About this document

In 1986 J. B. Morris privately published a book describing some of his experiences during more than twenty years spent as Headmaster at Shebbear. As far as I know, this was sent at his own expense to all Old Shebbearians who were members of the OSA at the time, although it may have had a wider circulation.

In the years since then I have lent my copy to several Old Shebbearians of my generation who had not seen it, which suggests to me that there are many more out there who have not read it. So it occurred to me that converting it to a .pdf document that anyone with access to the internet could download might make his musings available to a wider audience. I have therefore scanned it and converted it to a .pdf file, and what you are reading is the result.

Jack's original was A5 size, but many of the illustrations were printed so that you had to turn the book sideways to view them. Because you can't conveniently do this on a computer I have changed the format to A4 and displayed the illustrations across the page. I have however retained Jack's pagination, and included his page numbers at the foot of each page. I am not totally convinced this is a good idea, and would appreciate your comments. In the original, the illustration pages had no numbers, so this .pdf has more pages than the original, including of course this one. Consequently the .pdf page numbers at the foot of the screen do not correspond with Jack's, and this may cause some confusion. I have amended his contents page to show both sets.

The optical character recognition software I used worked very well, but inevitably it misread some letters. I hope that I have corrected all these errors, but if you find any please let me know. The quality of the illustrations is surprisingly reasonable, given that all I had to work with were the screened letterpress printed ones that appeared in the book. I find on my monitor that they look best with the viewing size set to 200%, although this is probably too big to conveniently read the text: 125% seems about right for that to me.

Of course Jack's acknowledgements at the end are meaningless in this version, but I have left them in for the sake of completeness.

I hope it brings back memories for you.

Peter Brown (at Shebbear 1944 – 50) December 2006
peter.brown@any-mail.co.uk

A reproduction of the original book's cover

TWO DECADES

Recollections of a Country Schoolmaster

Contents

Two Decades

Recollections of a country schoolmaster

A word to the reader

I am setting down what is a memoir of my days at Shebbear, 1942-1964. It is perhaps not altogether fitting that a Headmaster should write of his own doings; but these are personal memories (some of a trivial nature) which will give me an opportunity to recall old friends and scenes. Shebbearians who read these chapters (and they are primarily written for them) may well echo the words of a much praised 20th century poet:

It was not like that
It was not like that at all .....

I shall include under various headings changes in buildings and the estate; activities belonging to Sparta and also to Athens; but I shall not seek to follow a strictly chronological order; and I shall make mention of members of staff - I cannot include them all - because I believe the influence of good schoolmasters (especially in boarding schools) can be of paramount importance; and that Old Boys who reminisce with their contemporaries at Reunions will like to be reminded of the men who taught them. Throughout I shall imagine that some Shebbearian of a younger generation is asking me, 'What was it like, sir?', and shall seek to satisfy his curiosity about days long past. Of the thousand and more boys themselves at school from 1942 to 1964, many of whom I remember so well, I have had to limit myself to few names, on account of space.

March 1986 JBM

I The battle of Shebbear

The Governors' meeting to decide on a new Headmaster was held in Exeter in June 1942. I had presented a curriculum vitae - schoolboy at King Edward's, Birmingham; proceeding to Oxford with a Laming Scholarship in Spanish: First Class Honours in Modern Languages in 1925, followed by a year's practical schoolmastering at Sutton Valence in Kent; then back to Oxford for the Diploma of Education course, and appointment to Marlborough College in September, 1927; but my time there cut short by the opening of a new public school, Bryanston, in January, 1928, whose staff I joined, and worked there as senior modern language master and Housemaster for fifteen years; married in 1933, one daughter.

I accepted the Governors' offer without seeing the College but paid a visit with my wife in July. And I liked the setting, grey walls against a country background of green; Shebbear village a mile down the road; the nearest town ten miles away. Here the battle of Shebbear was to be fought. And battle it certainly was! There were just over a hundred boys, three stalwarts on the staff, - Sydney Fowlston, Dick Shorney and Jackson Page, and a few young men in their first teaching jobs. An art and craft master was engaged in August, and a music teacher, Madge Clarke, riding up three days a week from Cornwall on a motor cycle. She soon came to live in College and worked valiantly with our primitive resources.

The fees had just been raised from £78 to £81 a year (inclusive). It was plain that this was a school running on a shoestring. There was no resident Bursar or Secretary (not even a typewriter). The School Chaplain had just left and could not be replaced. The head of the ground and maintenance staff had joined up. The Headmaster's duties covered therefore a somewhat varied range. My first intent was to keep up and raise if need be spirits and morale. We must make do with what buildings and facilities we had, planning some essential minor repairs and redecorations each holiday. I decided to take no more youngsters under 11.

Meanwhile, I was set to teach French to the upper school, and have the three junior forms each for a weekly period (subject unspecified). In the IV form I suggested a debate, which

was eagerly accepted; subject? "Conscientious objectors, sir". Very well. The first speaker strode up to the blackboard, turned and blazed out, "I think they should all be put up against a wall and shot". Others followed: and then I reasoned with them that we should accept the Tribunal's decisions as to the masters' sincerity, and they heard me out, very patiently. But with IIIb and IIIa 9-10 year olds we did "drama" in the old gymnasium (still standing): cowboys and Indians fought and held pow-wows After three days I could turn to my wife at school dinner - we presided at the midday meal in dining-hall for twenty-two years - and say, "I know the name of every boy in this room ".

By this time I had also taken cognisance of my other duties

a) I was in charge of rugger, - coaching, refereeing and restoring a fixture list; travelling with the 1st XV to other Devon schools. Kelly kindly welcomed us. The bus had petrol enough to take us to Halwill junction. We missed the train by ten minutes. Suddenly, an open farm lorry approached the level crossing. I stopped the driver and within a minute we were all in the straw-covered back, bowling towards Okehampton, where we disembarked. Up the hill to the station! Unencumbered by bags of kit, I was in the lead: the train was standing in the platform, and we caught it.

b) In command of the College A.T.C. - a weekly parade during dinner hour, and navigation and signalling after prep in the evening.

c) Run the College petty cash account, pay all wages of College servants (learn the mysteries of PAYE), hire and fire if necessary, collect and check invoices for our monthly finance meeting in Bideford.

d) Keep an eye on the Lake Farm bailiff, and make decisions with him about new stock etc, and do the Farm accounts. County Alderman John Squance, our local and much-loved Governor, enthused "You can't beat the ruby red Devons"; but I wanted milk for the College, and we started a fine Ayrshire herd.

e) Take Sunday services three or four times a term at Lake, and preach (especially during the holidays) at village chapels. There were fine country folk to be met there. Transport was

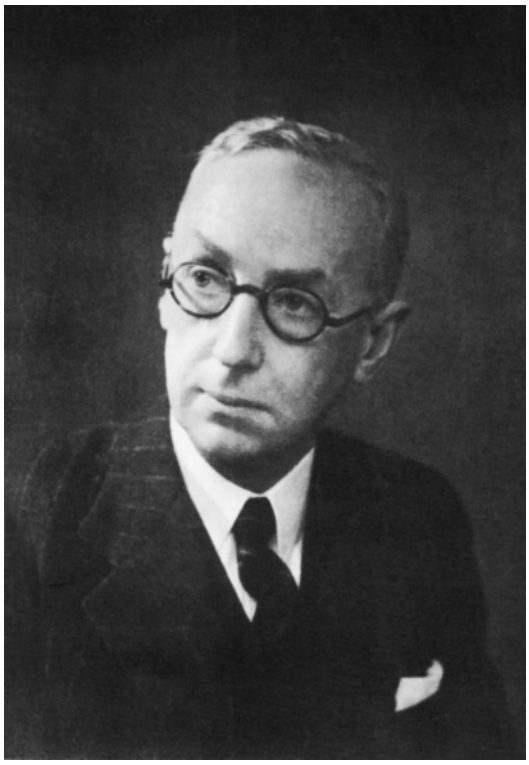
by bicycle (petrol scarce) and all signposts had been removed from the Devon roads and lanes.

Insurance cards and stamps were in my wife's province, as also all ration books. Very shortly, after Marjorie Waight's visit (English Folk Dance Society) my wife was teaching juniors country dancing in the gym, organising evening dance parties, and instructing seniors in ballroom dancing in the library. Her contribution to College life was immense. If there were upsets among the domestic staff, she smoothed them out deftly and firmly. When epidemics came she was in the dormitories with the nursing staff.

And so we managed. There were piano and violin lessons. Madge Clarke soon had two dozen pupils and more. We sang Vaughan Williams' Fantasia of Christmas Carols in December. There were form plays at end of term (original and blood-thirsty - VI former Geoffrey Shellard was "hanged" in public on the stage).

I said that in 1942 there were three stalwarts on the staff when I arrived. 'Dick' Shorney, who had given more than twenty years devoted service to the College, was awarded an M.Sc. in July 1943 and left in December to be a lecturer at Loughborough College. I wrote: "Gentleness and strength of character are blended in him. Integer vitae - he typifies the opening words of the School song. We are thinking of men who will be coming back to the schools when peace returns. Fortunate indeed will be any school that can attract to it men of the stamp of Dick Shorney". Syd Fowlston, a great Yorkshireman, teacher and sportsman, Rownsfell's second in command, a legend among Shebbear masters, had a serious operation in 1941; he died in January 1944. I was proud to regard them as colleagues and friends. But this left the College staff gravely depleted. It is the moment to essay a sketch of our new Second Master, Jackson Page, for whom Shebbear and the O.S.A. has been and still is his lifework.

II Jackson Page : Second Master



The copy of the Shebbearian (winter 1942) which had so generously welcomed the new H.M. was followed (spring 1943) with congratulations to Captain Jackson Page on the award of the M.B.E. (military division) on his out of school capacity as second in command of the local Home Guard. I am looking at the photo now. Shebbearians will need no description of him - a small man, (albeit the nickname 'Pigmy' was coined from the use of his word 'pigment' in his art classes), but with an eye of command, a sense of humour and puckish wit - he has always been an excellent public speaker who knows how to captivate his audience - a feeling for both beauty and for the ironies of life. We walked round the grounds after Syd's death, talked of a future Shebbear, and forged a friendship which has lasted for more than forty years. 'Not that there were no conflicts', confessed J.P. as he retired on Speech Day 1960. Historians would remember Gladstone and Palmerston; "The estimates were settled at the dagger's point".

I have been at some pains to gather details of his early life which may be unknown to the many pupils who have passed through his hands. Born in 1897, son of a Bible Christian minister he came to Shebbear in September 1912, to find some forty parsons' sons there, - able material for a teacher, - and was soon in the IV under 'Rusty' for Latin and History. That was an education in itself. Syd injected sufficient maths into his head (not unassisted by a signet ring) for him to pass his school certificate. A younger brother followed who was to lose his life in battle. Jackson was no athlete or games man, but there was mettle there: he left school in July 1915, and that November enlisted at the Dorchester barracks as a private. He went on to musketry school as a candidate for commission, trained at Downing College, Cambridge (where he was a member of the cross-country team) and was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in 1916.

May 1917 - out to France with the East Yorkshires 8th Battalion, on the front near Arras; they attacked on the slopes below Paschaendale; he was shot in the left arm, got back to casualty clearing station and then to England; recovering and hardening up for service again with the

Machine Gun Corps. By November they were crossing the Sambre at Charleroi. And so to the Armistice.

Restless in England, he joined the Indian Army in Bombay, was hospitalised with malignant malaria; returned home, and joined the Shebbear staff in September 1921. His father died that year. There was no money for University. Rusty's counsel was to work for a degree while teaching; and so he did, gaining a pass degree in 1924, and Honours in History a couple of years later. He had married Joan (as she was always known) in 1924, and they settled down in a bungalow at New Inn, moving later to their house in College Road, where she was a generous hostess to many generations of College boys. They had two children, Daphne who has since travelled the world as the wife of Sir John Vane (Nobel pharmacologist prize-winner), and John (lately retired Chief Press Officer at the Treasury) who followed his father in due course as President of the O.S.A.

His extra duties (like the H.M' s) were many and various.

a) He was Scoutmaster of Troop 2, and sustained the intense rivalry with Troop 1 (under Dick Shorney) year after year. He was famous for the 'ditch and dyke' exercise which he devised every spring. You wore your oldest rugger kit and came back bathed in icy mud.

b) He was in charge of the School library in the room he beautified at the south end of the Beckly wing. With his loyal team of boy librarians he raised the number of books to 10,000.

c) In his own small room off back quad he dealt with all books and stationery, their goings out and comings in at beginning and end of terms. There too was the school tuck-shop, with its stock and accounts under his eye.

d) The Shebbearian Editors worked under his direction and inspiration, and produced the magazine regularly at every term end.

e) The Union Society met weekly - lectures, debates, play-readings: and seniors learnt to speak in public, with a few notes (no reading of prepared stuff), but J.P. saw that you did prepare.

f) As Second Master he oversaw the work of Pres and subs in securing the daily good order and discipline of school.

And as teacher? He was in charge of VI and V English and History, with two double periods of water-colour painting with the IV - which he plainly enjoyed (as they did). He was a good teacher; thorough, delighting in what he taught and inspiring interest and keen appreciation. How can you surely know the good teacher, master of his craft? The V form set book for School Certificate (I keep the old nomenclature) was a volume of selections from Keats and Shelley (J.P. sufficiently a rebel to support the latter) though the form recited:-

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! No hungry generations tread thee down".

Books, supplied by the College, were handed in at term's end. But many V formers queried: "May we keep this volume and pay for it out of pocket money?" I told J.P. that he would never have (or need) a finer encomium than this.

Ronald Duncan, our farmer neighbour and author of the libretto for Britten's "Lucrece" and of his own "Death of Satan", came to the Union Society, and urged them not to be bored by Eng. Lit. and Shakespeare lessons, but to read something amusing under the desk, - as he had. When question time came, he was repulsed, courteously but very firmly, by boys who told him that Shakespeare under J.P. was a great experience.

Jackson Page taught his boys not only to read and speak, but to write: and for the eyes of schoolmasters to-day, if any should read these lines, I add here what he himself wrote in 1960, the year that he retired.

"As I grow older, as generation after generation grinds me down to the bare flint, what remains in me, what grows in me, I think is reverence - reverence mixed with delight that at moments rises above fatigue when at my desk (after I have left the school a pleasant one hundred yards away) I read one more sheaf of essays, and come upon the lines of prose or verse, patiently written, cogitated, corrected, fair-copied - by boys whose sensitivity and persistence have at last disciplined the stubborn words to something like regular obedience, so that their words and young art move me to a feeling as religious as I shall ever know ..."

III Taking the strain

It was not easy to get staff during the war years and after. I must speak of some of them. Eric Foss went off for a term, and married; and I invited him and Marie to come back to Way House in January 1944; Eric to teach geography and scripture, which he did with great efficiency and outstanding success in School and Higher certificate exams; Marie - junior English and junior drama. They rendered Shebbear great service on to 1966, when Eric Foss went out to Gambia as H.M. of Bathurst Grammar School retiring thence some ten years later with a well-deserved O.B.E. Peter Pitman (1st class zoology, Bristol) was in charge of chemistry and biology from 1942 to 1945 when he went on to Millfield. Cyril Barfoot arrived in September 1943 (with a 1st class degree in mathematics from Birmingham), a beautifully lucid teacher of maths and physics, as well as a first-rate model engineer and stage electrician. We lost him to Edgehill, as his family grew up and it was necessary to move to Bideford for their education. Eric Locker came to College Villa (renamed Battledown) in September 1944, in charge of art and craft, and did great work as sports master for the next sixteen years. How many rugger teams will remember him with admiration and affection as well as on the cricket and athletic fields!

Late in Spring Term 1945, our neighbour, Bickford Dickinson, of Dunsland House, who had visited the College as Chief Fire Warden for North Down, asked me whether there might be a chance for him to teach at Shebbear. My reply was that he could start in two days' time when a master was going on sick leave, and a fortnight later I would tell him whether it was going to work out. It did. Old Pauline, J.P. , grandson of Sabine Baring Gould (Squarson of Lewtrenchard), widely read, writer of prose and verse, a Devonshire man over six foot tall, and (I swear) not less than 15 stone in weight, an attacking batsman and wicket-keeper, 'Dicky' never looked back. His discipline in junior form-rooms was perhaps at times less than severe; but in classroom, or directing agricultural science or in charge of boys' gardens, he was much beloved. All schools need to have some masters who are 'characters', and such he was. Two years later we were delighted to offer our congratulations

to Bickford and Madge Clarke on their marriage at St. Michael's, Shebbear, and at the reception afterwards in College library.

January 1946 brought John Howes to Common Room (where he was known as a wit) to cover junior French, run a gramophone club, and take parties of boys to France during the holidays. Like others years before him he studied at College for his degree and gained B.A., London in 1950. Jock Harris arrived in September 1946 to take over chemistry and general science; a tough Scotsman who meant boys to pass S.C. in his subject; and they did. The old chemistry lab was at the far end of Beckly wing. I told Jock that they could hear him teaching down in Shebbear village. His Colts rugger XV went right through the 1948-49 season undefeated: Jock was triumphant; and then one Easter he flew off to a job in Nigeria, and later Hong Kong, at such a princely salary that one was surprised that any science teachers remained in England. And I must add a mistress - Marjorie Jaco, who visited us for singing; a beautiful pianist, an exciting conductor, a vivid personality. In early days she addressed a member of a junior form. "Swayne, I hear you can do a good imitation of me. Show me now". And Tony Swayne, not easily daunted, stood up, waved a magisterial hand at the choir on the stage, and announced: "Stand up there, you trebles, I won't have you drooping like weeds". And Marjorie joined in the laughter. (Was it not rumoured that on an earlier occasion she had cause to rebuke an unruly 1st former, took off her shoe and spanked him then and there?)

In '46 also came a gifted Old Boy, Guy Wright, newly demobbed, a born schoolmaster, junior maths, gym, rugger fly half and athlete. He was a pianist, took over the school choir, offered musical appreciation classes to the VI (eagerly attended): had a pleasant tenor voice, and made himself a capable trombonist; above all a loyal and good companion whose laugh was heartwarming to hear.

And now I must be allowed a short digression. It will be noted that I have used Christian names of staff, foreign to an earlier regime. But what of boys? In 1942, the custom was of course to use surnames (in ancient times one's name

as used ‘at home’ was kept a close guarded secret). And if there were several boys of the same name? Then, at Shebbear i, ii or iii was added after the name in the School list. In my first week I ran through the register of the IV form in class, and came upon Bridgman iv, a strapping Devonian, and then Bridgman v, a smallish youngster. “Are you his young brother, or cousin?” I enquired. “No, zirr”, (with a strong west country burr), “his uncle”. Great hilarity - in which the new H.M. joined.

But a further complication. There were four Darts. What happened when the eldest, Dart i, left? They all moved up - Dart ii becoming Dart i, and so on. Great confusion at subsequent masters’ meetings. I directed that we would use initials instead, - Dart J. and Dart C.; and within a few months they were John and Colin; which for a small and essentially ‘family’ school was good and proper. See how Shebbear led the way in this. Not a school now but has followed this procedure, and sports teams at all levels from village, to County and Test teams, likewise. But Shebbear had another talent - for bestowing nicknames: “Smiler” became the boy who kept a stiff, straight face; and Teddy Potter (of whom more anon) was known as “Gillie” (radio fans of the ‘40s will recall Much Binding in the Marsh).

So on to D Day and V Day, and the Shebbearian editors could quote C. Day Lewis (former prep schoolmaster and later Poet Laureate) with the words “Look, we have come through”. But the going was still rough; leavers were going off to do their national service; and no new building could be attempted. We did manage a well-attended Summer Reunion at College in 1946 - a great occasion, with Don Parley leading out the Old Boys’ Cricket XI, as he did for so many years; indeed until his son, John, was playing for the school against him; and after.

lan Hay wrote entertainingly of the “Lighter Side of School Life”; but in truth school life is largely a matter of routine, and stamina rather than heroics is called on to keep things moving as they should, and not allow standards to fall. “Morris”, a visiting Chief Inspector once said to me, “fifty per cent of most jobs are chores”. Sometimes, however, the weather steps in and imposes unlooked for stresses. Such was the spring term of 1947. Snow fell and lay over a foot thick. Immediately after morning assembly I sent urgent message

to Eric Locker in the craft shop to make sledges with ropes attached: they were ready within the hour; two teams of senior boys dragged seventy loaves from the village bakery and ten gallons of milk from the farm. 'Prince' and 'Madam' could not stir from the stable: the road north to Stibb Cross was impassable for a couple of days, but then a van got through from Bideford with provisions. Snowfights replaced football: igloos were built in back quad: the freeze went on for weeks.

A sudden thaw and rain followed by renewed frost produced an astonishing result. Electricity wires were covered with a thick coat of ice whose weight proved too much for the poles: they broke off a few feet from the ground; and there outside the main gate was a tangled mass of wire down the road to Battledown and indeed right on down the valley to Dipper Mill: all electricity was cut off. The little country school was without light, and with little heat from the main (and inadequate) boiler. Logs were piled that evening in the old gym fireplace, and there by the light of a storm lantern Guy Wright read The Canterville Ghost to an entranced audience, sitting in widening circles on the floor; then after evening prayers back through the snow to hot cocoa and biscuits before going up to candle-lit dormitories. For the next few weeks we lived during the day, in classrooms and elsewhere, in overcoats: spirits remained high: we rehearsed Julius Caesar in the evening. Then influenza struck, and soon there were eighty victims: we had our admirable doctor, Peter Green, calling daily from the village, his wife and other masters' wives and friends gallantly coming in to nurse the sick; until I had to give the word to 'strike camp' and our term ended a fortnight early. It had been a brave experience; and I was proud of them.

IV In Memoriam

1949 brought three occasions when past memories were stirred. On the 17th of March Alderman John Squance (1866-1949) died at his home in Galmington. His life was a link with the past of Shebbear. As a boy he was blessed by James Thorne. For fifty years his name was on the plan as a local preacher. He gave unstintingly of his time to public service in Devon, was elected to the County Council in 1915, and became an Alderman fifteen years later. He was a Governor and Trustee of the College and its lifelong friend. He was carried by bearers (of whom I was one, for a few hundred yards) from his home to his last resting-place in Lake graveyard.

On the 19th of May the Rev. Richard Pyke came over from Bideford and unveiled a Memorial tablet at Lake Farm, bearing this inscription: "In this house, the home of John and Mary Thorne, the first Bible Christian Society was formed, October 9th 1815". It was fitting that he should be here and on such an occasion a few months before he retired from the bursarship of Edgehill College. I must add some lines which I wrote then to recall to a later generation what he was and did.

Revd. Richard Pike at Lake Farm, 19th May, 1949

"For the past seven years, we, at Shebbear, have had the privilege two and three times a term of hearing him at Lake. School and village have filled the little chapel at eventide and listened to his virile message, addressed to those of intellectual stature. We have been glad to hear him, and he, too, has been glad to come, and see these new Shebbearians growing to manhood, joining in hymn and prayer in that place of so many hallowed associations, where their forefathers have worshipped for more than a hundred years. To-day we join in wishing him many happy and tranquil years of retirement at Bristol."

Richard Pyke was himself a student here for the Bible Christian ministry. And it was a little village in the heart of Devon, Sampford Courtenay, which knew him as a boy. His 'Men and Memories' a little volume of reminiscences, was published in 1948.

"Let no one suppose," he wrote, "that life with us was

dull and drab. No boy at Eton or Harrow could be happier. With a pair of good hob-nail boots, corduroy trousers, and the best of fathers and mothers, each day brought its glee. We played our games and our tricks. Mischief was sometimes discovered and duly punished; but the adventure was its own reward. It is not elaborate planning or costly toys that give a child pleasure. Freedom, fresh air and good food are more than these. If there is a world of life in a drop of water, so within a village there are all the conditions and requirements of abounding happiness. We may find as much excitement in watching a fox or a squirrel as others find in a horse race ...

It was a violent and disturbing change to pass from a farm, a village, and the companionship of a few country people into the midst of a boarding school with its vigorous life and challenge."

Others have known the same challenge of transposition, less violent perhaps today. But it was thus he came under Tommy Ruddle, and "the impact of his strong and restless personality, as well as his burning sincerity, made an impression which has lasted through life". Soon the young probationer was at work, and in the Shebbear circuit, under Henry Down (father of our Chairman of Governors) and "the best of superintendents". His love of books, and how widely he has read, was with him from boyhood. "In some of the farmhouses were young people who were eager to hear of books. It is pleasant to think of the large open fireplaces round which we sat at night, while I read passages from Ruskin, Carlyle, Tolstoy and Milton".

Pleasant indeed! What has modern invention to offer in exchange for such a training of mind and heart. Characters, too, abounded as they have ever done, in country town and village - rugged, individualistic, God-fearing, with the salt of wisdom and humour in their every utterance. And the author's power as a raconteur ensures that the tale and the jest live again in their native racy idiom. But the young minister was to travel far, to address large congregations, to hold converse with the great and learned; first to London, for ten years at St. James's Church, Forest Hill, then back to Bideford; from 1916-22 at Shebbear again, as resident Governor of the College; then Bristol and the north; in 1927, to preside over the United Methodist Conference and

to visit the U.S.A. as a delegate to the Ecumenical Conference. Arduous circuit work has claimed him, but "looking back there is no vocation I would prefer to that of a Methodist minister ..... The Methodist people may not have all the virtues, but no Church has more ..." In the first year of the War, he was elected President of the Methodist Conference which met at Liverpool, and a year of toil, danger and triumph in storm and black-out followed. And so back again to Bideford and the county of his birth. "One should ask, I think, not that he may be free from care and difficulties, but that he may have power to bear the inevitable, a sense of proportion, and 'years that bring the philosophic mind' ". Vale!

At the end of summer term 1949 the Memorial Plaque commemorating World War Two was unveiled in a crowded Lake Chapel. "The morning had darkened", reports the Shebbearian, "so that now the yellow lamps were switched on, lighting up the flags as two of the bravest Old Shebbearians stepped forward - Col. Walter Parkes, who led his battalion through the worst days of 1918, and Lt. Comm. H.M. Pinnell who fought his ship through the Mediterranean convoys - to release the cord, and the flags fell."

IN PROUD AND AFFECTIONATE RECOGNITION OF ALL OLD SHEBBEARIANS WHO SERVED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945 AND IN ESPECIAL AND HONOURED REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TYRANNY.

"Timothy, guard that which is committed to thy trust", was the text chosen by the Rev. John Ford Reed. Few names read from the Scroll of Honour but the preacher, Governor at College from 1922-1936, could call up the face of a boy he had known; and it was to the present boys, many of them young men about to adventure out into life, that Mr. Reed addressed himself. "What a magnificent thing it is to be trusted by a good man. And you are entrusted with your own good name which you derive from your family; with the good name of your school, and with the responsibility of keeping that Christian way of life bequeathed to it by its great founders in former years".

The two bronze plaques are still on the wall of the dining-hall in College. And there is another memorial, its like not possessed, I think, by any other school in England, a Memorial Book (compiled by Jackson Page) with obituaries and photos of all thirty-five who left Shebbear never to return. I was honoured by being asked to pen a foreword, and wrote.

This book is a record of men and boys who went from an English School. It is dedicated to their memory. It unites in a proud fellowship of grief the families from which they came, and that second family of which they made part in their schooldays, and which will honour their sacrifice for ever. We salute them, not as the most gifted, the most renowned of Shebbear's sons, but as brothers who paid most fully the price of freedom which is ours today. We do well to be proud.

"There no hearts grew faint, said Pericles, because they loved riches more than honour; none shirked the issue in the poor man's dream of wealth. All these they put aside to strike a blow for the city .. . They faced the foe as they drew near him in the strength of their own manhood; and when the shock of battle came, they chose rather to suffer to the utmost than to win life by weakness ....."

And in our pride and sorrow, there is thankfulness and humbleness of heart. No boy entering Shebbear for the first time, no young man stepping out into the broader paths of life, but will gaze at this bronze memorial, conscious that it enshrines the names of those who fought not in vain against the powers of tyranny.

"For you now it remains to rival what they have done, and knowing the secret of happiness to be freedom and the secret of freedom a brave heart, not idly to stand aside from the enemy's onset".

Roll of Honour

H. BADGE
F.E. BARNARD
F.S. BAZALGETTEE
R.A. CRICHTON
F. DENSEM
W.G. FOALE
W.A. FRIENDSHIP
N.H. GALE
W.E.S. GERMAN
D.A. GIBBS
R.G. HAM
K. HEYWOOD
W.R. HOUGHTON
W.R.F. LARAMY
C.G. LEY
E.J. LOCK
M.G. LOVICK
J.D. MOULD
H.G.M. OSBORNE
W. PERKIN
W.E. PILBROW
P.C.J. PILBROW
W.A. PILKINGTON
L.C. QUICK
F. RAINE
F.RAWLE
S.J. RENNELS
S.M. RUSS
R. SHORNEY
W. SLEE
C.G. SMITH
L.J. SYMES
J.K. SYMONS
W.F. TOLLWORTHY
F.R. WESTCOTT

Exegi monumentum aere perennius

V Looking Ahead

It was now a time to look ahead. Big developments were needed at the College. What was the financial position? And what could be done to undertake large commitments? I cannot do better than summarise a chapter from Richard Pyke's Story of Shebbear.

In 1920 the School was admitted to the Direct Grant list. It was known that this would mean the admission to the Governing Body of men and women appointed by the Devon County Council, whose representatives could not accept responsibility for any capital debt that existed, or be a party to developments and extensions of the fabric. A Governing Body, so constituted, was responsible only for current income and expenditure, and the educational activities of the School. The Trustees therefore formed a separate body, and it was their concern to deal with debt, and promote schemes for the improvement and enlargement of the buildings. The Governors, into whose exchequer came all the fees, were to be regarded as tenants; and it was agreed that they should pay a rent to the Trustees, to be determined by an impartial assessor. The plan worked smoothly; and the Trustees from the rent they received were able to maintain the fabric in good condition, reduce the capital debt, and from time to time embark upon an outlay in extensions which were needed. At the time when the change took place the total debt was £32,000 and it was steadily reduced by £1,000 a year.

In the 1940's the further step was taken of coming under the direct aegis of the Methodist Education Committee. The property was transferred from the Trustees, who were now discharged, and the methods of administration prescribed by central Methodism were now adopted. In the financial and legal adjustments involved, the School was fortunate in having the skilful and friendly guidance of the Financial Secretary, Mr. J.A. Knowles, M.C., M.A.; and the Rev.Dr. Baker, Ministerial Secretary, was followed by the Rev. George Osborn, M.A. , on his return from years of missionary work (and imprisonment by the Japanese) in China.

And now a further word as to the "direct grant". What did it amount to? What were its conditions? The School had to

undertake to supply "free places" (i.e. remission of tuition fees) to 11 year old entrants, up to a third of such entrants each year. These places could be taken up by County authorities, whether our own, Devon, or others: and during the war years and their aftermath, boys from London and other county authorities were so admitted, having passed the eleven plus examination which qualified them for a grammar school. But with more settled conditions these now fell off. Devon County education committee decided to withdraw almost entirely its support from the College. It was then incumbent on the College to provide "free places" at its own expense to new boys who had passed satisfactorily our entrance exam and subsequent interview. The grant was paid from Whitehall as a per capita sum calculated on the total number of pupils in the school, with a higher grant for VI formers; and it steadily increased over the years from 1920 onwards.

But by this time, in the late 1940s a difficulty had made itself felt. The total tuition and boarding fee had to be agreed with the Board of Education: and this body did not approve of any fees being charged which might form a building and development fund. It was claimed that present parents must not be mulcted for expenditure that would benefit a later generation. I have thought it well to explain this at some length, for when we came to plan for the post-war future, this question of capital expense was crucial. Our one source of supply was, of course, loans from the Methodist Education committee, who were not generous, but on a number of occasions took the line that capital expenditure would be looked at most kindly on behalf of schools, that by raising their fees could help themselves. As a "direct grant" school we had to forego higher fees that I am confident a large proportion of our parents would have willingly paid.

A Centenary Memorial Fund had been instituted in 1945, divided into two sections, College and O.S.A., and contributions were duly recorded in the Shebbearian. But the Association had various views as to what should be done. One loyal Old Boy was loud in his insistence that it was for the Governors to provide all new buildings. The only part on which the Association should be called was embellishments. A Governor expressed his view to me on another occasion that he thought we might envisage an expenditure of some

ten thousand pounds. I replied, respectfully, I hope, that we should have to open our eyes wider than that. But patience was needed in the after-war years.

In 1947 I wrote with the Governor's permission to the Architectural Association asking whether they could recommend an architect for new school buildings. They sent me two names, and the one chosen was F.R.S. Yorke, F.R.I.B.A. He devised for us a master plan, never, as it turned out, to be fulfilled. It would certainly have been costly; and Governors were very divided about its merits (and its modernity). An alternative architect was asked to submit plans, and the Governors met in the school library with the two sets ranged down both sides. After protracted debate Yorke's plan just won the day. But the difficulty about securing capital for such a bold and extensive scheme remained. We had therefore to proceed piecemeal. That was nearly forty years ago, but I have no regrets now.

The following must be a rather dull catalogue of small advances. September 1948 saw the college kitchen enlarged to twice its size. A year later the dining-hall was extended under a flat roof to the south, and new oak tables and forms installed. New cedar-tiled recreation huts, long since removed, came in 1950. Summer 1952 saw the completion of the dormitory block reaching out to the tower, though we had to wait some months for the showers and changing room on the ground floor. A craftroom was built to the north of back quad and Thorne dormitory later added on above it. Later in the 1950s masters' houses appeared on the far edge of Beckly cricket field, - Thorne Cottage and Peartree Cottage, good country names.

Back at College, the new Memorial Hall, converted from old "Third" by the efforts of College and O.S.A. , was finally completed at Easter 1959. (We shall come to its opening later). A transformation indeed! And it has proved its worth for audiences of musical and dramatic events. Its acoustics are excellent. The corridor along the west side looks out at sunsets over Beckly field, and allows plentiful exits: above all the hall is of the right size to take an

audience of 200-250: it is not too big. That is one reason why I have never regretted the large modern hall drawn in the 40s master plan. The big new day schools have perforce had to have them, but they have proved too big for boys' and girls' voices, who cannot (without micro-phones and loud-speakers) project in play or musical performance, and any intimacy between stage and auditorium is lost.

A modest addition to the east end of the Headmaster's house on all three floors proved very useful, designed and built by our very faithful Holsworthy firm of Stacey. So on to the summer of 1961 when the science block on the west side of Battledown field was completed and opened on Speech Day by Professor Coulson F.R.S. It comprised senior and junior laboratories for physics, chemistry and biology: and a new house next to Battledown for the senior science master was added in the following year.

It is clear that patience was needed over the years; and the Governors were very patient with me. I shall not forget one autumn when urging at some length more electric heating for the bitterly cold junior dorm 28, our Chairman of House committee, Richard Blackmore of Bideford, looking quizzically down the table and enquiring: "Has the heating already been installed, Mr. Headmaster?" And I had to say, "Yes, Mr. Chairman", amid laughter and the sum needed was agreed, with a cautionary "But don't do it again". Our ever genial Governor, Jack Chudley, was amused when I quoted a passage from Edmund Burke, and he brought copies in fine large Roman capitals from his printing works for our next meeting.

THOSE WHO WOULD CARRY ON GREAT PUBLIC SCHEMES MUST BE PROOF AGAINST THE MOST FATIGUING DELAYS, THE MOST MORTIFYING DISAP-POINTMENTS, THE MOST SHOCKING INSULTS, AND WORST OF ALL, THE PRESUMPTUOUS JUDGEMENT OF THE IGNORANT UPON THEIR DESIGNS.

It still hangs in my study.

A visitor would have seen greater changes during the first decade in the school grounds. Tower field was drained,

no light matter, and resown. Lake field was taken over for junior rugby, and two pitches fashioned for second XV and colts on Dartmoor. Beckly and Battledown cricket fields were developed, the latter having grown 3| acres of potatoes during the war. I had renamed the “non-scouts” whom I found in 1942, Pioneers: they hand-hoed the potatoes, and did notable work on the estate during the following years.

Owing to the work of devoted groundsmen, particularly Cecil Stacey, the pitches were well looked after. We bought another seventy acres for the farm, and found an admirable Bailiff in Donald Hunt, who married our visiting folk dancer, Marjorie Waight, becoming our lifelong friends. Two cricket pavilions were added: mention must also be made of gifts of parents - a scoring box on Beckly in memory of F/O Nick Brooking, killed on duty in 1948; and a semi-circle of stone seating at the swimming bath to commemorate Pat Gerrard Wilson, who lost his life when the S.S. Samtampa was wrecked on the Porthcawl rocks, South Wales, in April 1947.

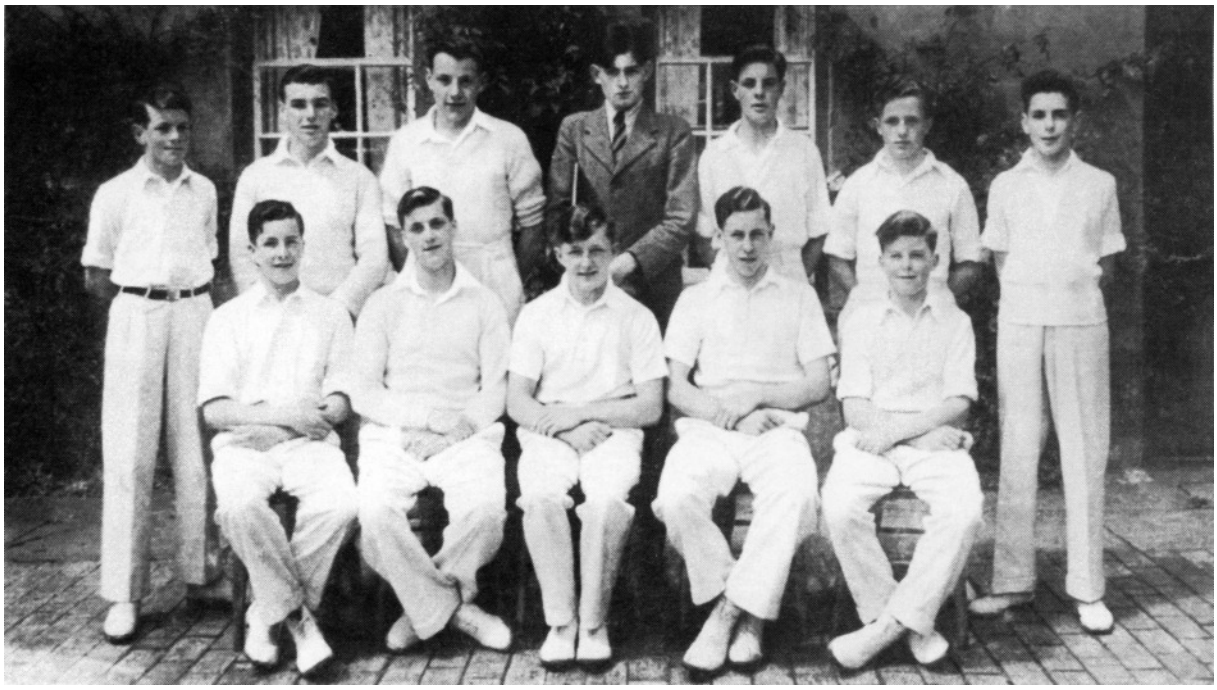
VI World of sport

I must start with an anecdote. During 1942-3 it happened that I took some Shebbear ATC Cadets over to Torrington. The newly built secondary modern school there gleamed white and fine in contrast to our weatherworn country building. 'Was it not a superior establishment?1 I enquired. "They haven't got our spirit", a Devonian voice replied. Not a bad answer!

Indeed, the spirit in which games are played should be of the most vital importance to schoolmasters. Skilled training in physique and the game's tactics is good and rewarding; but the best schoolboy teams play as amateurs. The word "professional" is often employed in the popular press as an encomium, and a "professional foul" dismissed as of no importance. But if boys still young are not trained in a true ethic of sport, do you imagine that they will behave themselves well, later on, on the field of play? Wilfred Wooller, great Welsh three-quarter and later rugger critic, was aghast when he visited Wales some years ago for an under-19 England-Wales match. As an English kicker ran up to convert a try, the Welsh schoolboy contingent gave a great howl, to put him off. What, enquired Wooller, were their schoolmaster coaches doing? (It is the same in cricket. Lack of early training will show up ill in county games, and again in test matches, where your schoolboy may now be captaining his country).

At Shebbear, in 1942, conditions were atrocious. Tower field was deep in mud; the rain poured down steadily. Nevertheless, the game of rugger was played hard and with discipline. How well I remember the heroes of those early days, under Bill Batten as Captain, followed by Bonzo Coombe, and with Ivor Harris, not very big but a plucky and determined full-back. Francis Barnard followed as captain in the three-quarter line, and Reginald Laramy in the pack. Both these boys lost their lives in the last years of the war.

From 1944 onwards Eric Locker as sports master did a very fine job. The fixture list was extended; soon three and more teams were representing the College with increasingly good results. 1st XV members were playing in county



1st XI Cricket : Summer 1947

Standing: D . A. Rew , D .B. Roberts, W. L. Goodman, M. Stubbings (scorer), P.T. Roberts, D. Bradley, D.H.A. Tomlinson.
Sitting: H. C. James, J. A. R. Arnold, B.A.M. Jones (Capt), J. Forster, D.J. Sellick.

1st XV Rugger : Winter 1953

Standing: M.R.Smith (touch judge), T.B.Richardson, T.F.J.Ball, D.R.S.Brown, G . J. Wrayford , R.D.Anniss, J. E. Ellis, J. F. Dobson, S. J. Glanville.
Sitting: V.F.Hall, C.J.Maule, E.W.T.Brown, D.G.Hipperson (Capt), C.A.Fairchild, M.M.Mitchell, J. Mayne Brown.

teams. The disciplined approach showed itself notably in the turn-out: scarlet jerseys and white shorts were immaculate; boots were thoroughly cleaned each week.

Spring term 1951 brought an outstanding triumph. Shebbear College (so the Western Times reported) "were worthy winners of the Devon County seven-a-side tournament at Exeter. Playing in wind and rain they showed more determination and attack than any other team, and did not mind the heavy going". ONLOOKER reported on the match in the Shebbearian: 'Has there been a Neville Cardus to describe the thrills and subtleties of the great winter game? The school team won their way through two rounds unimpressively, beating Okehampton Grammar School 9-0, and King's School, Ottery 5-0. Haply, their captain was well pleased: strength must be conserved through such a tourney. Out came the teams for the final, Hele's, whose powerful threes had already shown up prominently, in black and purple; Shebbear in sadly muddied scarlet. Within two minutes School are in striking distance inside Hele's 25: the ball is loose, a diagonal kick forward along the ground, and a red figure is streaking after it, to gain the touch-down with a few inches to spare. Venner it is - a real captain's try -that puts the whole team right on their toes. They have tasted blood. Nothing can stay them. Again up the field, and the ball is passing from hand to hand in the loose, with the captain going over again under the posts, and Swayne again adding the points for his second conversion. Hele's have the ball from the set scrums, but the red defence is rocklike, and the tireless forwards are back in defence covering all threats. Ten minutes each way in the final round. Maule is through in a fine burst in the second half, and then Swayne snaps up and jinks his way through the centre (18-0). The final whistle is drowned by the roaring crowds in the grandstand.'

I phoned from Exeter to our admirable housekeeper, Mrs. Mallalieu, ordering a special school supper at 6 p.m. (when post-war austerities should be forgotten) and drove back. Then the team bus arrived with a large silver cup, and progressed round the quad to the cheers of assembled College; - Robert Venner (captain), Alan Bull, Colin Jarrett. Peter Maule, Richard Moyle, Teddy Potter, Tony Swayne. Shebbear rugger had very definitely arrived. And I must add Len Parsons'

laconic note which follows in that term's magazine. 'The second XV under the able captaincy of Hipperson has kept its unbeaten record this term, and four matches played against town Colts' teams have been won. Their record over the whole season is: played 12, won 12: points for 328, against 24. So it has not been easy to cross their line'.

Tom Danby arrived in January 1959. He turned out for a practice game, 2nd's and staff v the 1st, wearing the English rose on his white shirt. He was tackled (often by more than one) with great fierceness, and came off when the whistle blew, beaming with delight, one eye already blackening. The rugger tradition in his hands has been well kept.

But now we must turn to summer days and the English game. I wrote about it in a 1951 Shebbearian.

'I reckon', remarked a mythical American, 'that we have done England, and we've certainly gotten some new ideas. I've seen St. Paul's, I've seen Westminster Abbey, and I've been mighty impressed, but for the real quiet atmosphere and the solemn hush-hush .... give me your cricket'. Quite so. The game would not be so incomprehensible to foreigners were it not so essentially English. It is more than a sport; it has its ritual, and in the core of it what may not irreverently be termed a religion. It may display the awful dignity of a liturgical service or the abandon of a revivalist meeting. No man or boy imbued with its essential spirit but is increased in stature and measures achievement by a new and honourable yardstick.

It incarnates the English virtues; stolidity in the face of danger as the batsman settles himself firmly in the crease though the fast bowler rattles his ribs; boldness in attack as he advances up the pitch to bang the spinner off his length; composure under good fortune and bad; an innate discipline which must not question the upraised figure of the arbiter in long white coat; guile and cunning so the laws written and unwritten be observed. All are implicit in this England game, mellowed by good fellowship:

"And laughter learnt of friends, and gentleness In hearts at peace, under an English heaven".

Long may the young of England be thus bred. And here this summer, on these Shebbear fields, Beckly and Battledown, in first XI matches ringed by keen-eyed spectators, where the long white-flannelled figures with skill and grace play out the pattern of the game, in junior house contests where under-thirteens scamper and battle for runs, on a score of practice wickets where the ball flies wildly off the uneven ground, the game, the essentially English game, has been played.'

Without true wickets batsmen cannot be trained. At first in the 50s low scores were frequent. Our bowlers took wickets, but our batsmen could not "build an innings". But from cricket scores appearing some years later in the Shebbearian we find Revell Arnold knocking up 97 against Queen Elizabeth's, Crediton, following with a 60 and a 48; and then Shapcott with 103 against Holsworthy C.C. broke Don Parley's record years before, when Syd Fowlston was delighted to present him with his own bat after the match. David Selleck was a delight to watch at the wicket. And then we come to what may be called the Ward-Hipperson era: they often opened the batting, and runs came fast; with Hipperson scoring two centuries not out in May and June 1951; and the pair together again in 1952. In 1953 Eric Locker reported: "Two record stands have been made; one for the first wicket against Bideford Grammar School, between Ward and Hipperson, produced 163 runs; both batsmen went on to complete centuries. The other, an opening stand between Ward and Bowey against Filleigh C.C. was of 158 runs, Bowey just missing his century at 91, run out. Horrell against West Buckland scored a very fast 80 not out. In bowling, Ward has had six wickets for 14 runs, and Bowden eight for 15; Raymond secured a hat trick and took five for 16. Hipperson, once again, has very ably captained the XI; he is master of the situation, crisp, imperturbable, a lively dashing batsman, who knows how to keep his own team (and also his opponents) on their toes. Strength to his arm! Ward (vice-captain) has played, for four seasons and more Horatio's part to the Prince: steady, sturdy, patient (but with shoulders ready for a six off the loose ball to leg) he has held to his post, and built the foundation of many a fine innings. Shebbear cricket owes much to them."

Orator Down's generous benefaction in 1953 which enabled new squares to be laid on Beckly and Battledown (and also the tennis courts to be re-surfaced) was an immense addition to our cricket facilities. For many years he umpired the Old Boys' match, and I know he would have relished the quotation from Francis Thompson:

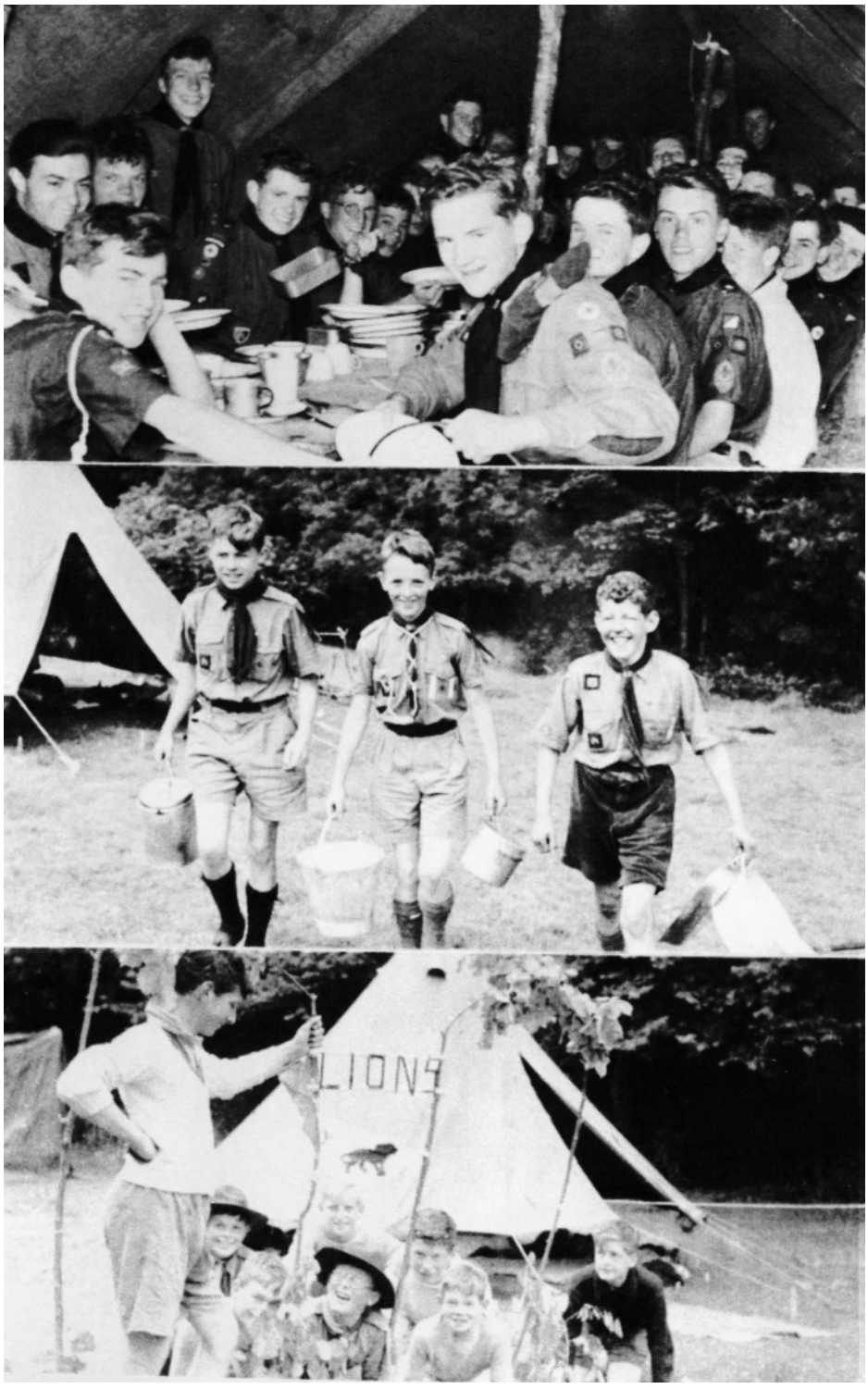
For the field is full of shades as I near the shadowy coast
And a ghostly batsman plays to the bowling of a ghost,
And I look through my tears on a soundless clapping host,
As the run-stealers flicker to and fro, To and fro -

O my Hipperson and Trevor long ago!

Those were the two major sports in which a large proportion of the school took part. But in summer term the swimming bath below Lake Farm (where Governor Pyke cut the first turf) was greatly enjoyed (not least on summer evenings when the HM was known to take an extra bathe after prep) and the annual swimming sports were keenly contested. Life-saving classes were also the order of the day.

Athletics flourished on Beckly field in summer terms, with pole vaulters rising high in the fading light, high jump and long jump pits occupied, and boys of all ages eager to pass their "standards". Spring term brought the cross-country run, not infrequently with snow lying about; and also the House gymnastics competition in the cramped conditions of the old gymnasium: but you should have seen the vaulting! There were no school tennis matches, but the senior and junior tournaments were keenly contested: and I must confess to making a point of always challenging the senior winner at the end of summer term.

Finally, there was Scouting - B.P.s game for boys. No school ever had stronger troops, keener competitors, or (I think) better training. Buckland Woods were close at hand for energetic wide games. Squire Brown at Buckland House was always ready to help. Summer camps were held even in wartime. In the 50s there were no less than five troops, over 140 boys, from senior to junior, out under canvas for a week before break-up; on sites ranging from Clovelly to Speke's Mouth, Georgham and Crackington Haven. S.M.s (staff members) and A.S.M.s (senior boys) did a fine job.



Scout Troops : Summer 1954

Top: Senior Troop Bivouac - Dinner Hour
Middle: Troop III - Back to the cookhouse
Bottom: Troop I - Troop Leader and Lions

Half Time

And so we come to half-time, when the referee's whistle blows, and there is a break for appraisal of play still on the pitch, and a slice of lemon

I asked my Bryanston Headmaster, Thor Coade, to come over for Speech Day 1952, 'His stories and wit provoked our laughter, his wisdom our thought, as he reflected on his job of educating boys', reported Roger Horrell. H.M. Pinnell as President of the O.S.A. was in the chair, Mrs. Pinnell presented the prizes, Mrs Coade the sports trophies. The Rev. Kingsley Barrett had come down from Durham for the Morning Service at Lake. The sun blazed down on the marquee standing in Battledown. It was a great day. They were very kind to me - Governors with an official encomium (after ten years), boys and staff with a bouquet and rose-bowl for my wife, and gifts for me, an easel and cheque and then a complete set of Rudyard Kipling from the School Captains of the ten years. I secured their approval to keeping the volume of verse, and placing the prose volumes in the College library, with this bookplate:

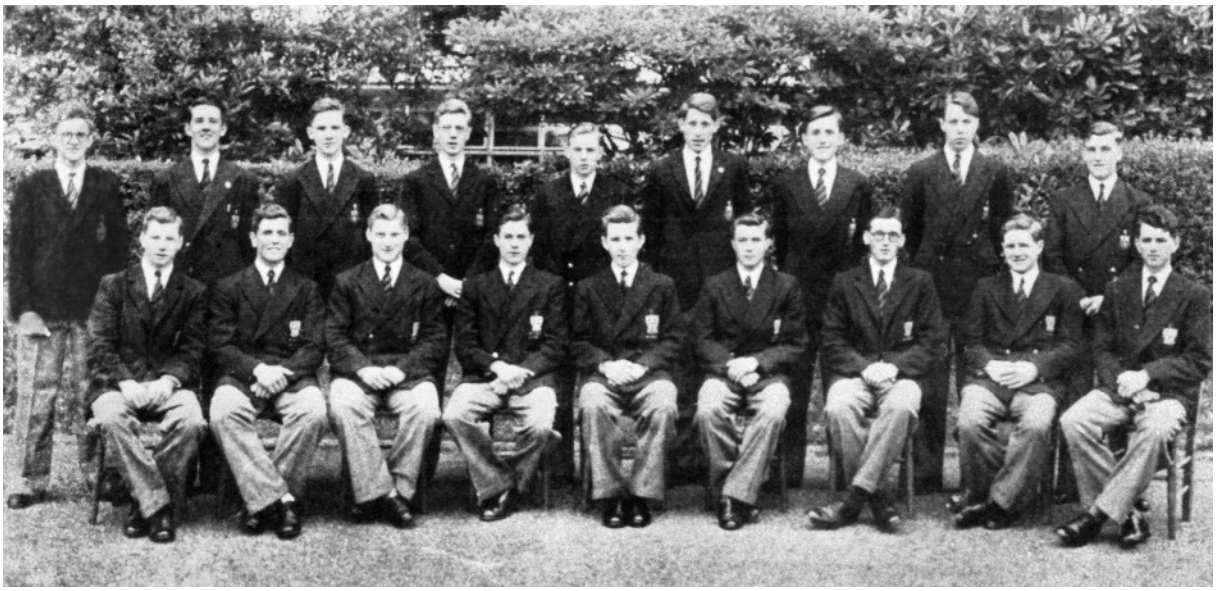
PRESENTED
by the School Captains of the years 1942-1951 at Speech Day on 22nd July 1952, to the Headmaster of Shebbear College, who takes great pleasure in here acknowledging their good wishes to himself and the School, and the loyalty which inspired so generous a gift.

W.A.BATTEN	1942 winter	B.A.M.JONES	1946-7
E.D.K.COOMBE	1943 spring	J.A.R.ARNOLD	1947-8
W.E.G.BOLT	1943 summer	E.J.NOTT	1948-9
D.W.T.SANSOM	1943-4	J.S.KNAPMAN	1949-50
A.A.TAYLOR	1944-5	T.R.S.VENNER	1950-51
A.G.ANDREWS	1945 summer	J.P.MAULE	1951 summer
R.D.GRAINGER	1945-6		

VII Work and discipline

And now, before turning to other matters, I am going to recall new arrivals on the staff who made a big impact on Shebbear in the 1950s, now over 200 strong. The musicians will appear in a later section.

Norman Barr (B.A. Oxon, French) arrived fresh from the R.A.F. for interview at Easter 1950. I offered him a September appointment, but he was resolute: he joined us that summer term - a sound teacher, a good athlete and coach on cricket and rugger fields, Housemaster of Thorne. He has gone on to educational administration and is now in command of Cornwall County. In September we welcomed John Buckley as senior science master (chemistry and biology), and Mrs Buckley, also a Liverpool graduate, who taught a two-year German course for VI formers. John was dogged by ill health, but was cheered by leaving the limited confines of the upper Beckly room for the new science block in 1961. Also in September 1950 arrived Fred Tippett (later HM of two large comprehensives), and Len Parsons (Latin and English), who both gave great service. September 1951, Michael Bond came from Loughborough in charge of gymnasium. Some boys were practising, with difficulty, handstands. He instructed them and then (I was told with awe) "walked right down the gym on his hands, sir". September 1953, Stan Malone (Maths) arrived, first-rate in everything he handled (later to become Housemaster and Head of Science at Christ's Hospital); also Phil Day, as good with middle school as on the rugger field and as Scoutmaster; and in January 1954 Mike Bailey (P.T. and Senior Scout Troop). Bill Tucker came in September 1955, and was to serve for 27 years, much of the time as Thorne Housemaster, delighting us with a pleasant tenor voice in choral works and opera, and as an actor with a mastery of timing and comedy; also Mike Kenwood (maths, games and scouting), all done with immense vigour and good sense. Richard West came to help out when I was on sick leave in 1956, and stayed on to become Head of English. John Queen (maths and physics) arrived in 1958, became Pollard Housemaster, and soon had one of the largest and most successful hobby groups in College - bellringing. Glyn Court (summer 1959) was a man of wide culture, languages and music. He gained his



Pres and Subs : Summer 1952

SUBS (standing): M.W.Glover, W.T.W.Jenkins, D.R.S.Brown, G.Dean, E.A.Moore, P. W.P. Madge, J. Rayer, R. Lindsey, D. Trenaman.

PRES (sitting): C.R.F.Bowden, G.R.Balsdon, A.F. Bull, E.G. Potter, G.T.Gooding (School Capt), M.T.B. Ward, R.W. Horrell, D.G. Hipperson, R.F. Andrews.

Staff : Summer 1957

(from left to right): P.H. Day, J.A. Buckley, R.H. West, B.H.C. Dickinson, S. Malone, W.H. Tucker, C.J. Symons, P.H. Northcott, N.W. Barr, J. Page, E.F. Foss, C.W. Barfoot, H.M. Kenwood, Rev .Alfred Olds.

doctorate from Exeter University while he was with us; and afterwards realised two of his three ambitions; to become the Brain of Britain, and a Devon County Councillor. The third? A liberal M.P. He may yet achieve it. That same autumn Bob Curtin joined us (from Durham University) whom I soon had as my assistant in Ruddle House. Some later arrivals in the 60s I must leave to another chronicler.

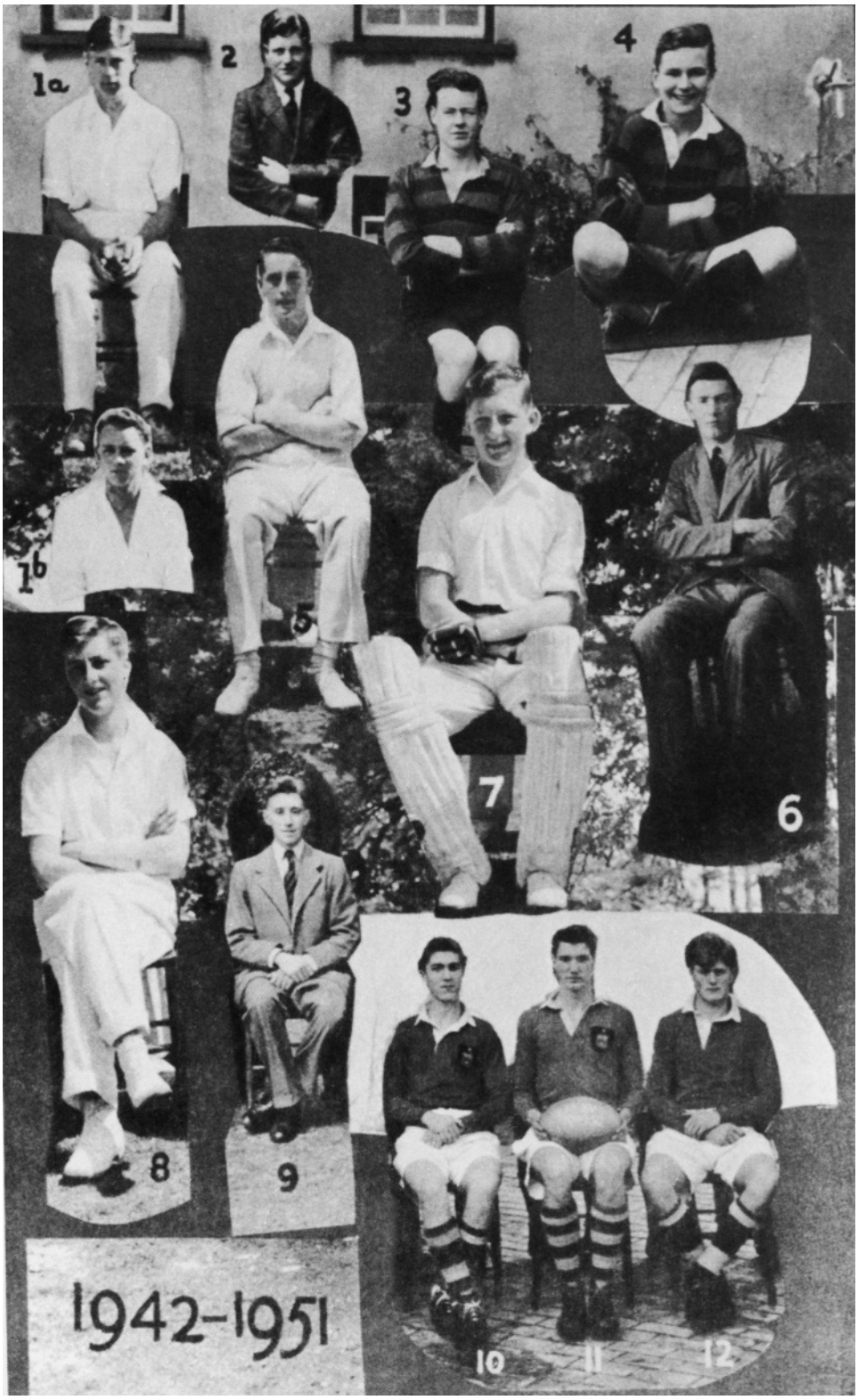
I take pleasure in recounting these names: and as I read in the press about the woes of modern teachers in our State schools I think of those men who were real schoolmasters, with no thought of 9 - 4, or extra pay for supervision of meals or preps or dormitories: they were able men, and they had both drive and dedication. They took parties of boys in the holidays to the lakes in England, hiking and camping abroad, skiing in Austria and Switzerland.

The School Captains must also here be recorded:-

1953-54	D.G.HIPPERSON	summer D .R .S .BROWN
1954-55	C.J.MAULE	
1955-56	G.J.WRAYFORD	
1956	J.W.HEYWOOD	winter
1957	J.E.ELLIS	spring & summer
1957-58	W.W.DANIEL	
1958-59	M.C.BROMELL	
1959-60	T.HAWKEN	
1960-61	R.C.GILBERTSON	
1961-62	I.FERGUSON	
1962-63	P.D.PUGSLEY	summer B.C.STREETS
1963-64	J.K.HEYWOOD	

We were a happy ship's company.

But what of schoolwork? Much has been said of out-of-school activities. What was being taught? Were there no innovations? I was not unaware of different methods and approach. At Bryanston we had taken on (and adapted) the Dalton system of work, with monthly charts to be signed up by subject masters, and scanned weekly by tutors. I do not think any such system would have suited Shebbear. The Shebbear of 1942 still had many customs and ways that



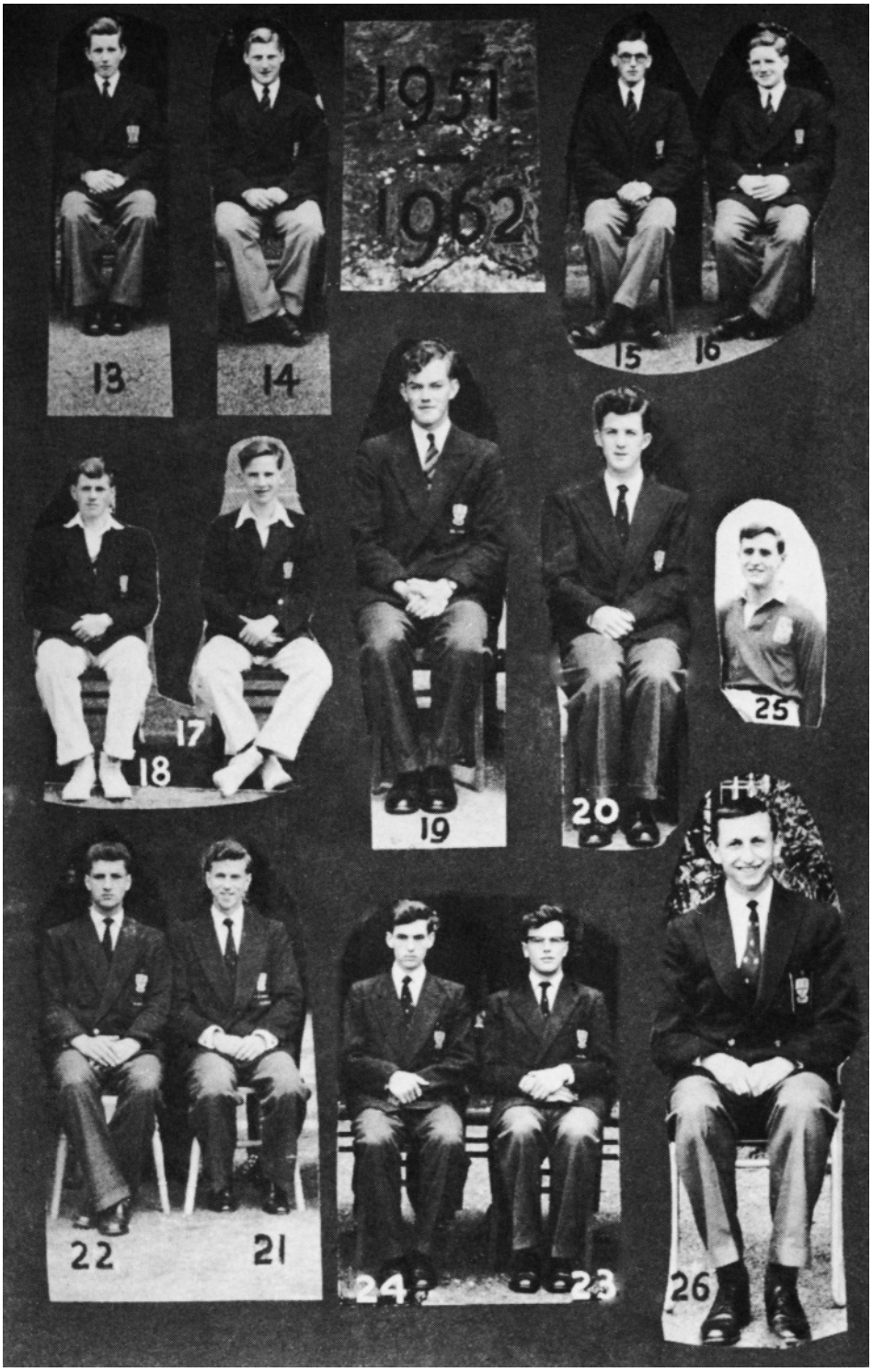
School Captains : 1942 - 1951

1a W. A. Batten
1b E. D. K. Coombe
2 W. E. G. Bolt
3 D. W. T Sansom
4 A. A. Taylor
5 A. G. Andrews
6 R. D. Grainger
7 B. A. M. Jones
8 J. A. R. Arnold
9 E. J. Knott
10 J. S. Knapman
11 T. R. S. Venner
12 J. P. Maule

would not have seemed strange to an early 1910 generation; and they were good ways. I was in no hurry to change them. The "September revolution" so-called was largely a matter of attitude. Good teaching does not depend on a multitude of gadgets or fine furniture. A number of our classrooms were dark and decrepit. I recalled looking down a passage at Marlborough at a little room furnished with an old-fashioned tall magisterial writing-desk, and a few hard forms, in 1927, and making some comment on its Spartan appearance. I was quickly better informed. "That is Brown's room, where some of the finest school classics teaching has been done for the last thirty years".

But there are some things a good teacher must have: a sound knowledge of his subject; a methodical approach; industry, so that when written work has been set to a class, it is well and clearly marked, and returned with promptness. The scientist does of course need up-to-date labs and equipment. Above all, the master must have a feeling of empathy with the class he is teaching, and sufficient liveliness so that he does not bore them, and they are kept on their toes, because they are never quite sure of what he is going to do next. Boys are very good judges of teachers' effectiveness. Indeed they will often, and not always wisely, make their choice of subjects for O and A levels according to the masters who they know will "get them through". The modern language laboratory with twenty telephone booths and the master at his instrument panel was the latest toy of the 60s. I visited a number of such, and thought them quite useless for middle and junior forms. For VI formers learning Russian or other second modern languages, cassettes and recorders are another matter.

Such commonsense principles and practices as I have outlined were dealt with at our weekly masters' meeting. I did introduce (not to the liking of the older men, I fancy) a system of assessing work; replacing the old 1-10 marks by four grades alpha, beta, gamma, and delta (with an appropriate + or - where needed). What fun, as classics are dying, to learn at any rate four Greek letters! Some of the others would come along in maths classes. And there was a colour to denote effort; red for good, blue for work untidy, careless or misspelt, and pencil for really poor work which would



School Captains : 1951 - 1962

13 G. T. Gooding
14 A. F. Bull
15 R. W. Horrell
16 D. G. Hipperson
17 D. R. S. Brown
18 C. J. Maule
19 C. G. Wrayford
20 J. W. Heywood
21 J. E. Ellis
22 W. W. Daniel
23 M. C. Bromell
24 T. Hawken
25 R. C. Gilbertson
26 I. Ferguson

have to be done again in the boy's spare time. Thus there was no monthly or fortnightly adding up of marks and issuing of form orders; but a boy's progress and effort showed up very plainly in the master's markbook.

VI form work developed. A level subjects available were English, History, Geography, Scripture, Latin, French, Spanish, Maths and Advanced Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Botany, Art. Was it, is it, true that a VI form must number 150 for efficient A level courses? And that comprehensive schools had to be planned for 1500 to 2,000 pupils? At Shebbear we had some able boys. They won Devon County major awards and open places at Oxford and Cambridge, Bangor, Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter, Hull, Keele, London, Manchester. There were 1st class degree successes, M.A.s and Ph.D's, careers in the Church (Anglican and Methodist), the law, medicine, the services, architecture, estate management, journalism, as well as agriculture, industry and commerce. I cannot attempt any complete listing. If you would know the twelve year old whom I nicknamed the "astronomer royal", and who now as a Ph.D. occupies a prominent post in an American University; or the fourteen-year old, who with his father gained a Royal Humane Society award for pulling a man out of the sea, and has since become a foremost micro-biologist and a fellow of his College at Cambridge, you must consult the O.S.A. pages of past magazines.

As for rewards and punishments I have never had any liking for the setting of impositions or detentions. School prefects numbered half a dozen or so, and an equal number of subs. Their normal penalty for misbehaviour was to put boys on the run list (1.5 miles round the triangle: time 20 minutes with some latitude allowed to juniors). One morning early in September I met a dozen new boys at 12.10 in Matron's quad all in games kit. "What have you been doing?", I enquired, "to be put on a run?" "Oh, sir", they replied, "we just wanted to see what it is like". I made them run it the other way round. "It gives you a good appetite for dinner", a cheeky VI former explained to me.

Masters' punishments included "scats" (local Devon dialect) with a gym slipper, or the cane from Housemasters and HM.

Corporal punishment was effective, when it was swift, sharp but fair, and accepted without resentment - conditions which do not obtain today. These, you will be saying, are trivial matters of discipline. So? Neglect them, let school-boys grow up saying, "No one ever touches me (or tells me off)", and then see them at seventeen. Do not forget that every yobbo on the football terraces has had five years in a comprehensive secondary school. The unkindest thing a teacher can do is (through weakness or negligence) to let children "get away with it" when they have behaved ill.

I well remember two graduates arriving from Exeter for the spring term for practical experience in their Diploma of Education course. I told them they would be welcomed as full members of Masters' Common Room; and gave them permission to punish juniors, if it should prove necessary. (There are some schools where student teachers are considered "fair game".) The heads of their subjects (history and geography) would have a good discussion with them one evening each week. Six weeks later their tutor-lecturer drove over to see them at work. He came in for a cup of coffee after lunch "What on earth have you been doing with these two young men?" he enquired. "Their classwork is first-rate: but they have grown in them-selves, in confidence; they can talk to me". I told him of our arrangements. "At many girls' schools students are never allowed to teach a class without the Headmistress or a senior mistress sitting in", he explained. He agreed with me that our two had made an excellent start at Shebbear and would make first-class teachers.

And so the years' work went on. I was still troubled with a duodenal ulcer, and in 1956 acceded to Dr Peter Green's counsel to have it operated on - by a Guy's surgeon, of course. We had a general inspection that February (and the Inspectors reported kindly on our affairs): the following day (post hoc sed non propter hoc - for you Latinists) the HM left for hospital; and J.P. carried on as Deputy in charge. Such an arrangement, by the way, is always (in my experience) welcomed by Common Room. They liked to see one of their number fully equal to the job (as of course he was) and backed him finely. A holiday in the Scillies followed, and I was ready for the discipline of schoolwork again. But it is time to leave Sparta for Athens.

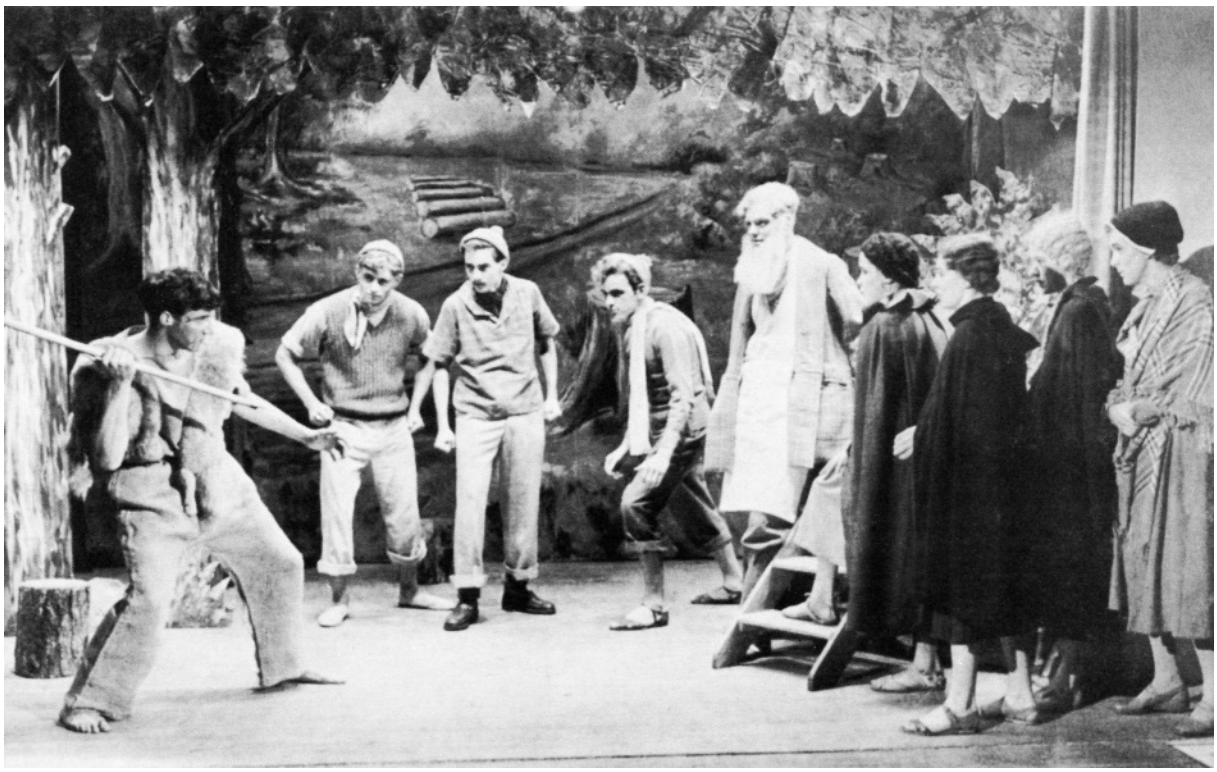
VIII Drama and Music

It could not be claimed that Shebbear provided ample stage accommodation for dramatic work. Duse, the great French actress, asked simply for "five planks and a passion". That is about what she would have got in the old Third form-room. But it was surprising what could be achieved by talented producers and casts who were filled with enthusiasm.

Moreover, much was owed to three gifted men who worked on stage carpentry, scene painting and lighting, - Eric Locker, Bickford Dickinson and Cyril Barfoot. The wardrobe mistress (HM's wife) and numerous masters' wives ensured that dresses and make-up were of the highest standard. And our actors did get their teeth into good stuff - Shakespeare, Shaw, Tchekov, Gilbert and Sullivan.

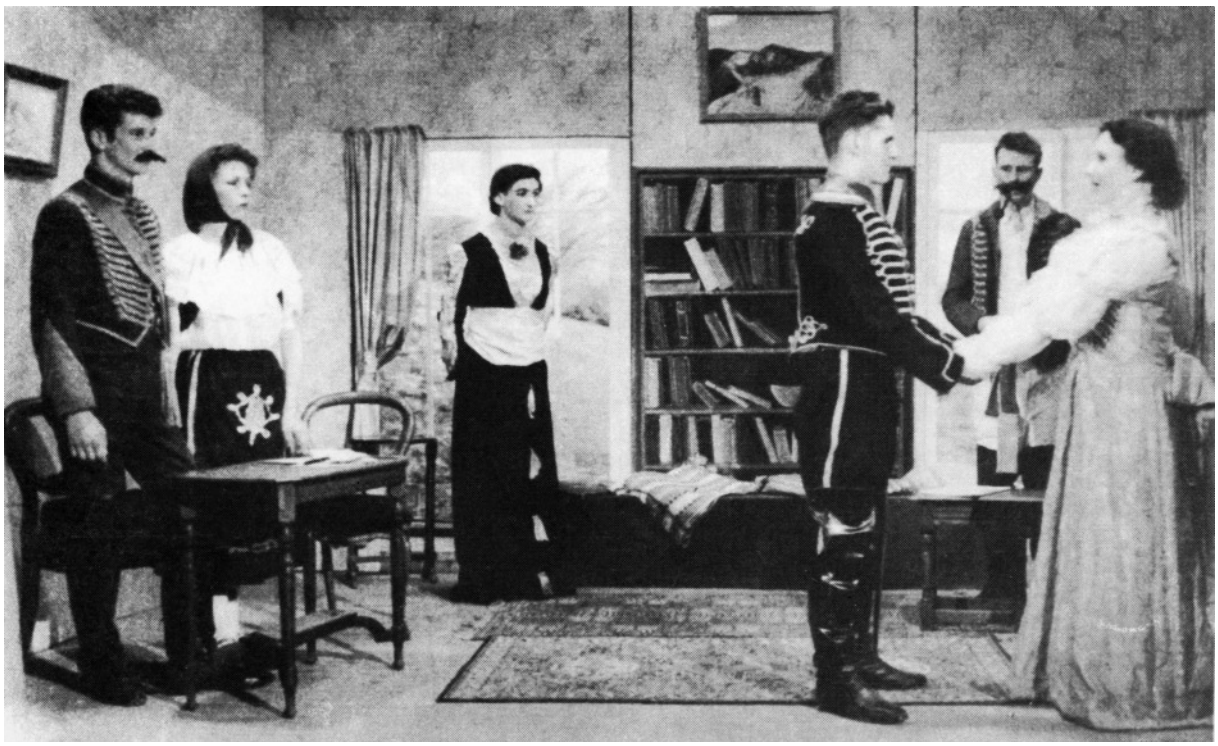
Schoolboy acting, I wrote years ago, has certain qualities when it is good which enable it despite the lack of technical resource to rival that of professional casts: it is fresh, unspoilt, unconceited and often breathtakingly sincere. Drama is no mere amusement but can indeed be a great educative force in a school, for both players and audience. That is why I am going to make a list of main productions, and add a few comments where appropriate, particularly in the earlier years.

March 1946: OUTWARD BOUND by Sutton Vane; producer : Eric Foss.
The production of this first full three-act play was noteworthy. "To die, that must be an awfully big adventure", said Peter Pan in a solemn moment. It was the theme of this play. These Va actors were admirable. (Moreoever, though a young cast, they were not without experience. This was the form which three years before was putting on the first scene from Saint Joan, a year later staging Campbell of Kilmhor, following with W.W. Jacob's Monkey's Paw, and the murder scene from Macbeth.) 'Mrs Cliveden Banks (socialite) has a number of funny lines, and they were well put across by Malcolm Cameron. And what of John Cater as Mrs Midget? Why say more than that he was Mrs Midget? Choosing at the last the task of looking after her boy and keeping him straight from drink, "It's heaven, that's what it is, heaven", she beamed, leaving us a little blurry-eyed and in her debt for a lovely performance.' I have ventured to deal with this at



Noah : Spring 1954

(from left to right): Wild Man (Tony Fairchild), Shem (Christopher Maule), Japheth (Richard Brown), Ham (Tom Richardson), Noah (Geoffrey Wrayford), Naomi (Terence Echlin), Sella (Charles Folland), Ada (William Jones), Mrs Noah (James Heywood).



Arms and the Man : Spring 1957

(from left to right): Major Sergius Saranoff (William Daniel), Louka - Maidservant (Steven Wheeler), Catherine Petkoff (Nigel Heywood), Captain Bluntschli (Terence Hawken), Major Petkoff (John Ellis), Raina Petkoff (Michael Jones)

some length because it formed a starting-point and set a standard for those which were to follow.

May 1947: JULIUS CAESAR - Shakespeare: producer HM. It was John Cater who recalled leading a delegation to my study, advocating Julius Caesar. "Caesar", the Head queried - "five acts, a large cast of principals, crowds of citizens, ability to speak blank verse, huge stage needed, space, air, light, music, noise of battle. With our very limited resources it should be impossible". Here if my memory serves me he banged on the desk - "But you've chosen it. So we'll do it".

I was fortunate in my cast - Clifford Pike as Caesar, John Stockford and Malcolm Cameron as Brutus and Cassius, Errol Nott as Antony. And there were some big moments - the quarrel scene in the tent, Caesar's appearance as ghost with the words "Aye, we shall meet at Philippi". Of course, there were blemishes, but our critic was kind: 'The performance became a living entity and sometimes attained the enchanted moments which are poetry, when all the scene, action and verse bloom'.

March 1948: TOBIAS AND THE ANGEL by James Bridie: producer: Eric Foss.
Some superb stage pictures: John Cater (whose distinguished professional career was here foreshadowed) an admirably diffident Tobias, and John Stockford, an impressive Gabriel.

Spring 1951 TRIPLE BILL
THE ROSE AND CROWN: J.B. Priestly:
producer: Norman Neal.

BROTHER WOLF: Lawrence Housman:
producer: Mrs Foss

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE: Clifford Bax:
producer: Eric Foss

All by twentieth century authors, charmingly done, and worthwhile working at.

Spring 1952: OEDIPUS THE KING - Sophocles:
producer: J.F. Goodridge (who was with us for a couple of terms during J.P.s sick leave.) But J.P. was in the audience to write: 'Roger Horrell carried the main weight and stress of the play, up through phase after phase, through a finely moving encounter with Jocasta (Richard Brown) to the anguish

of his final entry, when his speaking of the lines,

> O agony
> Where am I? Is this my voice
> That is brave in the air?

went past the guard of English hearts, straight, irresistibly, and then for a moment all defences were down; here were horror, awe and then pity. Thus Horrell entered the top rank of our players of the last decade. Alan Bull played Creon with force and feeling: Tiresias, finely spoken by Geoffrey Wrayford, made the blind prophet a noble figure'.
I must add an anecdote. The play was performed on the Friday afternoon to the Devon VI form society. A Barnstaple G.S. girl was so impressed that she insisted on her father coming over to see it on Saturday night. He sat in the third row, and at Oedipus's entrance, blood streaming from his self-blinded eyes, fainted and was carried out - to be revived minutes later by tea in the library below. (An awesome tribute to the players and the production!)

Spring 1954: NOAH translated from the French of Andre Obey: Producer: HM.

The animals were great fun, with fur skins from Theatre Zoo.

"Here was a lamb", said our critic, "who nearly stole the show, a gay, an angelic lamb trailing clouds of clover from Elysian fields which were its home Here was a bear with the sad magnificent dignity of bear (while a maddened son of Noah lashed and kicked it). Geoffrey Wrayford, now Vicar of Frome, was our Noah, "indomitable: neither disappointment nor desertion, failure nor age could break his spirit". Lighting and four sets, including a final rainbow, were well done.

Spring 1957: ARMS AND THE MAN: Bernard Shaw; producer: H.M.
A good cast in a Shavian anti-romantic comedy. Terence Hawken's Bluntschli well-spoken and well-timed; and the four sets outstanding, with a superb mountain backcloth.

Spring 1958: two one-act plays
CAMPBELL OF KILMHOR-. producer: R.H. West

THE PROPOSAL: Anton Tchekov; producer H.M.

Winter 1959: TEN LITTLE NIGGERS; Agatha Christie; Producer: R.H. West.
This was the first production, and a notable one, on the stage of the new Memorial Hall. It provided an evening of mounting tension, with the producer himself playing the part of the Judge, and a "mousetrap" ending: but it ran for three nights not thirty years.

Spring 1960: the first Gilbert and Sullivan at Shebbear. H.M.S. PINAFORE: produced by J.L. Queen and A.G.Court, with Christopher Symons at the piano:

There is always a danger when doing G & S that the staff will secure the principal's parts, and the boys (no Edgehill girls in this production) sailors, sisters, cousins and aunts, will man the choruses. But it must be admitted that Sir Joseph Porter (W.H. Tucker) and others were so good, that it would have been a pity to miss them.

Spring 1960: THE MERCHANT OF VENICE:
producer: R.H. West
With David Pugsley a vivid Shylock, and costumes and decor magnificent.

Winter 1961: JULIUS CAESAR:
producer: R.H. West
Was there the same amount of acting talent in senior school? Mr. Langford played Cassius opposite Peter Gartrell's Brutus, and the producer, Caesar (perhaps over-burdening himself); with a permanent set which could speedily be adapted to the various scenes.

Spring 1962: the second G & S. THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE: producer: John Queen; orchestra conducted by Godfrey Slatter.
A very colourful, lively and charming show; and the first joint Shebbear Edgehill production, with Mabel (Joanna Tope) outstanding, and the Major-General (W.H.Tucker) impeccable in voice, gesture and timing.

Spring 1963: 1066 AND ALL THAT;
Producer: John Queen.
Much merriment; and Geoff Bersey in his element as a bluff King Hal playing musical chairs with his wives; twenty crowded scenes and the visiting ladies from Edgehill looking as pretty as pictures.

Winter 1963: SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER; Oliver Goldsmith; producer: R.H. West.

'Provide Mr Hardcastle (W.H. Tucker), wrote the critic, 'an elderly, cultured and somewhat loquacious country gentleman, with a determined wife, a riotously vulgar step-son, a slender pretty daughter, and an old-fashioned country-house, destined to be mistaken as an inn by two young blades - and you have the makings of this 18th century comedy'. It was played with rombustious good humour.

Richard West succeeded Jackson Page as Head of English in 1960: it will be appreciated what a notable contribution he made to drama in the years we have been considering; and there was HAMLET to come.

Music

It would take too long (and indeed be tedious) to attempt a list of musical performances at the College during twenty years and more. Glancing through old magazines I am struck, however, by a few reflections which may be of interest many years later.

The first is how musically alive the College was in the 40s. In the summer of 1943, Kennedy Scott, the distinguished choral conductor, came (in spite of a broken ankle) and talked in the library about Bach, with illustrations sung by Edith Mills. He rang me up a week later from London: "I've got them to hold a small grand piano for you". I closed at once with thanks. We had carried one from the HM's house several times to the library or Third - an arduous task which I was loath to undertake again. In spring 1947 we read: "the Choir is now 60 strong: one boy in three takes part in school musical functions". Next year, (reporting on the House music competition) "nor should we forget the keenness of these senior boys in all these Houses. Busy as they are with all their other school duties and with the school play taking up much of their time, they have thrown themselves into the competition with enthusiasm. During the evening some seventy boys sang to us." This raises an important point. Talented musicians always contribute greatly to a school; but the interest and involvement of ordinary rank and file is important. Some years later I wrote of a first violin (Michael Biddick), House Captain and with his 1st XV colours, who

came home in the first half dozen of the senior cross-country; and sang a tenor solo in the Nativity Play at the end of term - what a good all-rounder!

Second, there was the question of audience appreciation (not less, I fancy, a problem to-day). John Clegg, a distinguished pianist came not for the first time to give a recital in the new Hall in 1962. And the audience? I wrote: "About eighty boys, who missed an hour's prep, and a dozen or more adults. Reaction? Very appreciative. Should concerts be compulsory for the whole school? Sometimes, not always. This is 'Third Programme' stuff; and what proportion of grown-ups tune in to that? But a school must cater for those, even in a minority, who are not content to be or remain, philistines."

Third, there were visiting artistes. Jean Stirling Mackinlay gave great pleasure in the early years. Then Antony Hopkins brought the Intimate Opera Company over from Bideford, for the first of many visits. There were the Chelham and other string quartets, Colin Sauer (violin) from Dartington, June Mills and James Maddocks (oboe and violin), more than once.

Fourth, the College Choir had works of substance to attack over the years - Elgar's "For the Fallen" '45, Bach's Peasant Cantata '45, Stanford's "Songs of the Fleet" '46, Stanford's "Revenge" '48, "Hiawath'a Wedding Feast '49, "Messiah" '50 and again '57, Arthur Somervell's "Story of Bethlehem" with full staging, '55, Purcell's "King Arthur" with a string quartet accompaniment '57, Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" '58, Faure's "Requiem", Handel's "Samson" (extracts) '59, Bach's "Sleepers Wake" '63; finally the Matthew Passion '64, a combined effort by Shebbear, West Buckland, and Buckland House Prep School trebles, sung at West Buckland and then at St. Mary's, Bideford; our Mr Parr as always impeccable at the organ, the Music Director of West Buckland conducting; Roger Bowden, once prefect, member of 1st XI & 1st XV, ex-University graduate, singing with professional assurance the tenor part of the narrator. It was a great occasion, the most ambitious work attacked by the College. 'Both Headmasters, the critic reported, and their wives were taking part; and so the combined operation brought a dream of many months, nay years, before to a happy conclusion, in a performance both memorable and moving.

Fifth, how fortunate we were in our music teachers and directors. Marjorie Jaco has been mentioned; Guy Wright (O.S.) not only conducted but enthused seniors with his musical seminars; David Purvis, composer of an operetta and other songs; Edith Mills, that sweet contralto from Bideford who wrote in our visitors' book "Tune thy music to thy heart"; Christopher Symons, conductor and composer, Godfrey Slatter conducting G & S with scarlet carnation in his buttonhole, J.C. Edmondson who married and went off to Culford, and finally Hector Parr, the equal as pianist and organist, I think, of any school in England. And for many years in musical events there was Madge Dickinson, as an inspiring and thorough accompanist, as well as a teacher of her own pupils (piano and violin). With the performance of the Matthew Passion a great expectation was realised. "But were there no other great occasions?" queries my imaginary young Shebbearian. There certainly were.

IX Great Occasions

Here I must be permitted a personal choice, and begin with occasions special rather than great and closely connected with the Bible Christian Methodist tradition. We had the privilege of a yearly visit from the President of Conference, who would speak to us all in Third and often to seniors afterwards. There was the Revd. Dr. (not yet Lord) Soper to coffee in our drawing-room at 11. "Do you not miss your open-air audience on Tower Hill?" I asked him. "I do indeed". "There are over two hundred young men waiting in Hall to ask you questions". "Lead me to them". He answered with admirable patience and straightforwardness. Even members of staff present on duty who had not relished his coming were impressed.

And then there was Lake Chapel. Some of you will remember Harvest Festival there in the old days, hot, crowded, but what a country atmosphere: College gazing at the fruit displayed, seniors hoping for success in the Sunday School auction which followed: waiting for Alderman John's treasurer's report, and trusting at some moment in the accounts to hear that phrase with its lovely Devon burr: "Mr Arnold, for titivating up the graveyard, two pounds, one and one pence". The first Bible Christian chapel was built and opened at Lake on 29th of May 1818 amid great rejoicing. In October 1941, enlarged, it was christened Ebenezer ("hitherto hath the Lord helped us"). But now in 1958 the builders had been busy again, and on the 1st of July the new Lake Chapel had been lengthened by some 22 feet, the organ was transferred to the gallery over the new foyer, the side galleries were abolished to make room for high windows, a new pulpit given by the three Stedeford brothers in memory of their father, once Superintendent in the Shebbear circuit, was placed to one side, and the communion table in the centre of what was now an apse. It was re-opened by a Methodist minister and Old Boy of great distinction, wearing the gown of a Doctor of Divinity, the Rev. Kingsley Barrett, Professor of Theology in Durham University. I took him down the evening before and we were bidden to remove our shoes, for the vestry floor was not quite dried out. Dr. Barrett had already chosen his text before his journey south, from Exodus III. 5: 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". It was a

sermon marked by earnestness, power and grace. Later in the evening there were speakers to congratulate our College Chaplain and Circuit Superintendent, the Rev. Alfred Olds, who endeared himself to us during his ministry at Shebbear, on this successful conclusion.

A year later, in April 1959, the new Memorial Hall at College was officially opened during the Easter holidays by Lt. Commander H.M. Pinnell, faithful and tireless Secretary and Treasurer of the Old Boys' Fund, together with E.G. Hawken (President of the O.S.A.) at his side. This great occasion recalled the past and linked it to the living present. Leslie Stubbings read a tribute to Thomas Ruddle written in 1909 by W.G. Horwill. Pridham Baulkwill movingly read John Rounsefell's valedictory of 1933, and then the youngest Old Shebbearians present on the stage rehearsed the Rolls of Honour of two World Wars. Over 150 Old Shebbearians and others sat down to dinner in the evening. And Richard Pyke made the journey from Bristol and preached to us on the Sunday morning. There had been other and hilarious Reunions at College, notably in 1946 in the first months of peace.

But our great occasions in the school year were undoubtedly Speech Days. And here I must interpolate a word as to the pattern of summer term in the decades we are considering. It was an admirable one. Cricket flourished: XIs completed their matches at home and away; School and Higher Cert, exams were tackled with gusto if not with invariable success. Papers finished, VI formers had a week of expeditions, for which their programme had to be approved. Two of them, scientists, volunteered as their objective the Dunreay nuclear station in the far north of Scotland to be reached by hitch-hiking. I was sceptical, but their postcard announcing success duly arrived three days later. A younger boy proposed to cycle round Devon, with various objectives, - a municipal works, a famous building and so on. He finally arrived at Exeter, knocked on the Deanery door, and was answered by the Dean, who heard his request, - and proceeded to show him round the cathedral, finally taking him back to his study and presenting him with a book. Canon Wallace had been a schoolmater himself (HM of Sherborne): I rang him later on, and asked him, as he had been so well impressed with

one Shebbearian, Chris Matthews, would he come and talk to 250 of them at Speech Day, to which he consented in 1955, and did us proud.

But now, school certificate and form exams were finished, and out the scouts went for summer camp, in some years 140 of them under canvas. Boys who remained helped to make preparations in art and craft rooms for Speech Day itself. The scouts returned, brown and hardy (pitching and striking is no light work). The big marquee was erected. The sun shone - we were famous for Speech Day weather - and a company of parents, friends, Old Boys and the College made up an audience of 800 and more. There was usually some diversion to prevent too heavy a repast of speeches. (HM's orders were to complete the programme by 4 p.m.) Then tea in dining-hall or on the lawns - and the balloon went up: families departed by car in high spirits for the holidays. Train boys helped to clear up, and left for Dunsland Cross (alas, no more) early on the morrow. The exigencies of modern exams have done away with all that.

But who were the visiting speakers who came on Speech Day? I must make a selection of those who remain most vividly in the memory. There was Isaac Foot (father of four famous sons and erstwhile Lord Mayor of Plymouth) in 1947. I ventured to ring him with my request, and he consented, with the North Devon liberal tradition in mind. "But how long do you want me to speak?" "Twenty-three minutes", I replied boldly. He lost his way in Devon lanes, but I got him to the marquee, and he spoke (and quoted) eloquently Cromwell, Carlyle, Browning, Tennyson, and sitting down (I was next to him on the platform) enquired; "How was that, Mr Headmaster?" I replied, "First-rate, 22.5 minutes". A professional speaker indeed!

Prince Chula of Thailand came up from Cornwall, driven by his charming English Princess, who allayed all fears of protocol by changing her shoes on the gravel path, as they were welcomed. Elephant Bill (Col. Williams) recalled fear-some days at school before his Indian adventures; he found himself in the marquee in face of a magnificent elephant. "Ah, Bandoola", he murmured, and at once felt at home.

But our most redoubtable guest was without question Lord Reith in 1954, whom Ivan Stedeford (O.S.) induced to visit us. The R.A.F. volunteered to fly him from London to Chivenor. There I had waiting for him the largest black limousine in North Devon, (Was he not 6'7" tall?) and provided a young master to meet him on the tarmac as escort. But the great man proved ill at ease. Only once before had he spoken at a Speech Day (at a girls' school); and it was clear he did not relish the prospect that afternoon in a marquee (not an easy place to speak in even with good microphone equipment).

"What can I tell this generation of boys?" he queried. "Dare I urge them to excel?" He paced up and down behind the table laden with prizes like a tiger on hot bricks. "I sat next to the Headmaster at lunch", he continued. "He told me not to ask for a holiday because it was the last day of term. Well, I do ask for a holiday". And with that the great man sat firmly down. I think the audience wondered, What next? This was no time to hesitate. I got up and answered him very boldly. "My lord, if we were in another place I should reply that I must have written notice of that question, but we are here on Speech Day at Shebbear, and so we will have a holiday next term, and we will call it the Reith half". He resumed: the boys must not believe that the speaker had had a successful career. 'I can tell you a story not of success, but of failure, of nearly every mistake a man can make'.

Lord Reith's strength and cunning, seriousness and wry humour had all his audience in his strong hands. Once having left the tent and on the lawns outside, the Great Bear became the most human of ogres. He was surrounded by juniors asking for his autograph in their prize books, and had to be torn away to go over to the group of prefects, whom he spoke to individually with concern, enquiring what they were going to do after leaving College. The speech-making was over and geniality reigned; but our thoughts as he departed, were, I think, that 'Reith of the BBC' as our President, G.S. Williams, had welcomed him, was not a happy man.

I cannot leave this section without reference to Speech Day 1960, when we said goodbye to Jackson Page, and I asked him to be our speaker for the day. The "Voice of Shebbear" (over the loudspeaker) recalled a record of forty years, traced his career, early colleagues and pupils added their memories, scouts doubled on to the stage, a squad of three improvised Home Guard presented arms; 'And who shall forget, the chronicler wrote, the majestic flourish of red and blue, the glint of armour, as Aspey and Hawken strode into the tent, and Cassius's words rang out:

"That you have wronged me doth appear in this ...."

Then Kingsley's Mediterranean sounded in our ears, and the elegiac close of Masefield's Everlasting Mercy, until Elgar's Nimrod underlined the narrator's voice.

How swift the summer goes,
Forget-me-not, pink, rose . ..
Our time of praise is ended.
His is the word to-day
In accents grave and gay
To which these scenes have tended.

Fair fortune on him smile
O'er many a sunny mile
And many a summer yet!
He gave with ready hand -
Ye know and understand -
Shebbear will not forget!

and then the music rose and rolled to its climax.

Visibly affected, J.P. rose to speak. He recalled Headmasters and Governors, the new regime in 1942; somehow the balance between Sparta and Athens had been preserved: what was the job of a grammar school? - to teach boys to read and write; the power of poetry; the picture of a winter evening with the light fading from trees on Tower field, when the swift rush of red and black created a beauty as moving as the repose of a sculpture by Henry Moore'. This was indeed Jackson Page's Day! Ave atque vale!

X Alarums and Excursions

But apart from what you have called Great Occasions didn't some things go wrong? Were there no mistakes and disasters? Of course, of course, You must eavesdrop on Old Boys' reminiscences to discover dark tales of what "really happened". I must confine myself in this personal memoir to events in which I had some hand at the time. Some you will think hardly worthy of chronicling, but they all form part of the picture of the life of a country school. Let us entitle this section, therefore, alarums and excursions.

It should be a sobering thought for a country boarding school Headmaster, in a school ten miles from the nearest town, that after 5 p.m. and at week-ends, he must-be his own caretaker. Our College groundstaff were a fine and loyal lot, but they lived some distance away. Water played a considerable part in minor mishaps. The new flat dining-hall roof was a weak feature: when it really rained at Shebbear, and it could rain, the well at the kitchen end would rapidly fill, and the only thing to do was to get mackintosh and Wellingtons on, and wade about in two feet of water, clearing the exit pipe to prevent it pouring down into the kitchen. The French have a proverb for it, "On s'accoutume a tout".

Then there was the top dorm 18 with a pipe over its ceiling to take water to the Beckly laboratories. At 10 p.m. an inmate reported water pouring down on his bed (hastily removed). I got a ladder, and armed with a hammer beat the offending lead pipe flat. "It's stopped, sir", I heard from below. All was not over. At 7 the next morning I woke and wondered whether my repair was holding, mounted the ladder on the staircase to the ceiling trapdoor, and found all was well: descended, but as my feet touched the top rungs felt the ladder slip from under me, leaving me suspended in mid-air some 12' high. Luckily I spied a broad window ledge to my right, sprang and landed safely, with a great clatter which brought Len Parsons out of his bedroom wondering what was afoot.

But a more dramatic mishap was to follow. In a cupboard on that same staircase an electric booster was installed, which gave satisfaction, until after midnight Matron woke us with the news that water was cascading down 18 stairs. It certainly was. Opening the cupboard door I found the hose had

slipped off the electric pump which was in full spate. Matron Lacey and Miss Goodwin - no school had better nursing staff - always ready in any emergency, were mopping up the landing. Our household was now aroused, my wife and I, and Norman and Jean Barr, all in dressing gowns and Wellingtons. We descended to the enlarged College kitchen, opened the door, switched on the lights, and a gleaming expanse met our eyes. The whole floor was a couple of inches deep in water. Out with the squeegees, and it was swept back down the kitchen passage to the road. The large larder? Alas, the door opened to show the flood had also penetrated there. At half past two I could give the word for a kettle to be set on the Aga, and we all drank hot tea before retreating to bed.

As for the main boiler, set twelve feet down a flight of steps at the end of the shellet, that would deserve a saga in itself. I had two permanent "boiler boys", stout-hearted fellows, who when the rains came and danger threatened would deal with the small electric pump which had been installed, but was often not man enough for the job: usually during prep (I had sometimes my suspicions) on a cold winter's night.

Then there was fire! A winter's evening, and Guy Wright sent message to my study - fire in 27 annexe. I was with him very shortly after, both of us with fire extinguishers in our hands, dowsing blazing bedclothes,and then tearingdown the smouldering wooden dado. Within a quarter of an hour danger was over, the smoke was released through open windows, and there, behind the dado were the blackened struts of Governor Pyke's fire in 1917. But the School fire brigade (in charge of long hoses which appeared in practices and were hung to dry from the top of dorm 20 fire escape) were quite rightly furious: they had been left doing their prep when the real fire came. I made our suitable apologies to them; our insurance company congratulated us, paid for all damage, and added five pounds for Guy Wright's burnt wrist.

Years later, on a dull Sunday afternoon after the compulsory walk, the chimney in the HMs house was found ablaze. Holsworthy Fire station was alerted. Dense fumes of smoke poured out mingled with burning soot. The young gathered in front of the Beckly wing, entranced. A few helped with a bucket-train of water to our drawing-room. Then the

firemen arrived. The tall ladder was erected, and water hosed down from the top. Good Devon men were regaled with tea in College kitchen before being hustled off by their Captain. (Firemen called out on emergency are paid by the hour!) The reaction of College, particularly the junior section, was clearly that "it had made their day".

But there were graver moments - typhoid in 1943 (our first summer term). A couple of boys were borne swiftly off to Barnstaple fever hospital, and happily made swift recovery. The health authority urged tests of all kinds: the College water from the high tank in the tower was cleared of suspicion. Was there a carrier? Results were all negative. The County medical officer told me he was baffled: no more could be done. And then in February 1944 came the news of the death of a 13 year old Shebbearian in a Truro hospital - from typhoid fever. I sat down and made a list of every single person in College over 18 (a carrier would not be younger than that age), and samples of excreta were sent to Exeter without a single exception. Then we waited for the news. It might be any of us - academic, domestic or ground staff. Word came by telephone: I must admit to some apprehension as I waited: "We have found a positive sample". It was Richard, old Walter Batten's team-mate, a dear man. I had to send for him and break the news, and that he must leave at once. He wept. I could have wept myself; but there were 150 boys and 50 adults at risk in the little school, and one boy, a widow's son, had lost his life in Truro hospital.

In 1949, Peter Green, our friend and school Doctor (ex Guy's and R.A.F. where his pilot had flown him into the top of a hangar) came into my study one morning with serious news. We had two boys in sick dorm 10, lethargic with slight temperatures, which Matron could not account for. Peter Green had been puzzled, he confessed; then that morning he had told one of them to sit up in bed, put a hand at the back of his neck and pressed forward. The boy cried out. The diagnosis? Poliomyelitis! The whole school was in danger of infection. At midday dinner I announced the news, serious enough indeed, with the corollary that all sports must be stopped for three weeks, because, especially with the young, any muscular activity is likely to result in more serious paralysis. Polio is no laughing matter - there was to be no rugger,

no gym - but I was surprised at their resilience. After grace, the table monitors rose to do their duties, other boys moved out table-by-table, but all in decorous slow motion, as if performing an ancient Greek dance. "We had to avoid muscular activity", they told me. I went into Bideford and sought (with Peter Green's approval) well-fashioned bows, arrows and targets, and we set them up in Battledown field until the emergency was over. The one boy who was infected recovered well, and the other remained unscathed in quarantine in No. 10.

There were also lighter moments. At 1 a.m. Matron flashed her torch in our bedroom. "Michael Littlejohn has just jumped out of the sickroom window into the quad below". I descended to the scene; found that he had been sleepwalking (we discovered afterward that he was prone to this when his temperature went up to 100F). He had let himself down from the window, had landed without serious injury, and was now back in sickroom. But what would he do before morning? I seized a couple of blankets, pushed the other bed across the little window, and lay down. At five o'clock Michael was sitting up, murmuring; "Come on, dad, let's go". I raised my voice and shouted: "Michael, lie down". He did, and there was no further disturbance.

I recall also an incident in my small study. Garth W. knocked and entered. "What's up?" He stared at me. "I can't go on, it's all too much." He had a knife in his hand, and putting it to his lapel he tore his coat down in one swift movement. I crossed to the door and locked it. (I was not going to have a boy with a knife roaming round back quad). "Well, let's have a look at your knife, Garth", I suggested. He handed it to me; and then we talked, and I persuaded him that life even at Shebbear was "not all that bad". He was due to leave at the end of term. (And what happened to him afterwards? you inquire). He got a scholarship to R.A.D.A. I could not but feel that he had been practising the histrionic art on me.

But my most popular action was to follow, in the winter's frost. I did not always agree with junior members of staff, there was a magnificent slide across back quad, on which seniors when they retired would splash a bucket or two of

hot water to ensure a fine surface on the morrow. At master's meeting, the slide was condemned - too risky, someone would get hurt on the brick wall at the foot of Third steps. I listened, knowing that after tea in the gloaming it kept half the school in great spirits and warm, and mindful of the chilly form-rooms that were their other shelter. I said we would think about it. Next morning, carrying a pile of books and in schoolmaster's gown, while boys and staff were going up to Assembly in Third, I put a bold step on the slide, and "went for six" flat on my back. No damage done; but the mishap was much appreciated - not least by staff.

Not all japes were done by boys. I had occasion one summer to remind (admonish is too pedantic a word) some younger masters of the need for proper dress in school time - grey flannels, jackets and ties. (Boys were only allowed to omit the tie and appear open-necked when the weather got really hot). Our masters' meeting took place at 12.10 every Monday. On this occasion we had started our business when the door of Common Room opened, and a figure in black morning coat and trousers, complete with gown and mortar-board appeared: "I am sorry, Mr. Headmaster, to be late, but I knew you would insist on correct dress for masters' meeting". It was a veritable coup de theatre. We gazed: and then I came out with: "Dick, you are a scoundrel! Come and sit down here (there was a vacant chair next to me) and behave yourself". And then we laughed, loud and long, so long that even the miscreant had to unbend and join in.

XI Envoi

And now, as I say farewell to these pages, I can permit myself a glance over those admittedly strenuous years: but less strenuous in the second decade. Cyril Ball, Bursar at Edgehill College from 1949, came over weekly and proved a tireless and ever-helpful worker on our accounts: and then in 1959 John Archer arrived as our own resident Bursar. The morning after summer term ended, we met in my study (his office was next door) and I handed over to him a large pile of A/c books and the key of the safe. From that moment all financial and estate matters were dealt with efficiently and most harmoniously. Two secretaries I must mention (who handled for years the floppy discs of my Dictaphone) - Molly Locker and Penny Danby, well-known to a later generation, who both did admirably.

But are there some scenes, incidents, characters, which leap to my memory? There are.

A memory from that first fortnight has just occurred to me, which I must insert with wry amusement. A dull autumn morning Assembly in old Third, with staff in line under the windows and HM at the tall desk, was not perhaps a very enlivening start to the day: but what is this? Only treble voices singing the hymn! The back half of the hall is dumb. We had our prayers and then I asked the masters to leave: I would send their classes down to the form-rooms shortly. "Now, we will have the hymn sung properly", but VI and V remained silent. I strode up the middle line of desks, told the lower forms to sit down. "Play the tune again", I said to the boy pianist; and I looked the seniors in the eye. They realised I meant business: and they sang.

It is, by the way, very important for a new HM - or form-master - to make it plain that he will stand no nonsense. Years afterwards I appointed a junior maths master, tall, well-spoken, of good presence. I had high hopes of him - not to be fulfilled. Before the year was out I had to tell him: "You have queered your pitch here; get another job in September, and make a fresh start". What happened that winter in his classroom? I heard afterwards. "We threw snowballs at the blackboard when he was teaching". "Well, what did he do?" "Told us to go outside the door". "And then?" "We went downstairs for more snow".

I made brief reference to the so-called September Revolution in 1942. Well, I do remember changing at once one College custom. In mid-wartime farmers needed help in getting in the potato harvest. They would ring me up and ask for a squad of boys. I approved for forms I - IV, boys not to go out 'spudding' more than one day in the week. They put rugger clothes over their school uniforms - it was both cold and strenuous work. I saw the 12 year olds lined up. "Do you need a master to go out with you?" A chorus of No, sir. Very well. Who is form captain? The leader held up his hand "Now I trust you all to obey him, and to do a good job". Off they went, heads up, on bicycle or on foot. The innovation was not unappreciated as you can guess in Common Room. And the squads never let me down. Lists were kept by a V former, Alan A. Taylor (Ack-ack as Syd always called him), later 1st XV full-back and Captain of School: pay was 3d an hour, and the sums duly paid out weekly. I told the Governors - 'we have the right stuff here'.

There was then no separate junior house, but there were two junior dorms. I thought it well to keep an eye on this younger division in College. I recall having once remarked (in not very serious vein) to an anxious parent, that many boys are high-spirited creatures somewhat like puppies: "They need training". "How can you say such a thing?" she replied horrified. "They need much more than that". "Agreed, but not less".

A fact that is often overlooked by schoolmasters (and even some parents) is that the young should be happy (when problems of indiscipline will largely disappear): and to be happy they should be active, and as far as possible actively employed. This was especially important for the first and second years in College. Leaving home for a Spartan boarding school at 11 is no joke. If they can settle in and make a good start, they are likely to get on well later. That was why I was entirely against the older idea that "bucky newsnips" (Shebbear slang) should be teased, bullied or made generally miserable: and my campaign had particularly to be directed against older boys, who had, as they said "been through it themselves", and disapproved of new boys having a soft time. I think after the first year my views prevailed with both staff and boys.

But how were the younger boys to be actively employed, particularly in those war years? In old-fashioned ways: outside in the autumn (apart from organised games) there was 'touch rugger' on the shellet; conkers were not despised; and pursuit games round the old stone buildings. Inside the primitive classrooms aero-modelling was a great activity; cutting of innumerable strips of balsa wood, gluing together, for which perseverance and nimble fingers were needed; and then powered by elastic or later a small octave spirit-filled engine, the craft would fly out on the College lawns; where during the summer croquet and bowls (of a very elementary nature) were indulged in by junior forms.

Then there were "pets" - established in the old "boneyard". My wife and I that first autumn drove two older boys (to be nicknamed later Fur and Feather) to Dunsland Cross to purchase the first pair of breeding rabbits. "What are you going to call them?" I enquired. A cavernous voice answered from the back seat: 'Jack and Jill'. The rabbits were followed by mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, owls, jackdaws, buzzards - and that meant building of cages, boxes, of every sort in the craftroom (which was open daily with a senior in charge), and all the business of feeding, cleaning out and so on. But this was active employment. There was no television to be watched for three hours a day, as is now reckoned the national average. Junior hobbies' evening (Johnson's innovation), including the long-lived and popular stamp club, replaced prep on one week night, while the seniors met in the Union Society. The weekly Saturday night film in Third was eagerly looked forward to.

Older boys found no lack of interests. The library grew to 10,000 books (no mean supply for a country school). I remember meeting "Nipper" Roy Knapman, V former, in front of Beckly one evening as he was going up to bed, a book under his arm. I enquired what it was - "Tolstoy's Tales". In rather heavy schoolmasterly fashion I confessed that there was one book on my shelf of unread books, the great novel "War and Peace", which he must tackle one day. "Yes, sir, I read it last term". (As Punch used to say 'collapse of elderly party'). Roy became a school prefect, and came on the staff before going off to Teachers' Training College. I called on him after I had retired, at Sexey's

School, Bruton, where he was a house-master. He took me as his old Headmaster into his classroom, and I had a word with them. When I had left he told them, “That man caned me when I was at school”. “What did they say”? I enquired at our next Reunion. “They clapped”.

As late as 1957 our entertainments were often largely devised by staff and boys. ‘Comedies’, I wrote that December, like cakes are often best home-made. In the last week of term we had three nights of Form plays:

IIb Saint George and the Dragon
IIa The Stolen Prince
IIb The Perfect Alibi (written and produced by Richard Dobson)
IIa Five Birds in a Cage
IVa Any Body?
Union Society The Monkey’s Paw
Staff The screen scene from Sheridan’s School for Scandal.

Finally, the Gang Show, a hilarious entertainment put on by the Senior Scout Troop (skipper: Phil Day). Here were casts numbering eighty or more, with painters, scene-shifters, props, lights and effects men galore, creating interest and amusement for themselves and appreciative audiences, singing and moving boldly and with confidence, in productions which were all home-made.

During my first summer term I found an extra employment after morning school, going down to the College bath, and teaching new boys to swim. The first one, I remember, who passed his one-length test with an elegant breast-stroke, was Ted Lott, a splendid dependable boy, good at his studies, well-liked by everyone, who succeeded his father at Rowden farm, and became a most valued Governor of the College, (and the Lott family our friends for these many years). What scene do I recall? The freeze-up of 1963, cutting off all electricity, and at 8 o’clock Ted striding into College kitchen with a huge oil lamp, promptly lit and suspended from the ceiling, on a hook which had been there for over a hundred years.

Ted had walked down a couple of miles from Rowden through a foot and more of snow.

And now for an unforgettable scene - a Choral outing on a spring evening at a little Devon church, Thrushleton, in 1962. Cars were parked in a field, and we walked under an avenue of grey and silent beeches through the little God's acre that surrounds the church, standing squat in a fold of the hills as it has stood for centuries. Parishioners coming from scattered farms soon filled the pews and extra chairs: a hymn, a psalm, a brief address from our old friend and former master, the Rev. Bickford Dickinson, now Rector of Lewtrenchard, and then the whitewashed stone walls were echoing to the well-wrought music of Eric Thiman's "Last Supper". And after the Benediction we mounted steep stone steps to an upper room: a huge open fire, wood-fed, blazed at the foot heating a large and hospitable urn: and above, lit by the soft rays of oil-lamps were set two long tables down the sides, where the boys stood, waiting for grace, and gazing at a Choir supper of truly ample Devon proportions. What mounds of cut-rounds laden with cream and jam: what assembled tiers of sponges and fruit cakes: what piles of sausage rolls and mince pies. And how in a flash the good things disappeared! "Were we not, I wrote, back in serener, wholesome days of faith, removed from the twentieth century bustle and unease, strengthened and made whole by worthy music with a great message at its heart?"

I have spoken of visiting speakers at Speech days; and must be allowed one pertinent query, which incidentally applies to any public speaker. Does he ever ask himself; first, what audience is he to speak to? I have heard a County Chief Constable, never at a loss for a word, address an audience of schoolboys and parents, at some considerable length, on the subject of battered wives and children. Second, at what length shall he speak? I have advocated (but in private) that a discreet visitor should be seated in the front row on such occasions, with a card lying flat on his lap; and that after so many minutes, he should raise it to a vertical position so as to

catch the speaker's eye,the words in bold Roman capitals -

CUT IT SHORT

This deterrent might well be supplied also to Chairman's remarks (which can get very lengthy) and Heads' reports. I must plead not guilty on this last score. I never had time enough (or sufficient secretarial assistance) to type out those twenty or more pages which I find some Heads armed with. But I must now confess that one summer after Speech Day Governors' lunch, and we had come into the drawing-room for coffee, I suddenly realised that I had prepared nothing at all. What was to be done? I excused myself, went out on the sunlit lawn, sat down on the gym box already in position, and taking out a postcard, wrote down three main points, thought of some small story or anecdote that would go with each. So armed, I returned, unperturbed, I recollect, to our guests: and a kind member of staff congratulated me on "one of my better efforts".

We employed our own device in 1956 for avoiding Speech Day tedium - a panel of speakers answering questions on education of the young: Professor Emeritus S.H. Watkins, M.A., Ph.D. , for weight, our own Bickford Dickinson for wit, Mrs. Griffith Morgan J.P. who was reckoned the best speaker of the lot, and the Rev. Douglas Wollen, from the Mint, Exeter; all kept in order by our Doctor, Peter Green. It was a happy solution. But Douglas Wollen, Methodist minister, got the broadest smile of the four from his tale of schoolboy days at an Anglican public school in Essex. The VI form was construing from Livy; and he duly rendered a passage concerning a Roman general "who sickened and died from dysentery". The Headmaster, a strong Churchman, rebuked him, correcting his pronunciation and adding; "There is no need, Wollen, to exaggerate the unpleasant nature of that disease".

Finally, on this topic, I must mention a visit to College (not on Speech Day) by Dr Victor Murray, Professor of Education at Hull University, and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference. We were to meet him at the Rougemont Hotel, Exeter. "You will know me at once - not a hair on my head". My wife was in nursing Home for a few days. I took my daughter to the rendezvous as hostess. True enough, a

tall man removed his hat at the entrance to the foyer, and we recognised our man. We sat down; and he consulted the menu: then he remarked, turning to my daughter; "Horse doovers: ! I say, this *is* going to be a lunch!" We were well away.

He spoke to seniors after prep in the library - not the easiest time to win their attention. "Which is better, Service in Chapel or on the radio?" he queried. "Radio, sir", came a bright voice. "And why?" "No collection, sir". We all joined in the laugh. (The V former was later to become a Methodist minister.)

"Do you remember our Lord being asked whether Jews should pay tribute to Caesar, and his answering query -Whose superscription is this?" and the Professor slipped out a silver coin of the Emperor Tiberius and passed it round, handled again by English schoolboys after nearly two thousand years. They questioned him and listened to him until I had to take him away and send them to bed at ten o'clock. What an example of one who considered and knew how to hold and enthrall his audience!

I said that by and large our Speech Days avoided the charge of being too long and too dull. For a quarter of an hour before tea there would be some lively entertainment on the lawns. You might have seen Paul Northcott (judo expert) in the guise of a seedy tramp being repeatedly thrown by honest young gymnasts whom he was attempting to mug: or Tom Danby and his troop of vaulters and somersaulters; or a Scout camp for three patrols being set, complete with tents pitched, turf cut, cooking areas equipped, fires lit, tea boiled, and all in seven minutes, - quite a thrilling display.

And now a final question. Were those Shebbear boys, particularly of the first decade different? Indeed they were. They were nearer Tom Brown's Schooldays than many schools of today. The tradition of the three end-of-term Sundays -"Buttonhole", "Odd sock", and "Kick the door", was still kept. They knew and respected discipline, but they had no use for bullies. Nor had the HM. Those were the days of the hero, not the anti-hero. They would not have been amused at the idea of taking the cad and bully, Flashman, expelled from Rugby in Thomas Hughes' famous school novel, and making him the central figure in later service life, transporting him to India, and following up with

Flashman V.C Or with making a film to deride the author of "If .... Shebbear boys, to use an old-fashioned word were manly. If they fought on the far side of the gym, but occasions were few, they fought fair. I could see the ring assembled, from my study window, and after some minutes would stroll across, and say to the combatants, "Well, have you had enough?" and very soon they would be shaking hands, and calling it a day. They were not punished, "There is no school rule against fighting", I told them. "Put them up", was the old phrase, referring to fists; and coats were then taken off and battle engaged. But that was a very different thing from your modern cowboy film, where the first (and foul) swing of the fist, calculated to break a man's jaw, is delivered to the unsuspecting opponent; and then it is all-in-fighting with no question of Queensberry rules. As for hitting a man when he was down, that was never thought of. Nowadays, the accepted thing is to get the man down and then kick him unconscious. The elegant euphemism employed by young thugs is "to put the boot in"; and it occurs on the rugger field as well.

John C. came to my study with a huge black eye (and his usual slight stammer). I asked him what he had been up to: "F-fighting, sir". "Oh, and I suppose you and the other fellow are now deadly enemies". "N-no, sir, we're the b-best of friends".

Enough: How shall I finish this farewell section? I must make brief reference to our last Speech Day of July, 1964. The Rev. Russell Pope preached with power and humour to us at Lake in the morning; and the Rev. Dr. Kingsley Barrett was my chosen speaker for the afternoon. A brass ensemble rang out bravely in the marquee. Folk were very kind at this end of an era. Generous presentations were made: Richard Pyke rose, though crippled with arthritis, and spoke not merely of the H.M. , but of the H.M.s wife whose contribution to the School over the years had been immense, a tribute that I was too bashful to pay in public. In replying, I could but thank the generous donors, Governors, O.S.A. , academic and domestic staff and boys; recall the names of men who had given so much to Shebbear: "but the School is greater than any man: men go but the School lives on".

And I thought of an earlier Speech Day and a group of young men's voices singing my verses (to a rollicking tune from Bach's Peasant Cantata). Were they more simple and single of heart?

HIGH SUMMER

Summer term flies quickly past,
Cheerily sounds the bat against the ball.
Now of days we reach the last,
Welcome give to parents, Old Boys, all.
Who can tell what lies before?
Memory keeps its treasured store.
Though the winds may threaten, coldly,
We salute the future, face its every challenge, boldly.

Lessons learnt, and some forgot,
Friendships forged and battles fought and won; Daily tasks, a schoolboy's lot,
Pains and mirth and penalties and fun!
Here within these Shebbear walls
We have known both heights and falls;
Leaving, we'll forget you never,
Keep the proud tradition, and the golden memory, ever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to College for the use of blocks from past SHEBBEARIANS: and to the school photographer, an old friend and acquaintance, whose two sons came to College, for the photographs.

The letterpress has been prepared by Malthouse Duplicating Service, Taunton: and the blocks set up by Rockwell Press, Wellington.