say truly how it was, save that there is no such thing as a free school.

But all are agreed that upon these forms was written '*Hic*

iacet Roger. Head quondam headque futurus'. Upon reading these words, Roger was sore confused because Latin had been dropped from his school's curriculum and so he kneweth diddly as to what it meant. And yet he signed the papers for he wit well that Mrs Mobs often made him sign things he hadn't read.

And therewithal, a man with a German accent and an alpenstock appeared next to Roger and said unto him that his name was Hahn and that despite his best efforts he could not convince everybody that an experiential, holistic education in which we are crew not passengers was the way forward. There was, therefore, room for one more school. Roger marvelled what Hahn meant and so said unto him: "Come again?"

So, anon, after Hahn's solo had run full *da capo*, Kurt took Roger to the top of a great mountain that he might see all the children of Heaven. And the children bore each other fellowship save for a small group of status-obsessed anachronisms.

"Alas," they wept, "that we should learn in the same wise as other children. Let us do as we would be done by." They were a passing felonious bunch and yet Roger wist immediately what was needed. And Roger looked pleadingly at Hahn who didst smile and say:

"What would ye, Mobsy?"

"I would open the British School of Heaven, sire."

"Thou hast spoke well. You have signed the papers yourself, for verily, the lonely school boy past was a sign that all your Christmases shall come at once. Now be so true a Head as the order of HMC requireth."

And then, by Kurt Hahn's commandment, Roger V Mobs ran down the mountain with passing joy unto where the moody children sat texting. And as he ran he said unto himself: "I wot not in what joy I am, for this passeth all earthly joys that ever I was in." Amen.

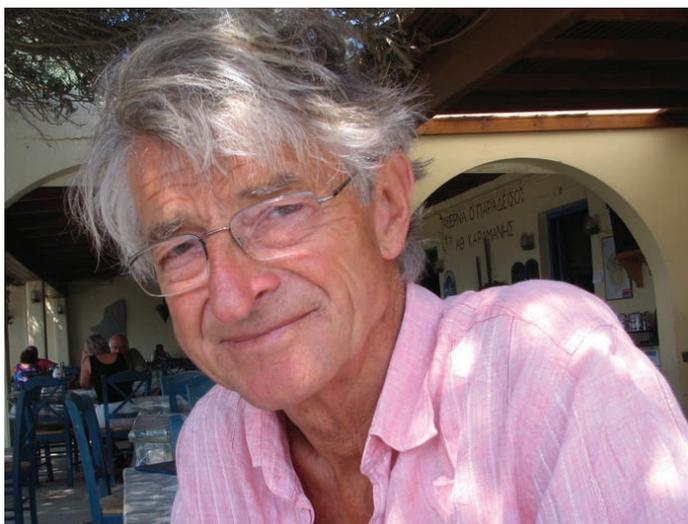
And when he saw the children were scruffy beyond all belief, he told them he was wroth out of measure, but they did ignore him and he felt at home."

Mr Kingsley: "Thank you Jenny. Most imaginative, though I'm not quite sure what the Headmaster would make... "

Cassie Forsyth: "Isn't that your mobile, sir?"

Mr Kingsley: "Hallo! ... Yes, Kingsley, Charles Kingsley ... Switzerland? ... You're calling from where? ... Yes, yes he is ... He's what?"

Cassie Forsyth: "What is it, sir. You look as though someone's died."



Christopher Martin

Education has not always struck people as being a Good Thing. Mostly this is because, being different, we all look for different desirable outcomes in those who have survived the educational process and present themselves as veterans, ready for the next stage in their lives.

Many adults disparage young people for not emerging cloned in the same ways that they were when young. “*Tous les braves gens n’aiment pas que l’on suive une autre route qu’eux*”, wrote Georges Brassens. While we are all likely to endorse in theory the slogan “*Vive la différence*”, in practice we tend to view differences in our fellow men with more suspicion as age starts to wither us.

For example, some claim that school leavers today know nothing, but not the owner of a shop in New York who placed this notice in his shop window: ‘Hire a teenager today while he still knows everything.’ He must have been a parent.

Others sympathise with the young from their Olympian height of advancing years, as for example Arthur Koestler: ‘Adolescence is a kind of emotional sea sickness. Both are funny but only in retrospect.’ More often than not, the young have been held in suspicion by their elders, partly perhaps out of envy at their youth, partly out of anxiety about their vibrant energy.

After all, teachers get older every year while their charges remain the same age. One particular passage stands out from the welter of observations available on this topic:

The world is passing through troubled times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they alone knew everything and what passes as wisdom for us is foolishness for them. As for the girls, they are foolish and immodest and unwomanly in speech, behaviour and address.

Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells, on a bad day, might well have shared these thoughts with *The Times*, but the author was in fact Peter the Hermit, preaching in the year 1112 AD. He had knocked about a bit, having taken part in the First Crusade. On his return to Europe, he became the Prior of an Augustinian monastery, where his familiarity with the young may have ended. Or perhaps it was the young, as he saw them, who had persuaded him to see out his days in a remote monastery in the first place.

Quick wit

A bouquet garni drawn from the rich broth of a lifetime’s experience

Misery, as Trinculo reminds us, acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows, and in many classrooms the old and the young are thrust together more closely than in any other context in western society. In such circumstances where the one is so heavily outnumbered by the many, sparks may fly, sparks that may be entirely desirable.

‘*L’étincelle de la vie ne saurait jaillir qu’entre deux poles extrêmes.*’ Cocteau appreciated the energy involved in opposites colliding, though the more familiar French aphorism strikes a more melancholy note of regret. ‘*Si jeunesse savait; si vieillesse pouvait.*’

It is in the classroom that these critical age-referenced disparities take centre stage more dramatically than in any other enclosed space, including, some would say, the Coliseum. Teaching is a conjuring trick. You’re sitting on a volcano, relying on your personality, your preparation and, above all, the good will of those facing you in class. Lose the latter and you’re doomed.

It is tempting to vote for St Sigbert as the patron saint of teachers, for it was he who went into battle against the King of Mercia, armed only with a twig. Naturally he was killed instantly, but one cannot fault him for optimism – another essential trait for any teacher. A teacher who is unsure of the reception he is getting from a class could do worse than recall the old sailor’s mantra: ‘If you don’t know where the wind is, set your sails as if it were favourable and sail accordingly.’

The ultimate objective of education has never really been pinned down. History is supposed to help here, as in most contexts, for as Soren Kierkegaard said, life must be lived forward but can only be understood backwards.

Rugby’s Dr Arnold made a good stab at nailing the ultimate educational objective, but even he could not reduce it to less than three essential ingredients: ethics and morality; gentlemanly pursuits; and intellectual exercises, in that order.

Dr Thring of Uppingham, founder of the Headmasters’ Conference, reduced it to a single word, when in reply to a parent’s enquiry, “For what are you preparing the boys, Headmaster?” he replied succinctly, “For death, madam. For death.” Of course, he might be accused of taking an unreasonably long view here, and the suspicion lurks that he would not have found favour with many education ministers, examination boards, health and safety quangos or other interested parties these days.

But at least he had a clear view. We are preparing our charges for the future. Few contest this. Even Groucho Marx did no more than cast a shadow on this assertion when he asked, “What’s posterity ever done for me?” The virtue of such clarity, however, might be contested by Anthea Millett, erstwhile director of the Teacher Training Agency, who delighted her committee one day by declaring that, “There is no complex problem for which there is not a simple answer

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which is wrong.” She also encouraged those who strained at the leash of central academic control when she admitted engagingly that she too was attracted by “the irritating success of wrong methods.”

Indeed the search for absolute clarity when contemplating the strange mutability of human affairs should be treated with suspicion, for reducing things to their basic ingredients leads directly to oversimplification, a seductive but misleading outcome, as recognised by the Harvard philosophy professor who would ask his classes at the end of a discussion, “Now, is that absolutely clear?” If a student were rash enough to assent, the professor would say, “Darn it. Now we’ve got to start all over again.”

Fred Clark, however, would have sided with Thring, for when teaching teachers their trade, he would often remind them of the point of the exercise as he saw it. “The reason you are teaching little Johnny long division is because he is an immortal soul.”

Less compelling ideas on the nature of education include those of a technical college in Somerset where apparently

‘Education is learning based.’ This might have been disputed by a Victorian Headmaster of Westminster who, when asked by a colleague if French could feature on the curriculum, declined and, when pressed for a reason, declared, “Because it might be useful for international trade.”

And what are we to make of the US High School’s parents brochure where learning is given a novel priority: ‘All passive recreations are encouraged, including sitting, sunning and academic classes’? Or the first level task in the Australian national curriculum some years back: ‘First, locate the teacher in the classroom’?

In this connection, it is worth noting that within the last 20 years or so, road signs in the UK announcing a school ahead have changed from signs bearing the Torch of Learning, to signs showing two children with satchels, to a sign where the same pupils are merely holding hands.

Christopher Martin was Headmaster of Bristol Cathedral School and of Millfield.

HERE & THERE

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Historic visit to Rome

Over the half term exeat, Oundle School Choir made a thrilling tour to Rome at what turned out to be an historic moment for the city. Forty-four pupils and five staff stayed in the heart of Rome for five days, singing services at the Vigil Mass in Sancta Maria Maggiore on Saturday evening and at the Sunday service in All Saints Anglican Church, where they were given a very warm welcome by the congregation and an amazing sermon by Father Allerich.

The service was led by Bishop John Flack who was their guide while they were in Rome. In the evening the choir sang Vespers and then gave a candlelit concert at St Paul’s Within the Walls.

In the afternoon the group were fortunate to catch a pre-Lenten carnival in the Piazza dei Popoli, and to enjoy the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps in glorious sunshine.

Director of Music, Andrew Forbes reports: ‘On Monday, Rome was buzzing with the resignation of the Pope, and there was much speculation as to what would happen on Wednesday morning.

‘We visited the Piazza Venezia and Pantheon before travelling to the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, which was possibly the highlight of the trip. We were given a guided tour of the burial place of St Paul by Abbot Edmund Power. The building is second only in size to St Peter’s Basilica, and the joint service with the Benedictine monks in the evening was very special indeed, led jointly by Abbot Edmund and Bishop John.

‘The monks sang in plainchant and we sang from our repertoire of sacred music, in Latin and English. There was a tremendous storm that evening and the dome of St Peter’s was struck by lightning.

‘Wednesday was the day for our visit to the Vatican, which by this stage was teeming with film crews and reporters. The choir were filmed by several broadcasters, and even appeared on a Polish news programme!

‘We were very fortunate to be at the Papal audience on such an historic occasion, with the Pope explaining the reasons for his resignation. It was an unusual event, being neither sacred nor reverent, but the choir were able to sing twice, in amongst other music groups from around the world in the congregation of 5000.’



The devaluation of knowledge

John Moule is concerned by the growth of Gradgrindery

My son once asked me (before, I hasten to add, he had had the benefit of much Bedford education – he knows better now): “Daddy, I don’t understand the point of punctuation.”

I found myself struggling to respond. I knew that there was one, and that it was really important but somehow could not quite remember what or why. I think I took refuge in some mildly disguised version of the “it just is” argument, that splendid recourse for parents down the ages. I am not sure I got away with it.

Society often has the same experience with education. We all know it is important; we all talk a lot about it; we place it at the centre of political debate; but many of us struggle to articulate what it is actually for. Perhaps that would not matter so much if it were not for the fact that there seems to be a growing influence of those who think they do know, and get it wrong.

Sadly, many seem to think it is merely about practical utility. They seduce the young with cries of ‘relevance’ and they use the language of consumerism: skills, qualifications, employability, output, value added, wealth creation. Perhaps this is inevitable in an age of economic austerity, but it is short-sighted, too.

In the long distant days when I used to teach a proper timetable before the distractions of Headship got in the way, I looked forward each September to the first lesson with a new group. It was an occasion for my annual peroration, the setting of the parameters for the year ahead.

It would finish – in grandiose style – with a dramatic slowing and lowering of the voice and the words, “there is one question you are never, never, and I mean never, allowed to ask, on pain of whatever pain I am allowed to inflict and probably a bit more”. To add to the histrionics, I would then head-butt the wall to indicate the level of frustration and anguish the question would cause. What was the forbidden question? It was a simple one: ‘Do I need to know that, sir?’

Sadly, despite my best efforts, it never really worked. They might not have asked it directly, but it was always there in the background: an obsession with utility, a narrowness of purpose, a modern version of Thomas Gradgrind haunting their educational vision. Will it help me pass the exam is the unspoken measure of every lesson.

Not their fault really, as so much in education leans in the same direction: a militant utilitarianism that sees acquisition of information as only valuable if it has a defined and material ‘use’. The idea of something simply being interesting or having intrinsic worth is far too often anathema to modern schooling.

And the terminology we use tightens the noose. Child-centred learning, far from meaning that the child is precious and the education thereof a privilege and a duty – Amen to that – usually ends up as the child’s desires and interests being the driving force of what happens in a classroom.

Teachers all too frequently lower themselves to the level of the child and guide them along the low-road, forgetting to scale



John Moule

the heights, or even actively discouraged from doing so by utilitarian textbooks written in association with exam boards with the sole purpose of preparing a child to pass an exam.

Unlike many of my colleagues, I have no objection to the idea that some subjects provide a more useful foundational base for university than others, but the phrase ‘facilitating subjects’ reeks of the production line and sends shivers down my spine.

We also have to contend with the knowledge versus skills debate. We are told that we do not need knowledge any more as it is all to be found at a push of a button. And when Michael Gove suggests otherwise, he is, of course, a devil in human form for many in the teaching profession.

I have a nightmare vision. The ‘educated’ person of the future will be a well trained automaton, able to move from A to B with the utmost efficiency, able to apply ‘skills’ to support and fuel the wealth-creating economy of the 21st century, with technology always at hand to fill in the gaps.

But this person will have no soul. Because they have no innate cultural framework of reference, they will not have the material at hand within them to appreciate the finer things of life, to reflect, to recognise beauty, to place things in context, to lead rich, fulfilling, aesthetic lives. An exaggeration? Maybe. Maybe not. I wonder even if they will have anything more than a limited ability to create value to the economy.

I agree with Einstein: ‘Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.’ But what is tragic is that we are in danger of losing an emphasis on knowledge even when we are supposed to

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be transitioning to a knowledge economy. And as result, our imagination has no base, no structure from which to build, and becomes merely fantasy. Baroness Susan Greenfield warns all who will listen of the dangers of a generation that live their lives through computer screens and paints a frightening picture of a desensitised, relationship-starved world inhabited by our youngsters. It is not that the curiosity of the young will be lost: it will just be wasted.

Roger Scruton, in his book, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged*, suggests, somewhat controversially, that:

True teachers love their pupils, but they love knowledge more. And their overriding concern is the subject, rather than the things that might make that subject for the time being 'relevant'. A 'relevant' curriculum is one from which the difficult core of knowledge has been excised, and while it may be relevant now, it will be futile in a few years' time.

Teachers have, he says, a higher calling than merely making children happy at school.

Not all is lost, of course. I was hugely encouraged by the recent discovery of a new prime number by Curtis Cooper, a professor at the University of Central Missouri. The gargantuan 17,425,170-digit figure number, expressed as 2 raised to the 57,885,161 power minus 1, was discovered using a network of 360,000 different processors and far outstrips the previous record holder which was only 13 million digits in length. Dr Cooper won a mere \$3000 and, was forced to admit that his discovery had no practical application. Wonderful; enjoyable; profound. Knowledge for knowledge's sake. More of it, please.

John Moule has been Head Master of Bedford School since 2008.

HERE & THERE

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Numerus mirabilis

Abingdon School boys are looking to repeat the feat of 13 sixth-formers who, 50 years ago, walked 63 miles in 24 hours to commemorate the re-endowment of the School by John Roysse in 1563. Training for the walk began in November, with six practice sessions before the group of about 20 boys took up the challenge to commemorate both the 50th anniversary of the walk and the 450th anniversary of Roysse's endowment.

On Sunday, 23 March 1963, the Abingdon boys set out to walk from Worcester to Abingdon. They travelled to Worcester by train and then set off, that evening, to walk home by road.

Alexander Whitworth, aged 18 from Wallingford, said, "We wanted the walk to be in keeping with John Roysse's benefaction, so we are raising money for bursaries to enable children to benefit from an Abingdon education and for the Childhood Cancer Research Fund of the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals."

As a small child, Alexander was himself treated at the John Radcliffe Hospital for Langerhans cell histiocytosis (LCH). "We hope to raise £6300 from the walk, £100 a mile and more if possible. It will be a challenge but very worthwhile."

The length of the walk, 63 miles, is significant because John Roysse, who was 63 in the year 1563, funded 63 free scholars in a schoolroom 63 feet long, now part of the Guildhall in Abingdon. The numbers six and three are the last two of the main school telephone number and the school bell is rung 63 times to mark significant occasions. The bell was rung to welcome the boys back to School on 29 April.



Will there still be watering-holes 30 years on?

Simon Henderson, currently the youngest Head in HMC, wonders how the educational scene will look when he approaches retirement

For someone like me who, as my wife will tell you, often finds it hard to think about what I might be doing next week, being asked to write an article about what schools might look like when I retire presents something of a challenge.

I see how much pupils' learning experience has changed in the 13 years' since I started teaching and I predict that this change is only going to accelerate. However, while I am confident that schools will look different. I am also very confident that schools will continue to play a fundamentally important role in our society.

In his book *What's the Point of School*, Guy Claxton writes that

Education is meant to supplement the upbringing provided by families and communities with a more systematic preparation for the future. That preparation involves cultivating the knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, values and beliefs that we think young people are going to need in the world we foresee them living in.¹

I agree with him but find it very hard to imagine what world I foresee our pupils living in. We are sending young people into a world that does not yet exist. If you are joining secondary school this September you will probably be allowed to retire once you are well into your 70s, if you are lucky, and you will

The future

probably end up working for multiple employers and often in multiple careers.

The idea that you get a job when you leave school or university, work at that same job for 40 or so years and then retire is already very out-dated and will not be the experience of most young people today. Many of the jobs that they will end up doing have not been invented yet or will be done in very different ways to the ways that they are today. Perhaps it was ever thus, but I suspect that the pace of change in the 21st century will exceed even that of the 20th.

This presents a profound challenge to educators as we look to the future and wonder how best to prepare our young people for it. What is clear is that technological advances and the social impact that those advances will continue to have mean that the ways in which people are able to acquire knowledge and understanding will continue to evolve.

With the emergence of networked learning communities it seems likely that many pupils will no longer be expected to learn and work in single educational institutions (or even in a single country) but rather that they will be able to access the virtual community most relevant to their needs in any particular course of study.

The traditional model of sitting in a classroom with a group of pupils from your own school, in front of a specialist subject teacher employed by your own school may well change, particularly for older pupils. This is a point made clearly in the 2009 report on *Educational, social and technological futures* by the Beyond Current Horizons Programme² and is already happening in some educational establishments, especially in universities. The report concludes that it is important to recognise that:

There will be no single educational response that will prepare learners or educational institutions for all potential future developments. Rather than creating a template of 'a school for the future', then, to which all other schools might aspire, the education system needs to commit to

Schools will need to evolve with the times and to do this they will need to be forward thinking, outward looking and willing to embrace new opportunities flexibly. However, they will still have a fundamental role to play even if young people access a core of knowledge (that they will still always need) in new and diverse ways.

creating a diverse ecology of educational institutions and practices... Such diversity will emerge only if educators, researchers and communities are empowered to develop localised or novel responses to socio-technical change – including developing new approaches to curriculum, to assessment, to the workforce and governance, as well as to pedagogy.³

Schools will need to evolve with the times and to do this they will need to be forward thinking, outward looking and willing to embrace new opportunities flexibly. However, they will still have a fundamental role to play even if young people access a core of knowledge (that they will still always need) in new and diverse ways.

Assessment systems will also need to evolve to better reflect the way that young people work and to mirror the types of skills that pupils really need in later life. I can see us building more varied approaches to learning with an increased mixture of traditional classroom lessons, of seminar groups, of group project work; of 1:1 tutorials, of lectures delivered to pupil audiences of 50+; of time for private study, research and reflection; of learning online within schools and of learning online beyond the school gates, perhaps with partners from other contexts and from other countries, or perhaps from completely external providers. Of course, many of our schools offer much of this already, but I suspect we shall see such diversity increase.⁴

In his excellent paper *Campfires in Cyberspace*⁵, David Thornburg highlights the importance of balance in any educational experience and this is an important message to retain as we look to the future. He suggests that throughout time humans have always needed the 'campfire', the 'watering-hole' and the 'cave'.

The campfire was where information was gathered through story-telling, generally from those considered experts. The watering-hole was where people shared information and learnt from their peers, perhaps reflecting on what they had heard around the campfire. The 'cave' is where people isolated themselves for much needed private reflection.

Thornburg warns of the danger of not providing balance in education and cites the modern example of an educational conference to illustrate his point. Conferences tend to be advertised by stressing the campfire talks from experts in their field, but for most delegates the watering-hole discussions with peers and the opportunities for private reflection in the cave are just as important. Thornburg gives this example of a time the balance did not work:

A major invitational conference ... brought an audience of about 600 highly regarded experts together for an intensive two days of presentations. The presentations were set up back-to-back, with no breaks until lunchtime, and then again after lunch with no breaks until dinnertime. The presentations were (generally) excellent ... Even so, by lunchtime on the first day, there was a lot of grumbling from the attendees. They had been exposed to some intense campfires with no access to watering holes or caves.

The conference was so tightly scheduled that several people complained of 'overload'. On the one hand, people were free to walk out of sessions they didn't like, but the presentations were of such high calibre ... that most people were reluctant to walk out.

In his excellent paper Campfires in Cyberspace, David Thornburg highlights the importance of balance in any educational experience and this is an important message to retain as we look to the future. He suggests that throughout time humans have always needed the 'campfire', the 'watering-hole' and the 'cave'.

Even so, by the second day, the audience had started to vote with its feet, building in breaks where none existed. This experience brought home to me the importance of scheduling in opportunities for all three learning experiences, and showed the disaster that awaits those who neglect the need for balance.⁶

School communities provide this balance and will continue to do so in the future. Pupils need the campfire, but they also need the watering-hole and the cave. There is no substitute for real engagement with real people and time for private reflection is also paramount. Pupils will always benefit from interaction with their peers.

Of course, good teachers have never just been givers of information and pupils will continue to need personal attention and face-to-face support from someone who understands them as an individual and who can guide them in developing the flexible and wide-ranging skills that they will need to succeed both in their personal and their professional lives. The successful development of character and attitude will remain key challenges and responsibilities for educators.

We know that employers are looking for qualities such as problem solving, initiative, creativity, flexibility, teamwork and good written and spoken communication and we know that they do not currently feel that schools and universities always develop these. I expect to see the number of employers offering professional training programmes that incorporate studying for a degree further increase.

We know that happy and successful adults need to be kind and need integrity, self-confidence, self-discipline, ambition, self-reliance, determination and resilience, and that is not going to change. I hope we would all agree that humility, a willingness and ability to empathise, a sense of social responsibility and a desire to contribute positively to society are also essential attributes. This is an area where many feel that schools could do better.

While academic standards clearly matter, we already know that the most happy and successful adults are not necessarily the ones who got the best examination results. A strong exam profile opens doors to the future or makes it easier to open those doors, but how happy and successful an individual is, both personally and professionally, when they walk through one of those doors depends on a much wider range of qualities than just having good examination results.

My own experience tells me that those who develop these qualities tend to do better in their exams as well! It is not a case of either/or. We need academic excellence and we need

well-rounded individuals and there is no reason why schools cannot and should not offer both, whether now or in the future. Already many of these flexible attitudes to learning and to life are best developed beyond the traditional classroom. As Alvin Toffler is claimed to have said, 'the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn'.⁷

It is an exciting time to be involved in education, but in the future I continue to see pupils at the heart of our schools. More than ever they will need to genuinely feel that their education is something done *with* them and *for* them, not *to* them by their teachers and by their parents. I believe Einstein once said that "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school."⁸ I suspect that that will be more true than ever over the coming years.

Simon Henderson has been Headmaster of Bradfield College since 2011.

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Raising the bar in catering standards

Given the current economic climate, there is more pressure than ever on Independent schools to ensure that they stand out from the crowd and attract new pupils.

One method many Heads are turning to is enhancing their catering offering, utilising the attention created by the ever-increasing microscope on traditional 'school dinners'.

Many are calling in experts to overhaul their in-house catering, increasing their desirability to ensure that pupils aren't shunning school meals. One such expert is Independents by Sodexo. They have over 50 years' experience in the Independent schools market and are uniquely placed to help schools drive the standards of their catering.

Independents by Sodexo meets and exceeds the nutritional requirements of Independent school children from 3 to 18 years, instilling confidence among parents that their children are getting the best quality food, giving them the nourishment they need to fuel their learning.

Independents by Sodexo's 'fresh food from scratch' ethos fits perfectly with the increased focus on schools' catering. Pupils' health, well-being and satisfaction are at the forefront of a Head's mind when it comes to catering, and the Independents by Sodexo approach is no different.

100 per cent of their meat is Red Tractor accredited and sourced fresh from British farms, and all of their fish and seafood is MSC certified, proving that they care about what children are eating. To Independents by Sodexo, it's not commercial success that's the driver, it's simply delivering the highest possible standards.

This is achieved through a meticulous approach to quality, complete passion for the task at hand and dedicated staff and chefs, all of whom

use only the finest ingredients. Such a commitment to maintaining excellent nutritional standards for pupils truly sets Independents by Sodexo apart from its rivals.

To further reinforce the quality of its offering, and in-line with its intention to ensure it always remains the top caterer in the sector, Independents by Sodexo is sending chefs to the esteemed Lenôtre culinary academy in Paris, part of the Sodexo family since 2012.

Starting in June, Independents by Sodexo chefs will make an annual trip to attend a three-day course at the academy, learning not only the art of gastronomy, but also perfecting their skills in patisserie, plated desserts, pastries, creative cuisine and, of course, cuisine for that most important element catering for pupils.

Lenôtre received the highest accolade in the recent Bocuse d'Or, considered the world championships of cuisine, when its Assistant Chef Thibaut Ruggeri was named victor. Such accolades only reinforce the quality of the Lenôtre academy and the skills of the Independents by Sodexo chefs.

"What better way for us to ensure that we're offering the very best standards possible than to send our chefs to the best culinary academy available," explains Jane Bristow, Sodexo Education's Managing Director. "For a school to be able to boast that its chefs have attended such an illustrious, celebrated programme will truly set them aside from other Independents in this increasingly competitive market."

Such high-level catering truly adds value to what a school can offer a potential pupil, and in turn reflects incredibly highly on the Head who opted to appoint them in an effort to offer the best food option available.



For more information, contact Jeremy.Alderton@sodexo.com

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Other anniversaries

The National Schools Symphony Orchestra, born 1993 – still going strong

Hands up, if you have musically talented children in your school. A sea of hands – most of us do, even if it's only one or two. Now, keep those hands up if you positively seek opportunities for them to develop as musicians *outside* of school.

Fewer hands – not so easy, is it? In the current climate it is often easier to identify realistic opportunities for athletes and swimmers than for musicians. After all, there is no equivalent of an Olympic legacy for musicians. Musical competition is regarded as inimical in many quarters and, with the reorganisation of extramural provision, much of the LEA music service is teetering on the edge of oblivion.

The National Schools Symphony Orchestra (NSSO) has been offering opportunities to our young musicians for 20 years, and continues to do so with ever greater confidence. Young NSSO for prep school age children, NSSO for 13-19 year olds, and the National Schools Jazz Orchestra provide courses for aspiring musical talent from all over the country in a single residential course, each year, at the end of the summer term. This year it all happens at Malvern College from 7th to 14th July.

Each course is a journey, from the first meeting together to the final concert, starting with individual instrumental coaching from professional tutors, moving to sectional rehearsals (wind, brass, strings and percussion) and finally enjoying the fruits of this intensive labour in full orchestral sessions. The sense of achievement at the end of the week is palpable.

The experience and quality of the pastoral team at NSSO is second to none and an outstanding strength of the organisation. Over 1000 alumni can testify to enduring friendships fostered in the boarding houses and on the playing fields as well as in the rehearsal room. Beyond the rehearsals, each day is full to exhaustion with games and social activity, nurturing the common endeavour, respect and camaraderie that is essential to successful music making, let alone living and working together for a week!

Membership of NSSO is by audition, for players aged 13-19, of ABRSM grade 7 and above. Good music reading skills are essential to get the most out of the course. Standards are demanding and repertoire is both ambitious and challenging. Previous courses have enjoyed, *inter alia*, symphonies by Mahler, Rachmaninov and Vaughan Williams; tone poems by Richard Strauss and Dvorak; concertos by Elgar, Tchaikovsky and Brahms. The orchestra has worked with soloists such as Susan Bullock, Peter Donohoe and Timothy Hugh, and with film composer Patrick Doyle (an active and inspirational patron of the organisation since 1999), premiering his *Impressions of America* during the 2012 Three Choirs Festival under the baton of Mark Shanahan.

Young NSSO is for players aged 8-13, of ABRSM grades 3-6 standard. Ironically, or perhaps fittingly, Young NSSO was founded to ensure continuing opportunities for prep school age musicians following the demise of the IAPS Orchestral Courses



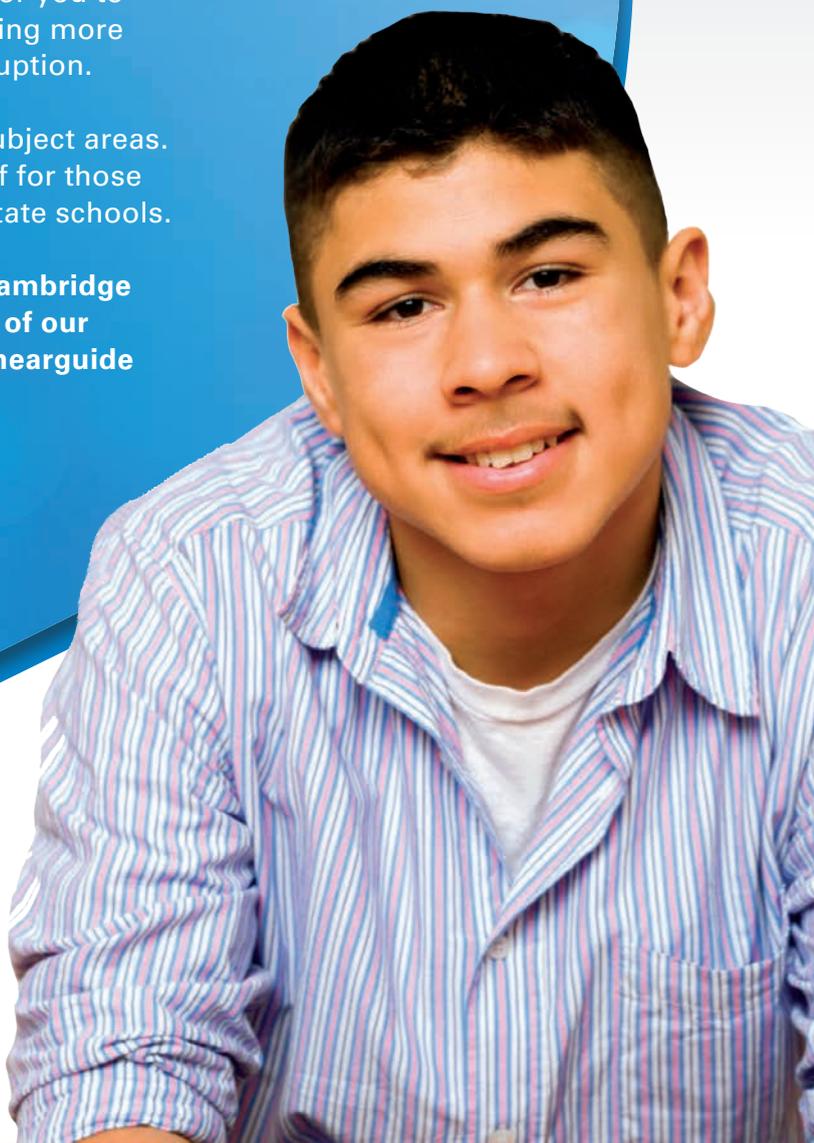
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that had helped to give birth to NSSO. The newly nascent orchestra has enjoyed two hugely successful courses and has a bright future, most of its members graduating into NSSO itself.

The National Schools Jazz Orchestra will make its first appearance in 2013, led by Alex Tester (director of music, St Edward's School, Oxford) offering Big Band and jazz combo experience as well as improvisation workshops. This promises to be an exciting development of the organisation's work and will also allow cross fertilisation between classical and jazz traditions.

It was in 1993 that David Evans, currently Director of Music at Hereford Cathedral School, was asked by the IAPS Orchestral Board to set up a continuation orchestra for those 'retired' 14 year-old players who were no longer eligible for IAPS courses. Thus was born the National Schools Symphony Orchestra, with 78 members on its first course, a final concert at Snape Maltings and a profit of £27 to boot! Twenty years on it is still going strong and welcomes *your* musically talented children to take part in its annual courses in 2013 and beyond.

NSSO is, like its founder, modest, hard working and

passionate about making music with young people. It sits comfortably in the panoply of such national organisations, offering important experience to aspiring members of the National Youth Orchestra, bridging the gap between school or county orchestra and NYO, as well as offering some insight into the world of the professional orchestral musician.

But its single annual residential course is also very often a better fit for those talented pupils with wide ranging interests and commitments, for whom music is important but not a career or higher education goal. There is also, of course, considerable personal gain to be had from developing the social skills necessary to benefit from the experience of a residential week away from home.

John Madden was director of music at the Dragon School.

Full details of courses, fees and bursaries, along with an application form, are available at www.nssso.org or, if you would like further information, please contact johnmaddenmusic@hotmail.com about the orchestra or to arrange a presentation to parents, pupils and staff at your school.

HERE & THERE

If you have news of topical interest, however brief, for 'Here and There', please email it to Tom Wheare at postmaster@dunbry.plus.com. Items should not exceed 150 words. Good colour photographs are also welcome.

Bromsgrove netballers crowned champions

Bromsgrove School's U19 girls' netball team have secured the England Netball National Schools Championship title for the fifth time in seven years. The National Schools Finals were held at the Basildon Sporting Village in Essex on Saturday, 16th March, with 18 teams competing. Despite the cold, rain and strong winds, Bromsgrove faced eight pool matches in five hours, with opposition from some of the strongest schools in the country.

After some close results in the pools, Bromsgrove pushed through to the semi-finals where they faced local team King's Worcester, who had defeated Bromsgrove three times in the past year. After a shaky start leaving them 5-1 down, Bromsgrove pushed back to win 10-9.

Facing Leeds Grammar School in the final, Bromsgrove were tied at 9-9 at the final whistle but a goal during extra time and a missed penalty by Leeds secured the 11-10 win and the championship.

This win marks a special victory for the U19 girls, who in their final year have now won the National Championships five times in the past seven years. In addition to the title, the Bromsgrove players were awarded a trophy for Endeavour and Sportsmanship, following comments from umpires and other schools who praised their commitment and friendly, gracious sportsmanship.

Deputy Headmaster Philip Bowen, who attended the finals, said: "All sports differ in the tournaments one can enter but for length of success and trophies won this is the most successful sports team in our long history.

"Congratulations to Monty Bent, Carly Nutt, Hayley Rudd, Claudia Cardinali, Kaya Wilson, Katherine Keates, Rebecca Morrice, Robyn Howcroft, Sophie Luckman and Captain Pippa Brock, most of whom have played netball for Bromsgrove School for almost as long as they can remember.

"It has been one of life's great joys for them and this was their finest hour. Their character – their determination, composure under fire and support of one another – saw them through."



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Student architects

Nick Gallop reflects on pupil participation in school design

Winston Churchill's assertion, expressed exactly 70 years ago, that 'we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us' resonates as much for political spaces as it does for school buildings, within which children spend the overwhelming proportion of their most formative years.

Churchill's declaration was driven by reactionary forces as well as practical instincts. Parliament, most particularly the House of Commons, was to be rebuilt exactly as it was prior to its near destruction by incendiary bombs in October 1943. Early sketches, which included expansion to accommodate all 646 elected representatives, were thrown out largely because the chamber would have looked even more alarmingly empty than it often does today.

It similarly holds true that the *building* of buildings shapes us. The building process moulds school communities by providing infrequent but invigorating opportunities for often disconnected, or at least disparate, elements to come together in creative and inventive, resourceful and pragmatic ways.

What starts with the articulation of a vision, emerging from a wider set of crafted priorities, runs through to the engagement of professionals – architects, planners and construction experts – all amidst vital deliberations over timescales, costs, environmental impact and the management of change and interim measures.

Running through this discourse, suffusing and 'shaping' the process, is a more fundamental question that is often only prompted by the advent of major development projects: to whom do our schools belong?

It is a decade since the widely acclaimed and unexpectedly influential book *The School I'd Like* was published. The book

was written and compiled following a *Guardian* competition, itself resurrecting a 1967 initiative of the *Observer*, to record and collate the aspirations of the most important elements within any school community and the voices that matter most – those of pupils.

The project's goal was to place the views of school children at the heart of the educational debate in order to prompt a reshaping and a reconstruction of the learning process based upon how the learning environment is experienced by today's children.

The immediate reaction to the competition was as inspiring as it was provocative. Designs and dreams ran the full range, from elaborate fantasies of schools that existed entirely within submarines, to the touchingly thoughtful – a jug of water in every classroom.

Responses were not simply drawn from run-down schools in half-forgotten communities – although for a significant minority needs focused upon the basics of warmth and light – but also from a large number of independent schools in which pupils craved personal privacy and proper respect for their space and belongings.

Common to almost all were imaginative and innovative ways of grappling with the issues and dilemmas that have faced the educational world for decades and still do – preparedness for life, exam stress, literacy and numeracy levels, health and well-being, the role of technology in schools.

The authors of *The School I'd Like* can hardly have anticipated the extent to which their findings would have influenced government policy to follow. Although 1997 saw a new approach to investment in schools, the years since the book's publication have been marked by a raft of legislation



Architectural drawing of the new Sixth Form Centre at The Portsmouth Grammar School, to be opened in September 2014.

The future

and statutory guidance that emphasise the vital importance of pupil participation in shaping learning environments.

Every Child Matters (2003) stressed the active involvement of family, school and community in design and construction; *Building Schools for the Future* (2004) underlined the need for pupils to play an active role in the development of design briefs; *Youth Matters* (2005) confirmed the principal goal of educational environments as being responsive to the needs of young people, and the *Primary Capital Programme* of 2006 and *Academies Programme* of 2007 made the involvement of pupils in the design process a statutory requirement.

Such a radical re-appraisal of the role of pupils was not prompted by a single text. The close connection between teaching spaces and cognitive processes has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years: the more we understand about how our brains function the more we realise just how important the environment in which we learn is.

The much-invoked developmental psychologist Howard Gardner made additions to the original seven intelligences that he expressed in his 1983 text *Frames of Mind*, the most notable being 'naturalistic intelligence'. In response to a growing appreciation of the importance of the environment and of human sensitivity to the features of the world around us, naturalistic intelligence emphasises that *where* we learn can be just as significant as *what* we learn.

This is particularly true of environments that children have been encouraged to use their creativity to develop, that they have a natural affinity for and that they feel empowered by.

The last 15 years have seen many school environments, in both maintained and independent sectors, change profoundly.

In some, cavernous central atriums provide schools with much-needed expressions of unity and cohesion. For others, discrete sections have been fostered – schools within schools – to operate semi-independently of one another. For others still, new spaces have provided opportunities for expansion to create flexible environments that can change and develop according to needs. But what of the pupil voices in these designs?

The most far-reaching research on pupil participation has been done by a collaborative project of ergonomists and children's geographers from Coventry and Northampton universities within the last three years. The findings may well reflect the sentiments we often feel when attempting to incorporate pupils in quite complex development processes.

The research – carried out across many schools, local authorities and building professionals – revealed that the true extent of pupil participation featured somewhere on a sliding scale between 'disappointing' and 'modest', with many projects referencing the 'complex and time consuming' nature of effective participation which, alongside the levels of regulation, guidance and standards that accompany buildings, conspired to ensure that pupil contribution to the design of 'their' spaces was limited to aspects of dining facilities or social spaces – colour schemes and furniture. Participation was 'tokenistic' and invariably 'foreclosed' by the complexity of the architectural process and by pre-determined perceptions of purpose and end use.

So, is that where we leave the inspiration and hope that burst forth from *The School I'd Like* and the collective aspirations of so many children to learn in environments that, to a greater or lesser extent, were designed and shaped by them? 'Foreclosed'

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and stymied, hemmed in by regulations and guidance, proscribed dimensions and designs: ‘tokenistic’ participation that *follows* the design process rather than *leads* it?

Many hundreds of pupils at The Portsmouth Grammar School have now had the opportunity to reflect on their sixth form years and on how they would shape the environment that supports them. Similar to some of the most striking and central features that emerged from *The School I'd Like* were the remarkable consistencies in pupil expressions of how they wanted to think, to work, to feel empowered to learn and to fulfil their potential.

When not constrained by pre-determined plans and decisions, pupils thought far less in terms of physical buildings, with all the associated constraints that come with architecturally-driven projects, and far more in terms of process and ethos, seeing their days as a series of interactive experiences – deeply personal, inclusive and flexible – in defiance of accepted designs, layouts or dimensional restrictions.

In *Creating Tomorrow's Schools Today*, Richard Gerver urges those with a hand in designing educational buildings to respond to the highest standards expected by our children and go far beyond the functionally institutionalised spaces that characterise the large majority of today's schools – including those ‘designed for the future’, with short-term morale-boosting doses of glass and chrome, but that often lack insight into the processes that will go on within them in that future.

Researching the physical future of the sixth form at The Portsmouth Grammar School involved journeys to destinations in higher education, to independent schools and state academies, and – most relevantly – to private businesses, many of whom have a global reputation for innovation.

The Hub at King's Cross, for instance, is a co-working space for social entrepreneurs, designed within a stunning listed building to inspire people within a highly creative working environment. *Microsoft UK* is a vibrant working environment with an acknowledgement that ownership lies with the people that fill the building every day.

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It's not easy to explain why our schools shouldn't be as vibrant, welcoming and energetic as the best that private industry has to offer – the kind of companies that have chosen to work closely with large groups of young technology-minded people to promote a sense of wellbeing, shared purpose and success.

‘Ownership,’ explains Gerver, ‘is at the heart of the issue. We need to be very clear who our schools belong to. They do not belong to you or me; they belong to the generation of children who inhabit them.’

Whilst the first challenge might be to convince them that their voices are relevant and valued, and the second might be to confront the effectiveness of the systems that record them, there is no better time to find out what kind of schools our children would like.

Nick Gallop is assistant head and head of the sixth form at The Portsmouth Grammar School.

The Hub, King's Cross





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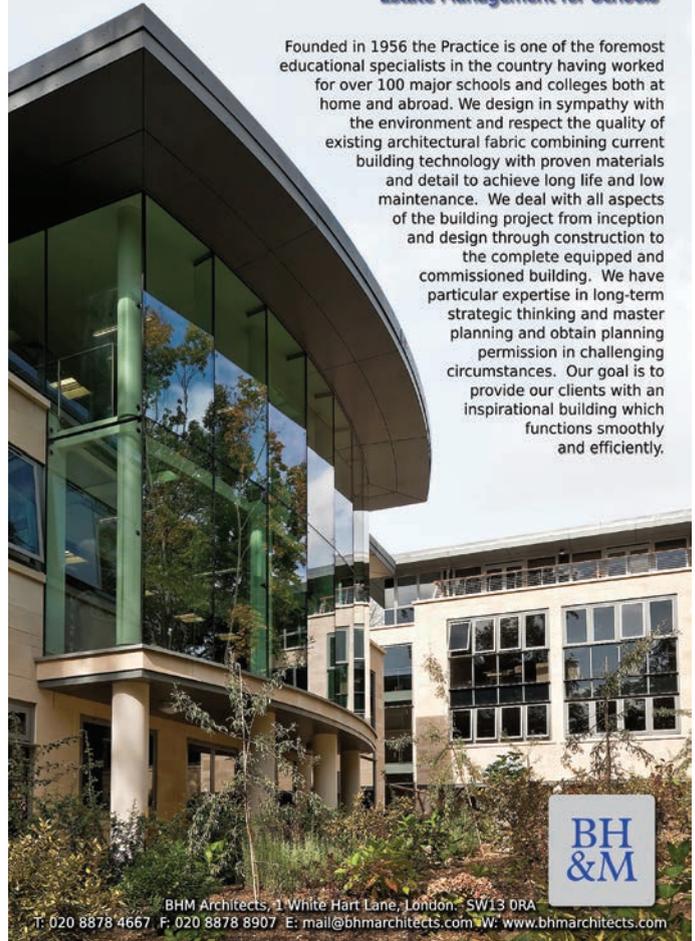


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Teaching and the Heavenly Virtues:

Truth

A long line of shuffling figures makes its way up the endless sweep of what appears to be a white marble staircase of Venetian origin but is, of course – eat your heart out, Mr Plant – the Stairway to Heaven itself.

At the top of the staircase is a massive intricately wrought gate of sapphire and pearl and, behind it, a giant palace, once again of glittering, beyond belief brilliant white.

The mighty host of the recently dead slowly winds through the gate and into the palace, arriving eventually in an Empyrean hall where white-suited ushers stand waiting to meet them, each with a silver-mounted clipboard.

After a long wait, such is the numberless number of the Dead, an especially crumpled figure, the Author, arrives at the head of the line.

Usher: (curtly) Name?

Author: Alistair Macnaughton.

Usher: Age?

Author: (sighing) 54.

Usher: Profession?

Author: Headmaster.

Usher: Cause of death?

(The author looks hesitant and embarrassed, taking some time to think it over)

Author: (eventually) Suicide.

Usher: By what means?

Author: (perplexed) Um....

Usher: (*mechanically reading through a list on his clipboard*) Drowning? Jumping? Hanging? Gas? Pills? Knife?

Author: (*with a perceptible struggle*) Working.

Usher: (*looking up for the first time*) Working? It's not on my list.

Author: Sorry.

Usher: (decisively) I'll put it down under 'Some Other Means'.

(The Author looks hesitant again)

Author: Where do I go?

(The Usher points to a seemingly very distant corner of the hall)

Usher: Over there.

The author, disconcerted, shuffles off until eventually he sees a big illuminated sign above the crowd, 'TEACHERS', then a further sign 'HEADTEACHERS' and finally a very small sign (though written in a florid Latinate style) 'HMC HEADS'. Underneath there are a few throne-like chairs, all occupied. The occupants are silver-haired, distinguished, sharp-suited, each with gleaming shoes and a copy of *The Daily Telegraph* open at the crossword page.



Alistair
Macnaughton

The author stands awkwardly, hoping for a seat but not daring to speak or even cough. Eventually, however, one of the seated rises, places his half-moon reading glasses in his lamé spectacle case, imperiously snaps the case shut and marches purposefully away towards a distant light. The author collapses into the now vacant seat, getting a faintly quizzical look from his neighbour.

Other Headmaster: School?

Author: King's.

Other Headmaster: (sharply) Which one?

Author: Gloucester.

Other Headmaster (as if discovering something slightly distasteful) Ah

(There is a pause)

Author: (nervously) Which school are you from?

Other Headmaster: Winchester.

He then points to the others seated nearby, each in turn:

Harrow, Charterhouse, St Paul's, Shrewsbury.

Author: All at once?

Other Headmaster: There was a tornado.

Author: Oh....

Other Headmaster: At a conference.

Author: At Brighton or at Wellington?

Other Headmaster: Kansas.

There is a pause whilst the Author takes this in.

Author: But what about the others?

Other Headmaster: They were all attending a compliance refresher course in Emerald City.

Author: Ah, I see, I see.

Other Headmaster: (darkly) A lucky escape...

There is a pause. The Other Headmaster gives the Author an even darker look.

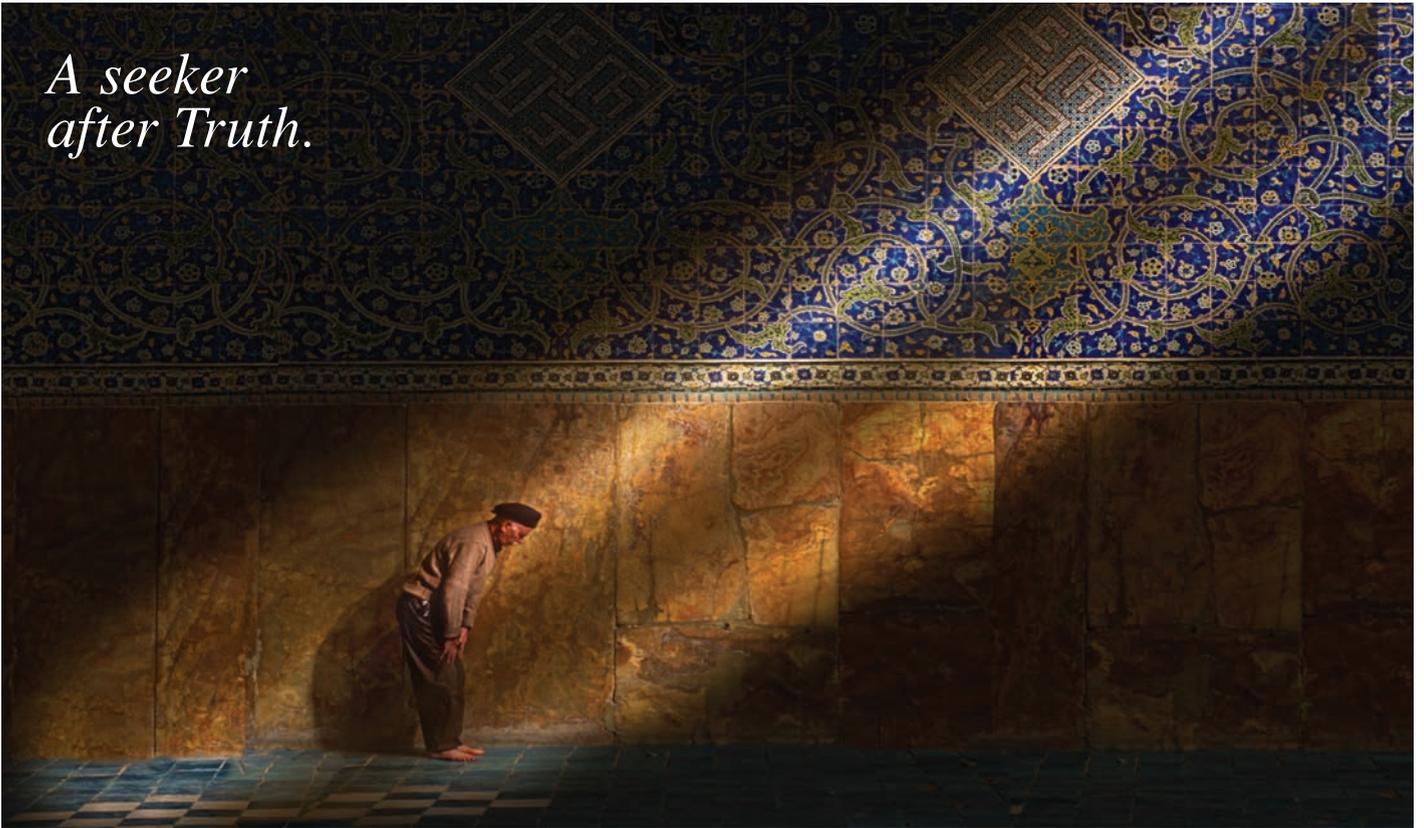
...or a clever one.

Silence ensues, the only sound being the Heads' Parker pens scratching in crossword answers at lightning speed whilst the author looks on perplexed, occasionally sighing dolefully and shaking his head.

After a seeming eternity, he is the only one left. Then, suddenly, a strange musical voice in his head says (or sings) "Next please" and he feels strongly impelled to rise and walk towards the same distant light as the others.

Eventually he comes to a man in a morning suit, clad as if for a wedding. It is his younger self, at 29, the age when he

A seeker after Truth.



Photograph Stephen Coyne.

married and started his teaching career. For a few moments he stands amazed at the sight of this half-familiar, half-alien being with his dark hair, unlined face and curiously disarming eyes.

Author: It's you....

Younger Self: Yes it is. It's me and you both at once.

Author: I'm confused.

Younger Self: You always were.

They look at each other.

Author: What happens now?

Younger Self: I ask you a question.

Author: What is it?

The young man stops smiling, assumes a very serious expression and looks him right in the eyes.

Younger Self: Did you tell them the Truth?

Author: (gibberingly) Who's them?

Younger Self: The pupils. The parents. Your colleagues. The governors. The World.

Author: I don't know what you mean.

Younger Self: (with a confident laugh) Oh yes you do.

He opens a large silver book that he has been holding and begins to read from the details therein:

What about the time you told the chairman at the Parents' Association you couldn't make the Harvest Barn Dance because of a (poker) school engagement? Or the Speech Day guest you described as an 'inspiration' when everyone knew he was the Dullest Man in Gloucestershire? Or the valedictory letter you wrote to Mr and Mrs Nightmare saying that they – and their little son, Fauntleroy – would be 'sorely missed'?

Author: But...

The younger self puts his finger to his lips to indicate to the Author that he should keep quiet.

How can you justify saying nothing whilst the Governors heaped praise on you for the new Independent Learning initiative when you knew that it was the deputy head's idea in the first place? Or pretending lacrosse was your 'favourite' girls sport when it makes you feel scared and confused? Or deceiving a whole generation by telling the upper sixth about the 'brilliant' future awaiting every single one of them?

The younger self looks at the Author with kindly compassion.

Younger Self: Do you want me to read on?

Author: (broken) No, no...

In the long pause that follows the author feels as if the film of his life is being played in his head. In a moment he hears again all the announcements he has made and speeches he has given, rereads all the letters and memos he has written, relives the meetings he has chaired...

Very slowly at first, the author turns and begins to retreat, mildly to the surprise of his younger self.

Younger Self: Where are you going?

The Author does not respond. As if hypnotised, he walks away, past the chairs, the ushers, the stream of people coming up the Stairway to Heaven. And as he descends and detects a faint whiff of brimstone and sulphur in the air, he knows that another destination awaits him.

Alistair Macnaughton has run out of things to say about Virtue and Vice, except – of course – in assembly at his school, to the ongoing dismay of his pupils.

First impressions do count

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