

## The History of Millfield 1935-1970 by Barry Hobson

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## Chapter 1

### The Mill Field Estate. RJOM's early years, 1905-1935.

An astute guesser would probably place the site of the Street windmill, one of many in Somerset, as the area where the Chemistry Laboratories now sprawl, a few feet from the Somerton Road, and the highest point within easy reach of the centre of the village. It was near here that William Stephens Clark chose to build the family mansion in 1889. He had been, to all intents and purposes, in sole charge of the shoe-making firm of C and J Clark for  
10 twenty five years, and, canny Quaker that he was, had desisted from the temptation to invest his capital in bricks and mortar, an action which had helped bring about the downfall of the founders, Cyrus and James, and almost of the business itself.

In 1864 Quaker friends and relatives advanced loans to the ailing firm on the understanding that the twenty-four year old William, son of James, had absolute control. Their faith was well repaid financially, as well as by the solid and sure development of the business. By 1888 William felt secure enough to be able to spend some of his hard-earned wealth on the design of a family home where he could exercise some of his foibles. Not  
20 many late Victorian houses have secret doors, staircases and bolt-holes. William used his to escape unwelcome visitors.

The small estate included a stable-block, a fine walled kitchen-garden, with an adjacent cottage for the gardener, and a tiny gate-lodge on the Butleigh road.

A straight drive (how apt when one thinks of Millfield's first two Headmasters!) led from the lodge to the main entrance of the house with lime trees planted along either side. A second avenue of limes crossed the paddock to the East of the house, ending at a second gateway on the Butleigh Road. Other individual trees and shelter belts were skilfully placed  
30 to create the privacy which William so obviously sought for his family and himself.

In 1882 he had already built on the site a 'Swiss' chalet for the treatment and subsequent cure of a daughter suffering from tuberculosis. Later a second daughter qualified as a doctor and ran a free health-service for Clarks' workers and their families from the self-same building. In 1909 an open-air pool for swimming, along with a small boat-house, was created at the bottom of the slope which falls away from the terrace and ha-ha on the south-facing side of the house.

It was this charming and serene establishment which Canon Rollo and Mrs Arabella Meyer rented in 1935 and where they welcomed their son, Jack, the middle one of three,  
40 and his wife, Joyce, who arrived from India with a group of princelings. The latter were to be prepared for entrance to preparatory and public schools and eventually to Oxford or Cambridge. This began a happy alliance between the dominant local family of Clark and the international family of Millfield School.

At the age of thirty, Jack Meyer was already a well-known personality in the sporting world, chiefly as an amateur cricketer of great ability, but recognition as a leading educationist was still a long way off. He was born on 15th March 1905 in Ampthill,

Bedfordshire, a child of the Established Church of England, and was christened Rollo John Oliver. His father had played cricket for Derbyshire and love of the game was passed to his sons. Canon Meyer could not have known that his particular passion would provide a passport for his younger boy to the realms of the Princes of the British Raj, to the foundation of schools, to the captaincy of Somerset County Cricket Club and to the appointment to his staff of the man who was to succeed him.

In 1913 the young Meyer joined his elder brother at Stratheden School in Blackheath, and then followed him to Haileybury College in 1918. The latter was founded first in 1804 as a school for the sons of British employees of the Honourable East India Company, the old 'John Company', which looked after its people with paternal care. It was not advisable for European children to continue to risk, beyond the age of four, the deadly diseases in the Indian subcontinent. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857 the British government took responsibility for administration away from the Company and closed its school in England. After five years it was reopened as an independent school and, although no longer linked specifically with India, continued to educate many boys from the Empire on which the sun never set. The role of the Public Schools in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries was seen to be the inculcation of their pupils with the idea of 'Service', either in the Church, or in the administration of government and law, both at home and abroad, especially in the colonies, or in the armed forces. Thus Jack came into contact with contemporaries whose aim was to complete their education and return to India where a man could live the life of a true gentleman, surrounded by servants and polo ponies.

At Haileybury Meyer's talent for ball games made him one of a few outstanding athletes of the post-Great War era, and one not without scholastic ability. He passed his matriculation examination before 'going up' to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1923, surprising only when it is realised that undergraduates at that time, especially good games players, could enter Oxford or Cambridge colleges with the main aim of gaining a 'Blue' and perhaps passing Responsions (also known as 'Little-go'). While at Trinity College, Cambridge, Hon. Lionel Tennyson, grandson of the poet, played cricket in trial matches (but was not selected for the Varsity side) without ever matriculating, let alone graduating. He subsequently became the hero of England when fighting against defeat by Australia in 1921, batting one-handed for an hour, having a split left hand. Jack himself said in 1978, "In those days there were very few who were trying to get both Blues and degrees, and it was rather easy to get offers of jobs." What he had to offer in 1926 was a Blue for cricket, a Half-Blue for Rackets, and an Honours Degree in English Literature. For a young man with such qualifications the world would seem to have been his oyster, but at that time there were certain constraints on a son of the Rectory, so that teaching, or perhaps the Church, if he felt the call, was the most likely profession he would enter. He had to make a living as most clergy could not afford to keep even one 'gentleman' in the family. There were many areas of employment which were taboo to people of his background and talent, trade being one of them, especially so at a time of severe financial depression. He had enjoyed driving a lorry during the General Strike of 1926, but that did not solve his problem.

Meyer could not use his sporting qualifications to improve his finances other than by coaching at school, and to this end he accepted an offer from Harrow to help the master in charge of rackets, which at least gave him the opportunity to play Minor Counties cricket for

Hertfordshire in the summer holidays. If the Church had chosen him, he might have emulated such worthies as Rev FH Gillingham of Essex and Rev ETS Killick of Middlesex, or perhaps pre-empted Bishop David Shepherd of Sussex and England. To turn professional was unthinkable at a time when the gentlemen and 'the professors' had separate dressing rooms and separate lives. It was not until 1951 that Paul Gibb, another Cantab., of Yorkshire, Essex, and England, and who had played with RJO Meyer for the Gentlemen in 1938, broke the mould and turned 'pro', to the horror of the then establishment.

The Empire, however, still beckoned strongly to the sons and daughters of the middle classes, as it had when Newbolt wrote "Play up, play up and play the game", and Rhodes was planning the Cape to Cairo railway. India was the greatest draw with its myriad opportunities for sport, and a social life enjoyed in Britain only by the aristocracy and the comfortably wealthy. It was during his short sojourn at Harrow that Meyer was persuaded to seek an opening in the cotton trade and he became a trainee broker, soon finding himself aboard a steamer bound for India. It was still 1926.

He arrived in Bombay at a time of great uncertainty in world markets, as Europe, especially in the aftermath of the First World War, staggered from one financial crisis to another. However Germany's problems seemed to have been solved by huge loans from the USA, which, by contrast, was in the boom period of the Roaring Twenties. British Industry had no such assistance and, like France, looked to the colonies for cheap imports of raw material for the manufacturing industries. The Lancashire cotton mills could no longer afford to buy from the USA and turned to India, but the Indians were not the subservient peoples of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Led by Gandhi, they made their political points by civil disobedience which inevitably interfered with communications and trade. In this atmosphere RJOM found his chosen career unattractive and often unpleasant.

By contrast there was another group of Indians who lived happily alongside the British Establishment. They were the leaders of the Princely States, who maintained a large degree of independence but accepted the advice and the protection of the Viceroy, who held court in New Delhi. It had been the policy of Britain since the 1857 Mutiny to persuade the Princes to send their sons to the Mother Country to be educated in the leading Public Schools and Universities. Almost inevitably, other rich and ambitious Indians followed the Royal example by sending their sons to the same of similar institutions, and also created a demand for schools of like character in India itself. This meant for most of the boys an introduction to the creed of 'Mens sana in corpore sano' and, for some, the striving for success in British sports such as cricket, hockey and lawn tennis, which were already familiar because of the military presence. British clubs in India provided facilities for all these, as well as the Indian sports, usually connected with the horse, such as polo and pig-sticking. Indians were welcomed very rarely as members so they formed their own clubs. Inter-club rivalry developed healthily and in 1912 a cricket competition was organised with a trophy to be played for between ethnic and even religious groups.

The young Cambridge Blue found himself picked to play for the Europeans in the Quadrangular Tournament against the Parsi, Hindu and Muslim teams, and subsequently for All-India, as the representative side was then known. It was at this time that he met 'Ranji', perhaps the greatest of all Indian batsmen, who persuaded Jack to leave his unrewarding

150 job and seek an opening in teaching. His mentor, KS Ranjitsinhji, HH The Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, had himself been educated at Cambridge, and had subsequently played cricket for Sussex and England; he knew the value of British education and seized the opportunity of using the disillusioned Englishman's talents in the service of India. Thus it was that the man who had rejected offers of teaching posts at both Eton and Harrow in 1926 began his career in education three years later, first at Limbdi, then at Porbandar, and in 1932 as Headmaster of the Palace School at Dhrangadhra. "I found myself teaching some twenty or so boys and girls with age range of twenty-two down to three and an IQ range of eighty to one hundred and forty. Half of them knew no English and I knew no Gujarati. A method of graded small group tuition had to be devised to meet the situation and it was perhaps here that the Millfield method was born."

On 6th June, 1935, the physical birth of Millfield as an educational establishment took place when Jack and Joyce Meyer, with their small daughters, arrived in Street accompanying the three sons of the Maharajah of Dhrangadhra, three other Indian Princes and one commoner, the mission being to act as tutor-guardians, and to provide a home from home for the boys throughout their time in England.

## Chapter 2

### The Indians at Mill Field, Summer 1935.

The financing of the project was in the hands of the Maharajah, and so no expense was spared to create a comfortable establishment for the boys, but not too comfortable, as they had to be prepared for some of the rigours of Public School life. On the long journey by ship from India to Venice, and thence by train and ferry to England, they had to learn how to deal with basic problems without the attentions of devoted servants, which, for the younger boys, meant learning how to wash themselves, brush their teeth and hair, dress neatly, tie shoelaces, and come to terms with European food.

In Dhrangadhra, apart from class-room subjects, Jack's pupils had learned to ride, to shoot, to play cricket and tennis, to swim and to cultivate a garden, as well as taking an interest in agriculture, upon which the prosperity of the state depended in part. Thus the Maharajah called upon the services of his experts to inculcate his family with a desire to improve their farming and horticultural skills. This latter was to be continued in the fine brick-walled kitchen garden at Mill Field (sic) with its beautiful espaliered peach, plum and pear trees, so lovingly tended by a team of gardeners.

A groom was engaged for the ponies which the boys would ride in the extensive paddock, while a butler and domestic servants of several kinds took over the running of the house itself. Life would be well ordered but not ostentatious.

The eldest Dhrangadhra prince, he was twelve in 1935, who subsequently succeeded his father in 1942 and became HM Maharajah Sriraj Megharajji of Dhragandhra, KCSI, FRA, FRAI, ARHists, BLitt (Oxon), wrote in 1986; "The old school (in India) was 'co-ed', from the start! However its distaff side was left behind when, in 1935, the School was translated overseas - transshipped, in functioning order, with principal, preceptors, pupils and staff, together with its peculiar proclivities (minus the horses!) - and transplanted in England, to become and blossom, as the Millfield School!"

"I remember it so vividly, esp. our being marched to Church by our Brahman preceptor in his dark suit and red tilak. To auspicate the new School House, I was required to 'light the lamp', while our guru recited Vedic verses. My father's picture, surrounded by flowers on the table, was there as 'sakshi' or witness".

"It is an intriguing reflection that Millfield initiated, under royal auspices, as a school for Indians later opened its doors to natives and come-who-may to become the first cosmopolitan school in the West".

The arrival of the Indian party in Street did not cause quite the 'seven day wonder' it might have done in other parts of Britain, especially the rural areas, for the villagers were not unused to seeing overseas visitors. The Clarks attracted shoe-buyers and sellers, as well as people of the Quaker persuasion, from many countries, at a time when they were strongly supporting the demand for the government to disarm in the aftermath of the First



World War. The most striking visitor, however, was not one of these. He was the South African soldier and statesman, Jan Christiaan Smuts.

50 General Smuts, as he then was, had fought the British army with great skill as a  
commando leader in the Boer War at the turn of the century, had taken up politics after the  
Peace and supported South Africa's acceptance of Dominion Status in 1910; he rejoined the  
army and fought the Germans successfully in both South-West and East Africa before  
becoming Prime Minister in South Africa and being invited in 1917 to join Lloyd-George's  
War Cabinet in London. The occasion of his visit to Street was to meet his daughter's 'in-  
laws' as she was married to a member of the Clark family. He was invited to open Elmhurst  
County School which had just been developed from one of the Clark family houses, and to  
plant an oak sapling in the grounds of Mill Field, close to the Lodge. Both flourished, though  
60 Elmhurst became a Junior School in 1974, the County Education Authority having built a  
new comprehensive school and a sixth-form college with a theatre, Strode, which Millfield  
thespians used extensively during the late 1960s and the 1970s before they had a stage of  
their own. Prior to that the School dramatists had hired, at different times, Crispin Hall with  
its silver band acoustics, Elmhurst School hall, and Glastonbury Town Hall, while Elmhurst  
School gymnasium was used at week-ends as a place where school 'defaulters' could be  
'entertained' by the current Cadet Force Sergeant-Major Instructor and the tutor on duty.

No such distinguished visitor as General Smuts declared Mill Field open, but the  
news of the impending arrival in their midst of a group of Indian Princes had roused  
considerable interest in the little shoe-making community, and a group of the more curious  
70 were standing in the dimpsy-dark of a mid-summer, Mid-Somerset, evening to witness the  
three taxis from Castle Cary turn off the Butleigh Road onto the Mill Field drive. It could not  
have been particularly inspiring for the onlookers but, then, Street did not go in for  
extravagant demonstrations of any sort. A month earlier, on 6<sup>th</sup> May, the Silver Jubilee of  
King and Emperor George V and Queen Mary's accession to the throne had been celebrated  
with a thanksgiving service at the parish church and some bunting with a few flags on the  
Crispin Hall, according to a report in the Central Somerset Gazette. Glastonbury held a  
parade with a band and there was a bonfire party on Windmill Hill. Other people climbed  
the Tor and lit their own small fires, a presage of times to come, many ends of summer  
terms, escapades recalled at Millfield reunions. "Do you remember when .....?"

80 The settling-in period over the next few weeks passed smoothly enough as a  
routine of lessons and outdoor activities were established for the day time, followed by  
family evenings with everyone joining in the attempts to solve crossword puzzle clues, and  
the playing of chess and other reasonably instructive board games. No doubt "our own dear  
Queen" would have approved, for, although he was an innovator in so many aspects of  
education, Jack Meyer was steeped in what a distinguished British Prime Minister of the  
Twentieth Century described as Victorian values. His insistence on each pupil accepting a  
religious upbringing, whatever his or her faith, meant they were brought face to face with  
moral issues. One was allowed to declare oneself agnostic but never atheistic. If religion  
90 was one cornerstone of his philosophy for the education of the young, then another was the  
father-figure, a role in which he exulted, cajoling, advising and, when necessary, beating the  
evil out of his adopted children. The equally supportive role of the mother, the third  
cornerstone, fell on the slim shoulders of his wife, Joyce, whom he had met and married in

India in 1931. Not only did she have to bring up their own two small daughters, now without the aid of ayahs, but had to provide the sympathetic ear to which the young men could turn in their times of difficulty. In the aftermath of the Second World War, especially, the number of pupils from single parent families and broken homes increased dramatically, and Jack insisted that housemasters' wives were spoken of as 'housemothers', a tradition which has survived and indeed broadened into 'houseparents'.

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The fourth corner was allegiance to country and hence to its leader, in Britain's case, the King, and subsequently, the Queen, Elizabeth the Second, who in 1967 rewarded his 'services to education' by appointing him an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Irrespective of nationality, attendance at the Empire Day lecture given yearly in the Maxime Cinema was compulsory, while pupils from all over the world promised to "build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land" at least once a term. When war broke out in 1939, a fair proportion of the male population of Millfield, led by the Headmaster himself, volunteered for military service. Fortunately the latter was sent home, later to receive a Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve commission as Flying Officer, later Flight Lieutenant, to organise and command the Glastonbury and Street Schools Squadron of the Air Training Corps, or the school might not have survived. That Millfield played its part in the defence of freedom, and everything worthwhile that Britain stood for, is evinced by the distressingly long list of names (as a proportion of the total school population) on the Roll of Honour in the School Library.

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One of those worthwhile things which Jack was prepared to defend was the belief in fair play, which in his case would have been indissolubly connected with the game of cricket which had been spread to every part of the globe, in the wake of the sailors, soldiers, pioneers, administrators and convicts who had created the British Empire. It was permissible to use guile and cunning to defeat the opponent, but never to cheat, and it was important to be magnanimous in victory. Therefore it was not long before a square was being cut and rolled in the paddock between Mill Field House and the Butleigh road, so that the young Indians, who did their share of work in the preparation, found themselves on "a bumping pitch in a blinding light" instead of the rather amiable matting of home. The first match, for which the score sheet has not survived, was played there against Queen's College, Taunton, while the first to be recorded was between a combined Mill Field and Street XI v. Glastonbury at Street CC's ground on 10<sup>th</sup> July. It was almost a year before the new pitch was deemed really fit again for visitors, Street CC on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1936.

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The paddock was also transformed into a riding school, fences and jumps being erected, while the horses, which had not been transshipped from India, were replaced by local ponies. It was not an ideal stretch of land for practising polo but the jodhpured princes were not deterred and they laid the foundation for what for many years was to be a unique aspect of Millfield, a school with a polo team.

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## Chapter 3

### The Crisis at Mill Field, Autumn 1935.

10 Once the newcomers had become accustomed to the surroundings, classwork began, tuition being given by RJOM and JM Dave MA, the recently retired headmaster of the Sir Ajitsingh High School, Dhrangadhra, who had been persuaded to travel to England and be responsible for the young Indians' religious instruction, as well as some of the teaching. Arrangements were made for three of the number to enter other educational establishments in the near future:- Surendrashinh Jhala of Wadwhan to Blundell's in January 1936 and, more immediately, KN Jadeja, son of the Indian guardian and treasurer NB Jadeja, and ward of the Maharajah of Dhrangadhra, to the Automobile Engineering Training College in Chelsea, while the senior Dhrangadhra prince, Mayurdhwarsinh, was driven by RJOM to a preparatory school, Heath Mount, near Hertford, prior to entering Haileybury in May or September 1936. This left six, including Jadeja, at Mill Field for the rest of the Summer Term. The other five were the Maharajkumar Harishchandrasinh, heir to the throne of Jhalawar and known as Baby Raj, Surendra Jhala, minor ruler of Wadwhan, and his younger brother, Virendra Jhala, and the two younger brothers of Mayur of Dhrangadhra, Virendrasinh and Dharmendrasinh, aged 9 and 8 respectively.

20 Already beginning to show were the complexities of Millfield time-tabling, requiring artistry which was to reach its peak in the 1960s when the school numbers were close to one thousand. At 15, Baby Raj was too old, it was then considered, to enter a public school en route to Oxford, so he had to be prepared for Responsions, the university entrance exam, which would allow him to matriculate at 18. Surendra, preparing for Blundell's, needed extra coaching in Maths and an introduction to both French and Biology, as well as lessons in English, History and Handicrafts. Brother Virendra was expected to go on to a public school, not yet chosen, in 1937, and therefore had to follow a course proceeding to the Common Entrance Exam. The two young Dhrangadhrans had to have general lessons which would lead to their entering a prep school in a year or two's time. With two teachers catering for five pupils it was not too daunting a task, but also to Jack Meyer fell the coaching of games, which of course he loved, and the keeping of the accounts, which he loved less but about which he was absolutely meticulous. Every receipt, varying from lunch for nine at the Gare du Nord in Paris on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1935, including a ten franc tip, to eight tickets (who dropped out ?) for Madame Tussaud's on 6<sup>th</sup> June, before they all caught the 6.00 pm from Paddington to Castle Cary, was carefully filed with the accounts. It has to be said however that the treasurer NB Jadeja, known to the boys as Nanabapu, was not happy with the books, because, it seems, he it was who had to explain the balance to the Maharajah, without having any control over the expenditure.

40 It was important that Mill Field should be running smoothly when the Maharajah arrived, though the date of arrival was uncertain. Other visitors came, approved and went, including the Jam Sahib of Nawangar, nephew of the great Ranji whom he had succeeded in 1933, and who was also interested in sending any sons he might have in the future to Mill Field. As a parting gift he presented a pony to the school and this joined another, already bought, in the stables opposite the front door of Mill Field House. Jumps were erected in the paddock to the south of the house, the two grass tennis courts were cut and rolled,

50 while a start was made on the preparation of a cricket pitch in the field between the house and the Butleigh Road. The weather was not kind, a wet June, so the latter could not be used that summer, though an area for net practice was brought into action. A month after they arrived in Somerset, three of the household, Jadeja, Baby Raj and Jack Meyer, turned out for Street Cricket Club against Sidcot School. Fortunately RJOM took 4 wickets as all three made ducks while helping Street to lose comfortably. The captain was J Anthony Clark, one day to be Chairman of the Millfield Governors. Three days later, on July 10<sup>th</sup>, a combined Mill Field and Street XI - this time the two Wadwhan boys played as well - met Mr Porter's XII at Glastonbury; then on 16<sup>th</sup> July the first officially designated Mill Field XI trounced Glastonbury. Six, however, were guests, though it was RJOM's match. He took 9 wickets for 35 and then made 54 runs.

60 On August 4<sup>th</sup> the Maharajah of Dhrangadhra arrived at Dover and, although the plan had been to visit his eldest son at his prep school near Hertford, the summer holidays had already started, so he proceeded to Somerset after an overnight stay in London. There he was greeted without reservation by the whole party, as befitted the founder of the happy little community. His guns, his case of cigarettes and his case of cigars had preceded him through police and customs scrutiny and he was therefore able to assume the rôle of a country gentleman surveying his estate in some comfort. Wearing tweed and eating lavish amounts of well-prepared food he was able to keep the damp and cold of a late English summer at bay, while, unfortunately, his servants upset the Meyers by their indecorous attitude to hygiene, the least unpleasant being wearing their boots in bed. His Highness had  
70 created further difficulties by expecting his meals at times different to those of the boys , and by being on a diabetic diet, though the latter had been anticipated. It was obviously a relief when the Maharajah announced that he would take all the six remaining boys (Jadeja had joined his Chelsea college) on a motor caravan tour of Devon in the first week of September. Successful as this venture was, the atmosphere was no better on their return. Mayur had to be taken back to Heath Mount School and preparations were made for the Maharajah, his father, to enter a London Nursing Home for observation at the end of the month. It was at this point that Jack Meyer asked his employer if he was satisfied with the Mill Field establishment and the way it was being run, as, so far, neither praise nor criticism, nor even thanks, had been expressed.

80 His Highness's reply was that the house was too far from London and that the boys needed four meals a day instead of the three they were having. Nothing could be done about the situation of the house, and it was an unpleasant fact, not pointed out to the Maharajah, that landlords of other houses more convenient to London had refused to lease them when it was realised that the new occupants would be brown-skinned. The Quaker Clarks, with their wider vision of the brotherhood of man, had welcomed the advent of the Indian pupils into their midst, while the villagers, mostly Clark employees of course, enjoyed the novelty. The meal problem was solved by cancelling High Tea at 6 pm and introducing a 'sit-down' tea at 4.15 and dinner at 7.15, which meant that the two small boys would be  
90 going to bed at least an hour later than planned and on full stomachs, neither of which seemed sensible, but "He that pays the piper calls the tune." Nothing however was said, at that time, about the quarterly advance payments for the upkeep of the house, due on September 1<sup>st</sup>, which had not been received from either Dhrangadhra or Jhalawar.

100 Meanwhile the daily round had to continue; term started officially on September 18<sup>th</sup>, and five boys needed teaching. In addition to his duties as their tutor, Jack Meyer, as their guardian, had to negotiate with a number of public schools regarding terms of entry for his wards. Blundell's Headmaster was happy to take Surendra in January 1936, but had to be persuaded to allow him to drop Latin and French, so that he might concentrate on English and Maths. Surendra's brother, Virendra, was accepted by both Cheltenham College and Malvern College for entry in 1937 and the latter was selected, as the Headmaster showed interest in the two young Dhrangadhra princes and offered them places at a later date. This was partly due to the influence of the Jam Sahib, an Old Malvernian himself, who had attended a reunion at the College during his visit to England and prepared the way for Jack's approach. A problem had arisen with Mayur's entry to Haileybury and this had to be sorted out with the Headmaster of Heath Mount, his prep school, and his future housemaster, as neither considered him likely to be ready educationally for his projected move in April 1936.

110 Although he already had part-time assistance, in teaching from a Cambridge graduate, Miss Joan Wilson, in riding from Captain Barron and in accounting from Mr SJ Travavis, RJOM engaged the help of the Officers' Association Employment Bureau, and the two main educational agencies, Gabbitas and Thring, impolitely nicknamed Grabatit and Cling, and Truman and Knightley, to find a suitable full-time assistant tutor. It was anticipated that advertisements that were to appear in Indian and Ceylonese newspapers would bring good returns and pupil numbers would double to the projected twelve. Approaches had been made directly to Indian Royal Families before the Meyers had left for England and were generally well received, but a number of potential entrants were held back until it was clear how well the project had developed.

120 Although Jack was due for six months paid leave under his original contract with Dhrangadhra State, it was obviously out of the question at the time and it was not until the middle of October, five months after their arrival at Mill Field, that he and Joyce felt able to leave the house together for a short visit to London. In order to get away for two days they had to hand over their responsibilities to the assistant master and mistress and to the matron, while the police were alerted to possible danger to the princes. Fortunately the Meyer grandparents were now on hand in Ditcheat to look after the two little girls.

130 Apart from the pleasure of a change of scenery, the objectives were to bid farewell to the Jam Sahib, who was about to leave for India, to thank him for his support, which included telling the Maharajah of Dhrangadhra that he was underpaying the Meyers, and to visit the said Maharajah in the nursing home. Whereas the leave-taking was a happy occasion, tinged with some regret that an ally was leaving, the sick-bed meeting was much less satisfactory. Jack felt that he had to press for an explanation for the non-payment of the quarterly account, then a month and a half overdue, and compounded by the failure of Wadwhan to pay their dues on 1<sup>st</sup> October, as well as rumours he had heard among the Indian servants at Mill Field and from friends in London that the Maharajah had changed his plans. He received a bland answer and a promise that all would be set right when the patient was discharged from the nursing home in ten days time.

140

On Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October the Maharaja returned to Mill Field and at midday announced that he was going to remove his two sons and Baby Raj, empowered as he was to act for His Highness of Jhalawar, on Friday morning. He asked therefore that all the boys' belongings should be packed ready for departure. This was no light task as everything they had for their proposed long sojourn in England was in the house and required re-sorting and inspecting, so the work was put in hand that Wednesday evening. While this was being arranged, Jack sent a cable to Jhalawar asking if it was correct that the Prince was to leave and received the blunt reply "Dhrangadhra acting for us".

150 The Maharaja would not give any reasons for his actions for the withdrawal and then announced his proposal to pay Jack (he was on first-name terms) six months salary, which he was due for the leave that so far he had not had, and offered a further £250, one third of the salary which should have been paid over the next five contracted years. No other money was offered in compensation and unpaid bills had already mounted up since September 1<sup>st</sup>. Recognising that the immediate future of his family and the school that he had worked so hard to establish was in jeopardy to this man, the main financial supporter, Jack said he would accept £375, half the full amount, if he could have £250 at once. In the event no money was forthcoming.

160 Meanwhile the packing went ahead and, sensing that unpleasantness was in the air, Baby Raj refused to get ready to leave Mill Field, where he was happily settled, became almost hysterical and, in the end, had to be persuaded by Jack that he must behave like the Prince he was and bow to his father's wishes. To add to the general misery, the Indian servants, also preparing to leave, visited shops in Street to pay the small personal bills they had outstanding, and of course, reported the events at the big house. On Friday, after the departure of the Indian party, the Meyers were inundated with callers, some expressing sympathy, as it was known how well the boys had progressed in the happy atmosphere that had been created, and others, rather more discreetly, requesting payment of their accounts.

170 Left alone, with a pony each to exercise, was the remainder of the school, the two Princes from Wadwhan, Surendra Jhala and Virendra Jhala, outnumbering the staff by two to one.

It is inevitable that, in a situation as had just occurred, blame will be laid by each party on the other. RJOM wanted to sue Dhrangadhra Durbar for breach of contract, but was told by his legal advisor, Geoffrey Sankey, a cousin by marriage, that taking action in an Indian court of law would be similar to the trial of Warren Hastings at Westminster in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, practically endless.

180 The Maharajah never committed his reasons for the rift to paper, but his son and heir, away at Heath Mount at the time, hints at a 'misunderstanding' which led to confrontation, caused by a 'sea-change' in the attitude of Jack Meyer. After being a 'favourite at court', though still an employed headmaster, when at home in England he felt no longer in thrall to an Eastern potentate, however benevolent and enlightened, both of which His Highness undoubtedly was.

It might well be summed up as a clash of personalities which could have scuppered Mill Field almost before it was established.

## Chapter 4

### RJOM carries on, 1935-6.

At least the uncertainty of the previous few weeks was at an end, but Jack was convinced that the whole venture was about to close in a welter of dashed hopes, recriminations, tears and overwhelming debt. However, he knew that he must not neglect the welfare of his two remaining wards from Wadhwan who still needed tuition. It was at this moment that the school doctor decided that Surendra ought to undergo an operation on his nose to clear a blocked air passage. He would have to enter hospital as anaesthesia was required. Acting as guardian, Jack signed the necessary papers, not an easy option when putting the life of a Crown Prince at some risk. All went well and the patient was back, convalescing, at Mill Field in mid-November, while decisions were being taken about the future. Sir Courtney Latimer, the British Resident in Wadhwan, was informed of all that had happened and was asked to decide whether Virendra should be entered for a prep school in January, 1936, when his brother would be joining Blundell's. Jack felt it undesirable that the younger boy should be tutored on his own, but Sir Courtney considered that a further upheaval was even less to be wished. While this correspondence was whirling across the world at 100 mph in an Imperial Airways air-liner, the teachers' agencies in London were informed that Mill Field would not be requiring additional staff and Jack made one last visit to the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra to attempt to gain a settlement of the financial position.

An uncomfortable meeting ended with a blank refusal to compromise and it seemed that the Mill Field adventure was over, but Jack, who knew he could make a reasonable living by returning to teaching in India, had underestimated the determination of others to keep him in England. A letter arrived from Joyce's father saying that a bank draft was on its way and it would more than cover the most pressing debts, while his own mother had visited all the local tradesmen to reassure them that the school was still a going concern and that it would shortly be paying its own way. They should not hesitate to advance credit as her son was a man of honour, a gifted teacher, an excellent business man, a great organiser, and a potential power in Somerset county cricket.

In these circumstances there was little to be done except to capitalise on the good fortune, rather than succumb to what had seemed to be a hopeless situation. What had to be decided was the best way to attract customers and what they were going to be offered. While Virendra still required tuition towards his public school Common Entrance Examination, it obviously made sense for Jack to offer coaching to others working for the same, or any other, set of examinations. Acting on the principle that you could not have too many irons in the fire he advertised in the Times of India and the Times of Ceylon offering to have "a number of boys of the Public School class" at Millfield (sic) for the Easter and Summer holidays, with tuition if required. He also offered to act as guardian, for this was at a time when British people serving and working in the sub-continent often had no home leave for several years and needed a reliable person to act *in loco parentis* during school holidays and as a go-between in term-time. In addition he suggested, via the Daily Telegraph, that he and Mrs. Meyer would be delighted to welcome guests into their



“beautiful modern country-house home” for a relaxing holiday, including, if required, country pursuits and, especially, golf at Burnham-on-Sea at three shillings a round.

50 On the very day that Surendra Jhala was to be taken to Blundell’s for his first term, 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1936, the first responses to the Daily Telegraph advertisement were received from Londoners interested in country holidays. In the meantime enquiries had come in from parents anxious that their sons were not achieving the standards expected of them at their chosen schools. Much to Jack’s relief, for he was now seriously exercised about Virendra’s situation of being the only young person in the house, two of the applicants and subsequent entrants were from prep schools. The first, Paul Jackson, passed the Common Entrance Examination, and John Struan-Marshall won a scholarship to Epsom College. Though slightly older than Virendra, they provided companionship and a marker against  
60 which he could compare his own standards of achievement. Older still were Charles Everidge, from Sherborne School, hoping for entrance to Jesus College, Cambridge, and Christopher Noel-Buxton, from Harrow School, aiming for Trinity College in the same university. Knowing that the future might rest on these young men achieving their aims at the end of a few short months before their exams, Jack hastily set about finding and employing an assistant tutor; thus his first staff appointment was GD March, a graduate of Reading University, who was to concentrate on coaching the three juniors, while he, Jack, had to bring out the best in the seniors. That both tutors and pupils were wholly successful is reflected in the fact that six decades later Millfield still has the reputation of achieving the impossible, in scholastic terms, while paying guests fill the school ‘Village of Education’ in the summer holidays, some, at least, in pursuit of country pastimes.

70 At the beginning of March, before the exams, which really decided the direction that Millfield was going to take, negotiations opened with a number of printers for the production of a prospectus, and the result was a folder of blue card containing two pages of heavy cream paper with six black and white photos and a description of Mill Field as “A Holiday Home for Children of all Ages”. The inclusive fee, 4 guineas a week, provided coaching in all manner of sports by Messrs. Meyer and March, but not tuition. However, this could be provided by special arrangement.

80 By the end of April, and with the summer starting, a degree of optimism was spreading through the household. The number of pupils increased by one, an Indian, Ismael Moloobhai, seeking Oxford entrance, while enquiries about country holidays were coming in steadily, but the biggest boost to the confidence of at least one member was the certainty that the cricket ground with its lovingly prepared square could at last be used for matches. Now he set about selling his name to the discerning people of Somerset, not just by his own performances, which quickly elicited from the Central Somerset Gazette the remark that here was a player at which the County should look, but by encouraging their sons to play at higher standards and by raising teams drawn from local schools to face touring sides and the more rarefied Junior Somerset Stragglers. Jack himself managed, in between times at Mill Field, to represent not only the Somerset Stragglers but the Stragglers of Asia, a club for  
90 expatriates on leave from the Orient, in May, June and July, so that when the school holidays began in August he moved easily into his true metier, County Championship cricket for Somerset, alongside the great Arthur Wellard and the rising star, Harold Gimblett.

Tennis too played a part in making the county aware of Jack's presence, for not only did he play in house-party tourneys, accompanied by Joyce, but he also entered the Somerset Amateur Championships at Burnham-on-Sea, and achieved considerable success and publicity. He also belonged to the golf club in the same town, the Burnham and Berrow, with its championship links, which he soon mastered whilst getting into practice for the English Amateur Championship. Jack was one of those English sporting all-rounders whose days seem to have finished with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. He never quite reached the top in any of his sports, probably because his Indian interlude took him away at the most propitious period of his physical development, but he could never be accused of not trying, and it was this determination to succeed that pulled Mill Field through its unpropitious birth pangs.

## Chapter 5

### Re-establishment, 1936-7.

There can be no doubt that the general concept of Millfield, ill-informed as it may be, still centres on its original reputation as an excessively expensive cramming establishment, run by an eccentric top-flight sportsman with an enlarged ego who understood the value of publicity, any publicity. However for those who followed Jack Meyer's struggle to set up a business which would pay off his debts, first and foremost, and then provide a living for himself and his family, it must have been a matter of wonder as to where he would turn next. Attempting to develop the school and coaching aspect along the accepted public and prep school lines, in a period of recession which for Britain had lasted since the end of the Great War in 1918, would have been a recipe for further disaster. Hence, he tried to attract overseas customers with the 'Home from Home' prospectus for children, while entertaining adults to country-home holidays.

The idea of a 'home', in the very best sense of the word, with a caring family atmosphere and, by no means least, excellent food and cooking, was, it could be argued, the basis of his success. It must be said that this aspect of the success could never have been fulfilled without the unsung co-operation and dedication of his young wife, Joyce, who had herself experienced the pleasures of a comfortable upbringing in a European household in India, where servants, though not always fully reliable, took orders without argument. England in 1936, with a strong socialist minority, and even a growing communist presence, was showing disapproval of girls being put into 'service' when they left school at 14, and anyway domestic help could be afforded by many fewer people, even than in the nineteen twenties. Great tact and skill were needed to oversee a happy and contented household, and obviously Joyce had both in quantity, allied with her natural charm as well as an unswerving loyalty to Jack and his ideas, come what may.

By the end of the summer of 1936, when all RJOM's efforts to help his first English pupils had been crowned with exam success, his self-confidence, which had been shattered by the events and accusations of October 1935, was fully restored. He was the future in providing expert tuition for pupils, mainly of school age, who had suffered already through learning difficulties. The word had started to spread. Jack himself gave much kudos to Charles Everidge's father, who was inclined to tell perfect strangers met in railway carriages and similar restricted spaces, from which they could not immediately escape, that they should send their sons to Meyer's place in Somerset forthwith. A trickle of applicants began to arrive at Mill Field's front door, hoping for entry in September, and they were welcomed warmly, though it was made clear by the shrewd Jack that they were extremely lucky to have the opportunity to be pioneers in this new scholastic venture, education for the love of it and at one's own pace.

40 It is worth noting that he had had an early success in 1936 in the coaching of a young Royal Air Force officer, Flight-Lieutenant Hugo Thomas-Ferrand, on long leave prior to sitting a promotion exam, which he subsequently passed. The Flight-Lieutenant was the son of the owners at that time of Edgarley Hall, a large family house on the outskirts of Glastonbury which, after military occupation in the 1939-1945 war, was sold by the Thomas-Ferrands at a very reasonable price and with much good will to Jack Meyer as a boarding house for the Millfield juniors.

This contact with the armed services prompted a recognition of another possible source of custom, specialised tuition for young men seeking entry qualifications for the officer-producing colleges of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force. This was to be a highly important feature of Millfield for its first twenty-five years, roughly the period of compulsory National Service and the last throes of the British Empire. It may also have been the reason why Jack offered himself for flying training on the outbreak of war in 1939, having had little or no experience of either of the other services at that time, other than social contact with officers in India.

This short encounter with adult education and, perhaps, with the confidence gained by telling the somewhat bombastic Squadron-Leader Everidge, the RAF again, to leave his son Charles alone and allow him, Jack Meyer, to sort out the problems and secure a place at Cambridge, may have led to the appearance on 14<sup>th</sup> August in the Personal Column of 'The Times' of the following advertisement:-

60 "Parents who have apparently lost the affections of their children or who are otherwise distressed about them may care, before consulting "Psychologists", to receive advice from a parent who has had his own problems and who has successfully helped others. – Write Box N.651, The Times, E.C.4."

There were four replies immediately from the Home Countries, only Wales not being represented. In each case they were from parents deeply concerned about the behaviour of their teenage children. Jack's reply consisted of a breakdown of his qualifications for dealing with their problem, a request for full details of the background of the case, including the influence exerted over the child by nursemaid, governess, father and mother, and, of course, school reports. Should his help be accepted then there would be a fee of 5 guineas to cover six months' administration charges and 3 guineas for each direct consultation.

70 Apart from the financial aspect, the advertisement and the responses offer further insight into Jack's thinking at the time. Psychologists obviously did not fill him with much confidence, although his own questions to the parents seem akin to those that a trained educational psychologist would ask. In due time, during the period of vast expansion after 1945, he changed his views drastically and, although he continued to interview each possible entrant personally, it was frequently after the boy or girl had had their Intelligence Quotient measured by the distinguished Frederick Livie-Noble, who lived near Marlborough.

Thus Jack was forewarned about the potential of the pupil but not of the parent. There may have been something to be said for the view of Victor Edghill, Edgarley's first Headmaster, that "it is the parent who needs the IQ test, not the pupil".

Probably because the school side of Jack's business ventures seemed at the time to be the more promising, he did not follow up his tentative approach to solving parental problems directly, but he spent much of the rest of his life sorting them out indirectly by dealing with the problems of the parents' offspring. Especially in the early days, when numbers were small, he was able to gain the confidence of most of his pupils, to encourage them to be self-reliant and to have self-belief. When his methods led, as they almost always did, to honourable achievement in scholastic work and other areas of the lives of the boys and girls, the parents also felt the benefit as at least some of their worries were relieved.

September 1936 added four new faces to the surviving pair, Virendra Jhala and Ismail Moloobhai, both from India. Among them were Helmut Mayer from Germany and Nathan Penney from Newfoundland, so Millfield's international flavour was beginning to be established. In January 1937 the numbers had risen to a round dozen, four of whom were of prep school age, under 13, while the others varied from 15 to 18. The needs of each, in a scholastic sense, were equally varied and Jack recognized the importance of tailoring the programmes individually. This could only be achieved by an increase in the size of the teaching staff, and the first school photograph taken in the spring of 1937, when the first prospectus proper was being planned, shows the same ratio, 2 to 1, of pupils to teaching staff as it was in November 1935. The number difference is considerable however, 12 pupils to 6 tutors, not including the headmaster, who still taught English and General Knowledge.

GD March, who had successfully coached the juniors, departed with the summer holidays and his place was taken by S Punton-Smith, who remained as Senior Tutor until 1941. The latter was an older man than Jack who had served as an officer on the Western Front in the First World War. An experienced teacher of history, he also eventually became guide to Millfield's Service entrants. Alan Grant, a Classics teacher, played an invaluable part at a time when many public schools still demanded a pass in Common Entrance in Latin or Greek, while Oxford and Cambridge Universities both required School Certificate standard in one subject or the other from its undergraduates. He also relieved Jack of one of his chores, that of book-keeping, and subsequently became the school's first in-house bursar. Before that Jack described the manager of Lloyds Bank in Street as his bursar, probably a wise precaution in the distinctly uncertain financial circumstances of the time.

A new venture, science, taught in one of the rooms of the stable block, was in the hands of Eric Attock, the youngest of the recruits, and he also took on the organisation of hockey, coaching in practice games and seeking out local fixtures with some considerable success. Apart from riding, cricket and tennis which were established from the start in 1935, the pupils could play golf on the nine-hole courses at Marshall's Elm, a mile from Mill Field, and at Wells, seven miles away. Low handicap players were welcome at Burnham and

Berrow. Other organised sports were badminton and shooting with a .22 rifle. Both had been set up by hiring the Territorial Army Drill Hall in Glastonbury, which contained court and range, and engaging a Regular Army Staff Instructor for the latter. Almost inevitably  
120 soccer, of the kick-about variety, was played in spare moments, while rugby was coached and practised without there being any hope of raising a school team.

Music, too, was brought into the curriculum alongside the private tuition which had always been provided. Sidney Masters, organist at St. John's Church in Glastonbury, became the school's first music tutor and he encouraged his pupils to sing in the Street Parish Church choir. One at least, Nathan Penney, became a member of the St. John's Church choir and attended so regularly, cycling to and from Glastonbury on his 15 shilling bicycle, that he was invited to become a sidesman and attended the Bishop of Bath and Wells on his visits. Tragically, Sidney Masters was to be one of the three pre-war Millfield staff to lose their lives in action in the 1939-45 conflict, in his case serving in the Royal Navy  
130 off the Belgian coast in 1944.

With the increase in numbers of pupils and staff, some with experience and others with little, as well as different subjects of study, it was clear that a new structured timetable was required, one even more complex than that of the summer of 1935. Nevertheless, there was still an air of happy-go-lucky-dip about the daily scheme of work when the tutors gathered each morning after breakfast with RJOM in the sitting-room. They had to be prepared to take on special assignments at no notice if the headmaster decided that one of the pupils needed a fillip in a particular subject, and a quick re-arrangement of the day's routine was made. Occasionally, if the sun was shining and the barometer set fair, everyone was sent out blue-doming, that is to give thanks to God under the blue dome of  
140 heaven, and a picnic for everyone was hastily put together by the kitchen staff. It was taken by car to an agreed spot perhaps five miles away. Pupils and staff walked or went hungry, and perhaps enjoyed the beauties of nature and certainly the break in routine. Even the happiest of homes can be a little wearisome without some light relief.

The normal morning began with prep at seven, then a not unusual occurrence at public schools, followed by breakfast at eight. The Rector of Street, the Rev Christopher Buckingham, visited at least once a week to lead a religious observance before classes began at nine. Work went on with a short break until half past noon and lunch was taken sharp at twelve forty-five. Anyone late or untidy might well be banished to outer darkness, and this lesson was quickly learned. Organised games began at two, and lasted for an hour and a  
150 half, which gave time for a bath and a quick cup of tea before afternoon school at four. Freedom arrived at five-thirty but ended with supper at six forty-five.

The family evenings continued despite the larger numbers, with everyone, resident tutors, pupils and the Meyers, sharing the same sitting-room. In her thirty-five years in the house Joyce Meyer never had a reception room or drawing-room that she could call her own.

160 The ritual completion of the Daily Telegraph crossword was followed by an evening period of prep on most days, though this was often shortened in the twilight of summer evenings to allow the pupils more time in the fresh air. Everyone had a bicycle and these were used around the grounds and on the roads, which in the late 1930s carried very little motor traffic. They were particularly useful on Sundays when all could explore the surrounding area once their religious commitments had been completed. The older pupils were on occasion allowed to make two-day excursions, for example to Weymouth, carrying light camping-gear, provided they understood that they were to make a full written report on what they had seen and done. To the amazement of at least one Old Harrovian, who joined the school in 1937, they were allowed to go to the cinema.

## Chapter 6

### Expansion as the war starts, 1937-40.

The original plan, conceived in 1935, was completed by the start of 1937, when the pupil numbers reached twelve, but financially the situation was very different. The only guaranteed income was the guardianship fees for Surendra and Virendra Jhala, the tuition fees of the latter until he left for Malvern College, and board and lodging charges for the pair. Success rested on the ability of the parents of other boys to pay fees necessarily higher than those of the public schools from which some of them came in search of exam passes. The young ones' fees were reckoned above the equivalent prep school charges. Both old  
10 and young could expect to pay more if a repair job had to be carried out in double-quick time, and, under these circumstances, they were encouraged to join a holiday course for which, naturally, they paid more. Like the Windmill Theatre in London after the Second World War, Mill Field could boast proudly, "We never closed".

In fact, the whole domestic organization had to remain in place during the holidays, for the overseas pupils could not go home while sea-travel was so slow and so expensive. Therefore, it made good sense to fill the half-dozen or so empty beds with paying customers and to engage one or two temporary tutors, who, in those impoverished days, would gladly work for their keep and some pocket-money.

To join the two Indian boys, Virendra Jhala and Ismail Moloobhai, the  
20 Newfoundlander Nathan Penney and German Helmut Mayer, there came from South Africa, via Queen's College, Taunton, the school's first Head Boy, Bob Walton Holmes, then trying for Cambridge. Other arrivals in 1937 were Bob Barr Smith from Australia, also heading for Cambridge, Palab Nair from Madras in India, and Shaikh Mohammed Nasiruddin from Madras, then in the Raj. The last named played for Northamptonshire in 1938, and so was the first Millfieldian first-class cricketer. Unfortunately, the war brought an abrupt end to all that. The European mainland had been lightly represented up to then by Helmut Mayer, Michel and Philip Denis from Paris, Jack and Stephen Iplijian from Romania, and Ludwig Moser from the Netherlands. More were to come, but not just yet.

For the time being the overseas connection remained intact but the home products  
30 began to multiply disproportionately. By midsummer 1937 they were leading by fifteen to five and this has been accepted as about the correct ratio ever since, though it inevitably lapsed, when a new set of figures had to be taken onto consideration. These were the girls, the Young Ladies Club (YLC), whose numbers increased significantly in 1943.

Sylvia Jean Gordon was the first girl boarder. She arrived in 1938, just after her younger brother, Alexander John, passed his Common Entrance exam to the Nautical College, Pangbourne. Two of the boys, Tony Francis and Nathan Penney, lost their cosy little room half way up the main staircase, much to their chagrin, but otherwise things went on much as before and the new situation was quickly accepted.

RJO, as he was then called in private by his pupils, had not considered co-education  
40 as part of his philosophy before and it grew on him very slowly. In India the daughters of the Maharajah had attended the Palace School in Dhrangadhra but there had never been any suggestion that they should leave home and travel with the party to England. Those



little girls either had separate classes, or shared with their brothers, and would not have been allowed to mix even with the sons of other Indian rulers, so it was almost like having two parallel schools. Jack had been educated in boys' schools and in a male-dominated university at a time when women were still not fully entitled to the vote. Perhaps the birth of his own two daughters, and the imminent need to plan their educational future, made him consider the idea of mixed schooling, but undoubtedly he began the process with much trepidation, similarly to those headmasters of boys' public schools who approached him for advice when agonizing over having girls in the sixth form some thirty years later. Like them he considered it a matter of expediency at first, but came to recognize the value of a little leaven in the rather stodgy, and sometimes unhealthy, pudding of the boys' boarding schools, many of which had not moved very far from the Victorian era.

Though there always were some juniors, that is boys of prep school age, the majority of the growing population was drawn from the upper strata of the public schools. After Christopher Noel-Buxton's success at Cambridge, Harrow School had a number of representatives over the next few years, including his brother, Michael, who passed into Balliol College, Oxford in 1939. The list of other schools which sent pupils on to Mill Field reads like the roll of the Headmasters' Conference.

People from the central Somerset area too were soon aware that something rather special in the way of education had appeared in their midst, a school which aimed to give individual attention to each pupil and to stimulate a desire for success. Charles Everidge, the first to prosper in 1936, came from Lottisham, five miles from Street. Hugo Thomas-Ferrand, the RAF officer, lived in Glastonbury, whilst the Rector of Street sent his two children, a boy and a girl, for coaching as day pupils. Perhaps the most colourful of them all was Colin Hodgkinson, the son of the family who owned and lived close by Wookey Hole. He had been at the Nautical College, Pangbourne, then commonly known as the back-door to the Royal Navy, for its pupils were registered as Cadets, Royal Naval Reserve, though the majority went on to serve as officers in the Merchant Service. Just to make sure that he passed his exams, with the requisite marks for entry to the Fleet Air Arm of the Senior Service, he was to be given a final polish at Mill Field. In this he was successful but it was for one particular athletic effort that he became part of the Millfield folk-lore.

Colin was a good rugby player, travelling with Nathan Penney on Saturdays to play for Yeovil RFC, but he was an equally tough boxer. Tor Fair has been held annually in Glastonbury in September since mediaeval times. Originally a sheep-fair, by the 1930s it had become largely a fun-fair and this always included a boxing-booth where old professional fighters, and a few aspiring young ones, gave displays of their art and then challenged any man in the audience to go three rounds with the boxer of his choice. The result was usually that some callow youth, after a few too many libations, and egged on by his less adventurous friends, earned himself a bloody nose and a black eye to show his admiring and solicitous girl-friend. Colin, without the libations, but with the full support of most of the school, stood up to the battering of the ex-light-heavyweight champion of West Africa until the final bell, earning himself a brave entry into the Hall of Fame. He was to establish his place there even more firmly when as a Fleet Air Arm pilot he lost both his legs in an accident and then returned to fight again with the Royal Air Force as a Spitfire ace. Like Group Captain Douglas Bader of "Reach for the Sky" fame, he too was shot down over

France and became a prisoner of war in 1943. He was repatriated in 1944 and, after plastic surgery to burns on his face, was flying again before the end of the year.

90 Unfortunately, this was not the case with Caleb Dickinson, one of the Old Harrovian group at Mill Field in 1938. A trainee pilot, he was killed in an accident in 1941. As heir to the nearby Kingweston estate, his tragic loss meant that ownership passed to his sister, Mrs. Joy Burden, who, with incredible generosity, gave the house and grounds to the school in 1991 as a memorial to her dearly loved brother. This was not, of course, the precursor of Millfield's initial occupation of the great Georgian mansion, for RJOM had signed this first lease of the building in 1945 and KW had become, along with ISP, YLC, JK, and endless initials of tutors, part of the school lingo.

100 As the number of pupils increased, so did the number of their initialled tutors, a good many of them birds of passage, as the war was to whisk them away, while others survived the exigencies and returned to make their indelible marks on the story of the school. In addition to the musician, Sidney Masters, two other tutors, John Jarmain and Hedley Rawson, were killed in action during the war, while other, older men sought teaching posts elsewhere. It was RJOM's considered opinion, in the aftermath of the British Expeditionary Force's withdrawal from France through Dunkirk in May 1940, and the imminent threat of a German invasion, that Mill Field would close its doors, perhaps even be taken over by the War Department, which had already happened to Edgarley Hall, then an emergency hospital. In fact he was quite wrong, but, unaware of his misjudgement of the situation, he suggested to his teaching staff that they would do well to take the opportunity of applying for jobs in schools which were losing their young teachers to the forces.

110 S Punton-Smith (SPS), key man in the Services Entry department, went off to Abingdon School, and never returned, though he had hoped to do so, because he died suddenly early in 1946. JR Bunbury (JRB), affectionately known to the pupils as 'Jungle Jim' and Australian born, joined the staff in 1937, moved to Durham School in September 1940, and returned in September 1945, to become Head of the Modern Languages Department. RB Atkinson (RBA), arrived from Ellesmere College in April, 1939, to teach French, English and History. In 1941 he took over as bursar from Alan Grant (ADG), and remained till 1944 when he, like his predecessor, succumbed to the blandishments of industry, then desperately short of young men who knew one end of a balance sheet from the other. However 'Atty' or 'Bud' returned in 1948 to be Assistant Bursar, tutor in charge of school drama, and, probably of greatest importance, to run, with his wife Mary, the first girls' house away from the main buildings, in their own home, Wraxleigh. TP Blythman (TPB), a science graduate, started in January, 1940, and completed two invaluable years at Mill Field before moving for promotion to Marlborough Grammar School in December, 1941. This involved an additional upward movement for him in the Air Training Corps, as he had been Pilot Officer/Adjutant to RJOM's Glastonbury and Street Schools Squadron, and he became Flight Lieutenant/Commander of the Marlborough Schools' Squadron. He did not, however, forget his pleasurable stint as a Mill Field tutor and returned to the fold, rather later than the others, to what had become Millfield by then, in 1962.

130 These stalwarts must have found it incredibly difficult to reconcile the tutorial establishment they had left in the early years of the war with the burgeoning school to which they returned, with its Nissen hut class-rooms, widely spread boarding houses, and

pupils with moustaches who were reminded that they need no longer expect to have to return the salutes of the other ranks.

## Chapter 7

### Games and outdoor activities, 1935-9.

The steady increase in the number of pupils gave rise to an air of confidence in the establishment's future but also to the need for more teaching accommodation. Dormitory space was not a problem as Mill Field seemed to have elastic walls and an extra bed or two could be fitted into most of the rooms, a philosophy which was built into the life of the school for the next thirty years.

10 Prefabricated wooden huts, the first given by RJOM's mother, were erected at a short distance from the main house, on the site which now contains the school secretariat and the staff common room. The pupils were able to help put them together, once the hard standing had been laid, and because they were small, holding just six or seven basic tables and chairs comfortably, they were named 'Chicken Runs'. There was a strong rumour that one of them had been used on a farm for that purpose but it was probably apocryphal. Whatever else may be said of them, and there were some ruderies, they served a purpose and survived for thirty years without ever gathering around them that aura of sentimental attachment to the Nissen huts which so many OMs have expressed.

20 Science teaching continued in the stable block while new ponies were welcomed into the stables to satisfy the demand for riding lessons and experience. However before them, in the late autumn of 1937, had come the redoubtable figure of equestrian instructor Captain Roy Hern, who established the school's reputation as a centre of excellence in all things to do with the horse. He was then, and continued to be until 1939, the chief instructor of the Porlock Vale Riding School, as well as running a small farm on the Quantocks, so that it was not until 1944, when he was released from military service with the West Somerset Yeomanry, that he really took control of the Millfield riding scene. However, it was he who had sought out suitable new ponies for the school and travelled a considerable distance regularly by car to help with the instruction and this, aided by the occasional tip of a 'cert' at a local point-to-point, helped to endear him to RJOM, himself a lover of horseflesh. Roy rode to hounds, played an excellent game of polo and could claim to have sabred an enemy infantryman to death while serving with a mounted unit, the Glamorgan Yeomanry, in the First World War, in addition to having a parade ground voice and a fine selection of military phraseology.

40 Riding had been established for the benefit of the princes in 1935 and had continued to prosper in spite of the dramatic changes that had occurred in the following year, but no action had been taken with regard to swimming. The pupils at the Palace School at Dhrangadhra had had lessons, but neither the Maharajah nor RJOM seems to have placed high priority on the availability of a pool within easy reach of Street. Local school children were taught in the River Brue, the slow-flowing water about four feet deep being very suitable, but distinctly cold. This was four years before the construction of Greenbank Swimming Pool which originally had the remarkable bonus of being heated by hot water in pipes connected to the great steam-engine which drove the shoe-making machinery in Clark's factory. Like almost every other facility in Street, Greenbank was used by Millfield, in its case for swimming and diving instruction and occasionally for inter-school matches and house matches. The Brue, however, was not used, at least for swimming, but parental questioning as to the likelihood of the provision of a pool for the school in 1937 received an

RJOM reply, with a wave of the arm towards the lake, pond might be a better word, that work on the project was imminent. It had not been, but now it was.

50 The work force, consisting of the boys and Mr Otridge, the general factotum, had first to drain the pond by digging a channel which would carry the water away to a ditch that divided the Mill Field property from the Keen's Elm pasture, a piece of adjoining farm land. Then the real problem had to be faced. The mud, the accumulation of years, had to be shifted in order to have a stretch of water deep enough for swimming, including racing. This was done by first removing the back panel of an old open touring car and turning it into a large scoop with ropes attached at the four corners. Wheresoever the tyres of the rest of the vehicle could get a grip, it was used to drag the scoop in a vertical position across the bottom of the pond. Where there was no grip it was all hands to the ropes and the shovel.

60 After weeks of excruciating effort a rectangular hole about five feet deep and measuring 90 feet by 36 feet had been dredged out. Some of the north bank was already shored up by a brick and concrete wall which included an inlet to the tiny boat house that was really a roof and walls for a floating harbour. The punt that had come with the lease of the house, and which gave much pleasure to the early inhabitants, was tied up there.

Expert help, a local building firm, was called in to extend the north wall, to increase the size of a stone platform, already there to the west, and to build a completely new wall on the south side. A submerged wall was constructed at the east end stretching at an oblique angle from the south wall into the pond area. The principle was that mud at that end would not get into the pool, while the punt could still be used throughout.

70 The water supply was mainly natural, but it could be augmented from the house by means of a series of water-course-linked pools in the wooded area on the slope to the west of the ha-ha. Any overflow from the pond would fall away to the dividing ditch.

Heating for the water was provided by the sun and, as it was usually still, the temperature could reach a comfortable stage, certainly better than that of the Brue. In the deep mid-winter the pool would freeze over and there were those hearties who would run down from the house before breakfast, dive in and swim under the ice without breaking it in the middle before climbing out on the far side. Perhaps not surprisingly, Nathan Penney, the Newfoundlander, was the pre-war record holder.

80 Though crude by the standards of the end of the millennium, the pool, like the Chicken Runs, served a purpose and remains a feature of the landscape, though long since abandoned for swimming or even 'ponding', the punishment inflicted by the boys themselves upon any of their number who 'broke the code', and frowned upon heavily. It is probably best remembered as the home of RJOM's ducks, but it had a life as a fish-pond with breeding-trout in it, and was used by the naval section of the Combined Cadet Force for boating manoeuvres and life-saving practice. Now it is almost purely decorative, spanned by a handsome wooden bridge and containing a few huge golden carp. Sadly, the pretty wooden and tiled boat house has gone, but all the rest, including the mud, remains to evoke memories, probably no longer painful, for those who used it for swimming in the golden summers of their youth.

Cricket, golf, tennis and hockey continued unabated on the school pitches and courts, while Jack Meyer maintained his personal campaigns on the Somerset County Grounds and to a lesser degree on the golf courses and lawn tennis courts. His first appearance for the County had been in June 1936, and he had played a further five matches that season. Whilst at Cambridge in the 1920s he had been regarded as a bowler with an ability to bat; the years in India had altered the emphasis and it was as a batsman that he flourished. His 202 not out versus Lancashire at Taunton was considered by the pundits as one of the best, if not **the** best, innings played by anyone in the 1936 season. In 1937 he played in seven matches and topped the Somerset batting averages, but 1938 provided an astonishing twist when he was chosen to play as a bowler for the Gentlemen of England versus the Australian Touring Team at Lord's. He almost emulated his own performance of 6 wickets for 65 runs twelve years earlier for his Varsity side against the Australian Tourists by taking 5 for 66, including Bradman's wicket, in the first innings. Batting at number ten he was unable to show those skills in a positive way, so that any hope his loyal supporters may have had of his sneaking a place in the Test Team would have been quashed with the realisation that the only all-rounder place was held by the skipper, the great Walter Hammond.

That season, 1938, he turned out for Somerset six times and repeated the same in 1939 with one match in June, one in July and four in August, but he did manage to return to Lord's for a one-day game, again taking 5 wickets; this time it was for MCC against the parliamentary side, the Lords and Commons Cricket Club. Doubtless it was all part of the publicity campaign for Millfield which was establishing itself as a valuable adjunct to the schools patronized by 'the ruling classes' whose offspring did not make the grade at their first attempt to enter university or the officer training establishments of the armed services.

The Millfield pupils do not seem to have suffered in any way as a result of Jack's absences during the cricket season, for he confined himself almost entirely to matches played at home in Somerset and was therefore in the house in the late evening and the early morning to settle any problems which might have arisen. Probably a half-century or a few good wickets during the day would have ameliorated any punishments needing to be meted out. The senior boys enjoyed the responsibility of maintaining good order and were rewarded with the trust of the Headmaster and staff, as well as a number of quite insignificant privileges which, however, added some status. Robert Walton Holmes had been told very casually one day early in 1937, "You'd better be Head Boy", and he was the first of a distinguished line who could be relied upon to keep RJOM informed of things he needed to know and to deal with those he did not need to know. Even after 1945, when new houses began to proliferate, the Head Boy was required to live in Millfield House, though other housemasters were loath to lose their outstanding prefects, and this remained in force until the founder's retirement.

RJOM's other personal sporting pleasures derived from golf at which, like his cricket, he was an outstanding amateur performer. He had represented his university when not required at Fenner's or on the racquets court and had continued to play regularly in India, so that, as a member of Burnham and Berrow Golf Club, he qualified to enter the English Amateur Championship in 1936. Playing tolerably well he reached the third round, a good performance in the circumstances because he could not easily find the time for serious match practice. However, he did use the nine-hole pitch and putt course at Mill Field at

every possible opportunity and to good effect on his short game. This little course, still in use and in a much refined state, was constructed in 1936 with the help of the gardener, Philip Taylor, and his assistants who had to mow the meadow grass to create nine reasonably smooth putting surfaces. In addition to this course, which was on the sloping ground to the south and east of the main house, a close-cut, well-rolled lawn above the ha-ha became a nine-hole putting green. Thus there was plenty of scope for basic practice in the game by staff and pupils who could later, should they wish, move on to the nine-hole courses at Marshall's Elm and Wells. Many, many Millfieldians and their partners will recall being interviewed by RJOM and his number 9 iron, and/or his putter, on the greensward in front of the house. At least one of the former, now a renowned figure in the world of show-business, claims that he reduced his school fees by a third when, batting with the nine iron, he managed to hit a golf ball bowled at him three times out of four. The stuff of legends!

At that time tennis was by comparison rather small beer. Jack, who had somehow managed to play the game for Cambridge in between the cricket matches, entered the Somerset championships, ran tournaments for young people and played country-house tennis whenever the opportunity arose. The two grass courts at Mill Field were well used by the pupils but not in a particularly competitive spirit. After all, the summer was created for cricket, and practice at the nets did not mean lobbing a soft ball over one. However, tennis was never allowed to be just a pastime, and it is arguable that this was the sport that first established the school as a centre of excellence from the mid-50s onwards. No other school can claim such a string of successes in the Junior Covered Courts Championships and at Junior Wimbledon, and it was Jack, the educational innovator, who persuaded County LEAs that his school could provide top-flight tennis coaching, including visits from Fred Perry, and scholastic education second to none in an inspiring environment.

Organisation and coaching of hockey up to the outbreak of the war in 1939 was in the capable hands of Eric Attock, though RJOM helped and played in matches whenever he could. Fixtures were quite easy to obtain, as the game at that time was the Cinderella amongst the majority of public schools, and they did not feel it infra dig to play their second teams against a new small tutorial establishment. Also, hockey has the advantage of not requiring its players to have the robust physique of the rucker forward, so that smaller schools that teach the skills well can hold their own with the larger ones, whereas only once in a while can they do so at rugby. It is worth remembering that more Old Millfieldians have won full international caps at hockey than have done so at rugby football, in spite of the general image of Millfield being a rucker school.

If what has gone before gives the impression that the pre-war Millfieldians did little but besport themselves and pay occasional visits to a Chicken Run for a French lesson or two and the stables tack-room for Chemistry, then that must be belied by the fact that every entrant came with the passing of examinations in view; it was the successes in that quarter that ensured the school's future, even with the onset of war.

## Chapter 8

### War service and new staff, 1939-45.

When the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, announced on the wireless at 11 am on Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, that Britain was now at war with Germany, a small group of holiday course pupils had gathered in the study to listen with the Meyers. Jack told those who were at Mill Field with a view to gaining entry into an Armed Services' officer training establishment that they would be wise to carry on with their studies until the picture was clearer. Eventually the War Ministry announced that all commissions during the emergency would come from the ranks. After a series of phone calls to his father in Ireland, Nigel Harman, who had just transferred from Sherborne School and was aiming for Sandhurst, travelled to Bristol University Officer Training Corps (OTC) Centre, was sworn in as a member of the embodied Territorial Army, received two shillings pay and half-a-crown ration allowance and was sent back to Mill Field, where he subsequently received notice that he was placed on the TA Reserve List until His Majesty King George VI required his services.

Nigel and his military contemporaries were not, however, the first Millfieldians to join the TA. A year earlier at the time of the Munich crisis, when Hitler was threatening to occupy Czecho-Slovakia, RJOM had summoned the senior boys to the sitting-room and told them he was convinced that war would come, even though it had been averted for the time being. He apologised for the fact that there was no OTC for them to join in preparation for service, and then explained that he had been in touch with the local Territorial unit, the Somerset Light Infantry in Somerton, and those who were over seventeen years of age might join if they so wished. Only two volunteered, Nathan Penney, the then Head Boy from Newfoundland, and Bob Barr Smith from Australia, which may seem to cast doubt on the patriotism of home-grown Millfieldians at the time, but most were committed to careers in the Royal Navy or the Royal Air Force and did not wish to compromise their decisions. Nathan and Bob obviously gained from those Drill Nights in the car park behind the White Hart, for they both subsequently joined the wartime army, Nathan the Newfoundland Rangers, and Bob the Life Guards. Some thirty years later Nathan revisited the White Hart for old times' sake and found his platoon sergeant still sitting in the public bar.

Jack Meyer also made his bid to join the Royal Air Force, and, while awaiting a response from the Air Ministry, did his best to carry on running the school as before, plugging the gaps as they occurred. He told his young colleagues that he would not stand in their way if they wished to enlist, but he was prepared to support them if they wished to claim exemption. Even before that Tom Kirkwood, who had been appointed Director of Studies late in 1937, and who had taught Maths, resigned and went into the army where he raced up the promotion ladder, reaching the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the 5th Dragoon Guards by 1945.

Two other young men who had joined the staff in 1938 found themselves called to the colours very soon after war was declared. Hedley Rawson went off as a subaltern in The Green Howards before the Autumn Term began, while John Jarman left in November for basic training and subsequent commissioning in the Royal Artillery. The latter had taken over Tom Kirkwood's maths tutorials, so his loss in the middle of term was particularly



unfortunate, as finding good replacements was hard. Sidney Masters, the organist at St. John's, Glastonbury, who had been in charge of school music since 1936, was selected to train as a Morse code signaller in the Royal Navy, an apt choice for one so gifted at fingering the keys, while there was concern that Raymond Singleton, the school biologist, might be taken with the next age draft.

50 Fortunately, RJOM's gloomy forecast of the immediate demise of the school, made undoubtedly in the likelihood of his own departure, for he would not have believed that anyone else could have run the show, did not come true. Though numbers of pupils had dropped by three in the autumn of 1939, from forty to thirty-seven, they had recovered to forty-two in the summer of 1940. A year later there were sixty on the ISP list, and the numbers never dropped again.

60 Unfortunately but not surprisingly, the suggestion of possible closure had an unsettling effect on the staff, and several of the established members prepared to leave. Eric Attock, the youngest tutor in 1936, moved to Bryanston, Punton-Smith to Abingdon, and Jim Bunbury to Durham. These transfers occurred in the summer of 1940 with the Battle of Britain taking place in the skies above the possible landing beaches and the approaches to London, whereas in September 1939, there had been a period of calm panic when the anticipation of the appearance of German bombers and the onset of gas attacks was almost more alarming than the real thing. The black-out and shortage of petrol had made travel difficult which meant that parents whose children had been evacuated from the cities to safer areas, usually in the countryside, could not visit them often and began to demand their return. In a few cases whole schools had been moved, intact with staff, but these were just a foretaste of what was to happen in south-east England some nine or ten months later. As a result of these upheavals there were displaced teachers in many areas who were uncertain of their jobs and their prospects, though there were many vacancies caused by young staff joining up.

70 Small as it was, Mill Field had its problems, particularly in replacing young members of staff in 1939 and the more experienced ones in 1940. Fortunately Bud Atkinson, who had taken a temporary post for the Summer Term of 1939, agreed to stay on. In the circumstances he could hardly have done otherwise, for he was, like his new headmaster, not only an Old Haileyburian, but a graduate of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and those are the sort of chains that bind men together in times of crisis.

80 John Jarman's successor as maths tutor was the formidable Miss GI Drake, who had taught for the previous nineteen years at Beaumont College near Windsor, where she shared a house with a kindergarten teacher, Miss EN Keay. Most of the latter's pupils were the offspring of Eton College housemasters and other members of staff, and in fact her classes were held in one of the school houses. Like Mill Field, Eton was losing its young masters, and Miss Keay, realising that the number of her potential customers was dwindling fast, agreed to travel with Miss Drake to Street and to set up what was to be a feature of the school for many years, a billet. They bought a house called Moormead, and moved there in January 1940, Miss Keay acting as housekeeper while Miss Drake began her teaching programme. As pupil numbers increased that year they were asked to look after the overflow, those for whom there were no beds in Mill Field itself. They were paid a flat rate for each pupil's board and lodging which meant they had to cope with the problems created

90 by food-rationing, but, in those circumstances, catering for six or seven was easier than just for two. Jim Bunbury and his wife also took in one or two boarders, their house, Montbrison on Roman Way, Glastonbury, being an easy cycle ride away. This, however, only lasted till their departure for Durham in September, 1940.

100 Jack Meyer had begun his stint as a pupil at Haileybury in 1918, the last year of the Great War, and was well aware of the presence there of 'the dug-outs', the witty but unkind name given to those elderly schoolmasters who had come out of retirement to teach in place of the young staff who had gone to serve their country in uniform. Hence he took stock of the potential among the superannuated teachers in central Somerset and immediately found a wonderful return in the person of the Rev Benjamin Hayward Fisher, only recently retired as the Head of Classics at Repton School. Burnham and Berrow Golf Club was the catalyst in this case, for 'Daddy' Fisher, as he was fondly nick-named by the pupils, was as keen on the game as Jack, and, after a few rounds together, agreed to fill in for the time being. This was to last for twenty-two years, and another Millfield pattern was set, not just for wartime, but for the next thirty years, the employment of retired teachers, headmasters included, who were determined not to vegetate. They were paid salaries which, with their pensions, brought their incomes back to what they had been before they had been pushed onto what they considered to be the scrap-heap.

110 In a totally different category were the family Sankey who arrived from London in the violent summer of 1940. They were cousins of Jack, and each party at the time needed the other. Elnith, mother of three daughters, was hoping to find a place of safety, while Jack was able to use their talents to marvellously good effect. His need of a good secretary was paramount with increasing numbers and the complications to school organisation caused by the war. This slot was filled by Amothe, ACBS in her official capacity, the eldest of the three girls, who was to serve Millfield with utter devotion for the next thirty years. It was as well that she had a natural genius, as well as a professional training, for organisation, and an acute memory and eye for detail, because her employer cousin was not particularly gifted with any of those attributes. Her younger sister, Gillian, was at another boarding school, though she did spend the summer term of 1941 at Millfield as a pupil, and, thus had the opportunity to see again her future husband, the Head Boy, John Church, having met him in 1940 for the first time. The youngest of the three, Everel, was added to the ISP list for 120 summer 1940, and was for some considerable time the longest serving member of the YLC, not leaving until summer 1945, when she had qualified to read medicine at university. At this time most of the Millfield girls stayed for one or two years only, as they were studying for Higher School Certificate or, perhaps, 1<sup>st</sup> M.B.'s, both of which were eighteen month courses after School Certificate had been passed.

130 Elnith herself, who was a talented artist, took on a number of roles. She took charge of the Cottage, which had presumably been built for the Clarks' gardener. Taylor however preferred to live in the Gate Lodge, and so the small house, built from the local blue lias, and close by the kitchen garden, became the temporary home of the Sankeys and the first separate girls' house. So, apart from having her own daughters under her eye, Elnith (CES) had to watch other people's female offspring, as well as teach English and Religious Studies to the younger pupils, and art to all in The Chalet, which long before had given hope of life to a girl stricken with tuberculosis. Elnith's kindness, patience and determination were so marked that it was not long before Jack asked her to take full charge of the Millfield Juniors,

140 those ten or so boys under the age of fourteen who were working towards public school Common Entrance exams or scholarships. Her considerable success in this field led to a steady increase in the number of entries in this category throughout the war years, so that with peace in 1945 it was necessary to find a new, separate home for them. Edgarley Hall, Millfield's Junior School in Glastonbury, owes a great debt for its foundation, not just to RJO Meyer but also to Mrs Elnith Sankey who was to become a Founder Governor of Millfield School Ltd in 1953.

It would be unfair at this point not to mention that Everel took upon herself, in the interval between leaving school and going to university, the summer holidays of 1945, the task of redecorating the whole interior, including the floor-boards, of Edgarley, which had been used brutally by the army throughout the war. No other Old Millfieldian can possibly have made such a positive, personal contribution to the upkeep of the 'Old School'. As every older generation is likely to say, "They don't make 'em like that any more".

## Chapter 9

### War time privations, 1939-40.

To use the phrase repeated several times by Nigel Harman to describe what happened at Mill Field when the war broke out, everyone just had to press on. He recalled what life was like in the phoney war period and in the aftermath of Dunkirk when recording his memories of those days, whilst confined to a hospital bed in the War Veteran's Retirement Village outside Sydney in 1993.

10 The impression he gives is of a rather pleasant day to day existence, one in fact without much pressure, certainly compared to his earlier pre-exam period at Sherborne, because he was no longer aiming for the Services exams, which were temporarily suspended, but for the Higher School Certificate. The former would have been taken in November 1939, whereas the HSC exams were scheduled for June 1940, and Nigel was none too sure when his call-up papers might arrive.

20 Inevitably there were some intrusions into school routine caused by the war. Although there was little land fighting after the fall of Poland, German U-Boats and surface-raiders were causing havoc amongst the convoys bringing food and other supplies to Britain and France. Government rationing of various commodities was introduced quickly, which made the dining-table much less attractive and travel more difficult. Petrol coupons meant that only 'necessary' journeys could be made in private transport, while horse-drawn  
30 mowers came back into fashion for games fields. Already by November, 1939, Mill Field, or Millfield, which was by then being used frequently, was in some difficulty. Percival Otridge, the general factotum and the brains behind the conversion of the pond into a swimming pool, wrote from his sick-bed at his home in Butleigh on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month:-

"Mr. Meyer.

Dear Sir,

30 As you will observe by the attendant letter in with Registration Book, I wrote this yesterday in readiness for postage this morning but on receiving your P.C. I have arranged for a friend to deliver it to you personally. As you are probably aware, the new Coupons are not exchangeable for petrol until Nov.23, and if we use our new Coupons we shall be short at the end of next period. I am sending herewith (2) tins, 4 Galls. which will explain itself,

I am Sir

Yours faithfully

P. Otridge.

P.S. There is, as you know 6 Galls in the back of the Morris 6 that is broken up."

The Registration Book was for a Morris 10, but sadly Mr Otridge was never to see it running again, as he did not recover from his illness and died in the following February. He had been more than just the general factotum, as he was described by Nathan Penney, for he had given lessons in wood-work and on the internal combustion engine to pupils in class-

40 time. For those going into the armed forces shortly this was a particular boon. Nigel Harman, who hoped to serve in 'Tanks', realised that he needed to know the practical side of engine maintenance and found Otridge's instruction invaluable. He was also taught how to mix and lay concrete, equally important in a later life.

The winter weather from November 1939 onwards was particularly severe, though this was never acknowledged publicly, that is in the newspapers or on the radio, in case it would prove valuable to the enemy who were known to be waiting for the first report of an anticyclone over the Bay of Biscay to launch an enormous attack on the Maginot Line in eastern France. Ponds and rivers froze over and by January 1940 the whole country was covered in snow. At Millfield organised outdoor games were virtually impossible to play,  
50 though it was still feasible to kick a football about, while badminton continued in the TA Drill Hall in Glastonbury. This latter had been a feature of the school's activities since 1939, along with small-bore rifle shooting, supervised by the permanent staff instructor from the Somerset Light Infantry at the same venue.

RJOM, who was a keen rough-shooter himself, allowed older pupils to bring shot-guns to the school, so that Peter Garnier, on hearing a report that a flock of wild geese had landed on the frozen moors, took Nigel Harman with him in his green Morgan three-wheeler to improve their dinner prospects. As they stalked slowly through the crisp thickets on the edge of the frozen lake covering the peat diggings, they neither saw nor heard any sign of any birds of any sort until, in a heart-stopping whirring of wings, the whole goose  
60 population of Godney Moor struggled into the air from beneath the hunters' feet. Peter, the one with the gun, gave them a left and then a right and, before he could reload, the geese were gone, quite untouched by shot. So it was back to rations at Millfield, Nigel quietly pleased that they had failed to bag any of the beautiful creatures but delighted with the adventure. Peter must have regretted his missed opportunity of a certain glory and a cooked goose, but he still had his beloved Morgan. It can have been no coincidence that when the war ended he was appointed Motor Sport Editor of 'The Autocar' and not of 'The Shooting Times'.

The icy weather persisted into March and then gave way to a warm spring, followed by a hot summer. Millfield played hockey and then, at last, cricket matches on the home  
70 ground, in which Nigel Harman, the ex-Sherborne wicket-keeper, showed his mettle. He finally parted with his Millfield hockey shirt when packing to go to Australia in 1960, and he never forgot the lessons he learned when standing behind the timbers to the bowling of RJOM and Bill Andrews, the Somerset pace-man, each of whom had claimed the great Don Bradman's wicket in 1938. Nigel, however, had other interests as well as sport of the orthodox kind. He became head mole-catcher, using a sprung mole-trap and then skinning the unfortunate victim before curing the pelt in the science lab by the stables. He hoped for a pair of trousers or a waistcoat, but he did not have enough pelts before he had to leave for the war, and, though they were carefully stored at home, the moth wreaked its havoc over the next five years so the dustbin received the remains.

80 Sadly, Nigel's jackdaw-keeping also fell foul of the war. Notwithstanding his wild-geese chase of the winter, he teamed up with Terry Target to go bird-watching, it would be too trite to say 'of the feathered kind', and they each found and adopted young jackdaws which they were permitted to keep in an out-house. After a very little training these smart

birds were allowed to fly free and would come back on their master's call. Nigel's Jacky won himself a place in Millfield mythology by flying in through the window of Joyce Meyer's bedroom and having a dust-bath in the large bowl of face-powder on her dressing-table, common in those days. With the end of the exams that summer, he was packed in a travelling-box along with the rest of Nigel's clobber, mole-skins and all, and taken home to live in Ireland. When his young master left to don his uniform, Jacky too flew off one day.

90           The fact that "there was a war on" did not loom very large in Millfield life, though RJOM and Punton-Smith, the First World War soldier, were Air Raid Wardens, and Joyce Meyer had joined the Red Cross. There were no air-raids and there were few land casualties, and even the German assaults, first on Denmark and then on Norway, at the beginning of April - they did not need to know the weather over the Bay of Biscay - did not upset the general tenor. Even the overwhelming of the Dutch defences and the surrender of Belgium in May, closer to home, did not interfere with the cricket fixtures, while the evacuation of the British troops from the Dunkirk beaches was looked upon as a victory. The collapse of France under the German blitzkrieg was generally treated as a misfortune, but people were inclined to agree with Churchill that we would do much better on our own,  
100 no longer encumbered with unreliable allies. It was, however, accepted that the country was in a tight spot.

          The idea of a possible German invasion of Britain was brought home to people when the government announced a second evacuation of school children from the most vulnerable area, not just the towns and cities, but the whole of the South East corner of England. That even included Hertfordshire, and Jack Meyer was quick to offer Millfield as a safe haven for his old school, Haileybury, which had a number of buildings about to be compulsorily requisitioned as an emergency hospital. Though the idea was debated, it was rejected by the Haileybury governors, who decided that the College should stay in its own premises even under extreme difficulties, which was just as well, for Imperial Services  
110 College, a brother institution at Windsor, was forced to seek new accommodation in 1942 and amalgamated with Haileybury.

          On the same day that the first British casualties in the fighting were evacuated by sea from France, 20<sup>th</sup> May, an appeal was broadcast by the government for able-bodied men, not already in the armed services, to join a new organisation, the Local Defence Volunteers. There already existed a framework upon which to build, the Territorial Associations in the counties. They had been asked in the previous autumn, once their main forces had been embodied, to create a register of men aged between 45 and 55, with leadership experience, naturally mainly in the Great War, who would form the back-bone of what were called National Defence Companies. The LDV was different, for any man aged 17 or over could put  
120 his name forward, but the officers and senior NCOs were largely already in place, as a result of the government's foresight.

          Of the 46 Millfieldians in residence that May day in 1940, 27 were of an age to volunteer. Those with bicycles got to the police station first, only to find it shut. They decided to wait and eventually a local constable arrived and, having dismounted from his cycle, asked what was going on. When the reason was explained, he pleaded total ignorance but agreed to make a list of their names so that they would go back to the school. RJOM agreed that they should start training immediately, even without an official blessing

and indeed without arms. Clive Beasley, the oldest among them and an ex-Company Sergeant-Major of the Clifton College OTC, took command and drilled the squad which was to become the Millfield Platoon of the Street LDV, and, subsequently, when the title was changed, the Home Guard. When the summer term ended more than half of the original members left the school, most to join the armed forces immediately, and two of them were later to be killed in action, Roger Watson in 1943 and Andrew Miller in 1944.

It was agreed with the local LDV commander that the school platoon should continue to train under its own steam and only carry out guard duties at week-ends, which would not interfere with their studies. These duties, embarrassingly for the young volunteers, included standing outside the Street post office and telephone exchange on a Saturday night when the local girls were walking home from the Playhouse Theatre, later re-christened the Maxime, after the cinema show. Dressed in neat civilian clothes with only LDV armbands to identify their purpose, they were expected to prevent the German parachutists, possibly disguised as nuns, from gaining control of Britain's communications, not to suffer the ribald comments of a group of pretty young women. The whole guard of nine young men had, at first, one Webley .45 revolver and one Sam Browne belt between them.

The second position that they were to guard was a small reservoir on Street Hill. This duty, unlike the lively spot in the High Street, was excessively dull and ameliorated only by the fireflies which appeared in huge numbers in the late evenings of that particularly balmy summer. Eventually they were provided with rifles as the whole country was ransacked for weapons. School OTCs had their serviceable rifles requisitioned and replaced with Boer War weapons, while sporting guns were sacrificed by farmers and other loyal folk. Canadian rifles, left behind after the First World War, were brought out of military store and de-greased, but they were of a different calibre to the British service rifles, so there was practically no suitable ammunition. However, Joyce Meyer was able to provide another kind of ammunition for the lonely sentries, large numbers of sandwiches which would at least keep the wolf at bay. The National Loaf, which had a rather unappetising grey colour, was never rationed during wartime, unlike most other foods.

All this quasi-military activity did bring home to people that there was an emergency, and, although Somerset did not at first suffer air attacks, news of troop trains, packed with haggard French soldiers, passing westward through Somerton and Yeovil Junction bound for repatriation via Plymouth, made them wonder if the next visitors might not be the Hun. However, between 25<sup>th</sup> May, when the evacuation of the British and French troops from the Dunkirk beaches began and 4<sup>th</sup> June, when the last ship pulled away, during which time 330,000 men were saved from death or captivity, Millfield managed to play four cricket matches, two against Etonhurst, at the time a prep school at Ashcott, and two against Elmhurst County School in Street.

“There is time to finish the game and then defeat the Spaniards”, said Drake.

## Chapter 10

### New recruits to the staff, 1940-2.

The enthusiasm engendered at Millfield by the formation of the LDV was distinctly tempered when the sad news filtered through that Hedley Rawson had been killed. His regiment, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Green Howards, had taken part in the abortive attempt to stop the German army occupying Norway, where Hedley was lost in action on 29<sup>th</sup> April. Some half of the school had known him, as well as most of the staff, and for the majority it was the first time that the real consequence of war came home to them. He had, of course, been a tutor, and, mercifully, another year was to pass before an old pupil joined the casualty list.

RJOM was, unlike his pupils, going through another slough of despond, similar to that of late 1935, where he could no longer see hope for the future of his still small tutorial school. It was at this point that he advised his teachers to start looking for new jobs, and then the Sankeys arrived. He could not easily express his gloom to his cousins, who were prepared to work for next to nothing and happy to have their feet on apparently firm ground, but it was difficult not to explain why the longest serving tutors, SPS, EA (Eric Attock) and JRB, were all applying for posts elsewhere. Fortunately the new stalwarts, RBA, TPB, and GID stood alongside ADG (Alan Grant). Raymond Singleton's position was still in jeopardy, but he had married in April and had introduced his wife, Hilda, another biology graduate, as a possible replacement when he was called up. She (HRS) started teaching on a part-time basis and then took over her husband's time-table in January 1941, when he was required to train for a commission in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Another extremely important part-time appointment had been that of a replacement for the many faceted Otridge as wood-work instructor. Finding someone to succeed him in all aspects of his work was impossible, but there was a well-qualified wood-work teacher, Alfred T Taylor, employed at the Glastonbury Technical School, and, when approached, he showed interest in coming to Millfield. Shortly after Percival Otridge's death, ATT began an association which was to last to the end of the war, two or three hours of expert and utterly devoted work each Saturday afternoon. His successes with candidates for the School Certificate exams over the years, on a few occasions a candidate's only pass, were phenomenal. ATT's pupil numbers increased, and in the autumn of 1941 he persuaded Boss to approve the manufacture of a new work-bench and the purchase of two new complete sets of tools, a proposition unthinkable little more than a year before. Unfortunately ATT became ill on a number of occasions, probably partly due to overwork because, apart from his regular job at the Technical School and his Saturday afternoons at Millfield, he was taking adult evening classes and fitting in time on Saturday mornings with the South East Essex Technical College, which had been evacuated to the area. When he was laid low and unable to attend, his place was taken by Clifton Kelynack, a registered conscientious objector, who had been directed to do land work by a tribunal. At Millfield he was working with Philip Taylor, the gardener, and overseeing the pupils doing 'Public Works', though he was a graduate musician, and, after a short time, he was granted permission to do some teaching of classics. For a period in 1942 a senior pupil, John Carter, an early ATT success and who was indeed the actual constructor of the new bench, gave most of the instruction to the exam candidates and proved adept at the job. John never



forgot this episode of his youth, for, after becoming a fighter-pilot with the Fleet Air Arm, flying Seafires and 'beating up' Millfield occasionally for RNAS Yeovilton, and later graduating from Agricultural College, followed by a career rubber planting in Malaysia, he  
50 'retired' in order to run a special school for disadvantaged children in Hampshire.

Staffing problems were exacerbated by the steady increase in pupil numbers. The forty-six on the books at the end of the summer term in July 1940 had become fifty-nine for the autumn term starting in September. The constant air attacks had made the south-east and south coast of England a dangerous area in which to live and Street seemed to be a particularly safe place. It was not, however, considered safe enough for the last of the six original Indian princes, who had arrived at Mill Field in 1935, and he, Surendra Jhala, was sent home with his brother, Virendra. The latter had been at Haileybury since 1938, the same year that Surendra had come back to Mill Field from Blundell's.

Harry Hawker, the last but one of the 1936 entry, also departed in July, leaving just  
60 Dudley Sampson, the next Head Boy, who could still remember the school in its infancy. He left in December to join the Royal Air Force, in which he was to have a distinguished career as a pilot in both war and peace.

It was at the end of July that the Battle of Britain began in earnest but there was little action over Somerset, though there were occasional air raid warnings sounding, as German reconnaissance planes sought out future targets. The aircraft factories at Yeovil and Filton were picked out for daylight raids and Street lies between them, some way from both. The danger therefore of being bombed was minimal, as Clarks shoe factory could hardly be described as of prime importance, though it was turning out army boots and other military equipment. The about-to-be Head Boy, and, rather later, Wing Commander, Dudley  
70 Sampson saw a low-flying Heinkel 111 cross the area, but thought that the pilot was probably lost.

This calm atmosphere did help to create a sense of security which some people felt was misplaced. Mr Macmillan, the chief air raid warden in Street, would receive early warning of the approach of enemy aircraft and would immediately phone round his sector wardens to alert them before the sirens were sounded. Millfield was the bane of his life at that time, for the warden, RJOM, could never be found quickly enough to be at his post and to be able to report that all precautions had been taken to ensure his charges' safety. In fact, he was trying desperately in the face of huge difficulties, only made worse by the bomb threats, to ensure that his young charges should have as normal a school life as possible.  
80 Class-work and games had equal priority, while the Germans came a poor third, and these latter were not going to divert him at a moment's notice from teaching the juniors about the Bible or marking out the football pitch. It should be remarked that, as the war ended, Mr Macmillan chose to send his daughter Margaret to Millfield as a day girl.

Millfield House itself had good cellars which could be used as an air raid shelter in a dire emergency, while the swimming-pool was designated as a static water tank for use by the fire brigade if mains water pipes were fractured by bombing. Fortunately the cellars were used only rarely, and this inevitably occurred when Street was under the flight path of the large forces attacking Bristol or Cardiff or Swansea. A few bombs were dropped at night in the general area, presumably by strays unloading on their way back to base in France, but  
90 damage was negligible.

Though censorship was skilfully applied to the daily radio news bulletins and the newspapers, in order to keep up civilian morale and to prevent the enemy from making use of information in judging the effectiveness of their attacks, people soon got to know when there had been a raid within a radius of about thirty miles of their own homes. There was no hiding the fact that the Bristol Aeroplane Company factory at Filton in the northern suburbs of Bristol had been hit by some seventy bombs in broad daylight at noon on 25<sup>th</sup> September and that there was virtually no response from the air or ground defences. Worse was to come when the German Luftwaffe was switched to night bombing and the centre of Bristol was blitzed and set alight on 25<sup>th</sup> November. The glow of the fires could be clearly seen above and beyond the Mendip Hills by the watchers in Street, while the firemen were called to relieve the beleaguered city brigade along with contingents from other towns in Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Evacuees arrived at the reception centre in Street on the following day, and Joyce Meyer was there in her capacity as an officer of the Red Cross to get them settled into temporary accommodation.

Fortunately Yeovil, only fifteen miles away, never received quite the same attention, though the centre of Sherborne was severely damaged in an attack which was probably intended for its larger neighbour, and it continued to turn out vitally needed aircraft for the RAF.

Irrespective of all this action going on around, the pupils of Mill Field still needed teaching, and September 1940 brought the appointment of Victor Perthen to the science department. He had been on the staff of Belmont School, Falmouth, which had been under such severe air attack that numbers dwindled away. He was so successful a tutor that RJOM struggled hard and long to keep him from being conscripted, but eventually had to give best to Their Lordships of the Admiralty who commissioned Victor as Instructor-Sub Lieutenant, RN Volunteer Reserve with effect from September 1943. In August 1940, the Royal Navy had snatched away Olaf Meers, Mill Field maths tutor since 1937, to be an engineer officer, so Jack was raring for a fight.

However, at the same time, September 1940, there arrived the calming influence of Mrs Christine Johnson, a Quaker, whose elderly parents lived in Street. A London University graduate, at Millfield she taught History, English and Divinity, the latter as Head of Department in the 50s, until her retirement twenty-seven years later. In addition, a month or so after her arrival, she moved with her family to Bove Moor and for a time helped the cause by billeting a couple of girls from the school when their numbers increased in 1942. When she left in 1967 the Governors bought her home and it continues as an important and since enlarged girls' boarding house, bearing her name. A whole generation remember her for her scholarship and her patience in class, and those girls, and a few boys, as well as one or two members of staff who were lucky enough to board at Bove Moor Orchard, 3 Butleigh Road, recall her kindness and concern for their well-being.

Another important part-time appointee was H Sydney-Jones, sometime 9<sup>th</sup> Wrangler at Cambridge and ex-headmaster, then well over 70, who taught Maths and some Science. As he, Victor Perthen and Christine Johnson were facing their new jobs that September, twenty-nine new pupils were taking the places, and more, of the sixteen leavers. Two girls, Imogen Benjamin and Jean Harrison, joined Everal Sankey, who had come with the rest of the family in the late summer. Five new Common Entrance candidates increased to thirteen

140 the number of juniors, who were to be organised by Everel's mother, CES. The Middle Common Room (MCR), which had hardly featured before, doubled its numbers to eight and was placed in the care of the experienced GID. With Amothe Sankey established behind her typewriter in Boss's study (Boss was what she had just christened her cousin, Jack Meyer), these three ladies could lay claim to have established the organisation which saw Millfield through the war years from 1940 to 1945 and well beyond.

150 Jack himself continued to oversee the progress of the seniors, thirty-eight in number in September 1940, including twenty new arrivals, several of whom were booked in for one term only and required a powerful boost to get them through vital exams in practically no time at all. For convenience, though many were receiving individual tuition, the pupils were placed into groups which were dictated by the exams they were due to take. This system had been introduced in 1939, each group being overseen by a nominated tutor. Group I consisted of those aiming for commissions in the armed forces, though a majority of them were candidates for the Royal Navy Special Entry Exam. A pass meant that those who had not entered the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth at the age of thirteen could become regular officers in the RN or the Royal Marines. Group II was the Higher School Certificate, Intermediate Science and 1<sup>st</sup> MB set, while Group III covered School Certificate, and the Oxford and Cambridge Commoners' exam, the latter usually being either Latin or Greek at School Certificate standard which was then a requirement for all, even pure scientists.

Group IV was a reception area for those requiring special help either because they had failed Common Entrance to the school of their choice, or, for some reason, had not taken the exam. Frequently they required very careful handling so that they might gain or regain some self-esteem.

160 The Juniors were divided among three groups, V, VI and VII, the first comprising those who would definitely sit Common Entrance, the second those who might sit if their learning problems could be sorted out, and lastly those whom Jack considered could not be coached to the right standard in the time available.

170 The length of stay at the school was not normally long, especially among the seniors who sat the relevant exams and departed promptly to await results which would decide for most of them whether they would continue their studies at university or join the forces. A year was probably the average, but there were those who came for a term only in a last desperate attempt to make up for earlier missed opportunities. The School Certificate entrants formed the Middle Common Room and generally stayed for two scholastic years, though inevitably there were exceptions, while the juniors tended to arrive with two to three years in hand before Common Entrance and they left if they had been successful. For those who were not, there was a guaranteed place at Millfield.

## Chapter 11

### Financial and staffing problems, 1941-2.

It might be considered unfortunate by those who attended in the early days that the increase in number to sixty or thereabouts inevitably meant that organisation of a more rigid nature was required. The happy-go-lucky atmosphere of the Thirties had not been totally lost, but the Group System was in place, whilst war-time conditions made exam candidates more aware of the need for success, thus promoting a somewhat more serious approach to their problems. In 1941 the staff still gathered with RJOM in the morning to decide who was going to teach what and to whom that day, so they could hardly claim that they were operating a heavily structured regime. On the other hand many of the older boys were fully aware that the fees their parents were paying for them to go to Millfield were appreciably greater than those they had been paying at their previous schools, and therefore expected that their noses would be pressed to the grindstone; what else!

In 1935 the Jhalawar Durbar, the State Government, agreed to pay fees of £750 per annum for Baby Raj's education, guardianship, and total upkeep whilst at Millfield. A year later, six months after the debacle caused by the Maharajah of Dhrangadhra, RJOM was offering a year's boarding education for 120 guineas, and, for pupils from abroad, complete charge for the same period, to include holidays and guardians' fees, for some 200 guineas. As public school fees were then around 150 guineas (£165) p.a., it was not too difficult to fill the twelve places available in September 1936. Unfortunately, the income hardly covered the expenses, and it was necessary to increase both numbers and fees in the following year. By 1941 most of the parents were paying 70 guineas a term, an increase of 75% in five years, at a time of very low inflation. Obviously they thought it worthwhile.

Even so, the local shopkeepers, who had been immensely helpful during the crisis of 1936, were still kept waiting for their bills to be paid, and the staff did not always get their cheques on time. On 31<sup>st</sup> December 1942 Miss Drake, the maths tutor, wrote from The Castle Hotel, Windsor, whilst staying there during the Christmas holiday:-

"Dear Mr. Meyer,

I went to my bank this morning and the cashier told me that my salary due on 1<sup>st</sup> December had not yet been received. Will you be good enough to send it in cash by return of post as I must pay my account here before I leave next Tuesday morning and I do not want to ask any of our friends at Eton to lend me money.

Yours very sincerely

G.I. Drake"

Seven months later, when again on holiday, she wrote from Burnham-on-Sea:-

40 "Dear Mr. Meyer,

Although you promised that, if you could not pay all the Money due to me, you would, at least, pay into my account by Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> August my salary due on 1<sup>st</sup> July, yet when I made enquiries about this, I found that you had not done so. If I do not hear from your bank that this money is paid into my account before the end of the week, I shall have to return home, as I have not enough money to pay my expenses here and I am not prepared to overdraw my account, so will you ask your bank manager to inform me as soon as it is paid in.

50 I heard over the wireless of your successes at Lords.

Congratulations.

I hope you will take a much needed rest during the vacation.

Yours sincerely

G.I. Drake"

Exactly a year later to the day since the first letter and from the same hotel in Windsor came :-

"Dear Mr. Meyer,

60 Once again I have the unpleasant task of writing to ask you for my money due on 1<sup>st</sup> December. I must have it and also the money due tomorrow in my bank here by next Tuesday morning as I need more than the one month's money to pay my account here. May I trouble you to wire me as soon as the money is in.

With all good wishes for 1944 to you and Mrs. Meyer,

Yours very sincerely,

G.I. Drake"

Lastly, in the following August, this time from Beeston, Notts, it was:-

“Dear Mr. Meyer,

My bank statement arrived yesterday and I notice that two months’ salary is now overdue and therefore I, once again, have the unpleasant task of having to write to ask you to have it paid into my account as soon as possible as I am needing it.

70

Will you be good enough to inform me when you have paid the money into my account.

Yours very sincerely,

G.I. Drake”

Other staff were obviously in the same boat as the long-suffering Miss Drake. George Turner, GBAT, who joined the party in 1941, answered the question asked by a Windmill interviewer in 1973, “Where did the money come from in the early years to set Millfield on its feet?” with the following:-

80

“I don’t think it really came from anywhere. This is to say, it could only come out of the parental pocket. Everything was very austere and one had to make do. Salaries were low and often slow in being paid.”

In fact, this was probably the least of the worries of G Addison Turner - that was the style he used in signing his letters - for, although aged 40 and registered by the National Service Board as in a reserved occupation, he received papers at the start of May 1942, nearly a year after his arrival from his home on Lundy Island, warning that he would be liable to register for call-up in July.

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He had advertised in The Times on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1941, offering his services as a tutor in a holiday or country post, a calling he had followed since leaving London University in 1926 with a general degree in English, Latin, Maths and French and an honours degree in Mediaeval and Modern History. It would have been difficult to find anyone better qualified to provide for the school’s needs at that particular moment and Boss grabbed him while he could. By an odd chance the early part of GBAT’s education had been in Weston-super-Mare at Etonhurst School, long before it had moved to Ashcott and given its name to the building which was a Millfield boys’ boarding house for many years. Although he had no more military experience than some mine-watching on Lundy and membership of the Home Guard, he seemed to slip naturally into the gap created by the departure of Punton-Smith and took over the Services Group, most of whom were being prepared for the Special Entry exam for the Royal Marines. His main subjects were History and Geography, and as the latter involved map-reading he was soon persuaded by the Officer Commanding 914 Squadron, Glastonbury and Street Schools’ Squadron of the Air Training Corps, to become an instructor of navigation for the cadets. As the OC and the Headmaster were one and the same person, Flying Officer RJO Meyer, RAFVR, George did not really have much choice in

100

the matter. The ATC had been set up on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1941 by the government and handed over to the Royal Air Force in August for administrative and training purposes. The RAF had not forgotten the tall, slightly over-age Headmaster, a volunteer for air-crew duties, who was still running his small school in Somerset. The admin officer was a Scot, WB Henderson of Strode School, Street, and the two expert educationists made a splendid team, enthusing their young volunteers and preparing them for possible flying training in the Royal Air Force or the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. The cadets included a number of those Millfield pupils whose parents permitted them to join, while Amothe Sankey was Squadron secretary.

Unfortunately none of this activity helped GBAT. After nine months spent almost continuously teaching, in term time and on the holiday courses, he was able to visit his beloved Lundy for a short break in April 1942, only to receive notice on his return to the mainland that he must arrange for his furniture and other belongings in his cottage to be removed, as for security reasons the Island was being wholly taken over by the Navy. A few days later he received the reminder through the post that his deferment from call-up was due for review in July.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May RJOM applied for an indefinite deferment for George and, as a result, Lady Helen Asquith, one of HM Inspectors of Schools and a resident of Mells, some fifteen miles from Millfield, visited the school on 1<sup>st</sup> July and reported that George's services were not indispensable. It was perhaps injudicious of Jack to have written in his application that, "My staff already contain a dangerously large proportion of women."

His next gambit was an approach to the Manpower Board which asked the question, "What efforts have you made to secure a substitute for Mr. Turner by employing women?" His reply was, "None available and in any case I have 50% of women masters already".

By this time George had been placed in Grade 2 by a medical board and was given ten days notice to report for army primary training at Chesterfield in Derbyshire on 15<sup>th</sup> October. RJOM now involved the ATC by suggesting that he had been about to recommend George for a commission, but the Air Ministry could do nothing. However, George drew Jack's attention to the extraordinary coincidence that the OC of 18 Primary Training Centre, Chesterfield, was Lt Col Alec Ross-Hume, father of current Millfield pupil Euan, then making good progress after an uncomfortable episode at Eton. A telegram was despatched at once requesting "a fortnight's grace to settle urgent personal and Millfield affairs". The response was cold, "No extension", but that did not deter RJOM. Unfortunately there is no record of the telephone conversation that followed, but a memo sent by Lt Col Ross-Hume to the Under Secretary of State at the War Office on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1942 began:-

"14316252 G.B.A. Turner

The above-mentioned man was included in the Army Class Intake ordered to report to this Centre on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct. 42, but was in very special circumstances and as a result of a telephone conversation which the Headmaster of his school had with me, granted 14 days deferment until 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 42, on which day he reported."

Meanwhile George had written to Vernon Bartlett, MP for Bridgwater and one of the last great Independents, to ask for his help, and he in turn had approached RA Butler, the

then Minister of Education. RJOM had also written a letter to the Minister which was forwarded to him from the Bear Hotel, Street, with a covering note from a resident, Lady Harcourt Butler. She was 'Rab' Butler's aunt and, according to Boss, "a great ally of ours".

150 Unfortunately all these efforts came to nought, and George Turner served as a private in the Royal Army Service Corps in Scotland until December 1943, when, as a result of a recommendation by his CO, he was transferred to the Army Education Corps and promoted to Sergeant Instructor five days later. The rest of his service was spent on the Isle of Wight and at Southampton, from where he was demobbed on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1946, as a Warrant Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, the highest achievable non-commissioned rank, because he was considered too old to be a commissioned officer.

Throughout this whole episode Jack Meyer had continued to bombard the Ministry of Education with reasons and requests for GBAT's release, and his efforts are perhaps best summed up in a letter he wrote to George, then in Kilmarnock, on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1943.

"Dear G.B.A.T.

160 I have pulled every wire, and pressed every button, for your release, without any noticeable effect: Have you tried a frontal assault on the War Office by a direct request for release? You can state that your headmaster has broken down as a result of overstrain, largely caused by your removal, and that you are urgently needed to take over. This in a large measure will be true, as there has been such an influx of boys to your department, that, with my other work, I have hardly time to see them, let alone do anything for them.

Yours sincerely,

R.J.O.M."



## Chapter 12

### Pupils with learning difficulties, 1938-42.

When George Turner joined Millfield in 1941, one of the members of his Service Group was Paul Attlee. The latter had come to Millfield from Haileybury where by chance he had been in the same house as Virendra Jhala, the younger of the two brothers who had stayed at Millfield after the upset of 1935. In addition, Paul had a younger first cousin, Martin, who could not pass the Common Entrance exam to Haileybury because he suffered from word-blindness and was in need of special tuition. Thus, on the advice of both his brother, Laurence, and Haileybury College, Martin's father, the Rt Hon Major Clement Attlee, MP, the Deputy Prime Minister, wrote to Jack Meyer suggesting that they meet in London. The outcome was that Martin took Paul's place in January 1942, Paul having joined the Royal Navy. Eighteen months later Martin won a place at the Southampton School of Navigation, and subsequently passed on to the Merchant Navy.

Never one to miss an opportunity to make a point, RJOM, by then promoted to Flight Lieutenant, persuaded Clement Attlee, whilst on a short visit to Street to see his son on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1942, to inspect the training being carried out by 914 Squadron, ATC, at Strode School and then to cross the road and address an audience of cadets and local church and civic dignitaries at the Play House Cinema, which later generations knew as the Maxime. As it was a Sunday, the Rector of Street, the Rev R Daunton-Fear, who presided over the meeting, suggested that it provided an epilogue to the religious services they had all already attended, and invited them to sing Jerusalem; shades of Haileybury once again!

The Deputy PM spoke at considerable length, stressing the importance of the service that the people of Britain were currently giving to the war effort, and would have to make in the future, sorting out the problems which would come with peace. He was loudly applauded as he finished, and RJOM, who moved a vote of thanks, led an equally hearty three cheers for the speaker. In 1964 Earl Attlee, KG, PC, OM, returned the compliment by endorsing the launch of the Millfield Project Appeal in the following words:- "I have marvelled for some time at the way in which you have created a public school at Millfield and at your numerous success. I send you my best wishes for what seems to me to be an educational development of great importance". For a fairly recently retired Labour Party Prime Minister to support the ambitious plans of a life-long Conservative Party member must have been manna indeed.

Martin Attlee was almost certainly not the first Millfieldian to suffer from word-blindness, but news of the successful treatment he received for his condition soon reached other ears in the upper echelons of society and brought in enquiries from families with problem children and with money to pay for expert tuition. In pre-war years these youngsters would almost certainly have been tutored at home, but it was no longer really practical. This was why George Turner had joined the school which was taking the place of his old job. It was also the reason why Jack Meyer became more and more interested in helping young people, and, indeed older ones, who had difficulty in reading and writing their own language. Millfield's reputation as the first and foremost school in the recognition

and teaching of dyslexic pupils unquestionably stems from this period, when patient tutors, frequently elderly and whose experience was often in quite different conditions, devoted hours to helping their charges over seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Jack himself became expert at recognizing where the problems lay and directed the programme for each pupil himself within the elastic-sided school time-table; the latter was made to fit the pupil, not the other way round, but it did mean there had to be many tutors and much of skilful juggling.

From 1929, when he first began teaching in India and had come up against children with reading problems, as well as some of other kinds, he used careful observation to seek out a cure for word-blindness. Jack himself wrote in 1989 when drafting out his autobiography, which sadly was never completed:-

“There is evidence that during my Indian teaching years I developed certain methods of assessment, of motivation and of ‘potentiality’ development – especially in the ‘extreme’ areas of remedial methods (dyslexia – then called word-blindness – treatment at one end and exceptional giftedness at the other) which were to stand us in such good stead over the next 35 years.”

He was also convinced, perhaps thirty years before the education pundits recognized the idea, that it was good for young people who suffered from impairments of one sort or another to enter schools where they might mix with everyone else, so that they would not feel rejected. Wishing to help the parents of the Australian, Bob Barr Smith, he accepted the younger brother, Dick, into Millfield in summer 1938. Though Dick only stayed for a year, leaving when Bob was about to go-up to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, the enthusiasm with which he faced his problems and the understanding shown by the pupils persuaded RJOM that sufferers from cerebral palsy could best be educated along with their peers.

In 1941 John Miskin, who became a successful and recognized artist, joined the school and at a much later date recalled:-

“The first fortnight passed rapidly, although I was a bit dismayed to find myself in Miss Osborne’s handicraft class in the chalet, a wooden copy of its Swiss namesake situated among some trees behind the main school buildings. We were kept occupied making baskets and stitching wool pictures on bits of card, - what today one does in nursery school. My classmates were Giles Johnson, a paraplegic confined to a wheel-chair, Michael Warren, a bright 15 year old athetoid spastic with similar problems to mine, Michael Northcott, a severely retarded 16 year old who, I think, was hydrocephalic, and a few others whose names and characteristics I forget.

The chalet had an upper storey, reached by an outside wooden staircase, consisting of a large well-lit room, lined inside with tongue and groove pine. This was shared at that time between Miss Osborne (Crafts) and Mrs Sankey (Art, English and Scripture). Although I spent most of my first full term with Miss O, Mrs Sankey’s periods were a joy.

Elnith Sankey was a marvellous teacher. She it was who kindled in many of us “dopes” the aspiration to learn, a desire to explore. She had the rare ability to inspire a

sense of wonder and poetry in us, helping us to an awareness of the way all things hang together. Her lessons, History of Art, Drawing and Painting, English Literature and Grammar together with Scripture sessions, unfolded the interconnectedness of the whole universe. For her, Art was never an isolated discipline: it involved history, science, mathematics, psychology, literature and religion. I, for one, will never forget the debt that I owe to her for opening my mind.

100 I do not know, but I strongly suspect that it was Mrs Sankey's influence that resulted in my move up the first rung of the ladder in academic attainment. All I do know is that, in the Spring Term of 1943, Giles Johnson and I were in Group 4b doing the full range of subjects preparatory to entry into the School Certificate syllabus. 4b's classroom was mainly in the ground floor room of the chalet."

This splendid tribute to Elnith Sankey underlines the immense importance of her contribution to the development and the ethos of the school in the trying circumstances of the war years, and it echoes exactly Jack Meyer's oft-spoken admiration for his kinswoman's efforts and ability.

110 'Miss O', Miss Osborne – in fact, Agnes Osborne-Smith – was a Froebel-trained infant teacher who, while living with her sister in Glastonbury, had been engaged as part-time governess for the two Meyer children, Jillian and Jacqueline, in 1936. Almost inevitably her skill at teaching the very young was quickly recognized by RJOM, who engaged her to help with the rehabilitation of some of his pupils who had been rejected by other schools as virtually unteachable, and who had need of the most basic training and education to set a pattern for their lives. John Miskin's account of his first term at Millfield, starting in September 1941, dealt with Miss O's last term, for she was preparing to set up her own 'Child Garden', her description, at home in Glastonbury in January 1942. This she did  
120 successfully, though she still helped out at Millfield from time to time.

Her successor in The Chalet was Miss Marie Malackowski, a German Jewish refugee, who had been working in the summer of 1941 as a rather superior domestic help in a large house in Denham. As a registered alien she could not be paid less than 16 shillings, equivalent to 80 pence, a week, but was getting £1. She accepted RJOM's offer of £1 per week, with board and lodging, to teach German and be responsible for children's welfare. Arriving at the end of August, she found that this latter duty was mainly the organisation of out-of-school activities for the juniors and those pupils that Jack described as 'the lame ducks'. After Miss Osborne-Smith left she found herself even more in their company,  
130 teaching some French and Maths, as well as tutoring a couple of seniors in German. This was not really to her liking, especially when RJOM told her that he saw her future in "the junior department, particularly the 'lame ducks', for, whereas it is not difficult to obtain the services of a good Modern Language coach with high qualifications, men and women with your particular flair for understanding, appreciating and dealing with problems which require more psychological insight as well as drive are by no means so common." Even a pay rise of £1 a month in August 1942 did not alter her outlook, but it has to be remembered that war-time regulations could cause much frustration for aliens, enemy or otherwise. At that time there was no knowledge of the Holocaust to come, and even Jewish Germans were treated with suspicion. Marie had been refused permission to use a bicycle

140 by the Chief Constable of Somerset, although she had been allowed one in Buckinghamshire. Whilst allowing for everyone's anxiety about spies, it is difficult to imagine that having a push-bicycle to ride around Somerset in September 1941 could have been a threat to the security of the country. This attitude must have been very upsetting to one determined to help the Allied war effort, and it must have been equally so when, a year later in September 1942, RJOM suggested that she should not train with the Red Cross, as it might interfere with her school duties. As a result she handed in her notice.

150 Her departure coincided with the arrival of Ben Thoresby who was almost certainly Millfield's youngest entrant, six years of age at the time, and fully five years younger than Alexander Zvegintzov, his nearest contemporary. Ben only stayed a year, while Alexander, who was an evacuee from London, along with his mother, Diana, and two elder brothers, remained until the war ended. Diana, who was a Classics scholar, taught Latin and Russian at Millfield, and Greek to an Etonhurst School boy who came across from Ashcott by special arrangement. In reply to a letter from Mrs. Zvegintzov, in which she suggested that he was less than cordial on their last meeting, RJOM wrote:-

160 "I shall certainly have to examine my features in the looking glass, for, in the absence of all else, I had thought that I was by nature, inclined to bonhomie amounting at times to what the critics amongst my relatives call 'heartiness'. However, when we next meet I must try to banish thoughts of the plumber, builder, the timetables, the absent cook, the next staff meeting, the prefects' discussion group, the damaged paint-work, the broken window, the unoiled cricket bats, the unrolled hockey fields, the leaky radiator, the sick gardener's wife, the multiple insurance policies, leases, contracts, wage-scales, salary lists, the missing library books, the unsolved coal problem, my children's education, my appointments with parents – in short, all the odds and ends which require concentrated thought in the centre of hustle, tapping typewriters, yelling children and buzzing telephone-bells."

170 Who would be a Headmaster of a small school in war-time? This Jack must have asked himself often enough, but he obviously saw every young person with a problem as a challenge to him to provide a solution, so that each could leave with a better chance of being a useful citizen. Each case history built up his own knowledge and understanding so that he was able, sometimes seemingly miraculously, to help those whom other schools had labelled 'hopeless'. The vast majority of entrants were of course not in that category but were possibly those who had not fitted in to the public school system, or who were convinced they would not fit in, or, in some cases, had fitted in too well. Amongst the latter there were often the games players who had given too much time to out-of-school activities at the cost of exam results. The Millfield 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugger captain of 1948 had five ex-captains of public school 1<sup>st</sup> XV's in his team.

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## Chapter 13

### Notable pupils, 1939-49.

10 The continuity of a school must depend largely on the staff, gardeners and matrons as much as teachers or tutors, call them what you will, but the pupils help to create the character. The first entrants were all drawn from families who placed high value on British education and expected to pay for it, whether they hailed from Australia, India or the Old Country. At the end of their tenure the young ladies and gentlemen would enter either Oxford or Cambridge University - they were hardly aware of the existence of any other – or perhaps, in the case of the young ladies, a finishing school in France or Switzerland, while the less academically inclined young gentlemen would apply for a commission in the armed forces. These latter were actually in the majority from 1938 until 1944, and, allied with those seeking entry to medical school, they set the standards of behaviour which have stood Millfield in good stead ever since. They showed a mature, cheerful face to the world and an ease of manner and helpfulness to visitors which has been remarked upon down through the years and which has undoubtedly won the heart of many a prospective parent.

20 The small number of juniors, and the even smaller numbers in the MCR, the Middle Common Room, who grew up in the company of a preponderance of these adult seniors, naturally took them as role models. For example, in 1944, of the seventy-seven pupils in the school, exactly fifty, including eight girls, were seniors. However the tide was on the turn, and in more ways than one, for in 1945, before the war had actually ended, the ISP (In Statu Pupillari) list showed an overall increase to 134, of whom 61 were seniors, the MCR held 41 and the juniors were 22. As the Japanese were surrendering in August in the wake of the atomic bombs, Everel Sankey was painting Edgarley Hall in anticipation of the arrival in September of a new occupying army, those same Millfield juniors, now reinforced to 45 in number.

30 Though Jack Meyer did not relinquish headship of the juniors, for after all their school was still part of the establishment that he personally owned, the rather special relationship which had existed between the very young and the very senior at Millfield could not continue in quite the same way. This relationship was explained beautifully by a prefect writing in *The Windmill* in 1947:

40 "The house was acquired by a man who was famous. He could send any small ball for incredible distances and of course, you know, that means a lot. Around him he gathered a small circle of those-who-were-nearly-grown-up. These prefects enjoyed themselves hugely, and, what is so unusual in any other school, they saw that nobody was frightened".

After the opening of Edgarley, the age-gap between the youngest and oldest at Millfield shrank considerably, and fourteen year old entrants from prep schools had already often chosen their heroes upon whom to model their lives. Not all of them could understand that the easy relationship which existed between staff and prefects and pupils depended upon the acceptance of freedom as a reward for responsible behaviour.

The exceptional growth of the school in the aftermath of the war created other

10 problems as boarding houses, several of them at some distance from Street, increased in number. Whereas Boss had been able to keep a weather-eye on The Orchard, as it then was, on 34 High Street, and on Montbrison, it was more difficult with Kingweston and Walton, and even Resteholme in Glastonbury. The role of the housemaster and housemother became immensely important, for they had to take responsibility for the health and general well-being of their charges without interfering in any way with the sometimes delicately balanced arrangement agreed between headmaster and parents with regard to work and aims. Quite naturally, they were also expected to run the houses on the Millfield pattern, which meant leaving it to the prefects to make decisions, and then telling them afterwards where they had gone wrong or, more often, congratulating them on their successes.

20 Most of the prefects had already had experience of maintaining good order in their previous schools but rarely with that feeling of being fully trusted that they received from RJOM. A number of them have already been mentioned, but it would be invidious not to record the names of Eddy Greenwell, Old Harrovian and Head of School in 1939, John Church from the Nautical College, Pangbourne, and later to be a founder-governor of Millfield, Olly Brockman, an admiral's son from Cheltenham College, Peter Higgins, a doctor in the making from Bloxham, and Tony Scott, another fledgling medical man.

30 However in the autumn of 1943 the home-grown article took over for the first time. Wyndham Bailey had joined Millfield in September 1939 to work towards Common Entrance, which he passed in the following year. He had so much enjoyed his time, as well as his success, that he persuaded all those concerned that he should continue his education under the aegis of RJOM, the next hurdle being School Certificate. For him the summer of 1943 was particularly notable for his creditable results in that exam, and also his being asked if he would be prepared to sleep in a tent to make room in Millfield House for a new junior. Taking this as a compliment to his loyalty and reliability, and because it sounded like fun and yet more freedom, he agreed and moved his belongings into a canvas dormitory pitched on a grassy area to the west of the main house. His voluntary companion was Billy Wallace, an Etonian who had arrived at Millfield a year earlier, and who was to become one of the best known young men in Britain in the immediate post-war era, a 'Deb's Delight' and regular escort to Princess Margaret.

40 Wyndham's subsequent career may have been a little more prosaic, but it was of inestimable value to Millfield. He was promoted to the position of Head Boy for the following term and remained as such until he left the school in July 1945, just prior to his call-up for National Service. Three years later, military training and duties completed, he returned, along with half-a-dozen other men in a similar position, to improve his exam count in order to apply for entrance to university. All were absorbed into the Millfield ménage without difficulty but Wyndham, being 'special', had to take on special responsibilities and was appointed head of the delightfully ill-named Resteholme house. It was a fortunate choice, for in April 1949 the housemaster, Major Riches, died suddenly and Wyndham was able to relieve Mrs Riches of many of her immediate worries in keeping the house running smoothly.

He was successful in his exams and in his application to Exeter University, from

which he graduated with an Honours Degree in Zoology in 1952. Almost inevitably Wyndham, now with his wife Elizabeth, was drawn back to his first love, and he joined the teaching staff in 1953, operating on frogs and dogfish for the next ten years in the Biology Nissen huts. When the Old Millfieldian organisation, the Millfield Society, was properly constituted in 1959, Wyndham was elected to the first committee. In 1962 he was elected President for the year, an office which has since been abandoned, and in 1967 he assumed the role of Hon Treasurer, an office he was to hold for the next thirty years. This is not the full story, for in 1991 he also took the helm as Chairman, and steered the Society ship through very exciting waters for the next four years, culminating in the adoption of a revised constitution of which he was the architect.

In case a false picture may seem to have been painted, it has to be said that, however much he appeared to have been in thrall to the Meyer ideals, Wyndham remained very much his own man. In 1964 he concluded that a severe injustice had been done to his Head of Department, to the Biology Department and, indirectly, to himself, by a series of changes which had come about partly as a result of recommendations made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, so he resigned. This did not mean that he had lost his affection for and admiration of the school. Finding employment in local industry, he remained in the district and his three daughters attended Millfield as day girls, while his wife, who had taught at Edgarley for a time, joined the Maths department in 1973. It would be hard to find a better example of someone who epitomised that virtue, too often considered to be old-fashioned, called loyalty.

Many excellent Heads of School, boys and girls, have followed these early examples but few will have recognized where the trust that was placed in them originated. Successive headmasters too have carried on the same principle, also perhaps without quite realising that, in this aspect of the school at least, they also were walking in the shadow of the founder, and of some remarkable young men and women who gave unremitting service without asking for any tangible reward.



## Chapter 14

### Developing and running the boarding houses, 1943-5.

As the war drew to its close in the summer of 1945, the problems of running what was by then an established school, and no longer a tutorial uncertainty, did not decrease. 'Feeding the beasts' still involved ration books and hand-outs of cash for those who were sent daily to the British Restaurant in Street, a splendid war-time institution which provided cheap, nutritious, off-ration meals. Numbers were well into three figures and the capacity of the Millfield cooking facility was stretched to breaking point and beyond, while common rooms had to be turned into temporary refectories. Cooks came and went with some regularity, but fortune favoured Millfield in the quality of its housekeepers. Possibly top of the crop was Mrs Barbara Fielding Thoresby, who joined the party in the autumn of 1942 with her six-year old son, Ben, the youngest ever isp. Bar, as everybody knew her, was meticulous in her organisation and accounting, and understood the complexities of the government's rationing system. She was ever willing to roll up her sleeves and tackle an emergency, including taking over the kitchen when the cook was ill, whilst still remaining cool, calm and collected. Bar was popular with everyone, but her cheerful approach to life hid the fact that there were difficulties in the background, which allied with a bout of illness, took her to her home in Kent in the summer holiday of 1943, and led to Henry entering the Dragon School at Oxford.

Fortunately Mrs Stella Johnston-Jones, though quite oblivious of what was about to happen, was already waiting in the wings. The wife of a senior army officer, she had had no permanent home during her married life, having brought up her three children in a series of married quarters, and wanted a base for herself, where she could teach and stable her two ponies. Millfield offered both in May 1943, and she began by taking the juniors for English. At the end of August, when it became clear that Bar Thoresby would not be returning (her consultant had forbidden her to do so), Mrs Johnston-Jones, being on the spot, volunteered to take charge of the housekeeping pro tem.

Pro tem lasted for four years, during which Mrs J-J not only ran the domestic side of the main school but became adviser to the billets and the new houses as they opened after the war's end. She also continued to teach and look after her ponies, while finding time to entertain her own children in their holidays and her husband when he was on leave. Before Colonel Johnston-Jones was demobilised in 1948, she had found in Sussex a teaching post for herself and an administrative one for him, with the lease of a cottage included, as well as room for the ponies. Even then this formidable lady was not finished with Millfield, for she persuaded a number of the parents of her young pupils to send them on to the school in due course.

She had in fact, made several attempts to escape the toils, the first time as early as April 1944, when Miss Catherine Gibson was appointed as matron. The latter had just left a private establishment at Dolgelley in North Wales, the Bryn School for mentally retarded boys, where she had been for nine years in sole charge of the nursing, catering and domestic organisation. When engaging her for Millfield, Boss wrote:

"I have seldom been happier about an appointment, and I am quite sure we

shall find in you the person for whom we have long been looking.

You would, roughly speaking, be responsible for all the dormitories, and, in particular, for the junior dormitories and for the well-being of their occupants.

We shall, I am sure, be only too glad to make use of your talents in other ways, if you feel you are able to take on any more".

50 Unfortunately for Mrs. Johnston-Jones, it was soon apparent that Miss Gibson's talents could not be used, for she handed in her notice a month after her arrival on 31st March, giving as her reason 'quite unforeseen circumstances'.

These almost took Millfield off on another educational tack, for Boss very quickly recognised that the almost over-enthusiastic welcome he had given her was thoroughly justified by the way she went about her assignments in the house. Not wishing to lose her services, he set out to use 'the circumstances' to the schools advantage.

60 What had happened was that two pupils at The Bryn School had been so upset by Miss Gibson's departure that their parents had met and together had written to her, pleading that she take the boys back under her wing. This highly emotional approach had triggered her resignation as she decided she could not let the boys down, and was determined to start her own school for them.

By chance, or rather pressed by the desperate need to find permanent residence for the swiftly increasing number of applicants, RJOM had made his first offer to purchase Resteholme, a large family house on Wells Road, Glastonbury, on 24<sup>th</sup> May. After the price was agreed in the first week in April, and some financial aid from the Bridgwater and West of England Permanent Building Society was arranged, he was able to suggest to Catherine Gibson that she should inaugurate the new annex to Millfield as its housemother and, when she felt ready for the challenge, start her own 'school within a school' on the premises. This lifeline was quickly accepted and in the second week of May a handful of Millfield boys took up residence in conditions akin to camping. The exchange of legal and sale documents had not even been completed, while negotiations were still going on regarding the purchase from the vendor of unwanted furniture in situ. This included just four beds, and wartime restrictions meant that others were almost unobtainable except at auction sales. The immediate plan of housing some twenty boys had to be abandoned, and this led to a warning to Miss Gibson of possible prosecution in a letter written by the Assistant Food Executive Officer, Glastonbury Food Control Committee, on 5th June.

80 Using the figure supplied by RJOM, she had bought rationed food for the house on the understanding that the house would be filled. When she made her first return of points expended for the three weeks of May, it became obvious that she had drawn more than twice the amount of rations to which she and the other residents were entitled. Each civilian was issued with a Ration Book containing points, which had to be cut out and surrendered to the shop where the food was purchased, whereas residential catering establishments, like schools and boarding-houses, held all the books and received additional allowances for casual meals, such as team teas. All these had to be recorded and returns

sent to the Food Office at the end of each month, with the necessary points enclosed.

90 However Miss Gibson had other things on her mind when the letter arrived, for two days earlier, on 3rd June, the two boys from Bryn School had been discharged to her care under the Mental Deficiency Acts, 1913-1938. They were duly brought to Resteholme by their parents where, in spite of the difficult conditions, she was able to restart their education which had been sadly lacking since she left Dolgelley in April. She realised immediately that, in spite of RJOM's support, it would not be possible to carry out the task to which she had dedicated herself, that is to prove that her charges were not mentally defective, but were simply 'backward boys' as she described them in a letter, and at the same time to run Resteholme efficiently. This was borne out by a further letter of complaint written by the Food Executive Officer himself on 29th August, this time to RJOM, pointing out that Miss Gibson had apparently ignored the warning of 5th June and continued to overdraw her points. Meanwhile, however, she had handed in her notice again as she had found a house, Jarmeny, in Barton St. Davids, where she could live with and educate the boys, and moved there on 11th September. Thus 'the school within a school' venture ended, but Resteholme, later to be re-christened Chindit, was established as the first permanent Millfield boarding-house other than the main school itself.

100

Miss Gibson was such a competent and experienced organiser that Boss had been convinced that the whole domestic side of the house could be left to her discretion, while the education of the Millfield boys remained entirely under his direction. As it happened, all the problems of food rationing and costing landed back firmly on Amothe Sankey's desk at the end of August, 1944, so that the first attempt to allow another member of staff to exercise independent authority ended in failure. This must have coloured 'the study's' attitude over the next twenty-five years, for even senior Heads of Department were not given control of budgets, while housemothers who organised their own catering were expected to use common sense, rather than figures, when ordering goods or 'hiring and firing' domestic staff.

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This poor view of the capacity of teachers and their wives to control expenditure may well have accounted for Resteholme's lack of a housemaster until the appointment of a new full-time Bursar, Leonard Riches, in October 1945. Major Riches was a chartered accountant and wartime Royal Army Service Corps supply officer who had been working with the West African Division and General Wingate's 'Chindits' in Burma. Together with his Scottish wife, he took control of the house from Miss Edith James, who had run it successfully as matron-housekeeper for a year. She in her turn had succeeded the Quinceys, he was caretaker and she cook-housekeeper, who had replaced Miss Gibson in September 1944.

120 Meanwhile another, but much smaller, establishment had been bought and opened for custom at 17, Middle Leigh, Street, where John and Ida Charlton, both teachers, held sway. Unlike Resteholme, the boys were catered for in the main school, so that problems stemmed mainly from health and discipline, and not finance. This house started in April 1945, when pupil numbers jumped from 110 to 134. 18 had left, including 14 juniors, 13 of whom had passed Common Entrance to public schools in March. 46 replacements arrived, 17 of them to join the juniors, though 3 were for one term only, and this meant that 28 new beds and bed-spaces had to be found.

130 Orchards in Street, called The Orchard by its owners, the Morland family, came on the market in July 1944, even though it was still in use as a hostel for evacuee children. RJOM's offer of £2,250 was accepted on 26th July, and it is interesting to note that his original bid of £2,200 was refused, whereas the asking price for the house in May 1940, when the evacuees first moved in, was £1,850. The end of the war in Europe saw the children at last returning to their homes, while Millfield prepared to open another boarding-house, not however without some problems, for Street Urban District Council and the Ministry of Health had all their furniture and household equipment in situ. Boss tried to buy it but 'red tape' intervened and everything had to be removed, though this did not take place till the end of October 1945, by which time the first housemaster, Captain Howell, and fifteen Millfield boys were in residence.

140 It was all the more annoying because Millfield's own private evacuation, the juniors to Edgarley Hall, forty-six of them in all, was made possible partly by the willingness of the War Department to sell much of its equipment in the buildings, placed there when it was an emergency hospital. That, and the aforementioned handiwork of Everel Sankey, gave the new venture a fair start, even though the water supply was somewhat uncertain and some people were sleeping on mattresses on the floor.

150 Boss had not at first thought of Edgarley as a junior house and certainly not as a separate school, but at the time, summer 1945, it was the easiest solution to move the whole block of youngsters onto one site. As it developed as a separate unit, firstly under the guidance of Victor Edghill, who had already been a prep school headmaster before joining Millfield in 1943, and secondly with HL Higgins, it became clear that it would one day become a fully-fledged member of IAPS, the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools. A number of properties as far away as Herefordshire and Oxfordshire were inspected but the decision to move was never taken, and Edgarley never became what it was originally bought for, a Millfield senior house.

## Chapter 15

### The Nissen Huts, 1943-73.

10 It is not difficult to devote a whole chapter in the history of Millfield to Nissen Huts. These simple, corrugated iron, pre-fabricated buildings played a vital part in the development of the school and wrote themselves indelibly and with some strange affection into the memories of hundreds of former pupils. The huts in question, known collectively to the school as The Camp, stood in three lines, parallel to the Butleigh Road, between the Somerton Road and the main drive, and in part of a field rented by the Clarks to Mr AR Perry, a local smallholder.

The land, which was not then part of the estate leased by Jack Meyer, though divided from it only by a wire fence, was commandeered by the War Department in 1943. Two army camps had already been constructed in Street, the West Camp near Stone Hill, and the East Camp on the land north of the Butleigh Road called Bove Moor. This new site was described as East Camp Extension. Though formally under British Army control, these camps were in fact to house United States troops who had begun to arrive in large numbers to train in the West Country for the projected invasion of Europe, the Second Front.

20 Though occupied by black or white soldiers, at different times, for a year up to D-Day, 6th June 1944, the presence of the Americans at such close quarters in The Camp hardly affected Millfield. Many of them were transport personnel and spent most of their time moving the ground troops to and from the training areas on Exmoor and Dartmoor, and to embarkation ports for invasion practice.

30 The entrance to the 'Extension' was close to the cross-roads on the Somerton road and therefore the to-ing and fro-ing went generally unnoticed in the School. By the end of that fateful June the Yanks had gone, leaving an area forbidden to civilians but ripe for exploration by unfettered youth, and providing food for thought for a beleaguered headmaster. He was already in possession of the first new boarding house, Resteholme, and in July he negotiated the purchase of The Orchard. These meant more bed-space to provide for the increase in pupil numbers, but did not help the growing need for new teaching rooms.

Thus on 23rd August 1944, wearing his two hats as Headmaster and Commanding Officer, 914 Squadron, ATC, Boss wrote to the Officer Commanding, Somerset Sub District, Manor Hotel, The Grove, Burnham-on-Sea: -

40 "I am writing with regard to the Army Camp, made up of Nissen Huts, which has been built on the Millfield School estate (sic);

I am very anxious to know whether it will be possible for us to be granted permission to use some of these huts for educational purposes (not residence) in connection with the School, Air Training Corps, Sea Cadet Corps, etc.. The huts are chiefly required for storage of equipment, teaching and recreation.

We have been trying for a very long time to obtain quarters of some kind in the district for the pre-service work, but, owing to Army requirements, it has been almost impossible. We were previously granted the temporary use of the three or four huts nearest to the School, but were moved out on the day we took possession, owing to the sudden arrival of troops".

It is quite certain that, although the Camp had been built on part of the Mill Field estate, this particular field was in the tenancy of Roy Perry, and it was not until the signing of a new lease on 19th June 1947 that its northern end was legally added to Jack Meyer's holding. Complications, which were to come to a head in 1953, were added by Perry's sub-letting some adjacent tumble-down farm buildings to RJOM without leave from the Clark Estate.

However the letter did produce results although, distinctly perversely, considering the appeal to help the Air Training Corps and the Sea Cadet Corps, it was the etcetera that won the day. The Quartering Commandant for Somerset North allotted two Nissen Huts for the use of the 'ARMY Cadet Force of Millfield School', on a twenty-four hour loan basis from 2nd October 1944. Unfortunately the huts were in the West Camp, almost a mile away.

Three weeks later, another hut, this one released by the U.S. Army, and located in the Old Quarry at Stone Hill, Street, was offered and accepted. Obviously the siting of all three huts prevented their being of much use to the school, but they were for the cadets, and could not be refused. Moreover the principle had been established of taking the huts on loan until such time as the army required to use them or to dispose of them.

By further judicious approaches to the Quartering Office, handily placed in Wells, RJOM, was able to 'borrow' three more huts, this time the ones he really wanted, just over the fence from the Millfield drive and in the East Camp Extension. This was the situation until the war ended in August 1945, although, following the surrender of the German forces in May, he had written to the War Department Lands Office in Bath enquiring whether the huts would soon be for sale.

He was told that no immediate move would be made, but that when it was, they would be offered to the owner of the land, in this case C and J Clark, shoemakers. So he applied for the loan of more huts and in September was allocated three, each still equipped with double-bunk beds. These however were put into store by the army. Otherwise they might well have pre-empted the general use of bunk-beds in boarding houses in the burgeoning sixties.

In January 1946 six further huts were added officially to the Millfield holding of three, which unofficially was six, and by February 1947 twelve. Recognizing that Nissen Huts would make desirable residences for the post-war homeless, of which there were huge numbers, RJOM had written to the Officer i/c Barracks at Taunton in September 1946, requesting permission to occupy the remainder "to prevent the ever-present threat of squatters". This was refused but a month later, in October, he requested that the local council should reconnect the water-supply to the ablution huts so that they might be used as games changing-rooms. There were four of these.

The final act of the saga was played out from the summer of 1947 when the Ministry of Works offered C and J Clark the huts in the camps at a very competitive price. Bearing in mind that if the huts were not bought by the firm it would be the job of the Government Ministry to demolish them and then dig up the concrete foundations in order to restore a small section of a not particularly productive field to its original use of grazing land for cattle, a deal with Jack Meyer would have seemed to be in order. Thus he was offered them at a favourable price, at the same time as the new lease was being approved and which now included the land on which the camp stood.

Unfortunately for Clarks it was extremely difficult to tie RJOM down to a meeting when decisions could be made, as he had accepted the invitation to captain Somerset County Cricket Club for the 1947 season. This meant his being absent from the school for long hours from April to September. The lease went through in June, because that was dealt with by Major Riches, the Bursar, and the school solicitors. But the purchase of the Nissen huts was another matter, requiring the agreement of the Boss who would be the purchaser, and he did not part willingly with his hard-won capital. As luck would have it, his spine, in which a disc had 'slipped' when he was trying to crank a motor-mower during the war, began to give him severe pain and cricket was out of the question. This did not stop him attending the matches or giving advice to the acting skipper, sometimes on the flat of his back in the changing-room. Meanwhile Clarks waited.

At first they waited patiently; after all the Quaker tradition was to achieve by gentle persuasion, and they were dealing with a sick man who was a cricket idol, as well as captain of the county. The cricket season ended but no meeting was suggested as the school still had to be run, with the Nissen huts in full use, and the physiotherapist had to be visited regularly. By November patience was wearing thin and a carefully phrased letter was sent suggesting a settlement soon, as the firm was contemplating demolishing the huts and re-erecting them on the factory site in Street, since their post-war business was expanding and they needed more storage space. The response was "Ring Tony Clark".

J Anthony Clark, one of the family and a director of the firm, was born in Mill Field house and naturally showed great interest in everything happening there. He was a keen club cricketer and a member of the County Club, so had much sympathy with Jack's predicament.

It is not surprising therefore that he was the one approached with a view to saving the huts until RJOM felt confident of being able to pay for them. The ploy worked and no action nor even meeting took place until the end of April 1948, by which time Jack was fully recovered from a major operation to repair his damaged spine. In July the trustees of the estate agreed to accept the Millfield offer and the down-payment was made in September 1948, the school having already had four years' free use of some of them.

They had been, and were to be used for multifarious purposes. Divided in half by a simple single-brick wall they became two classrooms, each heated by a cast-iron, coke-burning, Tortoise stove, and each equipped with simple tables and chairs, rarely more than half-a-dozen, because that was the normal size of a teaching group. Having been expanded

in width and height by the insertion of a few extra corrugated iron sheets, they were large enough to hold scientific benches, and became homes to the physics and biology departments. An undivided, unexpanded hut was large enough to contain a grand piano and most of the music department, whilst another held a boxing ring. The sailing club's boats and tackle were stored in another. Yet one more was the school cinema. At different periods they provided homes and storage space for the ATC, the ACF and the Naval Section of the CCF, the latter superseding the earlier organisations in October 1948, while others operated as day boys' common-rooms.

150 As teaching rooms, classrooms, call them what you will, they were intimate, if nothing else. In summer they could be unbearably hot, but it was never taboo to move outside and work in the shade of the nearest tree. Winter presented different problems, everybody's comfort depending upon the stove in the middle of the room. Each one was raked out, relaid and relit by one man working his way round each hut in turn, starting at six o'clock in the morning. Sometimes the system failed, or the fire-lighters did, and first period at 9 am was disrupted while pupils went in search of 'the man', whilst tutor and remaining pupils huddled miserably in their greatcoats and scarves. Even when the stove was relit it took an age to give off any heat, though everyone gathered in a circle round it in the hope that their fingers would thaw enough to hold a pen. For some, of course, it was the perfect  
160 excuse.

There were other occasions when a hut was full of smoke, a percentage of which would be poisonous, and the door and windows had to be opened wide to get rid of it. This could reduce the length of first period in the morning by anything up to ten minutes, which could be as frustrating for the dedicated pupil as for the tutor.

It is difficult to say why 'the dear old Nissen huts' struck such a chord of affection amongst the Old Millfieldians over a period of almost thirty years. Perhaps it is because they were united in adversity when they had to 'work' in such basic conditions after games on a Monday, or Corps on a Friday afternoon when the Tortoise, aglow with heat, encouraged minds, perhaps not least the tutor's, to drift away from the task in hand and think pleasant thoughts of the comforts of home.  
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Suffice it to say that, despite their 'temporary building' status, they outlasted the tenure of the founder headmaster, finally making way for the Sacher Biology Block and then the Library. During 1972-73 they disappeared without fuss. Most of the school were enjoying the comparatively comfortable surroundings of the two big teaching blocks and the new wooden huts in Perry's field and were not concerned at the disappearance of the Nissens. A few of the older staff might have shed a nostalgic tear or two, but there was no  
180 great desire to preserve a 'tin shed' for posterity.

The question, 'But where are the Nissen Huts?' was to come later as Old Millfieldians, inspecting their Alma Mater, with one eye on their offspring's education, could not believe that the next generation would not suffer as they had.



## Chapter 16

### War veterans return as tutors and students, 1945-6.

A good many of the pre-war pupils in the school had been quite elderly, for they had already completed the normal span of a school career. The Millfield system was there to provide them with a second chance to pass the exams required before they moved on to the next stage of their chosen profession. A number of those who arrived at Millfield in the immediate post-war period were distinctly elderly by any school standard. Some had left school to join the forces almost six years earlier and wanted to achieve entrance to university as soon as possible.

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The first two in this category to arrive came from Gibraltar where they had served with the local defence forces, which were demobilised as soon as the war in Europe ended in May 1945. Alfred Vasquez, aged 22, and his brother Louis, 21, each sporting a military moustache, made a powerful impact on the mores of Millfield. They were young men from a highly disciplined background, intent on completing their education, which had been so sorely affected by the war. Others might well have kicked against the pricks of school discipline, but the brothers were obviously determined to join in with all aspects of Millfield life and to set a good example to the 'boys', not all of whom were that much younger than they were themselves. Their earlier schooling, until the war snatched them away, had been at the Jesuit Mount St. Mary's College in Derbyshire, and it was no coincidence that another product of the same school, also from Gibraltar, had just been promoted to Head Boy at Millfield. Charles Stagnetto, aged 19 in September 1945, had joined the school from Mount St Mary's the year before, his aim being entry to Oxford, and this was duly achieved. Wyndham Bailey, his immediate predecessor as Head of School, had had to cope with a total of 140 pupils, including 24 juniors, whilst Charles was faced with 170 in all, not including 46 juniors who had been transferred to Edgarley.

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There were only three others of Charles's age at that time, two oddly enough from the same school, Clifton College. They were Courtney Bennett, whose eyesight prevented his joining the forces, and David Mathias, who was to take 1st MB towards a career in medicine. The third, Nicky Emsens (his real Christian name was Alphonse) had just arrived from Belgium, no longer occupied. There was an age-gap of more than a year between them and the large group of boys and girls preparing for Higher School Certificate, university entrance exams and matriculation exemption through the School Certificate. The majority knew that they would be starting their National Service in a year's time and were hoping that good paper qualifications would help them on their way to a commission, though everyone knew about the hazards of WOSB, the War Office Selection Board, and OCTU, the Officer Cadet Training Unit.

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Jack's 914 Squadron, ATC, which had served so long as a training ground for Millfield boys who could expect to be conscripted, had begun to lose its momentum as early as 1944. Selection of candidates for air-crew training had ceased and the alternatives being offered were service in the Royal Marines, who were building up strength for the projected landings in the Far East theatre of war, or work in the British coal-fields, thus becoming one of the 'Bevin Boys'. As 1945 drew on it was realised that an army of occupation was going to be required for Germany, whilst those who had fought in the war and survived would be

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demanding a quick return to civilian life. So there was a revival of recruitment, mainly for the army, in the immediate aftermath of war, and Jack, preparatory to resigning his RAFVR commission, decided that some form of pre-service training organisation must be set up for the school. The Army Cadet Force, similar to the ATC, had been born in the war and usually operated in the local Territorial Army Drill Halls, frequently alongside the Home Guard. Thus it was a fairly easy step to inaugurate an independent platoon based in a school Nissen Hut (where else?), whose officers were ex-service members of staff and subsequently an ex-service pupil.

Of the male tutors at the school in the spring of 1945 only one, Noel Barry-Tait (NLB-T) had had any recent military experience. He had been invalided out of the Royal Artillery as a subaltern in 1942 and had joined Millfield in the same year to teach physics. He also transferred to the Home Guard, which in early 1945 was being disbanded, as the threat of invasion from the continent had gone. Thus it was he who was dragooned into inaugurating the new venture, the school ACF platoon, just as he was getting his teeth into another development, the serious coaching of athletics, an area much neglected by the public schools but soon to be the first sporting activity bringing national notice to Millfield.

However help soon seemed to be at hand, as Captain HM Howell, MBE, a 1st World War army officer, Reading University graduate, and honoured by the King for his work with the Monkton Combe School Officers Training Corps, signed on in August, 1945. He was the first housemaster of Orchards, but unfortunately totally unforeseen circumstances forced his retirement inside two months. His son, an officer with the 8th Army, was sent home from Italy with a view to his being discharged on medical grounds and in need of a quiet home background, which was unlikely to be found in a bustling school boarding-house.

As Captain Howell withdrew, so Major LR Riches marched in, not as it happened to occupy Orchards, but to take over Resteholme and also the post of Bursar. Leonard Riches was an enthusiast, a man right up RJOM's street, prepared to do virtually anything but teach.

After pre-war experience in estate agency, he had been called to the colours in his TA unit of the RASC in 1939, evacuated from the Dunkirk beaches in 1940, and then sent to Nigeria to help organise the supply system of the 81st West African Infantry Division. Major Riches accompanied the Division to India, prior to its deployment in Burma in 1944, and was transferred to Major-General Orde Wingate's command as supply officer to the Chindit expedition against the Japanese, in which he played a vital role and for which he was mentioned in dispatches. It was only natural for him to offer his services to the fledgling ACF, whilst helping to coach athletics with NLB-T, his predecessor in the Corps, and also the 1st XV with John Lally, the senior English tutor recently released from service with the Irish Army, and Charles Cunningham, classicist, 1st World War major and officer in the Downside School OTC. Neither of the latter showed any inclination to share their military experience and expertise with the Millfield ACF contingent. Apart from the fact that one had been a clerk at army headquarters and the other was over 60 years of age, they reflected the general desire among the population to get away from uniforms after six years of war.

The armed forces themselves were engaged on the one hand with demobilising the

‘emergency only’ men and women as quickly as possible, and on the other, with training the new Regulars and National Servicemen to take their places in maintaining the peace all over the world. The Territorial Army was to be re-formed, but it had a low priority, and the cadets could get no expert help from that quarter. Often without proper uniforms and practice arms, they learned to march and map-read so that they would have an inkling of what was required when they were called up or had to face a selection board. There were  
100 of course a number who had already had some training in the JTC, the Junior Training Corps, which, in the days of wartime equality, had replaced the OTC in their previous schools. It was natural that they were the first to be promoted as NCOs, but this inevitably meant that there was a lack of continuity for the first couple of years.

1947 saw an upturn in the fortunes of the Corps. The TA was reconstituted, which meant that the Drill Hall in Glastonbury reopened and a Permanent Staff Instructor from the Somerset Light Infantry, whose badge the cadets wore, moved into residence and was available to help on the Friday afternoon parades. Two important recruits arrived. Captain  
110 Michael Francis - his name is printed on the ISP list with his army rank - had joined up in 1941 from Blundell's before he had obtained sufficient paper qualifications for university entrance. After he was demobilised, Michael studied for his HSC at Millfield and was keen to help train his fellow pupils in the martial arts of the time and also, as an old colour of his previous school, to play cricket for the 1st XI. Michael Paxton had been evacuated to Canada in 1940 when he was eleven, but had returned and entered Stowe in 1944. His education in Ottawa had left him far behind his contemporaries in England, and in 1946 it was suggested that Millfield was the most likely establishment to prepare him for the target he had set himself, entrance to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Michael had just  
120 passed the Certificate A tests in the Stowe JTC, and was anxious for promotion in the ACF, which he duly achieved. With his sporting prowess, both as an outstanding athlete (he was to become the England schools 440 yards champion in 1948) and a fine rugby player, he quickly became a school leader and, an example to younger admirers. Thus the Corps saw a smartening of attitude and appearance in the wake of the arrival of these two young men.

All through the war the Services Group had maintained a high rate of success under first SP-S, then GBAT, and lastly H. Sydney-Jones, the distinguished mathematician and supposedly part-time tutor. He not only organised the maths teaching at Millfield from 1940, but was responsible for setting up the first engineering workshop, including a lathe on which, Boss thought, 'we might even be able to do some practical work such as turning out  
130 machine-gun parts'. Although the suggestion bore no fruit, the remarkable HS-J, who was already well over 70, worked a full time-table until 1945, when his pupils went for tuition to his home on Roman Way in Glastonbury. He retired in December that year, just a few weeks before George Turner returned to take up his former duties.

## Chapter 17

### The school grows and is officially recognized, 1945-9.

The end of the war brought the return from Durham School of Jim Bunbury who had only left Mill Field, the spelling he was still using in correspondence, because Boss suggested that his school was likely to close. During his five years in the north he had become head of Modern Languages, but was determined to return to the sunny south and his house, Montbrison, on Roman Way, Glastonbury, which had been used intermittently as a billet for senior boys. It meant that he would be working under the direction of Marc Dufour, a man of immense energy, who had closed his own tutorial establishment, Dufour College in Glasgow, at the end of 1941 and joined Millfield. Highly qualified academically, he had in the following years become a head of department and chief timetabler, as well as supervising Wanganui, a small billet in Street. Whilst carrying out all these duties, he had enrolled at Wells Theological College with RJOM's approval, intending to become ordained as a clergyman in the Church of England. After one term, summer 1942, he passed the requisite written exams, and then spent a good deal of time in 1943 and 1944 trying to find a Bishop willing to sponsor his ordination. He approached Bath and Wells, London, the Archbishopric of Canterbury, and Gloucester, in that order, but they all seem to have agreed with RJOM that he should undergo a course of devotional preparation for a year or so and that only his enemies would suggest that as a live wire, he might be likened to an electric eel.

By September 1945 Dufour had decided to give up his search for a parish and to remain at Millfield for the time being, and at Christmas he was hoping that Boss might allow him to direct 'The Foreign Branch in town' (ie a boarding house for foreign pupils in Street), a pipe-dream of the period. Sadly his Millfield career was about to crash. He was reported to have been found in a compromising situation with one of his pupils during the Easter holiday of 1946, well away from the school. He responded to Boss's suggestion that he should seek medical attention and remain at least fifty miles away from Millfield, subsequently becoming one of the principals of the Paris English College. Later on he left to work in Germany and then 'retired' to the Bahamas where he became the leading Cathedral preacher, as well as a teacher in a Nassau school.

Dufour's unfortunate affair never reached the public domain, as the police were not informed, and reporters at the time were concentrating on items of considerably greater importance while the Attlee government set about its nationalisation programme. It did however have far-reaching effects at Millfield, for Jim Bunbury took charge of the Modern Languages department and became Assistant Director of Studies, while George Turner added timetabling to his leadership of the Services Group. Boss had complete confidence in those two totally loyal and undemonstrative gentlemen and their support of his system and ideas, but he seems to have become even more determined to retain total control of the school's destiny in his own hands. It was at this time that he appointed the school's first educational psychologist, Frederick Livie-Noble, who lived at Marlborough.

From 1936 onwards each potential Millfield pupil had been tested, frequently

without realising it. Boss had devised his own system of measuring an applicant's intelligence quotient (IQ) with the aid of psychological methods published by Cyril Burt and William Brown. With this knowledge he had felt confident when forecasting for parents what their offspring could hope to achieve in the relaxed atmosphere of a Millfield education. His decision to bring in outside help came as a result of the overwhelming increase in new applicants at the war's end, and the Government's 1944 Education Act which ordered the introduction of intelligence tests for all state primary school pupils at the age of eleven. This Eleven Plus (11+) exam, as it became known, was taken in order to decide whether the candidate would benefit from a grammar school education or a less academic one in the newly created secondary modern schools. Indirectly Millfield gained some benefit from this controversial governmental decision as many people were very unhappy when sons or daughters 'failed the exam'. Some went so far as to withdraw their children from the state system and to go in search of a 'good' school which would educate them 'properly'.

Millfield's advertisement in the Public and Preparatory Schools Year Book of the time contained the following sentence :- "An attempt is made to determine at an early stage, usually with the help of intelligence and aptitude tests, what each individual's intellectual 'ceiling' is, and then to help him make the very most of his talents - whether he is a potential University scholar, or one who is unlikely to pass exams, but who can be taught to use 'the tools of learning' effectively enough to take his place in the world as a responsible citizen".

It must be remarked that 'she' and 'her' are not used in that text. The Year Book was concerned only with boys' schools, and therefore the presence of a growing number of girls (the YLC) is acknowledged only with the words: "A few senior girls are admitted. The Sixth Form, therefore, can be said to be co-educational". This latter point was for many years a bone of contention, one of a number, between Boss and many members of the Headmaster's Conference (HMC), who were not prepared to admit to their number a man allowing, nay encouraging, the opposite ....., they could hardly use the word, 'to share the same classroom with boys'. It was only during the headmastership of Boss' successor, Colin Atkinson, that the major public schools, beginning with Marlborough College, began to admit girls to their sixth form, and, in time, became fully co-educational. In fact Colin considered the HMC's guidelines to be too restrictive and was not prepared to seek election. He was however more than happy for delegations from other schools to visit and study how Millfield operated, confident in the knowledge that RJOM's pioneer work over thirty-five years had created a system almost above criticism and certainly the envy of many. Unfortunately it did mean that certain competitions were closed to Millfield pupils.

In 1946 the school was still classified as Private Independent by the Ministry of Education, and it was not until 1949 that it was up-graded to Efficient Secondary after an extremely thorough investigation by HM Inspectors. It was perhaps as well, bearing in mind Boss's comment about women during the George Turner affair, that his old sparring partner, Lady Helen Asquith, had removed to another area and that the chief inspector appointed was a man, EO Snelling. Lady Helen had visited the school again in May 1947, when a member of the teaching staff wrote to the Ministry of Education inquiring if his period at Millfield qualified as 'approved service' for state pension purposes. RJOM and the bursar had organised a private pension scheme for those that wished to join, but it was

100 already obvious that the future employment of well-qualified staff might depend on their being able to continue in the state scheme. Thus Lady Helen's suggestion that the school should apply for 'recognition' was taken seriously, but was not acted upon immediately, as Boss was facing a more immediate problem, how to run the county cricket team in the daytime and Millfield at night. In addition his damaged spine was playing up so much so that he decided to risk what was a potentially dangerous operation, the surgical removal of a disc, in the close season. It was not until this had been carried out successfully in February 1948 that Jack wrote to the Ministry of Education on 20th April, during his convalescence, requesting that Millfield should be recognised as an Efficient Secondary school.

110 The response from the Ministry was reasonably swift, being dated 3rd May, but it was couched in terms reminiscent of a patient teacher explaining the solution of a problem to a group of slow-witted pupils at the bottom of a class. Basically RJOM was to read 'Rules 16 (revised March 1946)', paying particular attention to paragraph 4 and indeed to 1 and 2 as well. Having done that he was to complete and return 'Form 34 Schools'.

No doubt calmed by Miss Sankey, he complied immediately, but there then began an interminable period of waiting. Fortunately Boss moved back into full harness during the summer term, so much so that on 15th July he bowled 15 overs, taking 5 wickets for 50, whilst playing for the staff v the school 1st XI. Three and a half months after the official application was posted, the Ministry agreed to carry out an inspection 'as soon as circumstances permit'.

120 It was at this point that it was realised that a separate application had to be made if Edgarley was to be recognized as an Efficient Primary School, so a double period of waiting began. Both ended in the New Year, 1949, Millfield being inspected by Mr Snelling's team from 26th to 28th January, and Edgarley on 17th and 18th May. The latter was turned down on the grounds of failing to provide five years continuous teaching and had to wait till 1957 for recognition, but Millfield sailed through and was informed of success on 28th March.

130 The Minister noted with satisfaction that the Nissen huts 'are soon to be replaced', and there was a recommendation that the staff in the lower part of the school should be strengthened. The report itself was not published until 30th September and its general conclusions were:-

140 "This School sets out to perform a difficult task, that of preparing for examinations a heterogeneous group of boys, girls and young men, many of them with latent loyalties to other schools and some staying only a few terms, and at the same time welding them into a living organism with a true corporate life; and a notable degree of success is achieved in both these fields. It now remains to provide, so far as building stringency allows, a more worthy home for the teaching and to reconsider and recast much of the pre-School Certificate work while strengthening the staff in certain directions. When all this has been done, the School may claim to fill with some distinction a very useful place in the educational system of the country".

## Chapter 18

### Millfield becomes a limited company. Edgarley stays put. 1951-3.

10 Just over a month after the inspectors' report was published by the Ministry of Education, one Gordon Woods, a pupil at Edgarley, the 'unrecognized' junior department of Millfield, passed Common Entrance to Shrewsbury School. This was unusual in that most of Edgarley's output went to schools in the south of England, indeed Gordon appears to be the only one to have gone to Shrewsbury, but it did mean that RJOM had made contact with the Headmaster, JF Wolfenden, during the previous summer, when he was also the chairman of the HMC. Thus on 21st November 1949 he wrote:-

"Dear Wolfenden,

I am very sorry indeed to bother you with a comparative trifle, but I wonder if I might ask from you, as Chairman of the H.M. Conference, an opinion as to whether I (and Millfield) would be eligible for election. We are recognized as an efficient secondary school by the Ministry of Education and I think we fulfill all the requirements as set out in Whitaker's Almanack - namely we are independent, we have over 200 boys over 13, we do a great deal of post-Certificate and University Scholarship work, and I think we have sent more boys on to Oxford and Cambridge and other universities than most schools".

20 Wolfenden responded two days later but he was not enthusiastic. Firstly he had resigned the chairmanship of HMC the week before, and secondly there was a substantial waiting list for membership, "so I should find it hard to encourage you to proceed with this notion". He did however give RJOM the name and address of the Secretary. He wrote immediately and received a prompt reply from LW Taylor, who enclosed an application form, but warned, as Wolfenden had, that the list was full and, with so many others waiting in the wings, there was little hope of election in the foreseeable future.

30 Nevertheless the application form was completed and returned at the appropriate time, early in May 1950, shortly before the meeting of the membership committee. Its decision was received on 20th May. Millfield's headmaster could not be elected as the statutory limit of 200 members had already been reached. Nor could his name be placed on the waiting list as the school's constitution had not been received by the committee and it was impossible to be satisfied that it conformed to the bye-laws of the Conference. The important point to be considered was whether the school was run for private profit or whether it was administered by a Board of Governors and all profits were spent on the school itself. Boss grasped the nettle and wrote with careful diplomacy that he fully understood the situation and that he would be most grateful for the Secretary's help and advice on how to set up a Board of Governors and to construct a constitution.

40 Help came by return of post. LW Taylor enclosed a copy of 'Model Articles of Government for a Secondary School', a publication issued by the Ministry of Education, which he considered would help Jack in forming a Governing Body for Millfield. The 'softly, softly' approach bore further fruit, for some sixteen months later, early in October 1951, Millfield was included amongst the schools on the waiting list that were requested to make a return of pupil numbers for assessment by the HMC membership committee, and this in spite of the clear refusal of 19th May 1950. Millfield kept up the good work and

immediately sent off the figures, followed by a request to the Secretary for technical advice on the drawing-up of 'an instrument of government'. The methods of 'Boss' Meyer and 'Old Noll' Cromwell, who were born just 30 miles and 300 years apart, might well bear comparison.

50 Jack had already begun to pursue one of his hobby-horses, the definition of a 'Public School', in Britain anyway. The Ministry of Education had told him that there was no such thing, only Primary and Secondary Schools. Now he also asked also what the

HMC thought it was. Taylor replied by quoting RA Butler, when he was Minister of Education, "By Public School I mean those schools which are in membership of the Headmasters' Conference or of the Governing Bodies' Association". Boss was unlikely to be impressed by this as 'Rab' had failed to take up the cudgels on behalf of George Turner when asked in 1942, and it is certain that Millfield continued to be considered as a 'Public School' by its proud owner and headmaster, even though it did not at that time belong to either of those august organisations.

60 In the meantime Jack had been looking around for 'friends at court' who might be of help in the next stage of Millfield's development. The Rev Canon Alan Ross Wallace, headmaster of Sherborne School, was approaching retirement in 1950. He was an outspoken supporter of the Meyer method, and had declared himself amazed at the way that some of his young men at Sherborne, who had not fulfilled expectations in their academic progress, had subsequently flourished at Millfield. Two of those were the Jardine twins, who in their case had had the advantage of a term as Millfield juniors and two years at Edgarley. Adrian and Stuart passed into RMA Sandhurst and later became the school's first sailing Olympians.

70 Canon Wallace had also preached to the assembled school in Street Parish Church and given lectures, so it may not have been too much of a surprise when Boss suggested that he might care to find a parish in central Somerset needing an incumbent and do some part-time teaching of Classics and Divinity at Millfield. Addressing him as 'Chief', his Sherborne nickname, Jack went on more realistically to hope that Canon Wallace might be regarded as "a potential Governor, or Councillor and counsellor". This letter, dated 4th April 1950, ends with the sentence, "All I know is that I would gladly bring you from the ends of the earth to talk to the boys - even once a term".

80 It is obvious from subsequent correspondence that the admiration was mutual, and, it has to be said, not least on the Burnham and Berrow Golf Links where they were both members. After his retirement from Sherborne in July 1950, 'Chief' Wallace became The Very Rev The Dean of Exeter, and, as Jack had hoped, was very willing to give what help he could in the translation of Millfield from a private school to one run as a non-profit making organisation with charitable status. His advice was invaluable and he became a founding governor, taking the chair at the first provisional meeting of the Governing Body on 17th July 1953. Unfortunately his church duties precluded him from being chairman on a long term basis, though he attended meetings regularly until his retirement in 1971, bowing out at approximately the same time as his old friend, the founder-headmaster.

90 Others from the world of academia amongst the first governors were Evan F Stokes, MA, JP, retired headmaster of St Dunstan's School, Burnham-on-Sea, who held the chairmanship from 1953 to 1971, and Jack Meyer, a most unusual departure as this made him, as headmaster, answerable to himself. In addition to Ross Wallace, the Church of



England was represented by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Rt Rev William Bradfield, and the Rev Prebendary JAL Armstrong, the Rector of Street. A number of current and past Millfield parents included Lord Broughshane and General Sir George Erskine, while the local MP, Lt Com SLC Maydon, who was also on the list, had two sons at Edgarley. Old Millfieldians were represented by ex-Head Boy, John Church, and ex-Head of the YLC, Dr Everel Green, whose mother, Mrs Elnith Sankey, along with her daughter, offered the woman's point of view, as well as that of an ex-tutor.

100 Two who might be considered as 'the professionals' were the legal adviser, JW Kennard, and the financial adviser, accountant EA Savage, who had spent some eighteen months steering Millfield to its new status.

Key, perhaps, to Millfield's future development was the acceptance of a governorship by J Anthony Clark, MA, JP, deputy chairman and a director of C & J Clark Ltd, Street, and a trustee of the Millfield Estate. He, along with several other members of the Clark family, had been born at Mill Field, and not unnaturally had an affection for the place, but apparently had no desire to live there. In reply to a letter from RJOM which expressed concern about the school's security of tenure and also outlined the plan put forward by Messrs Kennard and Savage, he wrote on 10th Feb 1953 :-

110 "I have not yet had much opportunity of discussing these proposals with my co-Trustees, but I know that they agree with me in saying that we should like to see Millfield School remain in Street. Those of us who think about the future of Street would like to see the School established as a permanent feature of the future development. For many reasons, we do regard it as an asset to the village".

Though it was not ideal to have the growing school based in a rented property, the knowledge that one of the landlords was willing not only to be a governor, but also to be chairman of the Executive and Finance Committee (when that came into being) gave everyone involved a feeling of greater confidence.

120 It did not however prevent RJOM's fertile mind from contemplating a complete upheaval in the future. Even as late as 1953 he was contemplating moving Edgarley to a large house in Hampshire, taking on a partner and keeping the venture private and out of the hands of the new Millfield governing body.

The plan was to sell a half-share to someone capable and qualified to run a preparatory school, move the whole to a new site, develop Edgarley Hall as a Millfield boarding house and use some of the money raised for the development of the senior school prior to its becoming a limited company.

130 Jack had informed his old friend, Bob Skene of Gabbitas Thring, of the way in which his thoughts were taking him in May 1951, when he was already investigating the possibilities of Hestercombe House, outside Taunton, with its Jekyll and Lutyens gardens. Also on offer were South Hill Park at Bracknell in Berkshire, Wotton House in Gloucestershire, and Woodborough Park near Bath. For a variety of reasons none was quite right and although he negotiated over two years with Jerry Cornes, a distinguished Oxford and Olympic athlete who was retiring from the Colonial Service and wanted a partnership, the deal fell through and Edgarley passed under the governors' yoke. Although the two men obviously got on well enough, there were differences between them as to how the

140 prep school should be developed. For example Jerry wanted a day pupil element and Jack did not: "They always bring diseases. Moreover day-boys never are quite standing with both feet on the school ground, and I have always found it impossible to get the parents to be part of the community life, or even to play the game about rules". It seems to have been some relief to Jack when Jerry indicated in mid-February 1953, that he had decided "to go on his own" and, in fact bought West Downs, a well known prep school in Winchester.

150 The saga does not quite finish there, for even as preparations were being made for the preliminary meeting of the Governors and Association of Millfield School on 17th July 1953 at the George and Pilgrim hotel in Glastonbury, RJOM was in correspondence with Philip Hall, the master in charge of the junior school of King's School, Rochester. He too was looking for a partnership, but could only be offered the opportunity to invest his money in the school and could not be guaranteed a family residence, one of his specific requirements, until the school removed from Edgarley. With no suitable houses in the offing he withdrew his application in August, shortly before Embley Park near Romsey in Hampshire came on to the market.

This was Florence Nightingale's family home and would have been ideal, indeed it became and still is an independent school, but Edgarley's future was now in the gift of the governors. Boss made one last effort. He contacted Jerry Cornes but it was too late. The West Downs contract was signed and sealed, and indeed Jerry was alarmed that a rival establishment might be opening less than 15 miles away. He did not have to worry.

160 "The Headmaster's Memorandum regarding the balance-sheet and developments", dated 18th October 1954, ends with the following:-

"I have for a long time wanted to move Edgarley to splendid houses I have found (now sold at twice the price), but I am persuaded that it is a pipe-dream, and anyhow the Houses are gone".

## Chapter 19

### Games and other activities, 1946-55.

10 The pupils were of course generally unaware of all that was going on behind the scenes during the four years leading up to the announcement in 1953 that Millfield had become a limited company. After all they were there principally to make up for past deficiencies in their education, sometimes through self-inflicted wounds, perhaps through war-time evacuation, or war-service itself for a few, or, if the Egyptian Feyzi Mohtar's suggestion in 1949 for a school motto is to be taken seriously, 'We are all here because we are not all there'. This latter appeared in the second edition of the Windmill, the annual publication which recorded the activities of the pupils, and to a lesser extent ex-pupils, during the previous year, until its sad demise in 1978 for financial reasons.

Between 1949 and 1953 seventy-four Millfieldians gained places at Oxford or Cambridge, including three scholarships and one exhibition, whilst twenty-seven entered other British universities, seven of them with scholarships. In the same period 149 Edgarley boys passed into public schools, 3 with major scholarships. This would seem to indicate that work for exams played a reasonably important part in school life on both sides.

20 Games inevitably occupied much time and thought amongst staff and pupils. It was fortunate that when Kingweston House was leased in the summer of 1946 the tenant farmer, Leonard Maunder, agreed to Millfield using ten acres or more of the park for sports pitches. Although exposed fully to the ravages of the prevailing south-west wind, the land was excellently drained and in time, having been given much loving care, provided splendid rugby and soccer pitches, playable at almost all times, one of the best grass hockey pitches in the west of England, two good cricket squares, a polo ground and a nine-hole golf course. The pitches at Millfield, apart from the 1st XI cricket ground, had been outgrown by the school and were used mainly for practice at times when it was inconvenient to transport players five miles to Kingweston.

30 The YLC still played their hockey matches on the original boys' pitch to the south of the line of trees bordering the cricket ground, and this was also used by athletes for sprinting practice and matches in the summer term. It was at this time that sporting prowess began to make the name of Millfield known to a wider public, and in the first instance it was through athletics.

40 Training and practising on a grass track round the cricket ground boundary, Michael Paxton, returned evacuee to Canada, became Somerset senior 440 yards champion and record holder, and then went on to win the public schools championship over the same distance at the White City. This was in 1948, the year of the London Olympic Games, when athletic performance of all sorts was under close scrutiny, but nevertheless the press showed a keen interest in the obscure Somerset school in the following year, when Tony Ford became public schools 440 yard champion, and again in 1950 when Hugh Laing just failed to win the same event.

The publicity which these excellent young athletes brought to the school obviously

did not go unnoticed by Boss and this started him off on a new track. His own love of the game had persuaded him to engage a full-time professional cricket coach for Millfield in 1947, the year in which he had agreed to captain Somerset himself. His choice was Sam Potheary, the recently retired Hampshire all-rounder, and as luck would have it, JH 'Snowball' Cameron, Cambridge University, Somerset and West Indies cricketer, wrote from Jamaica to ask if there was an opening for him at Millfield. Both men started in January but appear to have been disappointed in what they found, for Cameron left after the first season, and Potheary after the second.

10           It was obvious that Millfield's cricket was not going to hit the headlines without the injection of some external talent. In January 1950 Jack offered a bursary to Tony Corner with the approval of his headmaster at Huish's Grammar School in Taunton. Tony, who was at the time the best all-rounder in the Somerset under 15 XI, was duly found a billet in Street and became a day boy.

          Tony was by no means the earliest Millfieldian to receive financial assistance, but seems to have been the first whose sporting prowess was taken into consideration. Thus was sown the seed of the conflict which was to grow between Boss and a number of the HMC schools when he was accused of offering sports scholarships and poaching good games  
20           players from other schools.

          When it was realised that Millfield was in the market for good cricketers, headmasters of other state schools nominated boys that they believed needed and deserved the chance to develop their cricket potential in a more sympathetic environment. A number were accepted and these undoubtedly improved the school's performance, though it was some years before it reached the standards of the major public schools.

          With athletics and cricket dominating the summer scene, tennis seemed to be the  
30           poor relation, its development limited because there were only two grass courts to be shared by the boys and girls. For the latter it was the summer game, though there was also some competitive swimming at Greenbank. By 1949 the YLC was so well established, and so important in the university entrance stakes, that Boss decided to give them a fillip and engaged Fred Perry, the most famous British tennis player of his day, to spend a week-end at Millfield coaching. The visit was greeted enthusiastically by the girls and by the better boy players, with the result that it became an annual event for the next four years. Standards of play improved and the need for better facilities became obvious. Work began on the construction of four hard courts in 1951 and these were ready for play in the summer of 1952 when Basil Lawrence, then the senior Somerset county coach, began regular  
40           sessions at the school. By chance he was an Old Haileyburian and Cambridge Blue, ten years senior to Boss, and the two co-operated closely in spotting potential players. However the policy did not really come to fruition until 1955, when Derbyshire Education Authority agreed to finance Jimmy Tattersall through Millfield. He made his mark the following year by winning Wimbledon junior titles in singles, doubles and mixed doubles. This was the start of a fifteen year period in which current pupils and OMs of both sexes dominated British tennis.

          Winter games were also given encouragement by the appointment of new young

teachers only too anxious to use their coaching talents. In 1950 Walter Gluck, Oxford war-time 'colour' and Eastern Counties player, took over the organisation of rugby football and, perhaps more importantly, the coaching, much of which prior to that time had been carried out by senior team members. He was also able to secure an invitation for Millfield to play in the public schools' seven-a-side tournament at Richmond in April 1951. This gave Boss much pleasure, bearing in mind his determination to have the school recognized among the elite.

10 Hockey was well established even before the war, and the West of England Wanderers, a team organised solely by RJOM, played a part in developing the game in the south-west schools, thus helping to build up the Millfield fixture list. The new coach in September 1950 was Tony Robinson, fresh from Loughborough College, already capped by England and shortly to represent them in the Olympics. His influence, like that of Walter Gluck on the rigger, was immense, and he was equally good at teaching the girls as well as the boys.

20 These two young men, Gluck was 26 and Robinson 24, had been employed partly because of the inspectors' report, but also because Boss realised that, with the way the school was developing, he could no longer organise everything from the study. It was time to delegate some authority, and games seemed to be the area where the least damage could be done. No doubt with some reluctance, he made Walter Gluck responsible for cricket as well as rugby, but he kept tennis and golf under his own wing.

30 Others who joined the games staff at this important juncture were Mike Reilly and John Bromfield, the former coaching athletics field events and teaching mathematics, the latter coaching jumping events and rugby, and teaching chemistry. Syd Hill from Wales naturally helped Walter with the rugby, but was also involved with badminton as well as teaching biology. A year later athletics coaching was strengthened by the arrival of Herbert Smith, trained at Carnegie College, who joined Noel Barry Tait in the physics department, whilst Robert Bolt, who was to become more than ordinarily distinguished in the world of English literature, took over sailing. Basketball and boxing were coached and organised by Sergeant CH Seary, ex-Army PT Corps, who had been appointed as the permanent staff instructor of the recently formed Combined Cadet Force unit.

40 Outside help had to be brought in to coach the fencers, and the school was extremely lucky to obtain the services of Professor JS Field of Bristol who visited twice a week from 1952 to 1966. In that time the fencers won a number of county and national titles but were inclined to think of themselves as taking part in a Cinderella sport, complaining that other people thought they had chosen an easy games option which was definitely not true. They should perhaps have taken a leaf out of the riders' book and proclaimed their exclusivity.

Amothe Sankey, RJOM's secretary and an enthusiastic horsewoman, was largely responsible for keeping riding going during the difficult war years in the absence of the instructor, Roy Hern. His return from the army was followed shortly by the purchase of new ponies for the selected few who rode to hounds and practised polo. It became obvious that the original Mill Field stable block was no longer large enough and in 1949 work began to convert a group of tumble-down buildings in Farmer Perry's field close to the south-west

corner of the Camp.

Unfortunately, neither the building nor the land on which they stood should have been sub-let, but the new stables were completed and put into use in summer 1950, some two years before the owners, the Mill Field trustees, noticed.

10 Unquestionably, activities other than work for exams and sport were almost totally overshadowed, though plays were performed in the Crispin Hall in Street under the direction of Fergus Ferguson Young, and a small orchestra was led by Instructor Captain Geoffrey Clarkson, OBE, RN(retired), who also played the cello. Choral and individual singing were taught by Afif Bulos from Lebanon, pianist, singer and English tutor. It was he who, in writing about his own chief interest, summed up the situation regarding out-of-school activities at Millfield in 1951. His remarks could have been applied to any of the arts.

20 Writing in London in December, shortly before he left for home, AAB thanked Boss for his sending-off party and added, "May I suggest how absolutely necessary is a music room equipped with a good piano and radio-gram for putting the musical life at Millfield on a firm basis? The fact that we had no suitable place for rehearsals or listening to music was a great handicap. Sports as you pointed out have a very wholesome influence on the general standards of the boys that come to Millfield. Music and its appreciation would have an equally desirable influence in that respect.

Whether circumstances make it possible to renew my relationship at Millfield or not, it would give much pleasure to know that a good music room had been installed with the same speed that the tennis courts appeared on the ground! I hope you will forgive my boldness for making this remark.

With all good wishes to you, and to the school which I shall always remember with much affection and nostalgia".

## Chapter 20

### Pupils from overseas. The boarding houses grow, 1948-53.

10 It is worthwhile taking stock of what had been achieved at Millfield between those significant dates, 1935 and 1953. From being a tutorial establishment and holiday home for a handful of young Indians, it had become to all intents and purposes two boarding schools, the junior one, Edgarley Hall, with 72 pupils, two miles away on the outskirts of Glastonbury, and the 'efficient secondary', mainly on the original site but spreading over a five mile radius, with 247 pupils. There were a few day pupils included in these numbers, 4 at Edgarley and 6 at Millfield.

20 YLC numbers had hardly altered from the war years. There were around a dozen, more or less all of them in the hunt for university places, but their presence was firmly established. They added colour, and were a civilizing influence on the upper echelon of the school. Normally five boarded in the Cottage, two at Street Rectory, and the remainder were placed at Wraxleigh, which had been opened as a billet by Mr & Mrs 'Bud' Atkinson in 1950, he having returned to Millfield in 1948 as assistant bursar after leaving in 1944 for a brief foray into industry.

The overseas entry had inevitably fallen away during the war years, but numbers started to recover as early as September 1945, and over the next few years reached a steady 20% to 25%. Of the 383 new pupils joining the school between 1948 and 1952 inclusive, 90 came from abroad, countries as far-flung as New Zealand or as close as France and Belgium.

30 Amongst this group of 90, the largest number, 25, came from the Middle East while continental Europe was a close second with 21. The Far East, including the Indian sub-continent, provided 15 with, surprisingly by later standards, just one boy from Hong Kong. Southern Africa, including the Rhodesias and the then Union of South Africa produced 10 and North America 9. East Africa and South America tied with 5 apiece.

40 The overall proportion of overseas pupils has remained similar to Boss's ideal of 20% since that time, although the countries of origin have changed quite dramatically over the years, usually reflecting the current political situation. India and Pakistan were hardly represented during the sixties and seventies, when severe currency restrictions were imposed by their governments, and the new Republic of South Africa was affected similarly. With the diminution of the British Empire in the fifties and sixties the number of children sent home to be educated decreased, but this was compensated by the arrival of the offspring of new native government ministers and local entrepreneurs. Nigeria was a particular case in point as far as Millfield was concerned.

The original entry from the Middle East had come largely from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan

and Lebanon. By the mid-seventies the largest group from any country anywhere, with the exception of Britain itself, came from Iran. After the overthrow of the Shah's government in 1979 the connection was practically severed, since the parents of the majority of boys and girls sought safety in the USA. Since that time Hong Kong has dominated the overseas numbers, followed by Thailand, so that the Far East, or perhaps one should say the Pacific Rim, with regular contributions from Brunei, the Republic of China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, has become the happy hunting ground of Millfield's recruiters.

Just as important for the future of the school in 1953 had been the steady rise in the number of home products entering the lists in the 13 to 14 age bracket, so that more than half of the boy pupils were under 16 and aiming for the General Certificate of Education at Ordinary Level, instead of the old majority of seniors working towards university or armed services entry, though there were still plenty of the latter. Among the young ones loyalties were not divided, and indeed were strengthened as more and more filtered through from Edgarley.

Reputation too played a very important part. Not only were there remarkable exam results to encourage potential parents and pupils, but the air of friendliness and good manners about the place was noted and reported by all or at least most visitors. Boss was of course at the centre of all this, developing over the years into arguably the most perceptive interviewer of his time, whether he was persuading Mrs Bunn, the baker's wife, or the King of Siam that Millfield could do wondrous things for their offspring. The potential pupil was likely to be taken onto the terrace and put at his or her ease as, away from the anxious parents, the chat was about their hobbies and what they liked to do outside the classroom and what subjects were enjoyed inside. Inevitably games came into the conversation, and an old tennis ball, or perhaps an apple, would appear magically from the sagging pocket of this distinctly unusual headmaster's elderly jacket and would be tossed quite swiftly towards the youngster's midriff. This served a dual purpose, testing the ability to catch a ball and to find out which hand was dominant. The reaction could help to indicate if there were signs of cross-laterality, one of the causes of word-blindness, the treatment of which had been partly responsible for earning the school its reputation as a saver of apparently lost causes.

Once they had entered the school, many of the weaker vessels found their way to the Millfield house surgery where they found a sympathetic listener and adviser in RJOM's wife, Joyce, who understood unerringly the problems which they faced. She had not been able to turn to her parents when at school because they were in India, she in England. After her marriage at a very young age she had to rely largely on her not much older husband who from late 1935 onwards was struggling to keep his and Millfield's head above water. Soon she became the confidante of the young men arriving from other schools, often with their heads held high although their self-assurance was very low because they had failed exams or had been written off as hopeless by their previous teachers. It has to be said that more often than not it was Joyce whom the returning Old Boys sought out first at reunions



and on the touchline. If she seemed to have a special affinity for the rucker players, it was probably because they were the ones who spent most time in the surgery receiving attention for their injuries, and perhaps their egos. Like her husband, she was gifted with a wonderful memory for faces and names, so that her visitors tended to feel as if they had only left school the day before, and for that matter she herself hardly seemed to change in appearance over the years. Her dance-card would be full at every OM occasion even before the first note of music was played.

If Joyce Meyer had known well all the pupils between the years 1935 and 1945, the situation had changed quite dramatically by 1953. Numbers had almost tripled and, although attempts had been made to lodge everyone within easy cycling distance of Millfield and therefore mainly in Street, it had been necessary to go further afield to seek accommodation.

Kingweston House, five miles away, was the furthest. At first motor transport was needed for just a handful of boys, but soon a whole coach was filled, and, with the Millfield house catering facilities already severely overloaded, it was decided to send them back to the house for lunch. This meant increasing the number of domestic staff, and providing a house sick-room where the matron could deal with the halt and the lame without having to transport them to see Joyce and the school doctor in the central surgery. The first Kingweston housemaster, Major Herbert West, who by a strange chance had been a predecessor of JR Bunbury as head of modern languages at Durham School in the thirties, was married to a lady of impeccable background. Mrs Dorothy West had been a Dame at Eton and before that a matron at Westminster School. Sadly Major West died in 1947 after just a year in office, but his widow agreed to stay on as housemother at Kingweston with a bachelor tutor, Alfred Newman, as housemaster. This worked so well that Boss was inclined to point to her as the model which new housemothers should try to emulate. But since the latter were performing their duties unpaid, as their husbands were housemasters, while Mrs West was salaried, this was a distinctly unfortunate suggestion.

The housemasters too were in a somewhat invidious position when approached by parents of the boys in their houses, for Boss was not only headmaster but was still director of studies, though he had two assistants in FL Slow and RL Williams. A dossier on each new pupil's background, with a forecast of future developments, was issued to the housemaster but he could not give advice other than to approach the headmaster on any problem where work was involved. This was not the case in most public schools, so that parents, unfamiliar with the Millfield system, became frustrated when they simply required reassurance that their offspring were following the best course. Interviews had to be fitted into Boss's extremely busy time-table and, as the school grew larger, the period of waiting became longer. Fortunately the majority learned to accept this, being only too grateful for the opportunity to make good which had been offered to their children by this charismatic and apparently eccentric gentleman.

130 By 1953 only one other major house, the Old Rectory at Walton, had been opened, with Mr and Mrs HK Cassels in charge. They had already started Holmcroft, next to the Street Inn, with a few seniors in 1947, but conditions were very cramped and they were pleased to move a mile along the road to a more expansive setting in 1951. HK was a distinguished sportsman, an England hockey player who had taken part in the Olympics, and a Cambridge squash blue. He had taken charge of the squash team at Millfield, an unenviable job as all practices and matches took place at the Downside school courts, some twelve miles from Street. This wonderfully generous action by the famous Catholic school kept the game going until 1954, when the stable and coach-house at Walton was converted into the school's first court, under the critical eye of HK.

140 Badminton also had no permanent Millfield home, and the gym at Crispin Hall was hired on three days a week during the winter months. Small-bore shooting, carried on mainly under the aegis of the CCF, still took place at the Drill Hall in Glastonbury, while boxing, a popular sport in 1953, was coached in a Nissen hut by the CCF PSI, Sergeant Seary, though the inter-house tournament was fought in the Crispin Hall gym. This latter was part of a large building in Street which had been built by Clarks in 1900 as a centre of activities and entertainment for the factory workers and the villagers. The main hall had a narrow stage and a flat auditorium with a balcony above, designed for concerts by the Street Silver Band. Unfortunately the band was long since defunct, and the acoustics of the hall made it  
150 virtually useless for anything but loud band music. Nevertheless, in view of the lack of anywhere else of the right capacity for the increasingly large school to gather, Millfield used it for school plays, house plays, even debating and dances until such time as better venues could be found or built.

The school would have to be finding more suitable buildings for some time to come, because the Achilles heel of the whole set-up was the lack of a capital fund which could be tapped when new accommodation was required for any of the school's increasingly multifarious activities. This problem was now to land in the laps of the governors, but the finances would benefit from the charitable status conferred upon the school as the result of  
160 its becoming a non-profit making limited company, for tax would not have to be paid on income. Even then it was three years before the first new permanent building constructed on the school premises appeared.

## Chapter 21

### The first new school building at Millfield. Boarding houses, billets, Glaston Tor. 1953-9.

When preparing his first report for the governors, for the school year starting in September 1953, RJOM wrote in his preamble regarding the balance-sheet and development:

10 "There is one supreme difficulty which cannot at the moment be met. We are on other men's territory - friendly territory I am sure, but foreign none the less. We should, I feel, be cautious about large-scale expenditure in this foreign territory, but most cautious about expenditure which helps us a little but posterity not at all. I would gladly develop a garden or playing-field or house for others. I would dislike to leave behind us a mess which had to be bull-dozed out of existence when we had gone.

Now for my list of things I think and have always thought we need if we stay here".

20 He then pointed out the requirement for easing the overcrowding in the main house, especially as regards meals. He suggested that the north wing, then sculleries and changing rooms, should be rebuilt to provide a new dining-room and accommodation for an assistant housemaster and matrons and housekeepers. New classrooms were needed, and he floated the idea of a library and a small assembly hall, while better facilities for pursuing out-of-school activities, such as table-tennis, chess, hobbies and, excitingly for the time, watching television, would be more than welcome.

30 Edgarley too wanted new buildings, especially a gym/assembly hall, as well as improved drainage and flattening of the unsatisfactory playing fields. Millfield's were much better after the addition of the Kingweston fields, but a hard hockey pitch and a cinder running-track were needed.

Nearest to Boss's heart was improvement, which really meant extension, to the 1st XI cricket ground and the provision of a new pavilion to replace the old 'home-made box' erected by Percival Otridge and the boys in 1937.

RJOM then suggested that the already formed development sub-committee should invite the services of a school architect to produce a rough but orderly plan for the future, so that piecemeal development would be avoided.

40 Trying to see into the fertile Meyer mind at any period in the school's history is not easy but the impression must be that at this point he does not want to move from Millfield. He was sending none too heavily disguised coded messages via Tony Clark to the estate trustees that they should consider parting with the property before a decision was taken to move the school to another area, thus depriving Street of the major asset that he had created. It was necessarily a long shot, because the school, to all intents and purposes, had no serious financial assets other than the pupils' fees. Unsurprisingly it made no discernible mark on the target, but nevertheless it must have served as a reminder that this headmaster, who had achieved so much in the educational field against the odds, and who

50 had provided employment for many local people, was quite capable of 'upping sticks' to another field of play if he saw a financial advantage for his school, though it was now technically that of the governors.

The finances looked healthy enough on a day-to-day basis. There was a profit of some 9% of the total turnover of £130,000 in the first financial year as a limited company, 1953-54. This was partly due to good housekeeping and partly to the new charitable status. The percentage profit remained much the same throughout the 1950s, though the turnover in pounds grew, with more pupils in the school and a steady rise in fees which followed the pattern of inflation.

60 The cost of new buildings inevitably increased, so the surfeit of money in the coffers did not produce "a mess which would have to be bulldozed", but the 1st XI cricket ground was levelled, with the loss, sadly, of the line of trees ending by the field entrance on the Butleigh road, and a new pavilion was built, alongside new tennis courts.

70 The only permanent building erected on the main estate in that period was a set of chemistry laboratories. The other sciences, biology and physics, were served by enlarged Nissen huts in the Camp, while the original science lab, set up in the eastern section of the main stable block opposite the Millfield front door in 1936, had been converted to specialist chemistry in the immediate post-war period. The bursar, Brigadier AH Mackie, who had succeeded the highly adaptable and much mourned Chindit, Major Riches, had been complaining for some time about lack of space, and after his new appointment as Clerk to the Governors in 1953, which inevitably involved greater responsibility and increased paperwork, the decision was taken to convert the old laboratory to a room for his secretary, and to build a new one.

80 The site chosen was the western end of the Camp, quite probably where the Street windmill had stood, backing on to the Somerton road. During 1954 the chemistry tutors, led by the head of department, DJ Luke, worked with the architect, headmaster and bursar to produce simple but effective plans for a concrete block rectangular building, containing two laboratories, two lecture-rooms, a balance room and a small store-room, the whole cost to be about £2,500. With the agreement of the governors' executive and finance committee, work went ahead in 1955, at the same time as additional changing facilities were added at the rear of the old stable block. The cost of the latter was another £2,100.

90 The new labs were first in use in January 1956, but after the addition of further buildings and some reconstruction in 1962-63, they were christened the James Martin Laboratories, with a brass plaque at the main entrance. This was carried out in recognition of a loan of £5,000 from the Martin-Baker Aircraft Company, interest free for a period of 4 years, offered according to RJOM in his report to the governors for 1956-57 "to help with the Physics lab building", but which was in fact tied by the following conditions:

"(a) The loan to be free of interest until maturity date, but if then not repaid shall as from maturity date carry interest at the rate of 5%.

(b) The School shall apply all the income arising from the loan upon the development and improvement of the Laboratories or other facilities installed at the School for the purpose of Scientific Education, and shall from time to time upon request supply to Martin-Baker Aircraft Co. Ltd. details of how the said money has been applied".

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James Martin was the chairman and managing director of the said company, and had just entered his twin sons at Millfield in the hope of their subsequently achieving entrance to university to study engineering and then joining him in the firm. He was not only the inventor of the ejector-seat but also an exceedingly shrewd businessman who had created an outstandingly successful export organisation dealing chiefly with aircraft manufacturers in the USA.

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It was implicit in the agreement he made with Boss that the loan, equivalent to a sum between £50,000 and £100,000 at the end of the twentieth century, should be invested for four years and then repaid, with the interest, untaxed, having given the school a useful return with which to buy scientific equipment. 42% Conversion Loan, 1962, was suggested by the Executive and Finance Committee and this produced £1,350 interest in the first four years. As the Martin boys remained at the school until 1962 the free loan was extended for another two years and the interest accrued was £1,835, which was not far short of the cost of the original building.

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Boss had in fact almost inadvertently set up a building fund in 1956 by announcing in The Times in May that Millfield was celebrating its 21st year 'coming of age' by launching an appeal to build the school. Unfortunately the governors had not been consulted and indeed were less than enthralled by the idea, as it was felt that the school at the time could not afford the professional advice of an outside fund raiser, and that their headmaster had quite enough on his plate already. So letters of apology, thanks and hopes for the future were despatched as quickly as possible to those who had responded to The Times ad, mainly Old Millfieldians, while a further announcement was made on Open Day at Whitsun 1957 that all contributions to the building fund would be welcome. By the end of 1959 some £15,000 had been received and this had been used to help build the new cricket pavilion and to carry out improvements in the new school houses which were blossoming as the buds of the post-war baby boom reached secondary school age.

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Shapwick Manor, six miles to the west of Street, opened in April 1957 with sixteen boys and very little in the way of hygienic facilities. The owners, the Vestey Estates, allowed Millfield to make alterations at the back of the beautiful sixteenth century house to allow for new bathrooms and lavatories, so that a year later numbers rose to 44.

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Joan's Kitchen, which had been a restaurant, as well as a Millfield billet since 1950, also had a change of face in 1957 as the owner, Mrs Joan Cottier, leased the building to the school when she moved to another house elsewhere. To the regret of the inmates, the restaurant was closed, but the space was used to improve the living and working condition of the boys while creating room for 16 instead of 8.

Another innovation was the use of another school's premises to house Millfield boys.

Captain and Mrs HC James, the parents of two Millfield pupils, asked Boss for advice on how to start a private school, and being given it, including the injunction to start it as far away from Street as possible, bought Chilton Cantelo House, some sixteen miles from their mentor's front door. Any slight irritation that may have been caused was quickly offset by Captain James' offer to house Millfield boys while he built up his own numbers. Thus in April 1959 one former assistant housemaster, George du Heaume, in charge of a party of 30, was despatched to the farthest flung part of Somerset, or so it seemed to those who had to make the daily round-trip along the winding lanes in an elderly coach. This arrangement  
150 continued, with the introduction of a better bus and four more pupils, until the end of summer 1963, when Chilton Cantelo reached the point of requiring the Millfield dormitories for its own pupils.

It would not have been necessary to use Chilton Cantelo at all, if negotiations to buy Glaston Tor School, an ailing preparatory school in Glastonbury had not failed. In 1955 rumour reached Boss's ears that the founder headmasters, Jim Hollingworth and Bernard Watts, both Oxonians, were considering selling their property and moving their school to Orchard Neville, near Frome. This latter fact would have a bearing on the cost, for, if they decided to retire instead, they would be able to sell the buildings as a school, with its  
160 attendant good will, at twice the price. Enlisting the aid of OM Eddie Greenwell, head boy in 1939, and a chartered surveyor with headquarters in Oxford, Boss had enquiries made as to the owners' intentions, using the name of Dr Green, Amothe Sankey's brother-in-law, with the suggestion that he was hoping to set up a remedial education centre.

However Messrs Hollingworth and Watts soon smelt a rat, for Boss asked one of his fellow Millfield governors, Bristol chartered surveyor CH Pritchard, to visit Glaston Tor, still ostensibly on behalf of Dr Green, but obviously they were not as green as they were cabbage-looking! At the close of 1955 the headmasters made it clear to Boss, Pritchard and Greenwell that they considered the whole approach unethical, but, significantly, they did  
170 not break off negotiations. It was reported to the Millfield governors' executive and finance committee on 16th March 1956 that confidential talks were still going on. In June Pritchard offered the vendors £7,500, suggesting that Millfield might buy the furniture as well, but this was promptly countered by the proposed withdrawal of three cottages from the sale. Contact was not broken off but in October the governors made it clear that they were not interested in purchasing the good will.

However Boss was becoming desperate to find further boarding accommodation, and he too made inquiries about Orchard Neville, which might offer a chance of moving the junior school and turning Edgarley into a Millfield boarding house. But relief came from  
180 closer at hand when the offer to purchase or rent Shapwick Manor was also made in October. The asking price was around £3,500 but Pritchard, who made a survey, felt that leasing was the better option because the house was six miles from Street and could be costly from the maintenance point of view. As preparations were made to occupy Shapwick in April, the bursar wrote to the solicitors acting for Glaston Tor School, informing them that he had been directed by the governors to say that they considered that no useful purpose would be served in continuing further negotiations. This letter was posted on 1st March 1957.

190 Boss however did not give up quite so easily and on his own account made an offer  
for Orchard Neville. By August he had bought the estate subject to survey and contract.  
Sensing that no one else was in the market for it, except perhaps the Tor headmasters if  
they could sell their school, he did not complete the purchase, and then went on to make a  
lower offer three months later. This was under consideration by the vendors when Jim  
Hollingworth phoned Boss to say that he had heard, and was concerned by a rumour about  
Orchard Neville and that he would like to discuss the possibility of Millfield renewing its  
offer for Glaston Tor. They met on 27th November and agreed that £10,000 was a fair price  
for the buildings and land, and that RJOM would withdraw his offer for Orchard Neville. It  
was understood that the Millfield governors would have to approve, and that in the  
meantime Mrs Hollingworth, who controlled the domestic side of Tor School, would be  
200 willing to house and feed ten or twelve Millfield or Edgarley entrants for whom the schools  
had no bed spaces.

At this point Boss informed Pritchard who, after due consideration with the other  
members of the finance and executive committee, phoned on Christmas Eve to say that he  
was empowered to offer £8,500 and no more. The Tor headmasters turned it down flat and  
with genuine regret informed Boss on the last day of the year that the *quid pro quo*, the  
housing of the Edgarley overflow, must be withdrawn. He accepted this stoically and on 1st  
January 1958 wrote back, suggesting that the boarding offer was still open, in spite of their  
rejection of the £8,500, and then quite brazenly inquired if they would be willing to lease St.  
210 Michael's, their property next door. Though nothing came of the latter, they remained on  
good terms and Boss continued to recommend Tor as a good school to parents who could  
not afford the Edgarley fees.

Jim Hollingworth and Bernard Watts seem to have been aware of the writing on the  
wall. Numbers were falling and they could not sell the school at the price needed to restart  
them at Orchard Neville, so they decided to retire in 1959, having found a group of  
Glastonbury enthusiasts willing to help set up an educational trust. A salaried headmaster,  
HR Watts, no connection to Bernard, took office in September, while Boss and the  
governors looked around the area for anywhere to board the increasing numbers knocking  
220 on Millfield's doors.

The answer was usually found by squeezing a few double bunks into the larger  
houses, at that time Kingweston and Shapwick, and by opening new billets. In 1959 it was  
Ben Tor on Roman Way, Glastonbury, and Cheddar View at Ashcott. The former lasted just  
one year with eight boys, while the latter housed ten boys and a resident assistant master,  
at first Michael Foyle, a typical Boss appointment, for he had a Cambridge classics degree,  
had completed his National Service in the Intelligence Corps, had taught for a year in the  
USA, was going to teach Russian, and in return would to be tutored in sciences so that he  
could pass 1st MB on his way to becoming a doctor. However he changed his mind and  
230 stayed four years, whilst Cheddar View continues with a short break until 1970, for the last  
three years as a girls' billet.

Several other housing changes had occurred in the fifties as a result of a mains water  
supply being linked to Kingweston House. Additional washing facilities and lavatories  
allowed numbers to increase from 35 to 60 in 1950. This made possible the closure of two

small houses immediately. 43 High St, Glastonbury, with 14 senior boys, had been run since its inception in 1947 by Mr and Mrs Peter Pitman. He was senior biologist and a good cricketer and she was a State Registered Nurse, an ideal combination for house-parents. Unfortunately he was appointed to a new post in Surrey in 1950 and it was decided to end the lease of '43'. 31 High St succumbed at the same time. Mr and Mrs Archibald Watkins (he was a mathematician) took on Resteholme after the late Bursar's widow, Mrs Riches, decided to leave. '31', like '43', was mainly for seniors and had a similar number.

17 Middle Leigh lasted a year longer, closing in 1951. After the Charltons moved on in 1947, it was in turn the Millfield starting-point of two distinguished tutors. The first, for a term only, was Alan Salisbury, retired Indian Civil Service judge, who was to teach classics for the next 25 years, before moving to Edgarley 'for a change of air'. He was followed by Colonel Reggie Heard, OBE, MC, late of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who had become known to Boss because he was brother-in-law to the main school housekeeper, Mrs Muriel Walbank, a much respected lady. Reggie, who gained the unlikely nickname of Boogie, taught geography and was instrumental in converting the school's military training from the Army Cadet Force to the Combined Cadet Force, which provided greater freedom of organisation.

The numbers game continued right through the fifties, as the beds in school houses never quite caught up with the numbers of boys and girls. Billets, whose owners usually had another connection with the school, opened and closed as demand dictated. Joan's Kitchen was followed by Pedwell House, five miles from Street, which operated from 1951 to 1955. Several started in Glastonbury, convenient because the boys could cycle to and from Street. Abbot's Leigh, Abbey Grange and 3 Chilkwell St, just along the road from Glaston Tor School, all began in 1953. A rather larger establishment, Abbot's Sharpham, was opened by Hector Nest, maths tutor, and his wife for a dozen boys. This rural spot near Walton - half the building was a working farm - was chosen as the country retreat of the Abbots of Glastonbury, and it was there that the last one, Richard Whiting, had been arrested before his trial for treason on the orders of Henry VIII.

Leigh Nook on the southern edge of Street, which was also truly rural, had six and a half years of life, finishing in 1959. George Turner was the resident housemaster, because it was felt that it was asking too much of the non-Millfield owners to be responsible for the behaviour of eleven boys. The billet was exceptionally successful as a retreat for some of the school's potential university scholars and it was a sad day when the Mundys decided to give notice of closure. In addition that great servant of the developing school, GBAT, decided to leave housemastering.

Roman Way on Wyrrol Hill, between Street and Glastonbury, was the site of three billets: Montbrison (Jim Bunbury), Hill Home (Mr and Mrs Bob Dickens) and the already mentioned Ben Tor. These were happy places for boarding boys, but surely nothing could compare with the lot of those lucky girls who had been chosen to live in Shangri-La.



## Chapter 22

### Prefects, the YLC, smoking. The house system develops. The varying fortunes of Kingweston. 1950-9.

By 1950 the school magazine, The Windmill, was established as a useful but by no means comprehensive record of successes in the exam room, performances on the sports front, and changes to the staff and ISP lists. There were some original contributions, whilst reports from the boarding houses gave the reader a glimpse of the social life of the school, but not the spirit of the place. The decade that followed saw great changes, particularly in the beginnings of decentralization, but what remained right through the fifties was an indefinable feeling of freedom which had to be an inheritance from the old tutorial school days.

The working day was more structured, with no more staff meetings in the sitting room before morning school to decide who should teach what and whom, but relations between teachers and taught remained relaxed. The new young tutors had almost all spent a few years of their recent past coming to appreciate the inestimable value of really getting to know the men they might have to command in battle, and they applied this approach in the classroom, which, in Millfield's case, was usually an ex-military Nissen hut.

Rules were unwritten, but newcomers quickly learned what was acceptable in the way of behaviour, and what was not. Whereas Boss had meted out punishment when necessary, usually a swift caning, this became impractical with the spread of new housing. Each unit had its own system of maintaining harmony, correctives usually being defaulters, that is doing uncomfortable jobs around the house, gating, involving loss of all privileges, or, for certain serious offences, caning by the housemaster, or the prefects, with the housemaster's permission.

Prefects came in three categories, house, school and honorary, the latter usually being late entry seniors from other schools. They had the privileges but none of the duties of school prefects, though most of them did volunteer to give their services soon after finding their feet. The privileges were perhaps not easy to find. They included a special tie, navy blue with tiny embroidered silver windmills, the right to walk up and down the main drive at Millfield, and the exclusive use of one small room there, which meant that in break they did not have to queue up or perhaps scramble for a bun at the pantry window. Indulgent housemasters would allow them to go for a beer at the local pub on a Saturday evening, and in many houses they were allowed to employ a fag, normally a newly-joined thirteen or fourteen year-old, to clean shoes and make coffee and toast after prep. This was to become a controversial subject in the sixties and to end in the seventies, but many public schools in the fifties still approved of fagging, and the Millfield regime was unquestionably based on that of Haileybury.

The dress code was simple. During the school day, boys were to wear suits, or grey trousers with a neutral sports jacket or blazer, a plain shirt, a Millfield tie, or in the case of the late entries an old boys tie from their previous school, and polished shoes. The YLC were expected to show good taste and a high sense of decorum. These same regulations

50 applied when visiting Street or Glastonbury, or other schools when representing Millfield. In the confines of their own houses, the pupils were on the whole allowed to wear their own choice of clothing, though anything too outrageous might well be banned by housemaster or housemother, and anyway the choice would be limited by the space available for storage. A favourite Boss story, probably apocryphal, told of the son of a Middle Eastern potentate arriving for his first term with ten suits, having been instructed to bring two. Told to parcel up eight and send them home, he failed to do so. The suits were then confiscated on Boss's orders and buried in the garden at Orchards.

60 Though slightly out of context, for it happened in 1947, Boss introduced a remarkable piece of dress regulation, never to be repeated, for the first Kingweston dance, when he ordered the boys attending to wear cricket flannels. This was so that his car headlights could easily pick out the white legs of any miscreants who might have slipped out of the house for some nefarious purpose with or without, but most probably with, a partner. He was at that stage still highly nervous about relationships between senior boys and the YLC. It was made very clear to the girls and their parents before they entered the school that they would have to accept the blame for any impropriety (it did not have to be gross) occurring with a boy. The girl would be expelled and the boy caned for allowing himself to be tempted into unseemly behaviour. But then he was the weaker vessel, or so Boss seemed to think.

70 Unquestionably the presence of the young ladies had an effect upon the whole school in that the senior boys, at least in public, treated the girls with the same courtesy that they treated the staff, while the youngsters regarded them with the sort of admiring contempt that Just William reserved for his elder sister Ethel. Those unfortunates who fell into a sort of middle category by age, the rather advanced 14 year olds and some of the 15s, practised for the future by showing off and chatting to the first year A-Level girls, many of whom had had few encounters with boys, having arrived from the cloistered atmosphere of a girls' boarding school. If flattered at first by these attentions, the girls usually found quite quickly that they could pick and choose to whom they wished to talk. Indeed they were spoiled for choice with, at the very least, ten boys for every one girl throughout the fifties.

80 There was one privilege peculiar to the YLC which was envied by all the boys to some extent and by many seniors in particular. The girls were allowed, with parental permission, to smoke cigarettes at official school social functions, such as the dance held on the evening after the old boys rugby match against the school. In the immediate post-war period this licence was given to the young ex-servicemen at any time, and had inevitably trickled through to all those over 18, who were however expected to conceal their habit from the general public by retiring to the prefects' common room or some other designated area. However at that time the scourge of lung cancer was becoming attributed to cigarette smoking, and in consultation with the school medical officer, Dr Pinniger of Glastonbury, and with the housemasters, Boss decided to permit pipes only, although he did not stop smoking himself. It has to be said that most of the housemasters and their wives, and the rest of the teaching staff, continued to indulge in that 'most pernicious habit'.

90 What happened next in the saga of tobacco smoking is a good example of the loosening of central control that came about with the growth of the school. New

housemasters in new houses found themselves promoting much younger boys to prefectship and accepting defeat when those who already enjoyed the 18 year olds' privilege pleaded for their new aides to be able to do the same. It soon became common practice for prefects in the more distant houses to pass one lit pipe around among themselves while travelling to the main school in their ancient Fosters coach in the morning and on their way back 'home' in the evening. School rules were frequently deemed to operate only in the grounds of Millfield itself, while house rules were more elastic in interpretation so that 'out' house members, although they frequently complained of lack of facilities, also spoke of the freedom they experienced. This, allied with the common endurance of uncomfortable conditions such as lack of privacy, lack of hot water, curtainless windows, and double bunks caused the denizens to think of themselves as a 'tough' house, which created its own ethos, and to which they were almost fanatically loyal. To belong to Kingweston, for example, was of infinitely greater importance than to be a member of MillfieldSchool.

This attachment to house was greatly strengthened when a cup was presented to the school by an anonymous donor who wished it to be awarded to the house with the best all-round performance in inter-house games during the school year. Named as the Winston Churchill Cup, it was first competed for in 1951, the same year that that gentleman was elected Prime Minister for the first time in peace-time. One might speculate as to whether it might have carried a different name if Clement Attlee had won that particular election.

The first yearly competition was completed in the summer of 1952, and the cup was won by 'The Rest', a group consisting of all the small houses, Holmcroft, Middle Leigh and Joan's Kitchen, which was promptly broken up as Holmcroft joined Millfield house, JK was attached to Orchards, and Middle Leigh died a natural death. In spite of similar changes in groupings down the years, and regular grumbles from distant houses which were never allotted top swimmers and tennis players, and from 'in' houses which considered they were penalised by having all the horse riders who, it was claimed, contributed nothing to house sporting activity, there has never been a year in which the battle for the Churchill Cup has not been keenly fought.

Inevitably Millfield was the house to beat, partly because Boss was the housemaster and it was a popular myth that he selected the best sportsmen for himself. He also insisted on the head boy boarding in the house, and this frequently meant a top athlete in another house being transferred in, which weakened one house and strengthened that of the headmaster.

Resteholme, which became Chindit in 1953, was limited to senior boys, most of whom were joining the school at the age of 16 or 17, but it still functioned well on the games level. Leonard Riches, the first housemaster, and in whose honour the house was renamed, was a keen sportsman who considered that success in house competitions would help to bind a disparate group of youths together. His successor, AL Watkins, whose forte was swimming, carried on the good work, and EJC Bromfield, 'Brom', who took over the house in the summer term of 1953, coached rugby and athletics to great effect. By winning the first organised inter-house rugby competition, their team was awarded the distinction of wearing white shorts with scarlet jerseys, which made them look like the Welsh XV. This honour was jealously guarded until the autumn of 1983 when Chindit became a girls' house.

On the other hand Walton, which had approximately the same numbers as Chindit, gained its strength from having most of its entry at 13 and keeping them for the whole of their school life. Promising squash players almost inevitably found their way there, as the house had the only court, but, like the Chindit boys, they had to be competent cyclists, for it was only in the most inclement weather that housemaster HKC, who also cycled, was permitted to phone for a coach to take his charges into school and back for lunch.

150 Kingweston, which usually had a mixture of new and late entries, was from its inception something of a law unto itself, and was looked upon by the rest of the school as the Millfield brand of Liberty Hall. Major West, the inaugural housemaster, became increasingly ill, and during his frequent absences relied to a great extent upon his prefects to keep the house in order, though Mrs West, a former Eton Dame, was no shrinking violet when dealing with recalcitrant youth.

For the first two terms there were two assistant housemasters who do not seem to have got on with each other, thus adding to the problems. They were H Treacher Bowden, later headmaster of Clare School, near Yeovil, and Alfred H Newman, a naturalised British  
160 subject, who had escaped from Germany on the outbreak of war in 1939.

Major and Mrs West took up residence in January 1947, and Treacher Bowden left in April. Two months later Major West died, and Newman took over as housemaster, while Mrs West continued as housemother. Unfortunately Boss does not seem to have had full confidence in his new appointee's ability to take control in the furthest-flung part of the growing empire, in spite of Mrs West's support of him. In the preamble to the description of the school's work for His Majesty's Inspectorate in spring 1949, RJOM describes Kingweston as "A large country-house where many boys who are chiefly interested in farming and country pursuits find their niche", and Alfred Newman, whatever his other  
170 qualities may have been, could hardly be described as a huntin', shooting', fishin' and farmin' person. It was difficult for him to have any rapport with boys from an open-air background, especially the older ones, and inevitably this meant his being at cross-purposes with his prefects, many of whom were wished upon him by the headmaster. Nevertheless he was still there five and a half years later, when Boss decided to get rid of him. On 23rd September 1952, it was suggested to Newman, in the course of a conversation with the headmaster, that he should leave the school at the end of the summer term of 1953.

Probably suffering from 'shell-shock' in the aftermath of the ultimatum, Newman did nothing for a month and then wrote asking for RJOM's reasons for requesting him to go. It  
180 has to be said at this juncture that, however skilfully Boss negotiated with parents and pupils, face-to-face encounters with teaching staff often left the latter wondering whether a decision had been made and, if so, what it was. After interview, applicants for posts often left bewildered as to whether they were being offered the job or not, and subsequently had to write for confirmation. Boss was easily irritated by being pestered with questions on subjects which he considered as trivia and capable of being solved by a little common sense. Newman does not seem to have fallen into the category of a pesterer, rather the opposite, keeping his problems to himself, but if one is to believe Boss's letter of November 1st 1952, in which he explains his reasons for asking him to resign, he "had to intervene constantly to

190 make peace between you and your prefects". He goes on to say, "You have shown yourself to be quite incapable of working with any Assistant Housemaster" and "I am not impressed with your teaching and I am of the opinion that you fail to make the most of the pupils put in your care".

200 Newman's counterblast followed a month later on 1st December. He claimed that he had served loyally under Major West, that he had, as housemaster after the Major's death, only had two assistants, Dr Richard Nowotny, who had stayed at Millfield for less than a year, and W Christie Moffatt who, it was discovered, had falsely claimed to have a degree. After Moffatt left in 1949, no assistant was appointed and seven extra boys were drafted in. Only over the past year had there been any problems with prefects, and, as far as his teaching was concerned, he had not been told before that boys had complained.

210 In fact discipline at KW was not strong, but there were no real disasters either, just a few encounters with local farmers regarding tampering with tractors and lorries, and smoking and drinking in odd corners. Unfortunately for Newman, Boss, who had made up his mind to be shot of him, did not respond to the suggestion that he was being dismissed unfairly and, when the opportunity arose, seized the chance to underline his inefficiency. The Squire, Captain Dickinson, visited the house, of which he was the owner, in the Christmas holidays and demanded to know what had happened to the portrait of one of his ancestors which had been left on a main reception-room wall when Millfield occupied his property in 1946. Newman was hauled over the coals and had to admit that he had found the picture quite badly damaged in 1951 and had had it removed to the garage without reporting the fact either to the Squire or Boss. He was also asked to account for all the broken windows over the previous eighteen months and the lack of organisation of 'public works' when the boys were supposed to keep the house and grounds clean and tidy.

220 In a letter to Captain Dickinson, Boss described the man who had run a school house for him for over five years as "an inefficient fool", and subsequently in a letter to Newman, who was applying for a new job, in April, complained that he had not had his resignation in writing and therefore could not mention in a testimonial that he was leaving of his own accord.

It would not be fair to suggest that Newman was given notice in September 1952 because someone else was waiting in the wings. The man who did take up the housemaster's appointment had not then been interviewed, though Gabbitas Thring had informed RJOM in August that they had a 50 year old Oxford graduate on their books with experience at Haileybury, Uppingham and Eton.

230 He was Jack Hamill-Stewart, a classicist and historian, with some experience as acting headmaster of a small secondary school at Romsey, and he was hoping for a residential post. A tall, good-natured man with severely impaired eye-sight, his car-driving was to become something of a legend at Millfield, but this did not prevent him from getting the rough end of the stick at Kingweston. The boys in the house assumed that he had been imported to tighten things up, which was of course true. In addition, AJB (Tony) Robinson, the extremely popular England and Great Britain hockey player, had been appointed as assistant housemaster. The resentment at the dismissal of Newman, who had made it clear

to everyone what had happened, went deep, and the middle ranks of the house, which numbered 65 pupils by that time, set out to make life as uncomfortable as possible for the new incumbent. He put up with many unpleasanties because, as someone with no private means, he needed the accommodation and board that were the reward for those at Millfield willing to take the responsibility for running a school house. Inevitably the chief miscreants moved on as time passed, and life at KW became more tolerable when improvements were made to the living conditions. Mains water reached the house for the first time, and cooking equipment was modernised, so that the young inhabitants had less reason for feeling resentful at being dispatched to the wilds.

JAH-S felt secure in his post until in the spring of 1956 he heard a rumour that big changes would be made at Kingweston as a result of Mrs West's decision to retire at the end of the year. Astoundingly it was she who in July had to write to Boss pleading that Hamill-Stewart be told that he was to be replaced by Fred Stephenson in August, while she would be replaced as housemother by Fred's wife, Sheila. Fortunately for him, JAH-S's salary was improved to compensate for the loss of position and some of the heartache. He remained a popular member of staff until his final retirement. Fred, an Irish hockey international, also had experience as a headmaster, and he used this, together with his enthusiasm for games and his own obvious abilities, to weld Kingweston into a thoroughly disciplined and, to many, desirable house in which to spend one's schooldays.

At about the same time the Glaston Tor scheme fell through, and the Manor at Shapwick was hastily leased to take a few of those waiting for places in school. RH Goodwin, the first housemaster, left after a term to take up a new appointment and was succeeded by Walter Gluck and his wife Betty, who had been running Orchards since 1951. Tragically their time at Shapwick was to be just eighteen months, for Walter, along with another member of staff, John Loudon, was killed in a motor accident on 13th December 1958. The whole school was affected at the time by the feeling that things would never be the same again, but the games organisation, that Walter had himself drawn up, swiftly provided replacements for the posts that he had held and standards did not drop. His teaching groups continued under other tutors, while the boys at Shapwick behaved impeccably under the guidance of their ex-assistant housemaster, Barry Hobson, who also took up Walter's role as master i/c cricket, and his wife Rosemary, who had been the matron.

Orchards, the third oldest house, was just far enough away from the main school to be independent. After the Glucks moved to Shapwick, Herbert Smith, by then head of the physics department, succeeded, with his wife Elizabeth, in maintaining the happy balance of good scholarship and good games.

By the end of the fifties Boss had accepted that he had to rely on the housemasters and housemothers to maintain the standards of good behaviour and they were given a free hand to do so, although all were reminded what the standards were at a meeting held at Millfield on the eve of each term. A week later the prefects were given the same information, with the house authorities present, at a dinner held at the Copper Beech hotel

in Glastonbury. Subsequently the latter gathering was held at Joan's Kitchen as the numbers had grown too large for the hotel to accommodate. At Christmas 1950 there were 218 pupils in the school, and at Christmas 1959 there were 433, and these figures do not include Edgarley Hall which was still in Boss's remit as joint headmaster.

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It could be argued that this was the point at which the first crack appeared in the system which had been developed in the thirties and polished in the forties. Pupils were hardly affected, but they were turning away from 'The Study', even if their parents were not, and seeking advice from housemaster or housemother, while the governors, carefully chosen as they were, had begun to ask questions about finance, particularly in relation to scholarships, and about the lack of a clear line of succession among the staff, should the unthinkable happen.

## Chapter 23

### The development of rugger. Much success and much controversy. 1950-67.

9 In the years before and during the Second World War, Millfield was looked upon by many of the best known public schools as a useful place to off-load boys that they had failed, for all sorts of reasons, to educate successfully. To some of them, Millfield seemed to be getting above itself during its extraordinary immediate post-war expansion. The lists of exam successes, mainly for university entrance, often the best of them by girls, and not publicised in the press, inevitably reached the candidates' original schools, who were irritated that Millfield should be claiming them as their own after perhaps less than a year's expert tutoring. On a very different front, it was galling for them to find some of their better games players of the previous season knocking the daylights out of one of their 2nd teams while playing for a Millfield 1st team, and it was natural for them to identify players from schools other than their own wearing the Millfield colours.

18 No attempt was made to hide their origins. Indeed it was rather the opposite, cricketers being encouraged to wear their old school blazers and caps at matches, and for the rugger and hockey players to show off their colours ties. Lists of exam passers in The Windmill and in the school prospectus always showed the name of a previous school, and, where a university published its entrants, exhibitioners and scholars in newspapers, Boss always tried to get the names of both schools included. Nor did he follow the practice of practically every other boarding school in the country of announcing the opening of each term in The Times.

27 One or two schools considered the Millfield match as a club match rather than an inter-school one, for they started the fixture before the war when, as likely as not, RJO Meyer, of Somerset and The Gentlemen of England, was skippering Mill Field, a team containing several adults and one or two superannuated schoolboys. Though Boss ceased to play after the war, except in teams labelled RJOM's XI, all those isp were considered available for selection, and this included, for example, Captain Michael Francis, who scored 40 not out for the 1st XI versus a Blundell's XI in 1948, the year of his 24th birthday. Blundell's was in fact his old school, and he had led its cricket team in 1941. Nobody objected; it was just one of the idiosyncrasies of Millfield.

36 Perhaps the first real murmurs of dissent were heard in 1951 when, influenced by a careful approach to them by Walter Gluck, who had just taken charge of rugger, the committee of Rosslyn Park RFC invited Millfield to take part in their schools seven-a-side knock-out competition in April. Entry was only by invitation and the rules were simply those of the Rugby Union, with a stipulation that all players should be current pupils or at their schools until the previous Christmas, which allowed those who had sat exams for Oxford or Cambridge in the Michaelmas term to be selected. Unfortunately one of the players had a distinctly receding hair-line which attracted much amused speculation among the spectators, especially when Millfield, the unknown quality, defeated one of the great rugby schools, Whitgift, in the first round. Though they progressed no further, being defeated by Bancroft's in the second round, there had been sown a seed of suspicion that perhaps

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Millfield was not quite 'playing the game' by classifying some of their late entries, especially the ex-service ones, as boys, even though they were all isp. In fact, the butt of touch-line wit was 21, the oldest was 22 and there were three others, each of 20, so there was cause for some raised eyebrows, but the competition rules had not been broken.

54 The school continued to play at Rosslyn Park without upsetting the form-book, or, apparently, other schools until 1954, but no invitation to take part was received for 1955. When Millfield questioned why, the response from the 'Park' was that so many schools were queuing up that they had to ask some of the newer participants to stand down. As this decision had not been communicated to the schools or to the Press, who normally covered the tournament quite comprehensively, Walter Gluck wrote a letter of protest to the committee. They reassured him that Millfield's invitation would be in the post for 1956, as indeed it was.

63 In that intervening period between 1951 and 1956 the number of post-National Service entrants to the school dwindled to nil as the Government allowed A-level candidates in subjects other than scientific to complete their studies and secure their places at university before being called up. The scientists had been encouraged to do the same by being offered deferment. However there were still plenty of young men arriving from other schools, looking to Millfield for the final polish which would open the door to Oxford or Cambridge. In that category was John Norman, who had transferred from Downside in September 1954, a month after his 18th birthday, in the hope of entering Cambridge University to read medicine. He was well known by other schools in the area as the Downside scrum-half for three years, and now followed two at Millfield. Again it is possible  
72 that nothing would have been said, just a few grumbles, if the school VII at Rosslyn Park in 1956 had not been injudicious enough to knock out Uppingham, Monkton Combe, Dulwich and Blundell's on their way to defeat in the semi-final by Cranleigh.

But now touch-line talk ceased to be good-humoured, and masters in charge of rugby at a number of schools put their heads together and agreed to demand that Rosslyn Park should not invite Millfield to play in the future. Millfield's detractors do not seem to have realised  
81 that there were two players older than John Norman in that particular team: John Waelchli, a day boy of some long standing, just five days senior to him, and Farouq Izzedin Mulla, an Iraqi in his seventh year at Millfield and already only six months from his twenty-first birthday. The latter was to play in the following year at the tournaments at Clifton and Oxford, helping to win them both, though by that time it was known that Millfield had been excluded from the Rosslyn Park gathering. Unaware of the coming furore which had been precipitated by his playing for his school's sevens team, John Norman passed on to Cambridge and subsequent qualification as a dentist in the autumn of 1956.

90 On 25th September 1956, Eric Ansell, the honorary secretary of the Park's 'Public Schools' Seven-a-Side' organisation wrote to Walter Gluck:- "I think it is only right and proper to inform you that at a recent full Committee Meeting of the Park, I was instructed that I was not at liberty to send an invitation to Millfield for the 1957 tournament. Please believe me, that this is purely an impersonal matter, resultant from considerable criticism which was expressed during and after the 1956 tournament and which has since been

repeated in an official quarter, being, of course, in regard to the age of individual members of the teams which are entered.

99 You will appreciate readily that we cannot possibly afford to prejudice the success of the Sevens, and hearing had to be given to a number of the oldest supporters who maintained in a very definite way that the team entered from your school was more of the character of students than of schoolboys. I also assure you that we are not bowing to just one or two dissentient voices, but to a general attitude in this matter.

It has been suggested that an age limit might be applied, and I have yet to convince the exponents of this as to its impracticability".

108 Walter should really have been aware of the writing on the wall for, with the 1951 criticism firmly implanted in his memory, he had asked for advice in January 1953 regarding the possible selection of two Millfield old boys for the sevens team in the following April. Ansell had replied, "I note your news regarding the two boys you are considering playing and feel that 'a young man' over nineteen years of age who has left the school should certainly not be played in the tournament in April.

117 It is unwritten law that boys who have played during the 1952/53 season are eligible, although they may leave at the end of the Christmas term, but to include a man of the age you mention is rather encouraging the inclusion of young assistant sports masters, and as the tournament is specifically for school boys, it would be unwise to do this".

126 The difference, of course, was that in 1956 the whole team was still isp, irrespective of age. Walter therefore wrote back politely, even offering to do some refereeing as in the past, after a month's consultation and consideration: "I find it very difficult to realise that this is the decision of a Club with a name for fair play and sportsmanship and, of course, a leading reputation for the encouragement of schoolboys. It savours so much of the Star Chamber or perhaps the Iron Curtain that to say that no evidence was called for, let alone heard, may seem impertinent.

At all events, I feel I would not be discharging my responsibility to the boys at this School if I did not mention that, as I told you at the Sevens, no boy was over normal school age, that is as laid down by the deferment regulations. The very oldest was under 19 at the end of the Summer Term, as prescribed by the regulations, and some are still seventeen now. To say that you find an age limit impracticable and then apply it to us, frankly seems unfair. I should add of course that I would be happy to obtain birth certificates if you have any further doubts".

135 Walter Gluck was a man of impeccable credentials, admired and respected in the world of Rugby Union, having played for Oxford University, Old Merchant Taylors, Eastern Counties, Bridgwater and Somerset, after recovering from severe leg wounds received in action while serving with the Welsh Guards in Normandy. It would however perhaps not be unfair to his word to suggest that his overweening loyalty to Millfield had made him stretch credibility to breaking point, unless he had dismissed Farouq Mulla's position as hooker as irrelevant. The latter had been all but 21 at the end of the summer term, while only the two

144 reserves, who did not actually play, Mike Dart and Nick Behr, were under 18, the former celebrating his 17th birthday at the tournament. It was true, of course, that the only regulations mentioned, the deferment from National Service, did not apply to Mulla, and anyway neither Rosslyn Park nor anyone else mentioned his part in the affair.

153 On February 4th 1957, as there had been no further communication between the parties, Boss wrote to Eric Ansell:- "I have consulted members of my Governing Body and Council, some of whom are former Headmasters of well- known schools, and I am instructed to ask you to be good enough to place the following statement before your Committee: We fully accept your right as hosts to invite whom you wish to play in an invitation tournament, and we hope that, on your part, having these rights, you accept the obligation to see that your guests are fairly treated. We are deeply shocked that we should have been condemned unheard, and we feel that men of principle with a proper respect for justice and fair play would have asked our accusers - however powerful and numerous - to substantiate their entirely false accusations and would have given us an opportunity of proving these to be false.

162 We are well aware that we are accused of playing, at 21, a boy who left Downside at 19 after three years in the Downside XV. Even our best friends were persuaded by rumour-mongers that this was true. The truth is that he was 19, and had played at 16, 17 and 18".

Boss had not done his homework with accuracy, for the boy who had left Downside in 1954 was then still 17, and Mulla's presence in the team was not acknowledged. The final sentence of his letter summed up his feelings; "I do hope you will never again yield to a mob howling for the lynching of one of your guests".

171 Little of the contretemps reached the press, or if it did it was ignored, but word did get round among other clubs organising inter-schools tournaments. Oxfordshire RFU was the first to set up a committee to look into the problem of an upper-age limit, and Walter Gluck was invited to join it. His suggestion was the one he had already introduced at Millfield, that September 1st should be regarded as the key-date for all categories of sport for the forthcoming year. For example, senior colts must be under 16 years of age on that date, and for the purposes of the senior seven-a-side teams they must be under 19. This idea was accepted and introduced at Oxford, but Rosslyn Park has never used an age-bar, except in their preparatory schools tournament, where they settled for under 13 on July 31st on the year prior.

180 Walter's replacement, after his tragic death in December 1958, was Sydney Hill, who was instructed by Boss to 'put Millfield rugby on the map'. Supported by his fellow Welshman Herbie Davies as coach, this he proceeded to do, starting by making approaches for fixtures with schools in South Wales, the first being played in Cardiff in 1960. He also made representations to West Country schools, some of whom had in the past played Millfield 1st XV with their 2nd XV or an A XV, pointing out that Millfield's numbers had grown to equality with theirs.

The response generally was - "We have our traditional opponents, and financial restrictions prevent us adding to the list", but there was a suspicion that some of the

189 schools sympathised with the Taunton headmaster who, on being told of the suggestion by Millfield of a full fixture, replied, "I am not having my school playing a damned crammer's".

Curiously it was the seven-a-side game which eventually brought about the school's elevation to top status in the rugby world. Though black-balled by Rosslyn Park, entries continued at Clifton, Oxford and the Somerset senior tournaments, and tactics were not forgotten, so that, when there arrived an invitation to play as a guest team in the Welsh schools tournament at Llanelli in 1961, it was accepted with joy. In fact it was joy unconfined when the team found itself in the final, having disposed of three Welsh teams and Whitgift, that same school defeated ten years before at the Old Deer Park at Richmond. They faced Llanelli Grammar School who, a fortnight before, had won the Rosslyn Park tournament for the second time in four years, as well as reaching the quarter-finals in the two intervening years. In the event the score was 10 points each at full-time, but Llanelli squeezed home with a try in extra time. This exciting game, mainly ignored by the press in England, was widely reported in Wales, who were enjoying stirring up the public school 'establishment' with suggestions that the Welsh boys were actually practising, not just for fun, but to win.

207 The following year, 1962, the Millfield seven were eliminated in the semi-finals at Llanelli by another guest team, Crossley Porter GS, Halifax, who lost by a narrow margin to Llanelli GS in the final. The latter had already won the Rosslyn Park tournament for the second year in succession, to the accompaniment of further muttering from the old brigade and some of the press.

Sydney Hill had made his first approach to the Park requesting an invitation to play that year, but was turned down politely both for then and subsequently for 1963, in spite of Marlborough College's wonderfully generous gesture in recognizing Millfield's strength and true character by offering first team fixtures at rugby, hockey and cricket. Sydney persisted, however, and discovering that Eric Ansell, who was still hon. secretary of the Rosslyn Park sevens tournament, was an occasional visitor to Somerset relatives, asked him to watch a Millfield home match in the autumn of 1963. This was accepted and the school XV did enough to earn an unqualified invitation to play at Roehampton in the spring of 1964. Persistence had paid off, and Syd had not had to produce the birth certificates of the players, with which he had armed himself.

225 The long-awaited letter arrived in November, but the rejoicing was tinged with sadness, for the news broke just at that moment that the R P Club committee were considering a request by a number of schools that Llanelli, who had won again in 1963, should be banned because they were 'professional in their approach to the game'. Though the move was rejected, their headmaster, Stanley Rees, took, in retrospect, the only action possible in withdrawing the school from the competition. It was not surprising that Millfield's reappearance after eight years caused no comment, especially as they went out in the second round.

234 However in 1965 the Press, having lost copy with the departure of Llanelli, fastened on Millfield to provide the fireworks, because the school was known to have beaten the Welsh school at 1st XV level at Stradey Park in the previous November. Unfortunately they

failed to get through even the pool round, though they made amends to themselves, unnoticed of course by the London newspapers, through winning the Welsh sevens and becoming the first school to beat the dear old enemy on home soil since the competition began in 1958. At the time only George Abbott of the Daily Telegraph seemed to deem Millfield's efforts as worthy of praise.

243 However in 1966 Millfield was at last in the headlines as the winning finalist at Roehampton over who else but Whitgift, whilst scrum half Gareth Edwards was setting up an individual points-scoring record. He had been unable to play the previous year as a foot injury had worsened after the Welsh sevens victory, but he was now in full flow and had already played a major part in the retention of the cup at Llanelli. Excited speculation about his rugby future did not include the suggestion of what did happen, his selection for Wales in the Home International Championship less than a year later, when still 19. Even Syd Hill, who two years earlier had forecast that Gareth would gain his cap in due course, was surprised by this early recognition of his amazing talent and his further elevation to become the youngest captain of Wales on record.

252 The school was now truly on the rugby map of the country, and especially in Wales, where it was looked upon as a worthy opponent of the great grammar school sides, and the three South Wales public schools as well. An immediate result was a flow of applications from the Principality for places, at first mainly for boys with some athletic potential. One of these came from Dr Peter Williams of Bridgend who had been persuaded by two Millfield parents, quite separately and at different times, to approach Jack Meyer with a view to his son John joining the school in September 1966. The parents concerned, Major Horace Northcott and Mr CE Harrison, met Dr Williams at the Welsh junior tennis championships, 261 and each suggested that his boy would do well at Millfield as a tennis player and as a potential Cambridge entrant. Their own sons had gained much from their years at the school, both in sport and academically.

After the receipt of Dr Williams' initial letter on 8th July 1966, Boss acted as quickly as possible, allowing for the complications of the end of term, and invited him to bring the family to Millfield on 24th July. As a result he offered the eldest boy, John, a place in September, and places for the three younger boys at two yearly intervals, all with a view to studying for Cambridge entrance, and on the understanding that fees for John would be 270 normal, while those for the others would be scaled down. Details were tied up during August, after John, already occupier of the full-back slot in the Welsh schools XV, had added to his laurels by defeating David Lloyd, the holder, in the final of the Wimbledon junior singles championship.

JPR, the soubriquet by which he was to become internationally famous, fitted in well to the school and the 1st XV, and worked hard towards the elusive A-level grades for entry to university. In the spring term of 1967 John, along with another South Wales boy, Wayne Lewis, played in the Millfield seven which won at Clifton and Oxford, and reached the final 279 at Llanelli, won by the Grammar School by 6 points to 5. He was preparing for the Rosslyn Park Tournament when he was forced into making a decision which was to become a cause célèbre for a short while. He and Wayne were both selected to play for the Welsh 19 Group XV two days after the R P final. Naturally both accepted the invitation and then told Sydney

Hill, who wrote immediately to the chairman of the Welsh Secondary Schools Rugby Union, explaining the problem as he saw it. The reply, from the honorary secretary, arrived eight days before the first round at Roehampton and was the first official notification to the school that the boys had been picked for the international match v England. It stated that the committee had banned them from playing in the R P sevens for fear of injury or exhaustion.

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What happened next is perhaps best summed up by the Daily Mail headline on 6th April, "Beaten Millfield head rages at Welsh". The two boys had felt that, having accepted the invitation to play for Wales, they should accept the restrictions placed upon them as well. Wayne Lewis reportedly said, "We have been placed in a terrible dilemma", and John Williams apparently declared, "The headmaster told my family last night that if I did not play for Millfield I need not go back to school".

297 Boss was livid with the Welsh selectors for failing to consult the school in any way, until prompted by Syd Hill, and for putting the boys into such an invidious position. He believed that their first loyalty was to the school and that, if he had been approached properly, he would have given fair consideration to a request not to play in the Sevens. The previous year Gareth Edwards had to make a similar choice and he had not been harmed by his decision. There never had been a threat of expulsion, but the boys had no business talking to the Press without permission.

306 The Press loved it, Television News reported it and Syd Hill, with his team and the two unfortunates as spectators at Roehampton, had to face what he described as a 'foul atmosphere'. He even overheard the well-known rugby correspondent of a highly reputable broadsheet dictating over the phone, "You will be pleased to hear that Millfield is out".

On a lighter note, the Western Mail of Cardiff published a letter from Mr Geraint Thomas suggesting that "the conduct of Mr Jack Meyer should be referred to the Race Relations board". There is no such thing as bad publicity.

## Chapter 24

### Further sporting achievements. The Olympic gold medalists. 'Double Your Money'. 1956-64.

10 Jim Tattersall's triple success at Wimbledon was well reported in the sporting press in the summer of 1956, as were his further successes in 1957, but this paled significantly compared with the attention given to Millfield when it was learned that 16 year old Michael Sangster, the junior Covered Courts champion, was joining him in September. Mike had particularly caught the reporters' eyes because his large physique, together with his powerful service and shots, seemed to indicate that he was the first Wimbledon champion in the making since Fred Perry in the 1930s. However Mike's father was concerned about the effect all the adulation might have on his young son, and felt that his education was being neglected. Impressed by the Millfield pupils he met at tournaments, he asked Jack Meyer, who was naturally delighted, to admit Mike to the school in September 1957.

20 Sadly, he did not settle easily into the unfamiliar routine of a boarding school, with all its restrictions, but he was of course well coached by Basil Lawrence and David Rundle from the Somerset LTA. Sensing that some special effort was needed to get him involved in the life of the school, Boss decided to show some of the benefits that Millfield could provide, and organised a tour during the Easter term of 1958. Jim Tattersall and Mike would play in the Pakistan and Asian Championships, as well as paying a visit to India. The Royal Air Force agreed to fly them, as Air Cadets, on a training flight to Karachi, whilst Old Millfieldians and friends of Boss agreed to help with accommodation. All was in hand when the Lawn Tennis Association, in an action not too dissimilar to that of the Welsh Schools selectors some ten years later, told the boys they could not go as they would be required to play for London v. Paris, and anyway it was considered that they were too young to travel unaccompanied by an LTA official. Jim was now 18 and Mike 17.

30 Naturally Boss challenged the LTA's right to order the boys, who were of course amateurs and not bound by any contract, to stay at home because they were required for an international inter-city match during the period when they would be away. In response the LTA hon. secretary, Stephen Reay, toned down the directive, and asked the boys, through their headmaster, not to go, virtually admitting that the Association could only exert control on players when they were asking for finance to meet travelling and living expenses, which did not apply in this case.

40 Boss then told the boys that the trip was off and immediately seized the moral high ground by writing a four page letter to Reay in which he defined what he considered to be the damage done by the LTA's lofty and ill-advised action. This damage was summed up in a paragraph, after twelve others in which he took the LTA to task for their interference in his project for Tattersall and Sangster, the latter of whom had been coached from childhood by Paddy Roberts at Torquay.

"For your information, the Roberts - made boy Sangster (whose parents gave me responsibility for the boy's education) expressed acute disgust with the way the Pakistan business was managed, told me he could not carry on with so many people pulling different

ways, and asked to be allowed to leave".

50 This unfortunate ending to a short Millfield career was duly reported in the newspapers but the events leading up to it were not, as neither the LTA nor Boss wanted to add to the general discomfiture.

60 Jim Tattersall continued his calm, controlled route from success to success by representing his country at senior level, gaining entry and a county scholarship to Queen's College, Cambridge, securing a year's tennis scholarship to Lamar State College in Colorado, captaining the Cambridge VI as a freshman, and earning a good degree in economics. It was not the sort of career that would catch the tabloid reader's imagination, but it influenced a lot of potential Millfield parents to put their trust in a school which could turn out champion sportsmen and women, and develop their full academic potential at the same time. A remarkable number became top British tennis players and several of them played in the Davis Cup; one year three of the team of four came from the school. Old Millfieldians dominated Cambridge University tennis throughout the sixties, the best known Blue unquestionably being Mark Cox.

70 It was common knowledge that Boss had one ambition which was to produce players who would win the Davis Cup, and another to do the same for the Ryder Cup. He never achieved either, though the school supplied representatives for both competitions. Only one golfer, Brian Barnes, son of the secretary of Boss's home club, Burnham and Berrow, played in what was still the British Isles team against the USA, and he had the distinction of beating Jack Nicklaus twice in one day in the same match. A contemporary of Barnes at Millfield, Malcolm Gregson, also had a splendid career in golf, but missed Ryder Cup selection by a hair's breadth. Being a remarkably fine golfer himself and at one time a regular entrant to the British Open, Boss inevitably had his theories as to how the game should best be played, as he had with practically every other ball game. Irritated by some of the leading British players he had watched in 1961, he wrote to the Sunday Times claiming that too many approach shots were being aimed at the green and not directly at the hole. Americans were always prepared 'to go for the main chance', and until the British were willing to do the same they would never be consistent winners.

80 His letter produced an avalanche of replies and a challenge from the newspaper to show how effective his theory was. Thus, on a frosty March morning in 1962, RJOM, clad in a sheepskin coat and aided and abetted by the school golf captain, David Brown, later to be a Cambridge Blue and a professional golfer, fired golf balls at a hole on the putting green beside Millfield house all day from some twenty or thirty paces. The Sunday Times had nominated a tournament professional to join them and he too went for the hole-in-one. It was all good entertainment but after some six hours with a break for lunch there was not one success. It was well photographed and reported, so the school was provided with some good-humoured publicity which made up for any failure in the Meyer theory.

90 Another Cambridge Blue, this time a cricketer, also provided useful country-wide publicity. Tony Pearson, though an Old Gregorian (an old boy of Downside School), acknowledged his debt to Millfield when receiving a BBC television award as Sportsman of the Week for taking all ten Leicestershire wickets in one innings in May 1961. Tony, the son



of a Bristol doctor, had in the summer of 1959 been aiming for a place at Cambridge to read Classics, but then he decided that he too wished to be a doctor. Then seventeen and a half, and with little knowledge of science, he was advised by Downside that only Millfield could do the trick and get him to 1st MB standard in twelve months. RJOM took up the challenge, what else?, and was successful. In addition to working with great dedication, Tony managed to play at full-back for the 1st XV and open the bowling for the 1st XI before proceeding to Cambridge for his medical studies and a freshman's Blue.

From 1947 onwards, when the Millfield Athletics Club was formed by Noel Barry-Tait, the school had been well represented at county and England schools' meets, their entrants including three different winners of national 440 yards championships, but, though not unnoticed entirely, Millfield athletes created little excitement in the newspaper world.

Sport on television was a different matter, so that when a Millfield seventeen year old appeared in order to demonstrate a new method of throwing the javelin, enormous interest was shown, as it became clear that he was not only breaking junior records but possibly the world record as well as that of the British men. Nick Head had been developing his technique under the guidance of Mike Reilly for four years when an attack of javelin-elbow forced him to withdraw from the Somerset team for the England inter-county championships in July 1956, in which he was likely to have been amongst the first three.

As Nick was very slow in recovering from injury, Mike Reilly set out to devise a method of projecting the javelin with a straight arm thus avoiding strain on the elbow joint. The pupil was only too willing to aid his coach in research, and during the cold winter months the two figures, one track-suited, the other usually just blazered, with the cross-keys and sword of St Luke's Exeter to the fore, were to be seen on the old hockey pitch to the south of the line of trees which then crossed what is now the 1st XI cricket ground. The Amateur Athletic Association rules laid down that the thrower must face the target on his run-up and at the moment of release so that Mike's idea of adapting the discus throw, which involved whirling the whole body round, needed much thought and practice. The system, which the pair had perfected by the spring of 1957, meant carrying the javelin with the throwing arm stretched straight behind the body with the point facing backwards. As the projection point was reached, the javelin was swung round-arm and released towards the target, the tail sliding through the thrower's relaxed hand. It worked, aided by the fact that Nick was a more than competent discus thrower.

When the new technique was demonstrated at a local meeting, and the first record was easily broken, the press was quick to respond and it was followed by the appearance of the pair on BBC TV, Mike looking unfamiliar in a track-suit. They talked of the potential of the new throw, but already the committee of the AAA was making unwelcoming noises, and a fortnight later added a rider to the javelin rules, saying that the point must face the target as well as the thrower. It was a sad end to an honest endeavour, but their taste of 'fame for fifteen minutes' resounded well for Millfield, and showed how important exposure on television is.

That same summer, 1957, Millfield boys and girls were largely responsible for Somerset winning the Bradford Cup, the championship for smaller counties, which was

presented to Mary Bignal and Jack Archer by Countess Mountbatten. Their photos reached a few papers and Mary was noted as having set up a new record in the senior schools' high jump. She was then seventeen and a half and had been coached by 'Brom', EJC Bromfield. Mary had moved to Millfield from a local school in Street after being spotted at county athletic meetings. Her family were encouraged to approach Boss when she was fifteen, although this went against his code of entry for girls, who were expected to be A-level pupils, which usually meant that they would be over sixteen. Mary was neither and so joined a junior group working towards O-levels. She was at least a year younger than the rest of the YLC, and was distinctly more streetwise than her peers, who were of course boys only. She coped so easily with what might well have been a difficult situation, being the only junior girl amongst some 250 boys, that Boss began to relax his seniors only stipulation, and agreed to the entry of more junior girl athletes, and, eventually to girls, mainly staff children, at Edgarley moving on to Millfield at 13 or 14.

Concentrating on the high jump, she was selected to represent Great Britain at the end of the 1957 season against Germany and Poland, becoming only the second Millfield athlete to take part in a full international. She was in fact pipped on the post by her contemporary, Jack Melen, who had run for Wales a month earlier in the sprints. The fact of her still being a schoolgirl was well publicised, particularly after her victory in Warsaw, and there was mention that she had also taken part in sprints, hurdles, relays and the long jump, as well as playing hockey for the Somerset junior XI.

After leaving school the following year, Mary turned to long-jumping as her main event with such success that she travelled to Rome in 1960 carrying Britain's highest hopes for a gold medal. A series of no jumps was reported by the press with a mixture of disappointment and sympathy, and this seems to have encouraged her to train for Tokyo in 1964 with even greater determination. The long jump remained top priority, but she now added the pentathlon to her training schedule. As in Rome, she took part in three events, but this time she won the gold medal in the long jump while setting a new world record, the silver medal in the pentathlon, and a bronze in the 4 x 100 metres relay. Though she had left the school six years earlier, Millfield basked in reflected glory from arguably the best ambassador ever, and certainly the most glamorous.

It did not go unnoticed that four other OMs were involved in the Tokyo Games, but their achievements were to be put into the shade by results at later Olympics, largely because of the advent of serious swimming training at Millfield in the sixties. This led to Duncan Goodhew's gold in Moscow in 1980 and Paul Howe's bronze in Los Angeles in 1984. The latter, who was then still at school, was accompanied in the British swimming team by two other pupils and an OM, whilst four other OMs represented Great Britain at fencing, modern pentathlon, sailing and hockey. Steven Batchelor won his first medal, a bronze, for hockey and he was to win a gold at Seoul in 1988. An American hockey player was less fortunate but he did make up a total OM representation of nine, a remarkable contribution by one school to a single Olympic Games.

Just to show that Boss was not averse to publicity from any quarter, it is worth recounting his little contretemps with the presenter of a totally different kind of game, a television game-show called 'Double Your Money'.

190 In 1956 he had appointed Anthony Kerr, an Old Harrovian of Scottish descent, to teach history at Edgarley. This seemed to be a good capture, if a trifle unusual, for Anthony was a first class honours man from Trinity College, Cambridge, and at 27 was perhaps seeking a gentle experience in the classroom. Rather short of stature, with long hair and wearing a droopy moustache, at a time when a military appearance was still in vogue, he might have been expected to become a butt of children's wit. This inevitably happened as he was not strong on discipline. He added to the picture of distinct eccentricity by riding a huge, high-powered motor-cycle.

200 Recognizing that this intellectual was having a difficult time at Edgarley, and not wishing to lose such a distinguished scholar from the staff list, Boss persuaded Anthony to join the history department at Millfield in January 1958. This was a short time after the Independent Television Authority had set up a new transmitter in South Wales which made their programmes available to viewers in Somerset. One of the most popular was Hughie Green's 'Double Your Money', which offered an ultimate prize of £1,000, then more than a year's salary to the average teacher, for sitting in a sound-proof box, rather like a sedan-chair, wearing a pair of head-phones and answering correctly a few questions on a subject of the contestant's choice.

210 Anthony applied to take part, offering history as his subject, was interviewed and then invited to appear in the show in September 1959. In reality this meant, if one was to win the jackpot, answering questions during three successive weekly broadcasts. There were virtually no British recorded programmes at the time, and this all helped to build up the tension and the viewing figures which were so important to the advertisers. Hughie Green, a tall Canadian with a mocking sense of humour, and invariably elegantly turned out, was a remarkable contrast to the diminutive Anthony Kerr, whose posh accent was apparently a cause of great laughter for the studio audience. On being asked how to pronounce his surname, Anthony replied "Care, car or cur, whichever you like", and this was greeted with a roar of approval. Giving as good as he got and then answering his set of history questions accurately and swiftly, he caught the public's imagination and inevitably  
220 the attention of the press.

After the second programme, when Anthony was sent away to make up his mind whether to accept £500 or to risk losing all by failing to answer further questions correctly, Boss was inundated with phone calls requesting to hear his views on his junior colleague's success. Putting his response as succinctly as possible, he said that he believed it was wrong for professional people to prostitute their calling for mere gain and the entertainment of the masses, that it might be alright if the recipient gave the winnings to charity, and, if he didn't, he need not expect to keep his job.

230 Immediately the bricks began to fall. "Care, car or cur" being sacked for taking part in a game show made headlines in the tabloid papers. Millfield was just another hotbed of snobbery, however often it attempted to show that it was different. The headmaster was a dictator without a trace of benevolence.

Hughie Green, seizing his opportunity to gain publicity, phoned to make an

240 appointment, which he was given, and then arrived with a television crew to film the interview. Boss repeated his beliefs but denied sacking Anthony, with which Anthony concurred, adding that he had given in his notice anyway and was intending to visit schools all over Europe, including behind the Iron Curtain, to gain material for a book on education which he was proposing to write. The money which he intended to win in the next round would pay for his expenses. Naturally he did win, and the money did pay for him. Hughie Green became the defender of the 'little man', ITV increased its number of viewers, presumably the advertisers sold more cigarettes or whatever, and Boss came across to the middle classes, his bread and butter, as someone determined to fight for the maintenance of the highest standards of behaviour in professional circles.

250 Anthony went on his travels, which carried him much further than Europe in his search for educational ideas and statistics, and then returned to Scotland to help found the Political Freedom Movement, a non-party organisation of which he became secretary. He even invited Boss to stand as a candidate in a by-election at Bridgwater in December 1969, just as he had himself stood in a by-election at Kinross and West Perthshire against the ex-Earl of Home, Alec Douglas-Home, who had renounced his title in 1963 in order to enter the House of Commons as Prime Minister. Boss refused the offer politely, pointing out that his job as headmaster of Millfield meant that he had to be a-political, and that he had no intention of retiring or even becoming Life Warden as some people had suggested....

## Chapter 25

### Royalty and show-business personalities. 1950-70.

10 It is difficult to gauge whether publicity (it could not be described as a campaign for it was never co-ordinated) actually produced positive results in terms of attracting the full fee-paying parents who provided the basis of the school's economic health. Certainly many local people whose children showed athletic or, in some cases, intellectual promise were encouraged by stories of free scholarships, and made approaches to Boss, who in theory anyway was allowed a fixed percentage of the year's income to cover the fees of deserving cases. Teachers in state schools, who felt that they were failing to bring out the very best in promising pupils, also wrote to Boss, who invariably referred them back to the parents before he was prepared to examine possibilities. Indeed it was the terrier-like qualities of Bill Samuel, master in charge of physical education at Pontardawe Technical School, which with, eventually, the shy consent of the parents, persuaded Boss to interview Gareth Edwards. Bill had read an account of how Mary Bignal had qualified for a Millfield education and how that had provided the platform for her success, and he believed that he too knew a real winner when he saw one.

20 What can be asserted is that British people especially, when approaching scholastic agencies for advice on choosing schools for their offspring in the late 50s and early 60s, recognized the Millfield name. This was the period when the post-second world war baby-boom was having its greatest effect on independent secondary education. Headmasters' Conference schools were able to raise their pass marks in the Common Entrance exam, so that candidates whom they would have seized eagerly ten years before were now turned down flat. Many new schools were started with the aim of coping with this overflow of pupils whose parents were not prepared to launch them into the state system, while Millfield benefited enormously from its increasing 13 to 14 year old entry.

30 From its first shaky beginnings, the school had had its fair share of parents with royal and aristocratic backgrounds, but inevitably the majority were from the strata of society which expected their children to first enter preparatory school and then move on to the chosen public school. If the child failed in the system or the system failed the child, Millfield was there to pick up the pieces at almost any stage. By the early fifties, the agencies were already recommending parents with no personal experience of boarding at school to approach Millfield, which had a reputation for operating a much less rigorous regime of discipline and having a more modern approach to education than the average public school. With these enlightened attributes seemingly confirmed by the aforementioned publicity, Boss's appointment book became ever more full, as he insisted on talking to all the family  
40 himself, usually before despatching the potential pupil for assessment of his or her intelligence by Livie-Noble, his faithful educational psychologist at Marlborough. Only in the case of a pupil at Edgarley was a place guaranteed at Millfield, so that quite a number of distinguished parents were kept waiting, caps in hands, for a decision as to whether their offspring merited the offer of a place at 'Britain's most expensive school', a title bestowed by the media and never denied by Boss. Little did they know that the bursar was already under orders to find a cubby-hole in any one of the boarding-houses where yet another iron-bed or double-bunk could be squeezed in.

50 For a long time the entertainment industry seemed to be particularly enthusiastic about what Millfield could offer. Actors and management equally fell under the Meyer spell, and from the early fifties onwards the school could boast of its close connection with the leaders of the profession, despite not having any facilities of its own for drama production. Though Jack and Joyce Meyer and a few pupils had appeared in stage productions by the Street Players, including the world première of 'Victoria Regina', written and produced by Laurence Housman, who had founded the amateur company, acting was not seen as part of the curriculum until a much later date.

60 The first real impact made by the theatre on Millfield was the appearance of Kay Hammond, a real 'star of stage and screen', on Open Day in 1950, supporting her son John Leon at the end of his first year. He too was to become an actor, as John Standing, while his step-father John Clements, later to be knighted for services to drama, added some gravitas to the glamour of the occasion.

70 The next development came from within the school itself, the steady rise to fame of Robert Bolt, English tutor and playwright. He developed his gifts and skills from 1952 to 1958 at the same time as teaching, organising the sailing club, and turning out regularly for cricket and skittles with the Millfield Club and Ground XI, which he renamed 'The Spares', and which was nominated in his entry in 'Who's Who' as the only club to which he belonged. Before he joined the staff, Bob had had two short plays considered for radio, and he continued to aim at this medium. The first draft of possibly his most important work, 'A Man for All Seasons', written from scratch at his cottage home in Butleigh, was heard on the BBC Home Service on July 26th 1954. At that time, television signals could not be received in Somerset, but it was realised that, with new transmitters being erected all over the country, there would soon be a rush to buy sets and as a consequence a demand for more and better programmes. Aware of this, Bob re-wrote 'A Man', and most of his Millfield friends with access to a television set, still a rarity, watched it on New Year's Day 1957. Opinions were mixed as there were long gaps between scenes and it was 'stagey', having been recorded on film as if it were in the theatre.

80 Eventually, thoroughly re-written once again and introducing a new character, 'The Common Man', the play opened at the Globe theatre in London in 1960 and in New York the following year. The film version, for which Robert, as he was now called, won his second Oscar (the first was for 'Dr Zhivago'), was shown in 1966, and the reports always came out with the reminder that he had been a teacher at Millfield.

90 By then the school had admitted the Gatti brothers, whose father owned the Vaudeville theatre in London, and Gareth Forwood, son of leading actress Glynis Johns and Anthony Forwood, Dirk Bogarde's manager. Next on the scene, in 1962, was Nick Hawkins, to be followed later by his sister Caroline. Their father, Jack Hawkins, CBE, was a stern leading man in many important films. In the same term Walton received Jeremy Thomas, the son of director Ralph Thomas, who was eventually to become a world-famous film producer himself. In 1963 Nick was joined at Kingweston by Jonathan Mills, son of John Mills, the hero of innumerable films, and brother of Juliet and Hayley, whose appearances at Millfield were eagerly anticipated.

From a different branch of entertainment came in that same year Nick Heath, son of the great band leader Ted Heath and his singer-composer wife Moira. In 1964 prima ballerina Dame Margot Fonteyn brought her step-son Roberto Arias to Chindit, and the first of impresario Bernard Delfont's three children, Susan, entered the Cottage. Number two, Jennifer, joined her in 1965 and number three, David, arrived at St Anne's in 1966. This latter year also brought Paul Grade, first cousin of the Delfonts and son of Lew Grade, Head of ITC Entertainment, as well as Martin (moving up from Edgarley) and Sally, twin son and daughter of another great film actor, Stanley Baker.

What was considered by the outside world to be the greatest catch at that time was the enrolment of Michael Wilding in 1967, at the same time as his brother Christopher joined Edgarley. They were the sons of fabled Elizabeth Taylor and leading man Michael Wilding, to whom she had been married in the fifties. Her present husband was the equally famous Richard Burton, Shakespearean actor and Hollywood star, who had been persuaded by Oxford University to accept a visiting lectureship for a year.

This remarkable affinity with the world of entertainment was nicely summed up by the Daily Express of the 5th May 1968 :-

#### SHOWBIZ DAY AT MILLFIELD

"Parents' Day at Millfield, the Somerset school where fees are £1,100 a year, will provide a turnout on June 3 that wouldn't disgrace the billing of a multi-million-pound picture.

Guest of honour will be Elizabeth Taylor, and Richard Burton - her two sons, Michael, 15, and Christopher Wilding, 13, are completing their first year.

They will be joined by their showbiz colleagues, parents Jack Hawkins, Stanley Baker, Lew Grade and Bernard Delfont. "I was hoping that the Emperor of Ethiopia would be able to come to see his two granddaughters. But he's not well or something", said Jack Meyer, the headmaster".

He could well have mentioned the Kings of Rumania, Saudi Arabia, Sikkim, and Thailand, each of whom had a son or a grandson at the school that term, while the king of Jordan's nephew was present as well. Earlier Millfield could boast an Egyptian prince and a future crown prince of Yugoslavia, but Boss had a particular fondness for Emperor Haile Selassie who, on being defeated by the Italians under Mussolini in 1936, had settled into exile in Bath. While deciding which school should educate his sons, he was visiting several in Somerset (King's Taunton became the chosen one) when he ordered his chauffeur to stop at Millfield's gate, though he had no appointment. Getting out of the car, he stood looking up the drive to the main house and then knocked at the Lodge door. The story goes that when Taylor, the head gardener, opened it, the Emperor asked if he might use the amenities; he was shown to a small shed at the rear containing a bucket. Perhaps it is just another apocryphal Boss story, but he was fond of telling it, and the Emperor would seem to have been grateful, for he did send his grandson as well as the two princesses to Millfield thirty years later.

Also missing from the Daily Express list of celebrities was the name of Irving Allen, the American film producer, who, quite indirectly, had the greatest effect of anyone upon drama in the school itself. This was the building of the fencing salle in 1970, entirely at Allen's expense, to commemorate his children's time and successes at Millfield. In 1979 it was decided that a permanent stage could be set up there by knocking a hole in the east wall and adding a new building beyond it. From then until the opening of the Meyer Theatre in 1995, all school and house productions were given in the 'Salle-Theatre'. No longer did the drama department have to negotiate with the trustees of the Crispin Hall, as in the fifties, with the Town Clerk in charge of Glastonbury Town Hall, as in the early sixties, and the administrator of Strode Theatre, as in the sixties and seventies, in order to have a stage to present the school's shows.

Many of the latter were of extraordinarily high quality considering the problems faced by the directors, Fergus Ferguson Young (1951-1965) and Mrs Olive Murphy (1965-1978). A number of the performers went on to make their living in the world of entertainment, and three of them became readily recognizable in their own spheres :- John Standing in the theatre and television drama, Tony Blackburn as a radio disc-jockey, and, after dabbling in TV comedy with Alan Bennett, John Sergeant in radio and television journalism. Perhaps their determination to reach the top in the profession was inspired by the difficulties they had faced at Millfield.

One piece of Millfield mythology also has its roots in the theatre, the name by which the Bove Moor Stores just across the Butleigh Road is known, 'Slys'. In the autumn of 1954 a number of members of staff and their wives, Wyndham Bailey, John and Patience Collier, John and Bridget Fielding, Herbert and Elizabeth Smith, and John and Jean Pike put on a production of a recent West End hit, seen by many of the school. With its name fresh in people's memories, Boss posted a notice on his study door, using the title of the play, in capital letters and underlined, as the heading. It was to remind us that they were forbidden to slip across the road for replenishment of their sweet stocks during the five minute break between classes which was then the order of the day. Tutors teaching in the Camp after that were never short of a volunteer to fetch them a Mars bar or twenty Player's. The play was of course 'The Shop at Sly Corner'.



## Chapter 26

### Academic standards and the John Bell saga. Senior staff appointments. 1957-67.

10 All this show of wealth and confidence in the ever-growing school of the sixties disguised a growing unease amongst the governors regarding the state of the school's finances. In its private days, that is from 1935 to 1953, Millfield had existed precariously, living a sort of hand to mouth existence, but the financial advantages of becoming a non-profit-making limited company with charitable status, allied with a certain additional  
20 respectability, became obvious in the first few annual reports of a surplus of income over expenditure. This allowed the finance and executive committees to make plans for future development along the lines suggested by the headmaster, now properly salaried, in his annual reports. Unfortunately the financial year 1956-1957 showed a much less healthy profit, forcing the shelving of some building plans. This was mainly caused by a large award to teachers being paid on the national Burnham Scale, which affected most though not all of the Millfield staff, the numbers of which had been increasing in proportion to the additional pupil intake. This might have been foreseen, but the governors showed more concern with the steep increase in the cost of bursaries and concessions awarded by the headmaster during the year. The figure was £36,809 compared with £27,268 the previous year, and the chairman of the finance committee, Tony Clark, judiciously reported:-

"We admire the Headmaster's ability to put his case in defence of this rising figure, but it is equally the duty of your Finance Committee to be hard-headed insofar as these concessions affect the final surplus, so vital to the development of the School generally".

This was put forward partly in response to Boss's report to the governors in which he wrote:-

30 "It should be noted that the higher the fees rise the greater is the need to help the less well-off parents of outstanding boys whose presence is urgently required in the school if we are to maintain our flow of entrants to the Universities (especially to Oxford and Cambridge) at even its present level, which is lower than it was last year. Without this flow we stand no chance at all of being elected to the G.B.A.".

40 The governors were aware that membership of the Headmasters' Conference was not available to the headmaster of a co-educational school at that time, but they were anxious to join the GBA, the Association of Governing Bodies of Public Schools, which required amongst other things that a fair percentage of sixth formers should be bound for university. In spite of the good offices of Dean Ross Wallace who carried out the negotiations and applications, membership was not achieved until 1967 after Boss had engineered a meeting with Brigadier Knott, GBA secretary, during a Test Match at Lord's on 16th June 1966. It was in fact Amothe Sankey who observed that Knott had been invited to join a party in a box which RJOM had already refused, and over a drink or two Boss demanded to know the reasons for Millfield being blackballed at the AGM of the Association. He was able to point out that the improvements required by the GBA committee following a previous application in 1964 had been carried out in full, and it was obvious that this had been ignored for a variety of reasons in 1966. Knott was then able to

50 put the case for Millfield's inclusion, which came about the following March. Thus one of the major aims of the governing body since its formation in 1953 was achieved with a little sleight-of-hand by the man who had to take the blame for overspending.

60 In the early fifties the preponderance of concessions had been to the parents of all-rounders, bright games-players. During the period from 1950 to 1956, although there was no shortage of pupils achieving entry to university, only two awards were made by Oxford and Cambridge, one open scholarship and one open exhibition. So, when approached for help with boys of high academic standing by two headmasters of other schools in 1957, Boss was quick to offer Millfield's expertise. John Haydon, a teacher's son and head boy of Sidcot School, was strongly encouraged by his headmaster to spend his final sixth form year at Millfield in preparation for an Oxford scholarship attempt. This particular headmaster, D Murray-Rust, was a Meyer admirer and later joined the Millfield governing body himself, while the other, the headmaster of Winchester, saw no threat from Millfield to his school and was active in persuading the parents of one of his boys, who had had a breakdown in health at 15, to go there to study for a Cambridge scholarship. Both young men succeeded in their aims of achieving open awards, John Haydon at St Edmund's Hall, Oxford, and John Dunn, the Wykehamist, at King's College, Cambridge, thus supplying, in 1958, powerful ammunition for Boss's next counterblast to any gubernatorial sally in the future. He can hardly have needed it, though, for the governors were hand-picked.

70 RJOM was also able to point out to them at this time that many children of the excellent young teachers he had appointed in the aftermath of the war were attending the school, and they all qualified, at the least, for half-fees. Most of them were in the top echelons of their year groups and were contributing in all sorts of ways to the life of the school, a happy tradition that has continued.

80 In 1957 Millfield was included in a survey of independent schools broadcast on Panorama by BBC TV, and subsequently Boss was interviewed for the United States network by Joseph Harsch. This brought in a number of inquiries from Americans, including one from a serviceman in North Africa, whose wife was English, and whose son, John Bell, had been born in England. This boy, aged 13, was a brilliant mathematician but had had a pillar-to-post education thus far, in a series of English and US schools. Entering Millfield in September 1958, he sat for and passed GCE O Level Elementary Maths and Physics three months later. During the summer of 1959, at the age of 14 years 3 months, he gained five more O Levels, and A Level Combined Maths. In June 1960 he added A Levels in Pure Maths, Applied Maths and Physics to his tally. In March 1961 he took the Oxford University scholarship exams and was promptly snapped up or, rather, elected to an open scholarship in Physics by Exeter College, two days before his 16th birthday, though he had been entered for the award of the Stapledon, a closed scholarship of a similar financial value.

90 The college Rector, Dr Kenneth Wheare, informed Boss by letter on 23rd March of John's success and showed concern about the problem of gaining additional finance from the Ministry of Education, as the boy's father did not live in the United Kingdom. He also pointed out that, though the college science tutors wanted John to start in the following October, he was quite prepared to be persuaded by the boy's father and his headmaster that on account of his age - he would be sixteen and a half - that entry should be postponed

for a year.

Boss's reply is quite surprising, even a trifle patronising in tone:-

"Dear Rector.

J.L. Bell

March 26th, 1961

100

Thank you for letting me know that John Bell shaped well enough - at any rate as a 15-year-old - in your recent scholarship examinations to justify your awarding him a scholarship of £100 p.a., and for doing some thinking about the question of financing him. I think I shall be able to persuade the Ministry of Education, or the County Authority (Somerset, where he has been educated, or Gloucestershire, where he was born), or some industrial firm, or the American President's Scientific Adviser, or a member of the Millfield Supporters' Club, to help us with the cost of his University education.

110

As regards the acceptance of the scholarship and a place at Exeter in October 1961 or 1962, I shall, of course, discuss the problem with his father and with his friends in England, but I am afraid I must warn you that my own present intentions for him are that he shall spend the next 18 months working for a Maths scholarship to Oxbridge in December 1961-62..... I should expect him to leave school in December 1962 .... and to go up to King's Cambridge, in October 1963 - by which time I expect him to be emotionally and socially ready for University life. I accept the view of your scientists that he will be intellectually ready for it much earlier.

120

I think I am right in believing that people like yourselves are prepared to assist in the development of boys such as this one (I have a good many down below), and do not feel put upon if we use open Oxbridge scholarships as stepping-stones."

130

Dr Wheare did feel put upon, but held his fire. Meanwhile the story of John's success reached the ears of the Bristol Evening World, whose reporter talked to Boss on April 4th and published what he had been told that day. Over the next few days the press of the British Isles recounted Boss's alleged words:- "He is potentially one step below Einstein". This seems to have derived from a paper John had written in January 1959, when aged 13, and given to his headmaster:- "An attempted explanation of Hoyle's 'Steady State' Theory as applied to an Einsteinian Curved Continuum". Boss was also reported as having said:- "He's too immature, as yet, for university life. Besides I'm confident that he can do even better than that, a Maths scholarship at King's College, Cambridge, next year. I guarantee he'll be one of the top three to graduate at Cambridge in his year".

140

On 10th April Boss received confirmation of John's eligibility to be considered for the award of a state scholarship from the Ministry of Education, which was important but not as important as Dr Wheare's letter of 14th April which referred to Boss's expectation of John sitting for a maths scholarship at King's College, Cambridge :- "It would be quite contrary to the understandings which Oxford and Cambridge Colleges have with each other and with the schools that a boy should be entered as a candidate for a Scholarship without any intention of accepting the Scholarship if elected to it. We accepted Bell as a bone fide candidate for a Scholarship and we elected him to it in good faith. I hope to hear from you soon that Bell has accepted this Scholarship and that we may expect to see him in October,

1961".

John's father, then in California, also received a letter from the Rector and immediately contacted RJOM, by whom he was offered reassurance:- "There is no need to worry at all about the Rector of Exeter College except as regards the need to smooth him down - if possible - which you can safely leave to me". Fortunately Mr. Bell wrote politely and apologetically to Dr Wheare, stating that he would be happy for John to enter the college, but that he had agreed to let the headmaster of Millfield carry out any negotiations regarding the boy's immediate future. Boss also wrote politely but made it clear that he did not accept that the offer of a scholarship was binding upon the recipient :- "I am very sorry if I have unintentionally erred (at the moment I am not convinced that I have), and I am still more sorry if I have hurt anyone's feelings or interests, but I am afraid the decision is that John will go to Cambridge, if they will have him, Oxford if Cambridge will not have him and Oxford will, or one of the major American Universities if neither Oxford nor Cambridge want him".

This did ruffle the feathers slightly, for Dr Wheare, soon to be Sir Kenneth, wrote in reply : - "I imagine that we are at one in wanting to do what is best for Bell. I get the impression from your letter that you think that he would be better off at Cambridge. I must say I resent this suggestion. You did not at any time suggest to me that Bell was competing for fun. That you are bound to advise him to accept the Scholarship seems to me to be clear. If you advised him to turn it down, I think your decision would be regarded with great disapproval by other Colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, when I informed them, as I should feel bound to do, of the way in which the College had been treated by you".

Boss did not reply, and as a result received a short letter from Dr Wheare:- "I feel I must come to the conclusion that you do not intend John Bell to accept his Scholarship at this College. I think it is my duty now to inform the Heads of Colleges in Oxford and Cambridge of the course you have taken. I may add that I do not intend to mention John Bell's name". This was on 4th July, and John was already entered on the lists to take the King's, Cambridge exam in December, though Boss regarded it as a rehearsal for a repeat performance in 1962. The King's senior tutor summed up John's results in December as "Quite promising performance: just below exhibition standard".

This damning with faint praise might well have put the kibosh on Boss's plans for John, but he had in fact already been told quite clearly three weeks earlier by the Secretary for Oxford University Natural Science Scholarships that the Rector of Exeter College was fully within his rights to inform the heads of other Colleges of Millfield's malpractice. It could only be in the best interests of the school to give up what had become an unequal struggle, but RJOM had not quite finished, for he wrote to Sir David Waterston of Tube Investments Ltd, who had offered John Bell a Short Works course, that the boy was at the moment, 12th December, "sitting for a Maths scholarship (which he will win) at King's College, Cambridge".

However it was John himself who finished the saga by contacting Dr Wheare in the Christmas holidays to find out if Exeter would allow him to read maths, instead of physics, in the following October, a suggestion which was eagerly accepted. Thus Millfield was 'let off

190 the hook', which was just as well, as two current Oxford dons were governors and a black-  
balling of the school would have placed them in an invidious position. They had been kept  
in the picture during the previous months, but the other governors were given Boss's  
version of events in his confidential report for 1960-61:-

200 "A bad feature of Bell's case was that Exeter College who, in my view and that of  
lawyers I consulted, had no right to claim him as one under contract to go there, made it  
impossible for him to be considered for a scholarship or a place at any other Oxbridge  
College. I had intended him to read Maths at King's, Cambridge, but the selfish action of the  
Exeter College authorities made this impossible. As several Dons remarked to me, such a  
thing could not have happened in the old days, when the Colleges were controlled by a  
different class of person. Needless to say, Exeter will not be invited to consider any of the  
even better scholars we have coming along up the school. Moreover, if it were not for the  
fact that we have a distinguished member of King's College as a Governor I should feel  
disinclined to send any of them there, for they supported Exeter in their extremely  
unpleasant work by refusing to consider him. Incidentally, the authorities at this College  
managed to get John Dunn - an open scholar from Millfield - labelled 'Winchester' when it  
was announced that he had gained First Class Honours in History Tripos Part I. When I  
protested, I was merely told that if he got a first in Part II he would wear the correct label".

210 This report also included Boss's announcement that, with the approval of the  
executive committee, he had made a number of appointments amongst the present staff.  
These appointees were designated to organise the running of the school in the unlikely  
event of his being incapacitated or even dying, until such time as a new headmaster was  
chosen. Over a number of years individual governors had privately suggested that he  
should not work so hard, take a proper holiday, get more sleep, delegate more, and finally  
seven of them, acting as the executive committee, told him that it would be unfair to the  
whole governing body if he did not put a programme in place for the running of the school  
in his absence.

220 This was minuted on 30th May 1960, and RJOM replied to it in his preface to the  
report for 1959-60 by writing that he was always on the look-out for a really good man to  
come in as acting headmaster, with the expectation of being promoted to headmaster in  
two or three years. Boss did not think that he was likely to be sacked in that period of time,  
but supposed that he might be 'kicked upstairs' to become 'Warden'. However he thought  
that the governors should be aware of the qualities which he believed that the next  
headmaster should offer. They were (1) to be a gentleman; (2) have a Teaching Diploma; (3)  
appreciate the value of (a) exam results, (b) games, etc, (c) studying the individual; (4) have  
a firm conviction that the Christian way of life is the best way of life.

230 In the event he announced to the staff on 14th July 1961, that Frank Slow, the long-  
serving assistant director of studies (Boss was the director), was also assistant headmaster,  
but that, in the event of Boss being unable to carry on, Frank would not become acting  
headmaster. That role would pass to Herbert Smith, head of the physics department and  
housemaster of Orchards, who was given the title of deputy assistant headmaster, but  
whose only active participation in the organisation of the school was confined to the  
codifying of the rules, or so it appeared.

240 Thus, without having to alter normal practice, Boss had answered the governors' plea for continuity, and he was able to push on with his plans to raise money for the projected design and building of the school, while developing his own interest, and that of the school, in the education of gifted children.

## Chapter 27

### Expansion and financial difficulties. A second Inspection. CRMA and the Millfield Training Scheme. 1963-6.

1963 is a key date in the history of the school for it was in the summer of that year that the governors, with the aid of Lloyd's Bank, handed over the second and final instalment of the purchase price of the Millfield estate to the Clark trustees. It was in the same month, June, twenty-eight years before that the Meyers had arrived from India with their seven young charges, confident that they had the expertise and the finance to make a success of their new educational venture. For all the vicissitudes that followed, the withdrawal from their care of five of the original boys just five months after the start, the tragedy of war with the deaths of old boys and young ex-tutors, the constant struggle to keep ahead of the overdraft, and the often open distaste shown towards the upstart by other independent educational establishments, Jack and Joyce had come to love the place and must have felt that it could now be developed, with the unquestioning approval of the governors, along the lines to which they had aspired for so many years.

It should be remembered that to some of the Clarks it was a family home, indeed Tony, chairman of the Millfield executive committee, had been born there. So their reluctance to part with the freehold was understandable, but nevertheless they had made immediate planning for new buildings on the estate possible by applying for permission from the local authority. However the governors were less sanguine, for they had saddled themselves with a huge debt already by agreeing to buy and develop St Annes, a large Victorian building and one-time convent at Baltonsborough. This was necessary if the school was to house the increasing number of boarders that the Boss could not resist booking in for the autumn term, although Chilton Cantelo School was now standing fully on its own feet and unable to accommodate its little Millfield colony any longer.

It would be more accurate to say that it was Boss who had saddled the governors with paying for a building they would not have bought at the price which he agreed, and subsequently paying the bills for extensive renovations which finally cost more than three times the price of the house. He had been told in January by Cecil Hamilton-Miller, the school solicitor, that St. Anne's would be coming on the market shortly, its owner, a recluse, having just died, but "It is a Barrack of a place, and I would not recommend it to you, but as you know I usually pass these things on in case you might be interested". After probate the executors directed that the house and two and a half acres of adjoining land with planning consent for building should be sold at an auction which was fixed for 24th April. A fortnight before that date Commander RJA Hammond, 'Wally' to his friends, and owner of Kernick, a Millfield billet in Baltonsborough, wrote to Boss, stating that he had paid St Anne's a visit and suggested that "something could be made of St. Anne's as a school boarding house". Little did he know! Boss replied, "thank you for the report. We are trying not to be seen in the area - for obvious reasons and our surveyor wears a false beard. I don't like the sound of that 'drainage to river' lark". However this did not deter him, for, when an emergency meeting of governors held on 22nd April authorised a ceiling price of £7,500 for the whole

property, he told the school surveyor, through Cecil H-M, to be prepared to bid up to £10,500 in his name. That it was done, to all intents and purposes, in defiance of the governors' instructions is confirmed by Cecil's letter to Boss on 25th April.

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"Dear Jack, re. St. Anne's, Baltonsborough.

I heard from Cooper (Commander Cooper, the new Bursar) that John Pritchard (the School surveyor) bought the above property at last night's Auction at a figure of £8,500. Where do we go from here? I would like to have your views as to the next steps, e.g. do we approach the G.B. (the Governing Body) and see if they have any ideas about taking over the property? If we do I suppose Tony Clark can turn round and point out that their ceiling figure was £7,500.

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Could we perhaps do a deal by selling off the building land to a Builder? We might be able to get a good bid for the land, and then the G.B. might take over the building. What do you think?

I gave a blank cheque to John Pritchard to cover the Auction Deposit, and, perhaps therefore, you would be good enough to let me have your cheque for £850 being the amount paid to put my Office Account in funds again.

Yours,

Cecil".

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CH-M need not have worried, for, faced with a fait accompli, the governing body, in the persons of Tony Clark and Evan Stokes, accepted RJOM's blandishments and the price of £8,500 on the understanding that a friend of the school called Edwards was loaning him £10,000 free of interest. This was never forthcoming but the purchase of the house, and its acceptance by the governors, would ease the problem of accommodation.

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It was by no means the end of the story, for Hamilton-Miller's warning about the 'barrack' proved only too true. The aim was to open the house for boys in September 1963, so the bursar, Commander Cooper, who had just been promoted from assistant bursar on the retirement of Brigadier Mackie in April 1962, was instructed to liaise with the School architect, Kenneth Nealon, and to engage a firm of builders to make it habitable. The executive and finance committee sanctioned the spending of a further £10,000 for alterations and furniture in St Anne's, and Hayes and Sons of Somerton agreed to carry out the work after being approached by the Bursar, who did so after consultation with the architect.

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In a letter dated 14.10.64. to Dick Redman, who by that time had replaced Cooper as acting bursar, JWW Leask, one of Nealon's partners, explained that "owing to the speed with which the conversion at St. Anne's had to be carried out, there were no initial quotations for the work".

'The speed' was not great enough, for the alterations had not been completed by



the supposed September deadline and St Anne's was still not fully functional in the following January (1964) when the first intake of boys arrived, with a harassed housemaster, Freddie Phillips, who had looked after them for the previous term in the old Strode School buildings in Street which had had to be leased and equipped at very short notice. This latter was an additional cost to those for St Anne's which were rising unchecked, finally reaching some £32,000, the total expenditure on the house thus exceeding £40,000. There was also a considerable worry regarding the safety of the boys who had to walk or cycle to the Strode site in the dark evenings, as relations between local youths, 'Wurzels', and Millfield boys, 'Miffies' were of the tinder-box variety at that time. The police had to be alerted on a number of occasions and on Guy Fawkes night, 1963, prefect volunteers were brought in to help defend the vulnerable houses in Street, Holmcroft, Orchards and the unfortunate St Anne's outpost, which came under an organised assault with bangers and other missiles. It was fortunate that the local ring-leaders were easily identified and warned by the magistrates about future behaviour, as from September 1964 considerable numbers of Millfield pupils made daily journeys to and from 'Fort Strode', which was used as eleven teaching rooms until July 1966, when the new teaching blocks, subtly labelled A and B, came to fruition. They were the first planned buildings of the Millfield project drawn up in 1964 by the school appeal committee, which had been formed in October 1963 after the governors had decided to wind up the old building fund account, the funds all having been used. Thus 1963 saw the Millfield estate pass into the school's ownership and the first move to create the bricks and mortar section of Boss's dream.

Another intriguing piece of Millfield history had its origins in September of the same year when Elmsett Hall, which had been an hotel and country club at Wedmore, some twelve miles from Street, opened as a billet, with only a handful of Edgarley boys for its first term. William Preddy, who was engaged to teach maths, and his wife had made it clear to Boss that they were willing to have boys and girls in the house, and, as luck would have it, at this time Hector and Mrs Nest, who had run their Abbot's Sharpham billet of 12 boys for eight years, informed the headmaster that they would have to close it for personal health reasons, while the rector of Street declared that he would not continue to look after 6 girls at his home. In January 1964 Elmsett became the first and only Millfield mixed house, starting with 12 boys and 8 girls. By the spring of 1966, when it closed abruptly for financial reasons, numbers had increased to 39 boys and 17 girls and there had been little to criticize in this bold experiment, but no one since has been brave enough to repeat it at Millfield.

Elmsett did not come under the scrutiny of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools when it arrived, under the leadership of Dr PC Davey, on 15th October 1963, which was just as well for it might have been difficult to explain away the fact that the housemaster, Bill Preddy, held a full licence to sell cigarettes and alcohol on the premises. There was a bar on the lower ground floor to which members of the country club had access during opening hours. Edgarley had been inspected successfully in 1957, and was not involved in what was the first Millfield inspection since 'recognition' in 1949. Boss had inevitably been heavily involved in the preparation of pre-inspection descriptions of the workings of the school which were sent to Dr Davey and his colleagues for perusal before they descended in force.

Anticipating criticism regarding teaching rooms, he wrote, "Since the last Inspection we have not succeeded in demolishing our Nissen Hut classrooms - though the Street UDC

140 had issued a ukase that this should be done by 1952-3 - but they have been greatly improved pending the erection of new classrooms; a block of 25 (by September 1964), followed by a communal dining-hall, is to be the first stage of our building programme after the launching of our Building Fund Appeal". There was some wishful thinking involved here, for the final demolition of the Nissen huts took place ten years later, while two teaching blocks instead of one came into use in September 1966, which meant the abandoning of plans for central dining for 12 years, when another headmaster was in place.

150 The inspectors' report, which was published in March 1964, contained no hidden barbs. It praised the work being done by staff in all areas and condemned much of the conditions and the buildings in which they had to operate, concluding with the sentence, "This is an unusually interesting School to visit". Amongst the activities picked out as of special interest was the Training Scheme which had just come into operation at the start of the autumn term, 1963. During the spring term three of the officers in the CCF, Barry Hobson, Dugal Reid and Bill Carslaw, aware that the War Office was hoping to save money by persuading schools to make their 'Corps' genuinely voluntary, had met in the Street Inn to discuss their concerns about the gap which might well appear in the Millfield training for citizenship and to plan for the future. 1958 saw the end of National Service, the two years during which almost all young British men were trained in HM Forces, and many pupils could not understand why on every Friday afternoon they were made to wear an  
160 uncomfortable uniform and march up and down the tennis courts.

After weeks of discussion, planning and time-tabling, the trio presented to Boss their scheme for the training of the whole school in self-discipline, self-reliance, good citizenship and leadership.

170 Although he was obviously interested in the ideas, RJOM was not prepared to sanction the adoption of the scheme without the approval of senior members of staff including the director of Physical Education, CRM Atkinson. This was partly because he felt sure that the CCF would collapse if made voluntary. At CRMA's suggestion a committee was set up to tidy the loose ends and to ensure that staff, with the headmaster's agreement, could be cajoled into helping as instructors. Thus the Millfield Training Scheme, father of the Millfield Combined Training Scheme and grandfather of the Millfield Activities Programme, came into being.

180 Colin Atkinson, who became secretary to the Training Scheme Council, had joined the school in September 1959 to teach English and games in the autumn term and the spring term, and then to play cricket for Somerset during the summer. This had been arranged by Boss, who was then president of the county cricket club, at the suggestion of the captain, Harold Stephenson, who came from the same village in Durham as Colin and who knew of his prowess as a Minor Counties, Army and Combined Services leg-spin bowler. Colin was in fact one of those who had benefitted from the relaxation of National Services rules which allowed him to take a first degree at university before joining the Northumberland Fusiliers as an officer and serving in Kenya, during the Mau-Mau troubles, and in Belfast, where he was able to take a second degree. He was fortunate enough to be commanded by Colonel John Deighton, who had played as a fast bowler for Lancashire and England, and who introduced him to first class cricket with Combined Services. Also

qualified, via Loughborough, to teach PE, he made it clear to Boss that his ambition was to become a county organiser, and that he would only join Millfield and Somerset if he was guaranteed the headship of the school PE department when he felt ready to take it.

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After two seasons with Somerset, which provided the normal mixed fortunes of a 'new boy', he asked Boss to keep his promise regarding the directorship of games and PE. Unfortunately the post already had an incumbent, Tony Robinson, then England's most capped hockey international, who was styled master in charge of games. After an unhappy exchange of views Tony was forced by personal circumstances to accept a compromise which left him his title, and the organisation of junior games during the winter, and of all games in the summer while CRMA was playing cricket. The loyalty he had felt so strongly for Boss and the school, because of the indulgences granted which allowed him leave to fulfil his career in hockey and to take part in Olympic Games, was stretched almost to breaking-point, for he had just refused a direct approach from his old school, Marlborough College, to move there to organise and coach hockey. He had also withdrawn from consideration for the national side when Boss asked him to organise games after the death of Walter Gluck, though he had agreed to become a selector instead. In addition he had just married and was setting up a home, so that immediate resignation was hardly an option.

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The sympathy of the teaching staff was clearly with Tony, and some tutors with a little authority began to look over shoulders and wonder what other promises had been made or might be. However people knew that Colin was within his rights and was recognized that he was a rising star, especially when he became housemaster of a new house, Portway, in September 1962. Thus his appointment as Secretary to the Training Scheme was looked upon as further acknowledgement of his organisational flair, but it did not occur to anyone that he was to be the next headmaster.

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The setting-up of yet another committee rounded off an incident-packed 1963. This was a group of parents who were willing to give and raise money, aside from the Project Fund, to create a temporary swimming-pool at Millfield so their children could be coached on the spot by the supremely enthusiastic master in charge, Patrick McArdle, and his able supporter, Commander Brian Fairlie. By dint of his determination to make Millfield a swimming school, Patrick - 'Paddy', one of the Welsh who could swim - had given up his evenings to travel with the boys and girls to public baths as far afield as Bristol so that they might train in the winter when the open air pool, Greenbank in Street, was closed. He entered teams for all the local galas and competitions and gradually word got round that Millfield swam, in addition to all its earthbound activities.

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The Bursar, Commander Cooper, was less than enthusiastic about the scheme, as he felt it might interfere with the main Appeal, but Boss was already irritated by the Commander's tendency to point up any financial overspending without suggesting any viable alternative, and he told PRM to go ahead with forming his committee.

## Chapter 28

### Joseph Levy and others promote the Appeal. New classroom blocks and sports facilities. 1962-70

10 Millfield in the mid-sixties was a-buzz with activity and excitement as new developments and expansions got under way. Staff and pupils had long accepted the austere conditions in most of the houses, the bare furnishing in the Nissen Huts and the wooden teaching rooms with odd names, Chicken Runs, Snows, Prattens, Bolts and most notorious of all, the PS (private study) room, which served in its time as a hopelessly ill-equipped and much abused reference library, a lecture-room, a detention room, a room for staff-meetings, and a place of containment for those off games.

20 Work on the swimming pool began at the start of 1964. The father of two Millfield boys, local builder and property developer RM Smith, suggested to the committee which Patrick McArdle had been instrumental in forming that they should copy the simple system used in an army camp outside Taunton. After examination this was agreed, and another parent, WE Tompkins, chairman of the civil engineering firm Rush and Tompkins, loaned the school a small bulldozer to help prepare the site behind the cricket pavilion. The arrival of this Dinkum Digger was the precursor of great things to come. Once it had completed its job, RM Smith's firm moved in and laid the concrete base for the building, this being his contribution to the cost.

D Merson, father of two of the YLC, presented the boiler-house and changing-rooms, whilst ten other parents joined the original committee, Messrs Bond, Brend, Tucker and Smith, in guaranteeing £150 each.

30 The pool was constructed by raising a wall of concrete sections, buttressed by steel stays on the outside, in the shape of a rectangle measuring 25 yards in length and 6 yards and 9 inches in width. Lined with a PVC membrane, it was 4 feet 6 inches deep overall and provided three lanes for racing. Whilst the pool was ideal for teaching non-swimmers and enabling experts to practice, it was less than satisfactory for competition. House matches had to be swum in heats and results based on timing, and spectators could not be accommodated at all inside the inflatable nylon tent cover. This latter was suggested by the swimming staff and proved so successful, at least for a time, that it must have sown a seed amongst the tennis players. Three years later, they were rewarded with the Barracuda, an indoor court with a much stouter cover which was supported on the same principle, air pressure. Again a group of parents, inspired by Mr Compton-Dando, father of Ashley, a fine player who was profoundly deaf, raised most of the finance for its construction.

40 The activities of Messrs Tompkins and Smith round the swimming pool had obviously whetted their appetite for school development, and they were to play very significant roles in the dramatic developments of the next few years. The former had already given sterling service to the school in 1963 by making a detailed survey of Kingweston House, which was showing its age. He donated and delivered a hut for use there as a pavilion for the sports

ground, and gave invaluable advice on the state of the drains at the Old Rectory, High Ham.

50 All this was achieved within four months of his being invited to join the board of governors in June on Boss's proposal. A year later RM Smith was proposed and elected, soon after the confirmation as governors of two other current parents, Joseph Levy and Charles Green. All of these men were heavily involved with the running of large businesses and arguably brought to the governing body a full appreciation of the school's financial difficulties for the first time.

60 Up to that time most of the governors had been able to advise and support on the academic, sporting and pastoral side of school life, but not on the school's accounts with any deep experience, though Tony Clark, who did have the necessary knowledge, had been warning since 1955 that Millfield was entering perilous waters by being over-generous with concessions in school fees to deserving cases and to others who might bring honour to the school. These new men, who of course paid full fees for their children, were pleased and determined to help the school in the way they knew best, by sorting out the business aspects.

70 Probably the most charismatic among them was Joe Levy BEM, who had a son and daughter at the school and was already heavily involved in charity work, especially for the Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation, of which he was chairman and a founder member. He had set up a firm of surveyors and estate agents with his brother in the Haymarket in the centre of London, so that he was surrounded by invaluable contacts. These were points not lost on RJOM when he was approached by an old cricketing friend, Gerry Waites, who was looking to help Joe Levy find a suitable school for his 14 year old son, Lawrence. An older boy had completed a successful school career at Charterhouse, but the younger had suffered a miserable first year and everyone felt a change was vital, so Boss agreed to meet the family about a week before the autumn term of 1961 was due to start. The chosen venue was the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club at Wimbledon where nineteen Millfieldians were playing in the Junior Championships. Although only one title, the girl's singles, was won (by Frances Walton), this it made it easy for Boss to mention that his dream was to have a stadium where coaching of every conceivable sport could continue, come rain or shine. Before the afternoon was over, Lawrence's place at Millfield was secure, as long as Charterhouse was happy. Joe and Boss had found mutual interests as  
80 racehorse-owners and race-goers.

Five days later Joe received a copy of a plan for the stadium and responded by suggesting "we could meet and have a chat about this as I have one or two ideas which I feel could help you in your overall problem". Fortunately Lawrence settled into the Millfield routine without demur and completed four years at the school, having formed the basis of a career with his camera. He would become recognized as the world's greatest photographer of golf. So happy were the Levys, Joe and his wife Ninot, with what Millfield was doing for their younger son that they sent their daughter Jane to join him, a move she had requested after her first visit to the school.

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In the short intervening period between Lawrence's entry in October 1961 and Jane's arrival in January 1962, Mr Meyer and Mr Levy had dined together in London on 29th November and had drunk cocktails at the Criterion on 14th December, by which time they had become Jack and Joseph, the latter to become Joe by 9th January. There can be no doubt that this intimacy produced almost immediate results which were to be vital to the future of the school. Jack had arranged a meeting between 'Tommy' Tompkins, who brought the plans for the stadium, CH Pritchard, the school surveyor, and Joe Levy, who already had made up his mind to support the project financially once he was convinced that they would not be building on what RJOM had described in 1954 as 'other people's territory'. They met in London, and on 14th December Pritchard circulated a report of what had been discussed to the members of the executive and finance committee. This made it clear that the builder, Tompkins, and the financier, Levy, recommended the construction of the stadium, but only when the school had purchased the freehold of the Millfield estate. This could be construed as the jolt that was needed to force the governors into action, but the fact is that they still took their time and it might be suggested that they did not like being told what to do by people who were at that time outsiders.

The question of the purchase of the estate had been raised in 1959 by RJOM, and the response had come from Tony Clark, who said that he and the other trustees were not averse to selling it to Millfield, but that they would prefer for the time being to negotiate a new lease, as the valuation of the property was very complex and dependent upon planning permission for new buildings. Thus Pritchard was delegated to negotiate with the estate manager and this he was still doing in 1962 when the executive and finance committee met in extraordinary session on 8th March to discuss a replacement for Brigadier Mackie, who had resigned as bursar for health reasons. In addition to Pritchard's report on his December meeting with Tompkins and Levy, Boss produced a letter from Joe, written on 16th January, wondering whether any progress had been made and reiterating his conviction that an appeal could not go forward until the school authorities 'obtain security of tenure on the school and land'. Pritchard then further reported that the Clark trustees were prepared to offer the freehold at £50,000, the completion date being the last day of 1963, and the committee asked him to obtain an option in writing. At their next meeting on 18th June, Pritchard was pleased to report that the trustees were prepared to drop their price to £47,500 and the committee agreed to go ahead with the purchase. Three days later Jack Meyer attended Royal Ascot as a guest of the Levys and was introduced to a number of wealthy people considered by Joe to be potential supporters of the Millfield cause, but it was only too obvious that hard work would be required to open their wallets.

Joe showed his intentions in October by offering the Governors 5,000 shares in his Stock Conversion Investment Trust, their value on the stock market being some £10,000, which, if realised, should start to help to pay for the stadium. He wished it to be an anonymous gift and this was respected. Perhaps significantly, this splendid gesture was made a year to the month since Lawrence Levy had entered Millfield, so RJOM must have felt more secure in his plans for Joe.

There had already been some mention in their correspondence of a projected

'Millfield Supporters' Club' committee, and in reply to a long letter of thanks from Boss Joe wrote "If at any time I can be of further help to you and perhaps the Governors Sub-Committee, I shall be very happy to do what I can".

140 Prior to the next full meeting of the governors on 3rd June 1963, Boss, acting in his dual capacity as headmaster and governor, proposed that Joe, along with five other worthies, should be elected to the association from which the governing body was drawn. This was duly accepted, all the nominees having agreed to serve. At the same meeting 'Tommy' Tompkins was invited to become a governor, whilst Joe Levy was to be invited by the headmaster, with the approval of the governing body, to form an appeal committee and to be its chairman.

150 This new committee, which usually met in Joe's London office, consisted of himself, 'Tommy', Charles Green, and, as treasurer, General Sir George Erskine, a one-time Edgarley parent and in 1963 Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey. The latter was a founder-governor in 1953, a position he accepted while he was in the process of organising the defeat of the Mau-Mau uprising in what was then the British colony of Kenya. The general was almost certainly thought by Jack Meyer to be the old hand to guide the new men in the right direction.

160 The first meeting on 24th October 1963 laid down the ground rules for the organisation of the appeal :- that a professional firm of fund-raisers be selected to make a preliminary survey of prospects so a target could be set, that the committee could co-opt anyone who would be helpful in the raising of funds, and that a brochure should be prepared for distribution to old Millfieldians and other potential donors.

170 The experienced Joe set about his personal task of approaching directly those people he knew were likely to give generously to a worthy charitable cause, and, having been occasionally prompted by Boss, he was able to report at the morning governors meeting in the marquee on 8th June 1964, and later on at the Open Day gathering of pupils and parents, that £150,000 had already been collected or promised. He failed to mention that £50,000 of this was his own contribution. As a result of this initial success, the governors agreed to raise their sights from the original suggestion of a target of £750,000 to one of a million pounds sterling, while an article in the 1965 Windmill declared that the ultimate need was for a million and a half.

180 Naturally there were problems associated with this great venture, not the least being of a political nature, for a general election was looming in the autumn and, after thirteen years of continuous Conservative rule, supportive of independent education, the Labour party, with its socialist agenda undimmed, had regained much support from the general public by embracing CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Harold Wilson, the Labour leader, skilfully undermined the Tory leadership, first Macmillan, then Douglas-Home, and led his party into power in October, so that the threat to fee-paying schools was inevitably in the back of the mind of each potential giver, who would wonder if it was worth supporting a condemned institution. On 18th December Joe wrote to Jack:- "If we had tried,

we could not have picked a worse time to launch such a large Appeal for Millfield". Boss was not as dismayed, for he had been through similar situations before, firstly during the Attlee governments of 1945 to 1951 when there was left-wing talk of the abolition of independent education and, secondly in the aftermath of the Suez crisis of 1957 when polls showed a strong swing against the Conservatives who looked likely to lose the next general election.

190        Though a life-long supporter of the Conservative Party, RJOM was not prepared to believe that his Old Haileyburian friend Clem Attlee would put his socialist hand to a bill which would destroy the school that had helped his son so greatly. He was probably correct, but his theory was never tested, although the 1959 election seemed to present a more serious threat, so much so that he began to consider removing Millfield from the United Kingdom to a country which would welcome sterling investment. His investigations at the time gave rise to a great deal of speculation, as France, Switzerland, Greece and the Republic of Ireland were mentioned as possible asylums, with the latter the favourite. However in the intervening years he had become convinced that no government could afford the financial cost of 'nationalising' education and that, once Millfield was built, it would be invulnerable. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that he did talk of his ambition to set up an overseas branch of Millfield from time to time up to his retirement in 1971.

200        Whatever the doubts may have been, the campaign began on March 17th 1965 with a gathering at the Café Royal in London of the committee and all those who had already given or promised contributions. Amongst the latter were the head girl, Joanna Sancha, and the head boy, Michael Winand, who brought a cheque for £2,750, the result of an undertaking by the whole school to raise money by working in the Christmas holidays.

210        The Wells Organisation, a well-known fund-raising group, had been engaged to give advice and Major Hodgson was employed by them to lead the appeal forward, whilst working in close consultation with the new bursar and clerk to the governors, Dick Redman, recently promoted from assistant bursar after Commander Cooper resigned.

220        The first flush of £150,000 in promises and covenants was followed by a lull in contributions and at this time it was decided not to build the proposed dining-hall and one classroom block, but to begin with two of the latter, which would not stretch the budget so far. A glossy brochure, labelled Millfield Project and containing details of the plan for the new school and how to contribute to it, was printed and first distributed to some of those attending a ceremony on 29th October, which included the laying of the foundation stone of what was to be A Block, the first of the two new classroom buildings, and the burial in the foundations of a metal casket containing memorabilia of the time. Subsequently 'A' was completed and ready for use in September 1966, while 'B' opened in January 1967, the construction work being carried out at cost price by Rush and Tompkins, whilst Joe Bamford, yet another Millfield parent, loaned a JCB and driver from the start of the preparation of the foundations.

      In the meantime the Project film, which was produced and funded by Mr JM Finn,



230 father of Simon Finn in Etonhurst, was shown during the afternoon of Open Day, 30th May 1966. Appropriately the guests of honour, along with Mary Bignal-Rand, the Golden Girl of 1964, were Mr and Mrs John Mills, whose son Jonathan was in Kingweston. For the voice on the film, skilfully persuading people to reach for their cheque-books, was that of the famous film actor.

The flow of money into the appeal fund was steady but not spectacular. Hopes now lay in a plan to organise a lottery with extravagant prizes, £10,000 for the winner, an Aston-Martin for the runner-up and a bungalow for third prize. There were numerous others which had been given by parents and friends of the school. Unfortunately it all came to nothing, as the law at the time in the UK was quite clear and the scheme was totally illegal, so that some four years of planning and begging by Jack and Joe were wasted.

240 The decision to abandon was taken in May 1967, though there were thoughts of running it from an office in Ireland where lotteries were acceptable. However a Project management committee had been set up in June 1966 under the chairmanship of J 'Ronnie' Townson, a new parent governor, to ease the burden on Joe Levy, who had not been well, and also to replace the Wells Organisation, including Major Hodgson, who had completed their contract. Parent governor Keith Showering took on the task of approaching the potential givers of large contributions, whilst an Appeal secretary, Philip Tweedale, was appointed to co-ordinate the efforts of local area committees. These had been set up by Hodgson in order to raise money by organising social events, a number of which began with a showing of the Project film. On a different scale altogether, actor/director/parent Stanley Baker gave all the profits of the Welsh première of his film 'Robbery' to the fund in 1967, while another parent, Elizabeth Hikmet, offered to share the takings at the gala opening of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. This had been largely filmed in Turkey, and Mrs Hikmet, chairman of a charity committee of the Anglo-Turkish Society raising funds for the Florence Nightingale Hospital in Istanbul, was equally anxious to help her son's old school. She had high hopes of persuading the Duchess of Gloucester, the charity's patron, to attend, but this fell through, and Philip Tweedale suggested that the next best substitutes would be Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, who agreed to be guests of honour as Miss Taylor's two sons, Michael and Christopher Wilding, were enjoying, or perhaps enduring, life at Kingweston and Edgarley respectively.

260 Unfortunately Boss seems to have lost interest in the latter event once it was clear that there was to be no royal presence. The gala opening took place at the Odeon, Leicester Square, on 11th April 1968, and Burton's first query on arrival at the cinema was to ask where the headmaster was. Though Joyce Meyer and Ronnie Townson calmed things down somewhat, there was a disastrous mix-up over the seating, which placed Elizabeth and Richard some distance apart, so that they walked out as the film began.

270 In searching for a reason for this unfortunate incident one might well find an answer in Burton's autobiography, where he describes meeting Boss. "He made E. and Michael very nervous but didn't me - perhaps because my respect was mildly tinged with contempt. Still he's obviously good at his job. I became a little tetchy once or twice". This meeting had

taken place in 1967, and in the ensuing twelve months there had been no direct communication between the Burtons and the school, even though the elder boy's tutors were constantly complaining about his lack of effort. All reports for a meeting to discuss his problems were handled by a secretary and even an invitation to be guests of honour at Open Day was at first accepted and then refused, shortly before the event was due to happen. Boss too could be tetchy, and he was not prepared to put himself out for uncooperative parents, whoever they might be. It was no great surprise to him when it was announced to the press that Elizabeth Taylor's daughter, Liza Todd, whose father was her third husband, film producer Mike Todd, would not be going to Millfield as arranged, and that Michael and Christopher were being withdrawn. In fact Liza's application forms had never been returned, whilst the boys, according to their respective housemasters, showed no desire to leave.

Other parents (and of course Richard Burton did not quite come into that category) were more generous in their opinion of Boss, and in using their wealth for the benefit of the school. The Ladies' committee ran the highly popular Champagne Tent at the school's Open Days, as well as holding fund-raising social gatherings in London. The latter were emulated all over the country by groups of current and past parents and old Millfieldians. Roger Desoutter, of the famous firm of that name, provided a complete set of new engineering equipment for the metal workshops. Gabriel Sacher, a director of Marks and Spencer, financed the building of the permanent Biology Block, when challenged to do so by his OM son Julian, whilst Bernard Delfont donated some £10,000, the proceeds from the first performance in London of 'Golden Boy', starring Sammy Davies Jnr. Bernard's brother, Lew Grade, paid for a second language laboratory, as well some of the wiring and apparatus for the television centre, which had been set up by Irving Allen, the American film producer, who, along with his compatriot Richard Stewart, financed the building of the fencing salle and the judo dojo, which were opened in September 1970. This was two months after the Millfield charity première of Irving Allen's 'Cromwell' at the Odeon, Leicester Square, and two months before RJOM stood down as headmaster at Christmas 1970, two terms sooner than was expected.

## Chapter 29

### RJOM and 'gifted children'. Further staff appointments. 1962-7.

10        Though one might think that for some ten years Boss was totally preoccupied with raising funds to 'build' the school, this would be a misreading of what he was doing with his time. He certainly did want the stadium, and he recognized that the 'temporary' classrooms, the Nissen huts, which were ten years past their sell-by date in 1963, would have to go at some point. He disliked the idea of a central dining area for several reasons:- it would be very expensive to build and equip, it would be virtually impossible to give it a dual role, and it would diminish the value of the house system, the intimate relationship between house parents and their charges which had been built up over the life span of the school. Although RJOM interviewed every potential pupil personally and kept a firm grip on the details of their progress through the school, he had by 1960 appointed housemasters and housemothers in whom he had enough faith to allow them full pastoral control. This eased the burden to some extent but it really gave him more time for developing other aspects of the life of the school. It was still normal to find him working in his study at three in the morning.

20        The outstanding success of two scholars, John Dunn and John Bell, had stimulated his interest in gifted children and led him to search for others with similar potential and furthermore to become a founder member of the National Association for Gifted Children in 1966. Some years earlier he had joined the organisation in the USA which had exactly the same name, but had been started in 1954. The publicity afforded to Millfield's successes in the scholastic sphere, and the suggestion of possible 'free places', brought many approaches from parents with children suffering from the inadequacies of various schools, both state and independent, particularly their inability to prevent them becoming frustrated.

30        It was as a result of joining Mensa, the society formed in 1945 on the suggestion of the psychologist, Sir Cyril Burt, whose methods Boss had studied in depth, that he discovered that the American Gifted Children's organisation had been in existence for six years already. He had been attracted to the idea of applying for membership of Mensa by reading a newspaper report that a committee had been set up to investigate the possibility of forming a school for these talented children, an idea of which he disapproved strongly. If he was to make his views known, then it should be from within the organisation and, having made his application, he was duly welcomed as a member. This was in April 1960, and, on the strength of certain articles published in the newsletters he had received from the honorary secretary, he became convinced that Mensa was being used by communists to spread their beliefs and that the proposed school would perhaps serve a more sinister purpose. So disturbed was he that he sent copies of the articles to the CID of Somerset Constabulary at Bridgwater, and in December drew the attention of the Detective Inspector in charge to an article in the Daily Express reporting that J Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, was convinced that communists were making "an all-out attempt to capture the minds of America's youth".

40        Naturally, as a well-known expert on education who had spoken on radio and television programmes and whose letters to the Times were renowned, Boss was listened to

50 patiently and his views noted, but it is impossible to speculate whether any special watch on  
Mensa was put into action. Perhaps to help see his views in perspective, it is worth  
remembering that CND was then extremely active and the Committee of 100 had just been  
formed. This included Robert Bolt, then Britain's leading playwright, who had been in charge  
of the English department a bare two years earlier. Boss had defended ROB and his right to  
hold political views in January 1958, in response to a highly critical letter written by a  
Millfield parent who was a distinguished senior ex-RAF officer.

60 "As regards Bolt - it would be of great help to me if you could produce evidence of  
'extreme left-wing tendencies'. A school is, of course, un-political except at Debating  
Society level, and it would be quite wrong (even if it were possible) to ask a man how he  
votes. My drill here is to stand on 'Communists and Atheists are absolutely out. Socialists,  
Agnostics and Pacifists have (in a democracy) every right to their views and votes, but  
propaganda is forbidden'. We are, in actual fact, on the whole almost dangerously  
Conservative, though we keep out of politics altogether - except that I let the boys take part  
in activities at election time for educational purposes. It is noteworthy that it is very rare to  
find more than the odd person to help the Socialists. They would gain more knowledge of  
how democracy works if there were more opposition. Bolt has never before opened his  
mouth - which to my mind is dangerous because, whereas the Socialists have ever-ready  
70 tongues (and why not?), the Communists work underground. However there is not much  
chance of underground-working and indoctrination at school - particularly at this one as I  
should soon have a counter-revolution. The man is leaving in any case in July, to try to make  
a go of play-writing, and he may be beginning to feel he can tell us where we get off -  
including his employers. However, what I am asking for is not sympathy for a Headmaster's  
harassments, but all evidence that you can produce. Your protest will be published, and  
pressed home in no uncertain manner, but it is most important to see exactly where Bolt  
really does stand or seem to stand. I have to say in his defence that the Hungary business  
deeply disturbed him, and he even talked to our local clergy to ask if they could not get  
together to make an open and combined protest".

80 The half-joke half-fear of 'Reds under the bed' was widespread at the time, in spite  
of the open disgust shown by many British communists at the action of the Soviet forces in  
suppressing the Hungarian uprising of 1956. Millfield's reaction to what had happened in  
Budapest was inspired by General Sir George Erskine. The school took on the education of  
two refugee brothers, Arpad and Gabor Botar, who were clothed and equipped entirely  
through the generosity of the pupils. Arpad was a founder-member of the new boarding  
house in Shapwick, whilst Gabor went to Edgarley. Their father, who had smuggled them  
out of Hungary, soon had an offer of a good job in Canada and naturally his sons went with  
him.

90 Boss obviously had a soft spot for Bob Bolt and kept in touch with him even when  
the leaders of the Committee of 100, including Bertrand Russell and Bob, were sent to  
prison in 1961 for causing a breach of the peace in Downing Street. Perhaps it was because  
they demonstrated their beliefs and subsequently resigned independently, declaring that  
the organisation had become too militant. RJOM invited Bob to write the commentary for  
the Project film in 1965, but he was far too heavily involved in script-writing for the cinema  
and in writing a new play.

1961 had also been the year of turmoil over John Bell's Oxford award and it was perhaps not surprising that, when faced with a national reorganisation of the university entrance system in 1962 and the introduction of UCCA, the Universities Central Council on Admissions, Boss handed over the preliminaries and most of the paperwork to Frank Harris, OBE, who had joined Millfield the year before from Kenya, where he had been senior master at the Duke of York School and was already well versed in the intricacies of his job. Dr Terry Rogers, who had spent some time at the University of Chicago, looked after those pupils, many from abroad, who wished to apply for courses in colleges or universities in the USA and Canada.

Looming over everyone at the same time was the imminent Ministry of Education inspection in October 1963, the first since 1949, when the number of pupils was 186. Fourteen years on there were 606, with 120 tutors compared to 43 in 1949, so that the ratio of teachers to taught had increased from 1-4 to 1-5, a fact which does not seem to have worried the inspectors, but which may have given a crumb of comfort to the governors, who were constantly pressing for greater control of financial outgoings. For Boss the inspection was a triumph, summed up in the General Conclusions at the end of Her Majesty's Inspectors' Report on Millfield School. "The magnitude of the achievement of the Head Master in building so large a School, heterogeneous in constitution, yet, as a community, marked by its tolerance and sense of responsibility, is fully recognised; he has impressed his personality and outlook upon it".

In spite of all the preparatory work required to achieve this great success, it had not stopped RJOM's crusade for the cause of recognition by the education authorities in Britain that gifted children were not receiving the help they needed to show their full potential. On 1st March 1962, Sir David Eccles, the Minister of Education, stated in reply to a question in the House of Commons that the number of children with IQs over 175 was one or two in a million. On reading this as reported in the newspapers, Boss promptly wrote to one of the school governors, Lt Cdr Lynch Maydon, MP for Wells, to elicit his support and to point out that the Minister's figures were "ludicrous". Millfield alone had ten children of 1Q 180 to 220 and twenty of IQ 170+, but this did not really help his general conclusion that the highly intelligent child in Britain was gravely handicapped by lack of public funding, especially in primary schools. In the same letter he returned to his theme of 1960:

"Super-intelligent children tend to attract the attention of the nearest Communist 'educationalist' both here and abroad (we have collected funds for a few of these boys from overseas), and I think it is true to say that we have saved a few from falling into enemy hands".

A copy of this letter was sent to Sir Cyril Burt who replied immediately, giving his total agreement to Boss's contention regarding the Communists, whilst Lt Cdr Maydon filed it and forgot it for a month. However he wrote on 3rd April, apologising, to say that he had written to Sir David Eccles, enclosing a copy of Boss's letter of 4th March. A Ministry of Education phone call to Millfield on 13th April, which was answered by Amothe Sankey, Boss being away, gave a strong indication that notice had been given of a question to be asked by Lt Cdr Maydon in the House on the subject of gifted children, but it was shelved

and everyone had to be content with the minister's letter of 9th May to Maydon in which he pointed out that Boss's figures could no more be proved than his, the Minister's, could be. The final paragraph read:

"I think there is probably room for more thought about this question, but, on present information, we need to be very cautious in considering any move that will start a selection procedure for the very ablest children while they are still in their primary schools".

150 No mention was made of the Communist threat but Boss had not forgotten it, though he was temporarily more concerned with proving that Eccles's figures were wrong, with the help of Sir Cyril Burt and George Robb, the Lincoln and Lindsey Education Authority's chief psychologist. This he did to his own satisfaction, but a second letter from Maydon to Eccles on 24th May produced no better response than a reassurance that "we shall not lose sight of this subject", and that written on 20th June!

160 Less than a month later Eccles had gone, not to miss a good mixed metaphor, 'kicked upstairs to the Lords' on Macmillan's 'Night of the Long Knives', and by chance that event coincided with the publication of Mensa No 41, which contained an appeal for £500 to finance a main Appeal for the school building fund of which Boss was deeply suspicious. This issue also contained approving references to the work of CND, and he decided that he should warn the new Minister of Education, through Maydon, of a threat to the country's security. On 19th July he wrote:

"I think that you, the new (and old) Minister of Education, and M.I.5. ought to take a squint at the enclosed appeal within the MENSA organisation.

In my view it is the Communists at work on lines I suggested they would work on ten years ago. If this venture succeeded MENSA could capture the citadel within ten years".

170 However Maydon, who had just been promoted to junior minister status with Pensions and Insurance, was not impressed and did not inform the new minister, Sir Edward Boyle, or MI5. His rather dusty reply obviously surprised Boss, who did not pursue the 'Red' line any further, but maintained his campaign for a better deal for the gifted child. This latter took up more and more of his time as the word spread that Millfield, including Edgarley, was the only school really tackling this problem, whilst his friend George Robb joined the Essex Education Authority and introduced him to Dr Sidney Bridges, lecturer in teacher training at Brentwood College, who was piloting a study of gifted children. Dr Bridges was instrumental in persuading the parents of some of 'his pupils' to approach  
180 Millfield with a view to their children attending the school. In one case, the Sparrow family, it led to the father, Alex, joining the staff to teach, and his three sons, Colin, Malcolm, and Derek, becoming pupils, each in turn winning a place at Cambridge.

On retirement from Brentwood, Dr Bridges himself joined Millfield in 1970 to continue his studies with gifted children, following the progress of those at Edgarley through to the senior school. After Boss's retirement from the post of Warden of Millfield in 1972, Dr Bridges joined him as deputy headmaster of Champion School in Athens, his own two children, Sandy and Jean, having completed the Millfield part of their education.

190 The Daily Mail had brought the attention of a much larger section of the general public to the issue of gifted children by publishing on 4th February 1963 an account of an interview with Anthony Davies, one of the MENSA group who were trying to raise money for the projected school. Boss wrote to the editor pointing out that "A School for Little Eggheads", the newspaper's term, was quite unnecessary as facilities for teaching brilliant youngsters existed in the good preparatory schools, and the grammar and public schools. What was needed most urgently was money to be able to transfer these children out of the primary schools, which could not be expected to cope with the educational stimulation which was required. This time Boss, although he sent a copy of his letter to Commander Maydon, sent another directly to the minister, but no acknowledgement came in return. It was not until October that Sir Edward was reported in the Guardian, as having said "If you want to have the top line scientists, the start of their educational process remains in the primary schools", and Boss seized his opportunity to write and, perhaps luckily, to have printed succinctly his views on the need for proper arrangements for the top scientists of the future.

200 Letters from sympathizers were published over the next few days, while others wrote supportively to him directly. He then sent copies of all the letters to Lynch Maydon who passed them on to Boyle, who responded on 18th November by promising that "Mr. Meyer's point of view" would be brought to the notice of the members of the Central Advisory Council for Education which had just been reconstituted under the chairmanship of Lady Plowden 'to consider primary education in all its aspects and the transition to secondary education'. Boss received this response, the first really positive encouragement he had had from the government, via Lynch's secretary on the day before President Kennedy's assassination shocked the world, 22nd November 1963.

210 Four days later Boss wrote to the US Ambassador in London, His Excellency Mr DKF Bruce, offering the sympathy of everybody at Millfield and suggesting that, as a token of admiration, the school should set up a scheme for a Kennedy/Kruschev scholarship, whereby one American boy and one Russian boy would attend for a year. The Embassy responded enthusiastically, suggesting that the English Speaking Union could arrange a list of American candidates from which the Ambassador could choose, and that the Russian Embassy and the Foreign Office ought to be approached for their views. The inspiration behind the whole idea was the initial success of the nuclear disarmament talks between the US and Soviet governments. Unfortunately Kruschev had lost face among his own people as a result of his order to the missile-carrying ships to turn back at the time of the Cuban Crisis in 1962, and there was a move afoot to force him to resign. Anything which might glorify his name was being held in abeyance, and so the suggestion of a scholarship was not pursued in the USSR.

220 Though this was disappointing in several ways, it was perhaps just as well because Boss was to be deeply involved with setting up the appeal for the Millfield Project throughout 1964. He had to be away from the school frequently to attend meetings, usually in London, so that his campaign for helping gifted children, though not neglected, did not receive his primary consideration. He took a pleasurable swipe at the Trades Union Congress in June for suggesting to the Plowden Committee that streaming in primary

schools should be abolished, and he enjoyed some cut and thrust with the Guardian after it published an article on 31st October in which he was described as 'an academic white slaver'. This came as a result of a quotation taken from an interview with Boss when the People was running a series of articles on education: "Show me the boy or girl with an I.Q. of 150 or more and I will teach him free". Although neither the school's name nor RJOM's was mentioned, much had been made by the press of the Olympic heroine Mary Bignal's connection with Millfield, and the Guardian article writer, Ronald Deadman, a teacher, suggested "here is obviously a good candidate for a gold medal in the meritocratic rat race". It was all grist to the mill.

Unfortunately, perhaps, the capacity of even a very remarkable sixty-year-old to stand up to an incessant grinding was bound to become reduced. On Open Day 1966, Boss, recognizing that handing over the organisation of university entrance to Frank Harris had been an unqualified success, announced to the assembled company in the marquee, including many distinctly startled members of staff, that he was appointing his personal assistant, Colin Atkinson, not just as assistant headmaster, but as a potential successor to himself when he became warden. A year later the announcement came in the Queen's birthday honours that "R.J.O. Meyer, Headmaster of Millfield School" had been created an "Officer of the Order of the British Empire, for Services to Education".

Not surprisingly, these two announcements caused much speculation, particularly among the teaching staff, as to whether Boss's retirement was imminent, as other changes were taking place among the old guard. Reg Williams, the former director of studies, junior school, had been eased out of his post a year earlier when he had become ill, though he returned to his teaching, and the housemaster of Kingweston, Fred Stephenson, had been relieved of his post without explanation, though he also continued to teach. A large majority of housemasters requested to meet with the headmaster to discuss their terms of service, but this request was treated in such a way that Herbert Smith, deputy assistant headmaster, head of the Physics department, and housemaster of Orchards, was incensed and handed in his resignation.

Frank Slow, assistant headmaster since 1960, naturally had to hand over his wand of office, though he retained the title of director of studies, senior school, whilst McEwen Mason, one-time headmaster of a New Zealand school, became deputy director. The latter's promotion was not well received by the staff as he had only joined in 1964, to teach geography, but Boss must have been impressed by his administrative experience and energy, choosing him to lead an efficiency drive in the classroom, whilst CRMA, after his resignation as captain of Somerset County Cricket Club, could give his whole time to easing the burden on RJOM.



## Chapter 30

### **RJOM and various governors lock horns over development plans and related financial matters. CRMA becomes Acting Headmaster. 1967-69.**

10 There were obvious portents of the end of an era as the sixties came to a close. The wonderfully colourful Roy Hern, who had been in charge of equitation since 1937, died in '68, to be followed in '69 by Victor Edghill, the first co-headmaster of Edgarley, while the latter's successor, Harry Higgins MC, retired at the age of 74 after seventeen years of shared responsibility with Boss. There were two other highly significant retirements at this time. The last remaining pre-war tutors, Bud Atkinson, who with his wife Mary had run that most successful house for girls, Wraxleigh, and Jim Bunbury, the utterly devoted head of modern languages and senior master, had left by Christmas 1969. Only the indestructible Jack and Joyce Meyer remained from those who had seen the school through its first five pioneering years.

20 In the summer 1965 issue of Focus, the enlightened and thoroughly amusing pupils' publication, Boss, answering questions about himself and his future, declared openly for the first time that he might be 'made warden to make way for a young and efficient headmaster in 5 or 6 years'. He also confided that he had already helped the governors to draw up a list of six possible candidates.

Eight months later he told the governors, and then the gathering on Open Day, that he hoped that Colin Atkinson would be short-listed for the appointment of headmaster, at whatever point he, Boss, decided would be an appropriate moment. He was certain that it was his prerogative to choose his time of departure as the governing body had laid down that he was to be 'headmaster for life - removable only if insane' when writing his contract of employment in 1953.

30 In May 1966 CRMA had given Boss and Millfield a considerable service, and had made a shrewd move for himself, by buying Hollies, a large house near Chindit in Glastonbury. It had been the home and the surgery of Dr Pinniger, who had been the school's medical officer since the beginning in June 1935. He had recently retired and the house could provide accommodation for 40 boys, twice the number in Portway, which became a girls' house when the Atkinsons moved out. Technically Hollies was a billet, and was financed by the school as such, but it was regarded by the pupils as just another house.

40 The governors looked kindly upon this arrangement, because they were constantly having to accept increases in numbers, as one of Boss's methods of keeping the school full was to overbook new entrants in expectation of others falling by the wayside, which almost inevitably they failed to do. 20 extra places for girls at Portway was a real bonus, as there was a steadily increasing demand for good co-education. There was a financial drawback in that more transport had to be paid for, and this was repeated in September 1968, when Hornblotton opened. This too was a billet, just purchased by Charles Lillingston, the recently retired senior housemaster of Harrow, and it was to have started in January 1969, but as usual there was an overflow and 22 boys found themselves sleeping on mattresses on

the floor. The furniture eventually arrived and with it another 14 boys. Yet again transport costs rose, for Hornblotton was 10 miles from Millfield.

50            These and other expenditure problems were constantly on the agenda of the governors' executive and finance committee, whose main function was mainly to see that the school remained solvent. This was not an easy task in an era of steady inflation, considerable increases in national awards to teachers' salaries, uncertainty about the Labour government's attitude towards private education, and the intention to provide permanent structures on the Millfield and Edgarley estates. Though the Project appeal was producing results, it was vitally important that the school's income, the fees, should show a good profit like any other business, properly a surplus which a non-profit-making organisation has to plough back. A budget sub-committee also reported regularly, and, in  
60 'Tommy' Tompkins as a member, began to get its teeth into the reasons for the small annual surplus.

Although its reports were in fact merely repeating what the finance committee had been saying for ten years, that fee concessions and the teaching staff should be cut in order to balance the books, they were couched in more uncomfortable terms. On 7th June 1966 the report recommended:

“That because of the rapid growth of concessions, all concessions must cease forthwith, subject to special cases being brought forward for the approval of the Governors.

70            We recommend that a Bursary Committee be formed immediately and that no further concessions be granted unless approved by the Bursary Committee who will be allocated an annual block sum by the Budget Sub-Committee.

In view of the present financial position, it is likely that concessions will be drastically reduced for two years and may be non-existent”.

80            Boss's reactions may be surmised from the cryptic comments in the margin of his copy of the typewritten minutes. By the first paragraph he wrote, “I simply cannot agree. The whole balance will be upset”; by the second, “My contract?” and by the third, “Really!! Anyhow I am committed and so are Govs. for years ahead”.

In the same report the sub-committee resolved to put forward further proposals to the executive and finance committee,

“That teaching salaries be pegged not to exceed £205,000 p.a. for both Millfield and Edgarley and any amount over and above that figure would have to be made good out of concessions.

90            That an establishment Sub-Committee be formed to take control of the situation if the Headmaster is unable to achieve the target”.

Remaining calm, it would seem, Boss merely noted, "If I can't get target, no Sub. Com. ever will".

Amothe Sankey wrote, "In other words, take the control out of the hands of the Headmaster! In which case they can look for another secretariat immediately, and I am glad my cottage will be vacant in Sept".

100 Fortunately there were no such dire consequences, because a full meeting of the governors would have to be called in order to alter the wording of the headmaster's contract, and Boss knew that the majority of members would not even dream of interfering with the way he recruited members of the school or the staff. He had just appointed Colin Atkinson as deputy headmaster in order to allow himself more time to organise the Project appeal and his special baby, the prize draw. The new teaching blocks were rising steadily in the field to the west of the main drive, and they provided a useful sop to the demands of the budget sub-committee, as the teaching rooms would be bigger than most of the huts. Groups could therefore be larger and fewer tutors would be required. Concessions might have been more awkward to explain away, but the governors were positively purring at the wonderful publicity for the school as a result of winning the public schools rugby sevens at Rosslyn Park, especially the record number of points scored by Gareth Edwards, and an excellent list of university entrants, many of whom had been helped financially.

110 There was however a red herring afloat in the shape of catering costs, which had been severely criticised at the same sub-committee meeting. These were high, but then the standard of meals was and always had been much better than most other boarding schools, even before the Maharajah's complaint in 1935. The bursar received most of the censure for not telling the housemothers, and housemasters' wives, who were virtually unpaid, how to cut expenses. It was agreed that a catering consultant should be engaged, and Boss subsequently asked a Millfield parent, Rex Henshall, a director of Forte's Catering, to send one of his experts to make recommendations on how the situation could be improved. In the summer of 1967 Mr Timms spent two days, 6th and 7th July, visiting the houses and listening to their problems, after which he drew up a report strongly recommending the appointment of a full-time catering officer, and offering to put candidates for the job through the selection procedures employed by his company. This all reached the budget sub-committee at its meeting on 14th September, and it was confirmed that Forte's should be asked to select a short list of the best applicants for the catering post.

120 On 20th December Boss and the bursar, Dick Redman, agreed to recommend to the governors that they appoint Colonel AH Rose to the position of catering officer as from 1st February 1968. However on 21st June the sub-committee heard Boss and the bursar report the disasters of the previous five months, during which housemothers were on the verge of striking as a result of a near breakdown in the bread supply. It was agreed that Colonel Rose should be asked to leave as soon as possible, and nothing more was heard of central buying or catering officers until the school dining room was built in 1975.

130 Closer inspection of 'Colonel' Rose, when he attempted to claim damages for wrongful dismissal, showed that his title was bogus and that he was six years older than he claimed to be. To Boss however, his cardinal sin was to send copies of a report on the state

140 of Millfield catering to selected governors, and to be interviewed by one of them, RM Smith, without consulting him, the headmaster. In a letter of 6th August, addressed to Dick Redman, as clerk to the governors and bursar, summing up his feelings about the whole affair, he wrote :-

“The first I heard about it was when Mr Irving Allen, a new Governor, telephoned me to tell me how disturbed he was to learn about the ‘trouble at the school’, which ‘created a very bad impression’.

150 He was kind enough to send me his copy of Rose’s ‘report’, and I immediately asked how and why the ‘report came to be made at all - by a member of my staff, without consulting me, to a limited number of Governors (not including myself), using a school typist in the Appeal Office, on a subject which was one for you as Bursar to keep informed about (and through me the Chairman of the Executive Committee), and by-passing the Clerk to the Governors - through whom all communications to the Governors should be sent.

160 I am not sure whether the Governor who saw fit to cross-examine Rose (a member of my staff) without consulting the Chairman, or myself, or you as Clerk to the Governors, instructed Rose to by-pass you and not to send me a copy of the document, but, in any case, I must ask you to bring this matter up at the next Executive meeting, for I cannot understand in what capacity he was acting, or how I can run a school if members of the Executive Committee act in what I would consider to be an unconstitutional manner”.

170 For Boss it must have been the perfect tit-for-tat for his having to eat humble pie almost exactly a year before. He had lost his temper and stormed out of a budget sub-committee meeting on 1st August 1967, when criticised for failing to cut down the number of teaching staff. Though he had reacted finally to criticism from Tommy Tompkins, he had been prepared for a show-down and was armed with “a deliberately misleading staff balance sheet”, in the words of Amothe Sankey, who prepared it, though he never got as far as using it as an illustration of the problems he had to face.

170 Correctly, Boss sent an apology for his outburst to the chairman of the sub-committee, Bert Smith, recognizing their ‘wonderful work for free’ and thanking them for all that they were doing to help the school. The chairman responded graciously, some three weeks later as he had been catching fish in Scotland, and this provides an opportunity to note that the meeting, with its unfortunate incident, was held in Bath at the offices of the school’s accountant, Scotsman Robin Buchanan, who was later to play a significant role in the development of the school as a governor and the treasurer.

180 Following the Colonel Rose debacle, Boss and Bert Smith buried the hatchet - in the Bursar’s back. Dick Redman and his estates assistant, Major Ted Bullard, the school’s invaluable judo instructor, were roundly blamed by Bert, supported by Boss, for failing to arrange the erection of two Hardun huts at Edgarley or to obtain tenders for the interior decoration of several Millfield houses during the 1968 summer holidays. Along with the Project secretary, Phil Tweedale, they were severely criticised for being away on vacation at the same time during a critical period for the maintenance of the buildings.

190 The scholastic year 1968-9, starting in September, did not prove much calmer as Tommy Tompkins joined in the fray, suggesting in a letter to Bert, copied to, amongst others, RJOM, that there was "some unknown party in the background" working to undermine their plans. It was the beginning of term and Boss did not take the bait for four weeks. His careful response to the aspersions cast upon the school staff accountable for the maintenance and development of the buildings began with praise for "the assistance and advice" given by Tommy, Bert and Ronnie Townson. He then compared a school to a ship, rather than a business, and suggested that decisions were to be made by the captain and his 1st officer/paymaster without reference to the board of directors of the shipping company at home.

200 He had of course already tangled with Tommy at the infamous 1st August 1967 meeting and had also been antagonised by a letter written by him on 26th September 1967 to the chairman of governors, Evan Stokes, suggesting that a clear ruling should be laid down fixing pupil numbers in the two schools, so that the budget sub-committee and the finance and executive committee could forecast the school's income and expenditure with some accuracy, thus allowing positive planning of new buildings to go ahead. Boss's reaction was to note in the margin of his copy of the letter, "We must not let W.T. decide size of sc. by any other than educational criteria. J.P. should have copy of this letter. He understands and is ready to speak".

210 JP refers to Dr John Paxton who was head of the economics department at Millfield for some ten years from 1952, and had been elected president of the Millfield Society, the old boys and girls organisation, in 1966. At that time the governors and the Project appeal committee were anxious to involve the Old Millfieldians in fund-raising, and John, who was no longer on the staff, seemed to be the ideal person to put forward their views.

220 He was therefore invited to join the planning committee as a member, though he had first been approached with an offer to become chairman, which he had indeed accepted. He saw his role as being 'to balance the educational with the economic', and Boss fully concurred with this. Colin Atkinson also agreed, and wrote in the margin of a copy of Amothe Sankey's letter to John Paxton:- "Whatever former figures were bandied about there is no reason at all why such a figure should not be re-assessed in planning discussions. To refuse to do so is to be inflexible in the extreme and to defeat the committee's own object. It would be very wrong to go back to 600+ in the Senior School. There are problems of staffing connected with the ratio of 'A' Level schoolmasters to the total number of a School's pupils and their age spread which W.T. has no conception of. I am prepared to tell him".

230 Colin had to pick his way with great care through minefields which were almost certainly more dangerous than any he had encountered while serving with the Fifth Fusiliers. He was Boss's appointment as deputy headmaster, and nominee as next headmaster, but that latter appointment lay with the governors, whom he could not afford to offend, however irritating they might be. Two days before Boss sent his 'ship' letter to Tompkins, Colin authorized McEwen Mason, the deputy director of studies, who was gradually taking over the duties of 'Daddy' Slow, to inform heads of departments that their budgets for the current year had not yet been confirmed by the finance committee.

On receiving the headmaster's copy of the note, Amothe Sankey immediately contacted Colin, who explained that he had talked to the bursar, who reminded him that the budget for 1968-9 had been referred back by the finance committee to RJOM, for his approval when the September intake of pupils was complete, so that the year's income could be estimated. At that juncture Boss had not approved the budget estimates, indeed he had not even seen them.

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It is not surprising then that he told Tommy - "I quite agree that it would be wise to try to 'set out definite lines of authority - especially as regards the financial aspects of them'. At the moment, there are too many people giving the Bursar or his assistants too many differing instructions".

Obviously it is not possible to say with certainty who the "too many people" were, but Boss would seem to have been irritated by two letters written by Bert Smith on 6th September 1968, judging by his remarks in the margins. In the first, to the Bursar, in which he asks him to convene a meeting to discuss the plans for building extensions to Orchards and Holmcroft, he also acknowledges receiving "rough details of accommodation required at the Orchards which I assume are prepared by Mr. Atkinson". Boss has underlined the words "rough" and "assume are prepared by Mr Atkinson", and has written, "Why? Where are the Barton plans?" The second letter is addressed to a local architect, telling him that the bursar has informed him, Bert, of the "views of Mr. Atkinson, the Deputy Headmaster in respect of the Orchards". Boss writes, "What the --- is this? I have no knowledge of his scheme. Where is mine?" All this is in the right hand margin. On the left is, "Why no copy to ME?" In fact Colin had been co-opted on to the planning committee at Boss's suggestion. He was expected to negotiate on the headmaster's behalf with all those involved in building the school physically, but Boss did expect to be kept informed of everything going on so that he could still dip in his oar, if so inclined, because he was still the captain.

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However oil was poured on the troubled waters, at least for Tommy, who wrote to thank Jack for a Christmas present of a selection of exotic soups which had reached him via Harrods, with the hope that they would not be too rich for his blood. This somewhat enigmatic remark might well have been applied to Bert Smith, for unfortunately he was the one who became seriously upset in the New Year.

Having organised the design and all the other preliminaries for building a new art centre in the old orchard car park, he was informed in April 1969 that all was changed, as Boss had consulted the art department, whose head, Dugal Reid, had pointed out that the new Hardun hut was too small. Bert wrote, "The whole matter, however, from my point of view is most unsatisfactory and I feel I am just wasting my time, and would assure you I have plenty of other things to do".

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Jack wrote that he was sorry that Bert felt that way but thought that it was vital to correct mistakes as they became obvious. Bert responded carefully, reminding him that the planning committee existed and should be consulted when changes were suggested. One sentence in the letter seems to sum up Bert's feelings at the time with regard to his freely given service to the school and to his relationship with the headmaster; "With regard to the

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siting of the further Hardun huts, I would not be prepared to clear these down in the fear of making a mistake, but it does look to me that we are spreading and making a further encampment of Hardun huts in place of Nissen huts". Boss's only reaction seems to have been to question the meaning of the phrase "clear these down", building industry jargon for complete approval of plans. Ten days later the first shots of the next campaign were fired.

290 The background to this impending clash was that Boss had reported to the finance and executive committee that he had already bought, "with agreement from members of the Planning Sub-Committee", a house, No 1 Butleigh Road, "advantageously", and that Nos 3 and 5 had come onto the market. He suggested that these two properties, a large house and a bungalow respectively, both belonging to retired Millfield tutor Christine Johnson, and close to the school, would be invaluable as boarding accommodation. The committee agreed to a survey being made and requested Bert Smith to carry this out with Paul Pritchard.

300 What they did not know was that RJOM had already made an offer of £10,000 for the two, against an asking price of £12,650, but had been told that there were at least two parents who might be prepared to purchase the houses so that their children could attend the school. This was not to be another costly St Anne's-like affair as CMJ turned down Boss's offer, although her agent suggested that she might be prepared to consider £11,000. In the meantime Bert carried out his survey, as requested by the F and E committee, after receiving an inspection report from Paul Pritchard. Boss had been told by letter on 18th April 1969 that his offer was unacceptable, and was then informed on 25th April by Bert that he, Bert, had negotiated a price of £11,000 and had written to the chairman, Tony Clark, and to Mrs Johnson, stating that he was recommending that the governors should purchase the properties.

310 In his written response Boss was careful not to rend the veil: "We are extremely lucky to have a property expert such as yourself to advise and help us, but I cannot help wondering how we came to be operating in the same field unbeknownst to each other. I can find nothing in the minutes about a decision to go forward and it was somewhat unnerving and embarrassing to have your letter with the news that your negotiations were more or less complete while I was awaiting the final answer to mine. I have no doubt that it was I who was at fault, but it would be appreciated if you would keep me informed when deals of this nature are about to be negotiated".

320 Bert replied equally carefully: "I was unaware that you wished to acquire it for yourself and I was also unaware that you had been instructed to bid for the property on behalf of the School. However, I have made myself quite clear in my letter and it is entirely up to the School to decide at the next Executive whether they proceed with the purchase subject to all restrictive covenants being acceptable".

The School did so and found itself embroiled in legal argument and in paying interest for a year on £3,000, as Bert's agreement was to pay £8000 on completion in September 1969, and the rest in September 1970. Boss took no further part in these particular negotiations except to remark to Bert, who had surprisingly invoked advice on the interest question on 29th August 1969, that "This little additional burden of interest upon the £3,000

is typical of the lady in question". It was almost certainly a neat reminder that he knew more about Millfield than Bert could ever know, especially as there had been another traumatic disagreement in the middle of August over an extension to the boys' changing rooms.

Plans had been drawn up by the school's chosen architect, based on information passed to him by Bert Smith, as the result of an on-site meeting with Boss, Colin Atkinson and Dick Redman on 19th May. Bert sent copies to the planning committee and then went ahead with obtaining planning and bye-law approval, followed by selecting the best tender for the job. Work was scheduled to start on 22nd August.

On 15th August Boss examined the plan carefully for the first time, at the behest of the school surveyor and the head gardener who had spotted that a beautiful long established beech hedge was to be uprooted. The moment was seized, a phone call, unfortunately unrecorded, was made, and Bert wrote immediately to the chairman, Ronnie Townson, asking him to accept his resignation from the planning committee. Oil, this time in the shape of two carefully written letters from Boss, one to Ronnie, the other to Bert, saved the situation again and the resignation was withdrawn on 18th August.

Exactly a month later, on 18th September 1969, Boss announced to the pre-term staff gathering in the PS hut that he was taking sabbatical leave for the coming scholastic year, and that the running of the school for that period would be in the hands of the deputy headmaster, Colin Atkinson.



## Chapter 31

### The Appeal falters despite munificent gifts. RJOM's gambling becomes an issue. CRMA is appointed Headmaster-elect. 1969-70.

Sabbatical is the adjective derived from Sabbath, a religious day of rest, but it very soon became obvious that Jack Meyer did not perceive his leave as a period for relaxation or, as a number of governors had hoped it might be, an opportunity to travel the world in search of financial support for the school. In fact he remained at Millfield as a housemaster, continued to interview people wishing their offspring to enter the school, and kept a weather-eye on the acting headmaster. He seemed to be, to all intents and purposes, rehearsing his role as warden, which he was to take up in September 1971. The governors were aware that this would have to be discussed, as a new contract of employment would be needed, but they were more concerned about the appointment of a new headmaster.

As early as 1954, RJOM had approached Ronnie Maudsley, then a don at Brasenose College, Oxford, with the idea of his becoming Millfield's headmaster in waiting. This meeting had taken place quite informally at one of the splendid gatherings at the Randolph Hotel hosted by Boss on behalf of the school, after his highly talented West of England Wanderers side had played the university hockey team in the afternoon. All the potential Millfield entrants were taken to Oxford by coach, while as many college fellows as possible were invited to meet them and perhaps take part in 'horse-trading'. Ronnie responded after some time, and obviously after careful thought: 'I'm afraid that for many reasons I would never have been suitable', but he accepted an invitation to join the board of governors in 1957, and did an invaluable job as Millfield's representative on the GBA. Although an academic who was later to be a law professor at University College, London, he first knew Boss through cricket, having played for Oxford, both before and after the 1939-45 war, and for Warwickshire, while they also shared a love of golf. He had in fact suggested to Boss a possible successor in 1955, and it was not surprising that he was asked to vet the list drawn up in 1965. Colin Atkinson's name was amongst the chosen. Others included Ian Beer, already making his way up the headmasters' ladder, which in his case ended at Harrow, and Dennis Silk, housemaster at Marlborough, and a Somerset cricketer to boot. The latter was a known admirer of the 'Millfield Method' and indeed became a governor in 1992, so that he was high on Boss's scale, but he had ambitions elsewhere. This was true of all the others as well; thus Colin stood out as the most likely contender, though Ronnie and subsequently several of the governors questioned his capacity to cope with the intellectual demands on the headmaster of a public school which was concerned to upgrade its examination performance. This sword of Damocles hung over him for the next five years, possibly without his being aware of it. Boss, thankful for Colin's unquestioned organisational skills, seems to have been under the delusion that he, Boss, would continue to build up the academic side of the school by judicious use of 'concessions' and his wealthy contacts all over the world, whilst having an amenable cipher in the headmaster's chair. On a number of occasions the governors were reminded that, although Colin was a useful member of the planning sub-committee, he was not a governor and must not be treated as though he was. There was also an occasional reminder to the teaching staff that it was Boss who represented their interests on the governing body.

50 'Colin's Year', September 1969 to July 1970, passed without any undue upset in the school or its organisation, Boss continuing to deal with the future while the acting headmaster dealt with the present. Both were more in evidence to the pupils than they had been previously, Boss finding more time to chat on the terrace to passing prefects and golfing addicts, nine-iron in hand, whilst Colin appeared on more touch-lines than ever, in his case in a track-suit and carrying a hockey stick. The latter organised a greater number of teaching staff gatherings than Boss had had for years, instituting comparatively frequent meetings of housemasters, and of heads of department with the directorate of studies. As a result a number of tutors felt that their ideas were being regarded with interest, even if they were not acted upon, whereas in the past, with no opportunity to make themselves heard, except in small groups in smoke-filled labs over a packed lunch, all they had done was grumble. This alteration of attitude was important as the structure was changing, with the  
60 'old and bold', who had grown up with the school, retiring and being replaced with young hopefuls instead of the splendid 'retired' who were employed comparatively cheaply, as they had pensions but did not want to stay at home getting in the way of the vacuum cleaner. In the school year 1968-9 there were still six former public school headmasters on the staff, all teaching the small groups with ease and expertise.

That same year had also seen a major change in the organisation of the daily timetable, which up till then had been 'writ in stone'. Teaching periods were reduced in length from 55 minutes to 45, which meant that 4 periods instead of 3 could be worked before lunch, while there was no need for teaching after games, an exercise commonly  
70 regarded by tutors and pupils alike as a waste of time. The main architect of all this was 'Mac' Mason, an ex-bomber pilot and headmaster in New Zealand, who as assistant director of studies was expected to ginger up the staff as well as the pupils in regards to time-keeping. His efforts did not make him the most popular of men, but he already had much experience of dodging flak, and it was not until his return from his sabbatical in September 1970 that Boss became aware of the anger that had been generated amongst his senior tutors. Boss was also unhappy about the new timetable, but had given way in the interest of modernisation, and in support of Colin who approved of the changes. Another reason for their introduction was the need for more science teaching in schools, especially at the junior level, in order to inspire pupils to aim for careers in engineering and technology. Millfield  
80 itself was already in the vanguard of technological development, aided enormously by the generosity of current parents.

Lew Grade, as he then was, gave a complete language laboratory to reinforce the primitive and none too reliable machines which had been introduced as early as 1962, and in the same year, 1968, Roger Desoutter, chairman of a famous engineering firm, equipped the new metal workshop entirely at his expense. Television sets had also been given by the Grade empire to use as teaching aids in addition to the already widespread use of audio-tape recordings, but it was the gift of a video-tape recording unit from two American parents that established the school as a pioneer in the production and use of internal  
90 educational programmes in every department from remedial English to soccer skills. The two gentlemen involved, film producer Irving Allen, and businessman Richard Stewart, who had an interest in electronics, were not finished there, as they combined to pay for the magnificent fencing salle and judo dojo which was opened in July 1971. It would be invidious not to pay tribute to the masterly advocacy and persuasiveness of Peter Turner,

the member of staff in charge of the audio-visual department and also of fencing, who presented his case for better facilities in each area, aided, it has to be said, by some serious nudging by the Allen and Stewart offspring isp.

100 However, in spite of all these progressive achievements, Boss was not happy because too many mistakes were occurring in the actual building works, while his overall plan for the new Millfield, as laid out in the Project brochure of 1965, was going well astray. His central plank, the indoor sports arena, which he had envisaged as doubling as a self-service canteen, had been rejected by the planning committee, who were intent on cutting costs and who had included a separate dining hall which would cater for the majority of meals for the whole school. When the first phase of the Project, the A and B Blocks, were completed in 1967, all sorts of warning lights were flashing. Money had not flowed, nor was it flowing in the way that everyone had anticipated in the first heady days of 1963. The new governors had stumped up wonderfully, as had some of the others, current parents had responded well, but the playing of the Old Millfieldian card produced less significant results.  
110 In many cases those approached were sympathetic but young, and with scant resources, however wealthy their forbears may have been, and many of those had already paid well over the odds for the privilege of a Millfield education for their scions. Most of the older OMs had already forged links with their previous schools before they ever came to Millfield. Boss had actively encouraged these young men to wear their old school ties and other accoutrements, especially when playing games in Millfield teams. The records of their whereabouts in the 1960s were distinctly sketchy, even though the Millfield Society, which all past pupils were invited to join, had been formed in 1950, and it was obviously those from the 1930s and 1940s who were most likely to have some money to spare for a good cause. So the response from the OMs was disappointing, to say the least.

120 Added to these problems was the decline in Joe Levy's health and his necessarily retiring from his leading role in the appeal. He had vital contacts with the rich businessmen of the City and had introduced most of them to Boss, some at their London clubs, some at Royal Ascot or other racecourses, and some at casinos. There is no question that RJOM was a gambler, if necessarily in a small way, and he fitted in very comfortably to this world of high rollers whilst searching for benefactors and pupils. In India he had been well known for his sporting wagers, while one of his first acquisitions on his return to England in 1935 was a racehorse in training with Michael Beary at Weatherby in Yorkshire. Carlove does not seem to have earned its keep but it may well have determined Jack to become an owner once again when times were financially better. Apparently this was in 1948, for he then bought  
130 an Irish thoroughbred steeplechaser, Patador, to be trained at the school for point-to-pointing and as a hunter for advanced pupils. Though ridden on several occasions by OM Major Dick Hern, later to be one of the Queen's trainers, he never achieved a first place and was sold in 1952, on the eve of the school's becoming a non-profit making charitable organisation.

140 It was ten years before Boss officially returned to the turf with the purchase of an experienced chaser, Milk Shake, in 1961. He had taken the advice of Toby Balding, the trainer brother of Ian, Millfield's head boy in 1959 and already established as a successful jockey who, like Dick Hern, was to achieve fame as a trainer for the Queen. The horse gave

great pleasure but little financial return, running in numerous point-to-point races before having to be put down after breaking a leg in 1967.

150 Boss had found a fellow punter in Joe Levy, and the pair swapped tips from time to time, Joe out-gunning Jack slightly by having two horses in training on the Flat. Irving Allen, the film producer, who became a governor in 1967 and a great benefactor subsequently, also had horses on the Flat, and in 1969 promised the appeal half his winnings if Royal Smoke won the Derby. It didn't, but the offer was publicised in the press by Boss, and inevitably there was muted criticism at the suggestion that the future fabric of the school rested partly on the back of a horse. Equally there were many who applauded the initiative, even if misplaced in this case, of the somewhat eccentric headmaster willing to challenge convention to build his dream school. Most of the newspapers in the British Isles described him as 'a headmaster who also trains horses', part of the publicity for Trevor Philpott's 'Pay Schools', which was shown on BBC1 on 17th Oct 1968. Whatever the readers may have thought of that, only the people of Southampton seem to have been informed correctly of the words actually used by Mr Philpott for the Southern Evening Echo: "Millfield has a headmaster who 'trains horses for courses' at around £1,000 a year and has succeeded at least once in getting a boy from an educationally sub-normal school to Oxford".

160 In searching for 'runners' to recruit, Boss moved among the moneyed in the casino clubs which had blossomed since the enactment of the Betting and Gaming Bill in 1959. At the Casanova Club in 1966 he met Victor Chandler, the rising star turf accountant, who was anxious to see if Millfield might be a better school for his son than the one he was at already. This turned out successfully for everybody concerned, as did a similar encounter between Boss and Victor Lownes III, managing director of the London Playboy Club, who was unhappy about his son Victor Lownes IV's education. Millfield benefited from the younger Victor's rugby and basketball skills, as well as monies raised at parties held at the Club in support of the Project appeal. OM Jimmy Goldsmith, one-time junior and a founder member of Edgarley Hall, frequented these and other establishments, especially the  
170 Clermont, which was owned and run by his old Oxford contemporary and friend, John Aspinall. Jimmy obviously had great admiration and affection for Boss, which he showed by entering his son Manes at Edgarley in 1970 and moving him on to Millfield in 1972. John followed suit by sending his son Damian to the senior school in 1973, though by that time RJOM had set out on the first of his Greek ventures.

180 All in all, time spent on the race-course and in London's clubland does not seem to have affected the good name of Millfield's headmaster nor that of the school, but it did give rise to rumour and speculation as to the size of wagers involved and also, unfortunately, where the money came from. As far as Boss was concerned, a small outlay could bring big returns, and membership of Crockfords, the Olympic, and the Ambassador, which had to be paid for, was a vital investment for the future of the school. However he seemed not to have convinced all the businessmen on the governing body that this was a proper way to confront the problem of the school's finances.

After Boss invited these businessmen - technically the sitting governors did, but they always accepted RJOM's advice - to join the governing body, they became fully aware of the difficulties of the situation. Where money and the welfare of his Millfield was concerned,

190 Meyer was a loose cannon. He did not spend recklessly on himself, witness his unprepossessing choice of clothes, his unglamorous, workmanlike car and his very basic diet. Outwardly his only indulgences were his ducks and his exotic pheasants, which he actually used as part of his system of relaxing parents and potential pupils at interview. Deserving adult visitors to the study might be offered an indifferent sherry poured from the bottle, whilst pupils in the same category might well have an apple tossed to them. However he did lavish entertainment on those who flew the flag of Millfield high, especially in London, where they caught the columnists' eyes through their immaculate behaviour, and their success on the tennis courts, the rugger pitches, the athletics tracks, the golf courses and everywhere else that the school was represented. All these and the bills for the Oxford and Cambridge parties, along with those for entertaining teams such as MCC and Corinthian Casuals, were just about acceptable, but the continuing offers of what were  
200 considered by some to be over-generous concessions towards fees, and the suspicion that places were being promised in consideration of lump sums to be paid at some unspecified date in the future, stuck in the craws of those determined to run the school as a successful business.

Millfield was then rather like the swan on the lake, serene above, but paddling madly below. It was the ruffling of this apparent serenity by an outside source, William Hickey, gossip columnist of the Daily Express, which, to return to Boss's metaphor, led to the captain abandoning ship but still hanging on to the painter.

210 On 9th June 1969, a speculative report suggested that the then headmaster of Eton, Anthony Chenevix-Trench, would be approached to see if he would be willing to switch to Millfield when RJOM retired, as he had said he would, at the age of 65, in a year's time. Colin Atkinson was also mentioned as being in the running. Although the article made quite clear Boss's intention to become life warden when he did retire, the headline "Millfield seeks new 'boss'" obviously gave rise to concern among both current parents and those who were negotiating for the privilege, so that the study phone hardly stopped ringing and letters of protest poured in. Hard graft by both RJOM and Amothe Sankey was needed to reassure those concerned that Millfield was not about to fall apart, and the furore had hardly calmed down when the Express, who seemed to have had an informant amongst the  
220 school staff, published on 19th September the announcement by Boss the previous day, in private to the tutors, that Colin would be in charge of the day-to-day running of the school for the next year. The Post Office and, particularly, its telephone service, benefited once again, and, more importantly, the unfortunate publicity pushed the executive committee into taking decisions about the future of the school.

230 It has to be said that the governors had been very dilatory in coming to terms with the headmaster's advancing years and decisions that they would have to make about the future leadership of the school. Periodically, both collectively and individually, they had pressed Boss to take things more easily, without effect, though he did note that he would raise the subject of the succession at the executive committee meeting on 14th March 1969. However business, finance and the continued growth of the school, both pupils and property, took up the allotted time and he did not mention his future role. It was not considered at the half-term, full governors' meeting on 26th May, but Hickey did his stuff and 'Headmaster's succession' appeared as Item 7, amongst eleven others on the agenda

for the 46th meeting of the executive and planning committee to be held at the Copper Beech hotel, Glastonbury, on 7th July 1969. Boss made notes in preparation for presenting his ideas regarding the roles of Headmaster and Warden, but the governors present decided that further consideration was needed and a special meeting should be called. They did however endorse RJOM's appointment of Colin Atkinson as deputy headmaster, and increased his salary, but drew attention to the point that this did not commit them in any way.

A lack of urgency persisted, for, though several committee members were convinced they were to meet on 3rd September, the chairman, Tony Clark, only managed, with the help of the Clerk, Dick Redman, to call them together again on 8th October at Tommy Tompkins's office in London, and this in the aftermath of the furore created by the Press on 19th September. This latter had prompted CRMA to write to the headmaster, and to send a copy, with the latter's approval, to the chairman, asking if the governors would let him know if he could expect to be appointed headmaster-elect when a definite date for RJOM's appointment as warden was settled. He thought it only fair to point out that he had been approached by other organisations, but that he would be happy to continue as deputy while RJOM was Headmaster, but not under someone else.

The October meeting really settled nothing, but it was agreed to recommend to the full governors' meeting called for 14th November that RJOM should be appointed Warden for 1st September 1971, when a new headmaster would take office. The latter, it was hoped, would be chosen and announced by June 1970. Ronnie Maudsley agreed to prepare notes on how he saw the procedure for the future. His document was completed and passed to Tony Clark on 4th November, and it was promptly circulated to the members of the executive committee. The main theme was that, taking into account all the complexities of the situation, the governors should follow one of three routes to the appointment of a new headmaster:-

- (i) selection by personal choice of someone they knew,
- (ii) advertisement,
- (iii) appointment of CRMA.

Clarifying his own views on these, Professor Maudsley was not optimistic about the first alternative, as those considered strong candidates had already been approached privately and had shown themselves to be uninterested.

Although the second might draw in a really strong 'unknown', he (a 'she' was definitely not a prospect) would almost certainly demand a free hand, without a warden looking over his shoulder. In addition an open advertisement would destroy the third alternative by making CRMA and indeed everybody else concerned, staff, pupils, and parents, feel that he had been passed over.

The third was obviously the simplest. "The relationship with R.J.O.M is established and successful". The staff expected it, as did the public who believed what was published in the newspapers. Some governors questioned CRMA's intellectual capacity and therefore his

ability to take Millfield to new heights, but putting off a decision to appoint or not would gain nothing.

Whichever alternative was chosen, action must be immediate.

290 Boss wrote to Tony Clark on 9th November, sending copies of his letter to each member of the Executive Committee and to three governors not on it, urging that nothing should be done in a hurry as he was still in the process of reassuring current and future parents that William Hickey was not right. The three governors informed privately were Keith Showering, local businessman and parent, Dean Ross Wallace, Boss's solidest ally, and Sir Frederick Crawford, Rhodesian ex-British Governor of Uganda. None of them attended the 14th November meeting, and only the latter, who was persona non grata with the British Government for supporting Ian Smith's UDI, and therefore unable to visit the UK, wrote back commenting on the length and intensity of the 'fade-out' period, and the need for the successor to feel that he really was in charge after an agreed date.

300 Of the twenty-four governors in office on 14th November 1969, exactly half attended the meeting. As the one item on the agenda was a discussion of the recommendations of the executive committee regarding the appointment of a new headmaster and of a warden, the chairman of that committee, Tony Clark, was asked by the chairman of the governors, Evan Stokes, to take the chair on that occasion, a prelude to his occupancy of the position from 1971 to 1985. The recommendations were, to all intents and purposes, Ron Maudsley's third alternative, that Boss should retire as headmaster in September 1971, be appointed warden, and be replaced by CRMA who should be told that he was now headmaster-elect. Those present did not decide when to make the appointments public, nor did they define the relative responsibilities of the headmaster and warden after September 1971.

310 The executive committee next met on 13th March 1970, and it was agreed that RJOM should make the announcement of the appointments on Parents' Day, 25th May. This was duly carried out, not to anyone's great surprise as rumour was rife, but it did follow a fairly fiery governors' meeting in the morning. The Dean, who was almost 80, expressed doubts about the future of the school under dual command. Unfortunately he had not attended the meeting on 14th November, though the Clerk to the Governors affirmed that he had been invited, so that the others were not aware of his wish to see RJOM continue for a further five years while CRMA shouldered the day-to-day burden, as well as absorbing the magic formula that made Millfield unique. He brushed aside comments favourable to the scheme from Tommy Tompkins and Ronnie Townson, saying that divided loyalties within the school would be catastrophic. Boss assured the Dean that when the governors got  
320 down to terms of reference he would be closely consulted. Subsequently he wrote in the margin of the minutes: "I am determined to satisfy his mind".

It is notable also that at that meeting Boss said yet again: "The new Headmaster, Mr Atkinson, is not a Governor of the school, and therefore cannot consider it his right to attend Governors' meetings. I am perfectly happy for him to attend sub-committees of the Governing Body, such as Planning, but I want to make it perfectly clear that he is not a Governor".

## Chapter 32

### RJOM leaves the headmastership early. The rise of McEwen Mason. 1970-1.

10 At the opening of the 1971 spring term, CRMA announced to the assembled tutors that RJOM had retired as headmaster with effect from the 1st January and had accepted the governing body's invitation to become warden. Two letters had been posted to parents, both dated somewhat enigmatically, December 1970, and giving distinctly lame excuses for Boss's decision to retire, considering that there had not been a hint of any such action at the end of the previous term.

The chairman of the governors, Evan Stokes, wrote:-

#### THE HEADMASTER

In September 1971 Mr. R.J.O. Meyer was due to retire and become Warden, whilst Mr. C.R.M. Atkinson was to succeed him as Headmaster. Owing to strain and the possibility of medical treatment, Mr Meyer has decided to retire this term; which will mean that Mr. Atkinson will become Headmaster with effect from 1st January, 1971.

20 Whilst wishing to express their concern and sympathy for Mr. Meyer, the Governors are pleased that he will, as Warden, be available for the new Headmaster to consult on school matters.

It is hoped to arrange a suitable occasion on which Governors and friends of the School can acknowledge the founder Headmaster's achievement.

Evan F Stokes

December 1970

Chairman Governing Body

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RJO Meyer wrote:-

#### THE HEADMASTERSHIP

40 On Parents' Day 1970 I promised to confirm that the Governing Body had rightly decided that the time had come to appoint a successor to me as Headmaster as from September 1971 - the obvious choice being my very able deputy, Mr. C.R.M. Atkinson - while I took up an elevated position on the sidelines as Warden - or observer, counsellor and ombudsman.

As it happens, I have to go into hospital early in the New Year for the usual sort of medical check-up, and as it would be too much to expect Mr. Atkinson to put in another spell as Acting Headmaster I have persuaded the Governors to agree that he should take on from me as from next term.

I would like to put on record my gratitude to all you parents for your many incredible kindnesses and for your never-failing co-operation, and to ask you to extend to my



50 successor the same essential support that has made my thirty-five years in office such a pleasure. He has behind him what I believe is the finest all-round teaching staff that has ever been got together to form the best possible teaching machine.

As Life Warden I hope to continue to serve you in any way considered appropriate, and to fulfil my promise to you all to do my best to ensure that the future Millfield is an even better place for your children than it is at present.

December, 1970

R.J.O. Meyer

60 To the pupils and the vast majority of the teaching staff it was a shock of the first order, and gave rise to intense speculation as to why, clearly physically unaltered and visible in his Millfield study, Boss had taken the decision seven months ahead of what was to be a joyous celebration of a job well done. 'The possibility of medical treatment' was not taken seriously, though it was recognized by many staff that Boss had found some difficulty in taking over the schedule of headmasterly duties, which had been considerably modified by CRMA in his 'acting' year. As the news spread, it became obvious that there were old Millfieldians who did not accept the official explanation either, and that this would cause difficulties and unhappiness amongst the Millfield 'family'.

70 What was clear was that the decision to retire was precipitate, and followed a meeting in mid-December between RJOM and his old friend, Tony Clark, chairman of the executive committee, standing in once more for the chairman of the governors. The criticism of the way in which Boss had handled the financial affairs of the school during the previous decade had created an unfortunate division in the governing body. There were those who leaned back and watched in admiration the way in which the school had grown in stature and strength under his quixotic leadership, and it cannot be over-emphasised that he was a governor himself, whilst others saw financial disaster looming if he was not eased out of office. In the end it was the latter group which, aware that the good name of the school was at stake, demanded Boss's resignation as headmaster. However it was the action of others which caused the ultimatum.

80 These 'others' were a few parents of pupils and, in one case ex-pupils, who had become steadily more concerned about his growing notoriety, and, sadly, his becoming an object of curiosity among the rich who played the tables at the London casinos. These parents, some gamblers themselves, were alarmed by the amount of time he spent in the flesh-pots, particularly during his sabbatical, and by their own observations, as well as the rumours of his apparently staking high sums on the turn of a card. Whereas his dabbling with the horses and his enthusiasm for the failed prize draw scheme were considered rather colourful eccentricities in a public school headmaster, this was no longer a laughing matter. Inevitably it was of the deepest concern to the fee-payers, and there were warnings to the governors that a scandal of the highest magnitude was liable to break at any moment, and  
90 that a mass withdrawal of pupils would follow.

It seemed vital to the well-being of the school that life must go on as if nothing dramatic had happened. CRMA stepped into the headmaster's shoes with as little fuss as possible, though his appointment had still not been confirmed by the governors, whilst

RJOM prepared to move out of his study in Millfield and take up the undefined role of life warden. This was an ad hoc arrangement, for no plans had been made for what should happen in the summer of 1971, nor had the governors discussed the roles and duties of the headmaster and the warden (or life warden as Boss considered that he had been promised). Inevitably there was huge scope for disagreement, and equally inevitably it came to pass, but for the time being staff and pupils worked and played with equanimity. At first the relationship between headmaster and warden might be described as distant, but it was soon to be testy, and finally choleric.

The first signs of serious dispute came when it became obvious to everyone that CRMA was acting like a new president of the USA and dispensing with the services of the secretariat which had served the school and Boss for so many years, and to all intents and purposes had been his eyes and ears. Boss had made it clear to the governors over the preceding years that, on his demise or retirement, his secretary, Amothe Sankey, and her assistants must continue in office, for the sake of continuity until their retirement, by which time they would have trained competent successors. Now they were to go, and, although this was to Boss's personal advantage because Amothe could remain as his secretary, he was furious that his advice had been ignored and that his faithful servants were being humbled. In fact Mrs Joy Hoffman, No 2 in what the teaching staff termed 'The Matriarchy', was persuaded by her mentor to stay on, against her wishes, in order to explain the intricacies of the system to the successors. She could also supply invaluable information to the warden regarding changes in the school's hierarchy and especially reactions to them amongst staff and pupils.

Inevitably the teaching staff were confused by the extraordinary turn of events, and some began to wonder about their own tenure of office. They need not have done so at that stage, for the new headmaster and governors fully recognized the need to steady the ship, particularly with regard to maintaining calm in the classrooms, the boarding houses and the common rooms. Two important appointments were made. The assistant director of studies, McEwan Mason, was styled senior master, a term used loosely by Boss to describe Jim Bunbury in his later years, and Brian Gaskell, head of the maths department, was given the extra position of director of studies, with Frank Slow, the incumbent, bowing gracefully to the inevitable and accepting the title of advisor.

It very soon became clear that 'Mac' Mason had taken over many of the tasks that Amothe had gathered to herself in the years during which she had shared the study with the man whom she was the first to call 'Boss'. Apart from the basic secretarial duties of typing and filing the school's and RJOM's personal correspondence, keeping the appointments diary (a full-time job in itself!), answering the phone and fending off uncomfortable queries and requests, and generally protecting her employer from unnecessary and time wasting confabulation, she created each pupil's personal file, the isp list, the houses list, the groups list, the prefects list, the travel list at a time when most used the train, and, almost certainly the most difficult of all, had to ensure that the tutors completed half-term and end-of-term reports without mis-spellings, bad grammar, wrong punctuation, wrong group, wrong house, wrong exam target and date, with signature, and without taking them home and losing the lot. With all this and much more, she was never less than immaculate in dress

and appearance, and, recognized by all as the fount of Millfield knowledge, she was held in considerable awe by staff from all quarters and by pupils.

150 Not having to do the basic duties, Mac had been allocated a secretary of his own, and was able to concentrate on getting the lists completed on time and on sorting out problems with reports and speeding up their sorting and despatch to parents. As a geography tutor himself and a member of the common room, he was able to exert direct pressure on miscreant tutors, which Amothe had been unable to do, having to use 'Daddy' Slow and other heads of department, not all of whom were blameless themselves, to stick pins in careless colleagues. There is no doubt that Mac was efficient, but his direct approach to staff problems did not make him beloved of all men, some of whom added the sobriquet from 'The Beggar's Opera' of 'The Knife'. In Boss's final governors' report, 1969-70, actually completed in the spring of 1971, he wrote:-

160 "I did have numerous complaints from trusted members of my staff about the ruthless conduct of a man (J. McEwen Mason) I still believe it was right to appoint to strengthen the old faithfuls of my Directorate of Studies. At the end of the year I apologised for and accepted responsibility for this (inevitable) ruthlessness, which I felt was, in fact, needed as a very temporary expedient (I was shocked to find that he was subsequently appointed Second (or Senior) Master to my successor, and I can only hope that responsibility will mellow him: I am not confident)".

170 This condemnation of Mac, and his methods of putting the screw on the tutors primarily, must be seen in context. Boss had been in sole control of staff from the very beginning of the school and, as long as numbers remained small, he had no great problems in sorting out the shirkers. There were difficulties in war-time as young staff were, using the well-known phrase of the period, 'in short supply', and he had to employ who he could get. However by 1950, as the post-war ex-service trainees and graduates came on to the market, he had been able to build up a reliable, extremely loyal group, a number of whom inevitably took over the running of departments. Like the housemasters and housemothers, they were allowed to get on with the job without interference, as long as there were no complaints from parents, and a sufficient percentage of pupils were given good reports and passed exams. This in fact led to a happy atmosphere all round, though there were of course exceptions, but as the rapid expansion took place in the late 50s and early 60s, and outlying buildings were pressed into service as classrooms, advantage was being taken by both staff and pupils of opportunities to skive. Boss relied on prefects to catch pupil miscreants, but most of them were too concerned about their own work commitments to be of much use, and it was not until the A and B Blocks were opened in 1966 and 1967 respectively that absentees could be checked easily. This coincided with Mac's joining the hierarchy, the group whose names appeared at the head of the staff list, first as assistant director of timetabling, later of studies, and with CRMA becoming personal assistant to the headmaster.

180 Colin was still in thrall to Somerset cricket and could not be expected to do more than his PE administration over the two winter terms, so that the task of making the school run on time fell to Mac. He was reputed, probably apocryphally, to have claimed that, given a pair of gym-shoes, he could make both pupils and tutors sit up and beg. What he wanted,

190 without question, was efficiency, and this required an alteration in attitude to problems, a better use of time and space, and the development of new systems of teaching, some of which Millfield had pioneered. During his years in the school, Mac had recognized a tradition of reluctance to accept change, even though this was not for change's sake. Given his reputation as a highly effective administrator, latterly as headmaster in New Zealand, and, unlike the little assembly of retired headmasters at Millfield, being willing to accept further responsibility, it is not surprising that Boss approved his appointment and then raised no objections, in public at least, to the developments introduced by Mac. Only after two years, and in the aftermath of his own demeaning resignation, to some his 'martyrdom', did Boss apologise for Mac's 'ruthlessness' and claim to be shocked that Colin, by that time Boss's chief bête noir, and of course another of his appointees to high office, had promoted Mac.

200 The biggest change that had been effected by the directorate of studies under Mac's guidance was in the daily routine, in 1968. The most dramatic alterations were the increase to four morning periods instead of three, the reduction of the length of each from 55 minutes to 45, and the abolition of teaching periods after games and on Wednesday afternoons. There is no doubt that Boss objected to the shorter periods, but understood the reason for them :- the greater number meant that junior and middle school pupils could have a broader spectrum of subjects from which to choose, whilst seniors could add other studies to their three A-Levels. He might have been even less sanguine about the further reductions, to 40 minutes in September 1991, and to 35 in September 2000.

210 By an unkind trick of fate, the pupil entry in September 1968 was heavily weighted on the junior side, and the increased number of periods meant that more new tutors had to be employed, giving the critical governors further cause for concern. The 1969 entry raised pupil numbers by one hundred, bringing the total to 50 short of one thousand, but the extra staff were already in position to cope with the further groups as Boss began what proved to be his last term as headmaster of Millfield.

220 By this time he had finally agreed to have an assistant housemaster, to ease his work-load and to create an opening for his prize staff capture, David Hemery, Britain's Olympic gold medal hurdler. In January 1971, David became housemaster of Millfield house, Boss joining Joyce and her mother, the widowed Mrs Daisy Symons, in the bungalow which had just been built for them. This is now the central part of Oaklands, the school's medical centre. Boss did not however move out of the study with its wooden annexe on the south front of the main house. All his personal papers were stored there, with all the files on the current and future pupils. Those of past pupils were in steel cabinets in the cellar.

230 It became clear that he was not going to move until suitable alternative accommodation was provided for him as warden, along with his filing cabinets. This new office had to be within the school grounds in order to bolster the belief that he had resigned the headmastership of his own volition, and that he was still there for all to see and talk to, the latter soon to be matter of bitter contention. The ideal building, very much in the centre of things, was the chalet, originally the field-locked home of a tubercular child, and, in January 1971 an off-shoot of the art department, allied to the office and wet-weather retreat of the tennis coaches. Until these occupants could be found new abodes, Boss

would have to stay put, along with his files. Fortunately some new teaching huts were planned, as well as a new tennis pavilion, to be placed beside the CCF huts.

240 Meanwhile the new hierarchy and the secretariat remained crammed into a Bolt building, and without access to the files. Apart from an obvious degree of physical discomfort, everyone was able to carry out his or her job except for a major area, forward planning. RJOM, when headmaster, was responsible for enrolling new pupils and maintaining their records, and he had seen himself, as warden, continuing to interview prospective pupils and their parents until such time as a new headmaster had been trained in the subtleties of that art. CRMA did not see things quite like that, as he had been given the all-clear by the governors to go ahead and run the school, including the preparations for the next scholastic year. He was not daunted by the task, for he had the experience of acting as headmaster in 1969 and 1970, and had understudied his predecessor in all sorts of ways for several years. The situation was more than fraught, it was practically explosive with pent-up fury on both sides, largely created by the inability of the governing body to meet, discuss and decide what the duties of the warden were to be, and to appoint a headmaster willing to accept a position which did not give him full control of the whole organisation.

250

## Chapter 33

### CRMA struggles to establish himself, 1971.

After pausing for a short while to allow the spring term to get under way without too much upset, the new headmaster wrote a note addressed to the warden, asking for access to the pupils' files, those of the staff and, especially, those of the new intake for September 1971. The response was as curt as the request, and, sadly, the lines of battle were drawn.

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Both men were in intolerably difficult positions. CRMA had attained his desired position, the headmastership of Millfield, but not in a way that he could possibly have wished. He was aware of the reasons for RJOM's resignation, and was equally conscious of where the sympathy would lie among the majority of staff, the pupils, the old Millfieldians, and some governors. The latter were the ones who wanted Boss to remain in office for a further five years and then retire gracefully to become warden in name only, as well as those who questioned Colin's intellectual capacity.

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It is virtually certain that CRMA, who already had good offers elsewhere, would not have remained as underdog for five years, but he was happy to be headmaster-elect until September 1971, provided that he took part in the gubernatorial discussions regarding the position and duties of the warden, whether for life or not. Sentimentally, he knew that his position was largely indebted to Boss, who had made it possible for him to play cricket for Somerset, and who had recognised his capacity, encouraged by the shrewd Shirley, to be in the right place at the right time and to take on many of the duties which had accrued to the headmastership over 30 years. Obviously an approach had to be made to his predecessor and Colin, who was already dabbling in business, chose, perhaps

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unwisely, perhaps wisely, to put the new relationship on such a footing. He dropped the 'Jack and Colin' and this introduced an unfortunate rigidity into their already difficult relationship.

There had already been one almost ludicrous exchange between them before this. Boss, obviously trying to keep his feet on the ground and, bearing in mind that he was still a governor and member of the executive and finance committee, apart from the fact that he was headmaster until 31st December and wished to show that his resignation was of his own volition, had written to the bursar, Dick Redman, on Boxing Day under the heading, 'Budgets for school year starting Sept 1st 1970'.

40

"I may well have missed a trick somewhere\*, but why have we chosen this year of all years to go mad on overhead projectors, visual aid stuff, tape recorders and the like?

And who expected it all to be sanctioned? Certainly not I. Indeed, I do not seem to have been consulted at all, and I received no copy of your notice 16.7.70 addressed to "Heads of Departments, CRMA and DoS."

50 I would suggest that nothing is spent under this head until you have put it to the Budget Sub-Committee.

\*If I have, please tell me

26.12.70

RJOM

Note to the Bursar R.M.Smith Esq., Chairman, Budget Sub-Committee.  
Copies to J.A.Clark Esq., Chairman, Executive & Finance Committee.

60 CRMA) I see no sign that any of you have examined, FLWS) let alone passed these proposals, so I take it JMCEM) that I am not treading on your corns. RJOM"

The reply was written three days later, not by Dick Redman but by Colin. The festive season did not last long that year.

"R.J.O.M.

Budgets - 1970-71

Your note to the Bursar, 26.12.70

70 May I remind you that at the meeting of Heads of Departments, 14.9.70, this matter was dealt with under item 5 on the agenda and has been written up (under item 5) in the minutes of that meeting. You both read and amended the draft copy of these minutes.

80 You will recall that in previous years (and this year was no exception) I, along with the Bursar and D.o.S (J.McE.M.) have gone through these budgets and closely questioned H.o.D's. Much pruning and cutting back has taken place before the Budget Sub Committee ever sees them. Furthermore, the Bursar and I have always applied the brake for the first term (apart from normal running costs) until the Committee, having seen and adopted the financial report, could approve or order (e.g.) 10% cuts.

29th December, 1970

C.R.M.A."

Boss responded on the day after the New Year celebrations.

"Ex-Headmaster to Headmaster

(For the record only - no answer required)

2nd January 1971

BUDGETS - 1970-1971

90 Thank you for your note of December 29th with comments upon my comments upon the Budgets, which I sent to the Bursar on 26.12.70.

You rightly remind me that I left the issue of the Budgets to you, the Director of Studies and the Heads of Departments. Apologies, therefore, for the panic.

All the same, I do want to put on record for the benefit of the Budget Sub-Committee that I do not believe it will be right, even if we have the money, to spend so much on all that ironmongery.

100

R.J.O.M.

Copies to R.M. Smith Esq., J.A.Clark Esq., The Bursar, F.L.W.S., J.McE.M.”

It is worth noting that Boss describes himself as ex-headmaster, and not as life warden, nor even as warden, although both men knew that it was important for him to have the title. If he had refused to accept it, the sniffer dogs of the Press would have been off the leash to discover why, after all the claims and counter claims of the previous 18 months, he had not become warden.

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These notes give the lie to the rumours abounding at the time that Boss's spendthrift attitude had pushed Millfield's finances so far into the red that the school was virtually bankrupt and about to expire if he did not give up the headmastership. There is no doubt that there were serious problems, but the bank was not about to foreclose and the governors were not handing in their letters of resignation. In fact only one did so and that was the devoted Alexander Ross Wallace who had already made clear that he would be leaving at 80, and this was the age he had just reached.

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The next full meeting of the governing body was to be on the eve of Parents' Day, 26th May, the usual Whit Monday break which counted as half term, and the main event, other than the speeches, would be the official opening of the fencing salle and judo dojo in a new building gifted to the school by the two American parents, Irving Allen and Richard Stewart. The laying of the foundation stone had been carried out exactly a year earlier by Mrs Allen and Mrs Stewart, who were each presented with an engraved ceremonial trowel as souvenirs. A decision would have to be taken as to who would take centre stage, bearing in mind that Boss, in his inimitable, over-anxious, seemingly unprepared way, had orchestrated the 1970 ritual. CRMA would have to give the headmaster's report on the year, although he had been in charge for a little more than half of it, whilst RJOM was still in a sort of limbo in his study.

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It was the custom to provide the governors with a detailed report on the school's progress, or otherwise, in the year which had ended in the previous summer, so that on this occasion, May 1971, it would be the report for 1969-70. This was Boss's last complete year as headmaster, and he took the opportunity to deplore what had been allowed to happen to the secretariat, especially the loss to the school of the services of Amothe Sankey. He also made clear that, unlike some governors, he did not believe that Millfield was a 'nine days wonder', but he was concerned that if 'the system' was changed radically the school might not survive.

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Colin's report was naturally meagre by comparison. Dated 10th March 1971, it did however indicate that changes had already begun and that more were likely to follow. An advisory committee on university entrance had been set up to assist Frank



Harris, the tutor in charge since 1963, and heads of departments, and it had already made 'some interesting recommendations'. CRMA was holding monthly meetings with Ben Rushton, the headmaster of Edgarley, and the bursar, and he proposed that in future Ben should do all the interviewing of Edgarley parents and prospective pupils. Most significantly, however, with the governors' wishes in mind, he indicated that he expected to replace 16 leaving or retiring tutors with but 8 to 10 new ones, and hoped that he would be permitted to hold pupil numbers at Millfield at 1000, plus or minus 20, for a year or two.

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Under the heading 'Administrative Arrangements' he wrote - "The first attempt to bring over pupils' files from the Annex failed; after repeated efforts the files of new applicants were released, and some time later the files of existing members of staff; the files of present pupils remain with the Warden. The thought of more unpleasantness, vituperation and inaccurate memos to the Chairman of the Executive persuaded me to leave them where they are in spite of the fact that my senior staff are angry about the situation".

160

Happily there was a comparatively simple solution available, and that was to bring forward the construction of the new tennis pavilion, a largely prefabricated wooden building which would provide the needs of the coaches and, at the same time release the chalet as an office for the warden. This project was completed by the beginning of May, the transfers were made, and Boss was ready to receive visitors in his new abode a week later.

170

Whit Monday, Millfield's Parents Day, dawned bright and shining as usual, like Hitler's birthday, but every school house woke to find that it had had a visitation in the night. People with broad paint brushes and pots of white paint had daubed a mysterious large hieroglyph on each front wall and, where suitable, on the drive. It consisted of two V shapes, one superimposed on the other, giving the impression of a diving bird. At each front door was a pile of A4 paper, each sheet printed with a typed diatribe condemning those who had set out to destroy Boss and all his works.

180

The perpetrators were never exposed, but nor was their protest, because the maintenance department was galvanised into action in the early morning and, by the time the visiting parents began to arrive in their cars with picnic lunches, the offending paintings had been scrubbed off and the vast majority of the paper sedition had been collected and destroyed. Only on some of the more remote boarding houses did the evidence remain visible for any length of time.

The official opening of the Allen-Stewart building went ahead as planned, with Mrs Meyer representing the warden who was unwell and unable to attend, and the headmaster reported the ongoing success of the school to the assembled company in the marquee. No word of disharmony or rancour was spoken, and most of those present must have been unaware of the unhappy background to what seemed to be a smooth change at the head of affairs.

## Chapter 34

### A schism in the Millfield Society. CRMA develops his ideas. McEwen Mason retires. 1971-3.

10 Inevitably there were members of staff who were nervous about the future, now that the lynch-pin of the school over its whole history had gone, whilst a considerable percentage of pupils and parents took a gloomy view, particularly because they had no certain knowledge, only rumour, as to why the change in leadership had taken place so suddenly. Worst affected, however, were many old Millfieldians, mainly those who had been members of the school before 1960, when numbers were comparatively small and Boss demonstrated an encyclopaedic knowledge of everyone, their ability to hit a ball, their chance of passing any exam, and who their grandmothers were. Although Bud Atkinson was officially hon sec and recorder of the Millfield Society, it was to all intents and purposes run for the first ten years of its existence, 1949-59, by Boss. He financed all the gatherings, cocktail parties in London, entertainment for OM teams playing against the school, and the annual Kingweston dance, from his own pocket up to 1953, and then from the school's exchequer, bursar Mackie permitting. It was impossible for these OMs to believe that the multi-gifted founder, the paragon of generosity (virtue did not come into the equation), and the husband of the beloved Joyce, could have been treated so shabbily by governors who unquestionably had been hand-picked by Boss himself for what they could do for the school. Added to this was the insufferable behaviour of the jumped-up teacher, hand-reared and promoted by Boss himself, who had been awarded the mantle of headmastership by those same unworthy governors.

20 It was to be expected that the latter felt that it was in the best interests of the school and its future to say nothing to anyone about the debacle, and therefore the antagonistic OMs had to remain in ignorance of the causes. They rallied around Boss in the period before he left England for Greece in 1973, and severed their connection with Millfield as long as Colin Atkinson was in the chair. The appointment of Christopher Martin as headmaster in 1990 brought Boss back into the fold, but few of the disaffected OMs, as the appeal for funds to build the Meyer theatre in the early nineties showed. The Millfield Society did not really suffer very much as most of the active membership at any period was drawn from those who had left the school recently.

30 Apart from the first committee, which was elected in 1959, and contained a majority of older OMs, the organising body was young and inexperienced, and had to rely on a few members of the teaching staff who had been admitted to membership, a privilege not afforded to any who might have considered applying after the introduction of a new constitution in 1974. Wyndham Bailey, OM and ex-tutor, after resigning as president, began his long, long stint as honorary treasurer in 1967 on the departure of Herbert Smith, deputy assistant headmaster and housemaster of Orchards. Herbert had taken control of the accounts in 1964, at the same time as John Bromfield, housemaster of Chindit, was elected honorary secretary, a post he was to hold until a severe stroke enforced his retirement in 1989.

50 The chairmen of the Society committee from 1970 until 1997 were all  
members who had benefited from an education under Boss:- Robert Wilkins (1957-  
62), Hugh Laing (1945-50), Malcolm Tucker (1961-65), Wyndham Bailey (1939-45),  
and Nick Vince (1969-74). Their first concern was the well-being of the school,  
however they felt about the unpleasantness, and they were determined to prevent  
the schism in the roots of the Society from widening. Those OMs who could not  
forgive were not of course trying to undermine the Society specifically, but they were  
not prepared to support it, as it was an adjunct to the school. Time has shown itself  
to be a healer, and the regular attendance at school and OM functions of Joyce  
Meyer encouraged many doubters to come in from the cold, and warm to the fact  
60 that Boss's successors have to a large extent fulfilled his dream of an unique  
organisation 'which would study and supply the all-round needs of the individual boy  
and girl'.

As far as the tutors were concerned they soon found that their jobs were not  
in doubt, and, indeed, a number gained promotion as the new headmaster delegated  
authority in a way that the founder never had. Strangely, the two key promotions,  
the new senior master and the new director of studies, were posted without  
consulting 'Mac' Mason, who had expected, as deputy DoS, to become director, for  
which his considerable experience well fitted him. The position he had to take on  
had not really existed before at Millfield and therefore it was necessary to draw up a  
70 list of the areas of school life for which Mac, as senior master, would be responsible.

These included 'being an intermediary between headmaster and anyone  
else', his own words, which might have been prescribed to CRMA as deputy  
headmaster under Boss. However that title was not passed on, though it could well  
have been, as Mac set about reorganising and running the whole administrative side  
of the school and generally collecting most of the bucks which landed on his desk.  
He had an extraordinary capacity for hard work and a total devotion to duty. With a  
very few exceptions, the staff, including the Bursar, consulted him first when they  
had problems, sometimes with ones that were outside his remit. To most people the  
80 new headmaster was at that period a remote figure, while Mac, though not popular,  
was accessible.

Brian Gaskell insisted on carrying on with his tasks as head of the maths  
department as well as those of his new post as director of studies, when he had  
discovered what these tasks were. For the first 25 years of the school's existence  
Boss had been director of studies and only gave way under considerable pressure  
from the governing body in 1961 by appointing Frank Slow and Reg Williams, two of  
his most loyal lieutenants, as assistant directors for the senior and junior schools  
respectively. A year on and they became directors, but the real influence on the  
90 pupils' programmes still came from the headmaster's study.

Thus BG, as Brian was affectionately called by everybody, had to develop the  
new system for monitoring each pupil's scholastic progress, aided by advice from  
Frank Slow and, of course, Mac Mason, who had introduced the position of senior

tutor to oversee the work of the group tutors for each year group. The new appointments, six in all, did much to ease the strain on the DoS, and were especially helpful in checking and summarising end of term reports.

100 Having faith in these two excellent administrators, Colin Atkinson was able to concentrate on the financial problems of the school, which RJOM had failed to solve, and indeed, in the opinion of many of the governors, had created. The Allen fencing salle and Stewart judo dojo, which were paid for by the two generous parents, had of course originated in Boss's time, but CRMA received much of the kudos for the completion and opening of these buildings, as he did again two months later when the world famous clarinettist Jack Brymer opened the extension to the Music Lodge and gave the first recital there. This new building had been planned for more than a year, after it was agreed that a more academic approach to music teaching was needed than could be provided by the department under the amazing instrumentalist, Peter Fox. His first intention was to stay on, but a new appointee, 110 Geoffrey Keating, had made it clear that he would not take the job of 'Director of Musical Studies' unless the working conditions were rapidly improved. The governors agreed to his reasonable request, but Peter, who had done wonders in Nissen huts, resigned, having easily translated the writing on the wall of the concert hall which was rising from the lawn close to the main drive. He left the school for a new appointment in December 1970, just as Boss was preparing to resign the headmastership.

120 On July 10th 1972, the next new building, the Sacher Biology Block, was opened. Headmaster and governors were delighted with this amazing generosity, as they were with the new format for Parents' Day, on this, the last day of the summer term. The move away from the mid-term Bank Holiday was popular with the guest families who no longer had to struggle through appalling traffic hold-ups in order not to let down their anxious offspring. The new school management had kept to the old regime's Monday in May for Open Day 1971, but had persuaded parents to come early by providing theatrical, musical and sporting entertainment on the Saturday and Sunday, while the out houses held lunch parties for the pupils and their families on the final day. The arrangements for all this were organised by Mac Mason, who was determined to make it a success, which it was. In its train a decision was taken and confirmed by the governors to move the celebration to the end of the summer 130 term, where it has remained.

On Open Day 1976 CRMA made arguably the most popular announcement ever, certainly from a parent's point of view, in stating that tobacco smoking was now banned. Pipe smoking had been allowed to over-18s, after the cigarette ban in the late 50s, provided that it only took place in the senior common room at the main school, but the practice was much abused. The cheering that followed, with the parents on their feet in the marquee, must have encouraged Colin to feel that he had 'arrived'.

140 The first year in office had been very difficult for him, in spite of knowing that the governors had growing confidence in his ability to control the school's financial

uncertainties. He was under close scrutiny from every quarter, and this must have added to his natural shyness and to his reliance on those to whom he had awarded office keeping the ship on course. Many parents confirmed their belief in the school, and, indirectly, its headmaster, by adding generous donations to the building fund in the wake of the Sacher family, while there were no more staff resignations than in any average year. Nevertheless Colin harboured doubts about his security of tenure. By the end of the spring term of 1972 he seems to have decided that he had made a grave mistake by delegating so much power in the day-to-day running of the school to the senior master. CRMA's direct contact with the teaching staff was too often confined to committee meetings, when Mac Mason was invariably present as well. Therefore he confronted his 'rival' at the start of the Easter holiday, and Mac, dumbstruck, agreed to be ill and to take a term's sabbatical while Colin, to use a phrase sung by Fagin in 'Oliver', determined to 'think it out again'.

Mac's complete disappearance from the Millfield scene (he and his wife decamped to the Continent to avoid embarrassing the school) led inevitably to rumour amongst staff and pupils, but mainly staff, that he had had a major breakdown and was not to be contacted. It was well known that he had suffered long periods in military hospitals as a result of a near-fatal crash whilst piloting a bomber in North Africa during the Desert War. These rumours were never scotched and he accepted with good grace sympathetic inquiries as to his health when he reappeared amongst the crowds on Open Day, which had been organised in his absence by Roger Whyte, master in charge of Rugby, who had only just been invited to take over Administration.

Mac did return for the autumn term 1972 to teach a few periods of economic geography, a subject that he personally had introduced to the school, but he bade farewell to his colleagues from the 'soap-box' in the staff common room just before Christmas, explaining that he was going to warmer climes, Rhodesia, for his health's sake, and thanking them for the party they had given him at the Red Lion at West Pennard. He also thanked the school, in the persons of the governors and the headmaster, for their gifts, and wished them all well in the future. He wrote his own careful 'obituary' for the 1973 Windmill, but neither of his departures was ever recorded in the governors' reports.

Colin was relieved that this particular awkwardness was past, but it is known that he felt contrite about his easing out of one whose educational ideas and vision had changed the school immeasurably during the last few years of Boss's regime. He must have felt free to pursue his own concept of the school's future, ably supported by Brian Gaskell, who was soon to be promoted to deputy headmaster. There was however one nasty sting in the tail to come. In December 1974, LEW Smith, Len to everyone, the head of the English department, firstly from 1950 to 1956, and secondly from 1968, when he was persuaded to return by Boss, stood on the same soap-box and told the assembled company how wonderful it had been to work under such an enlightened headmaster, RJO Meyer.

## Chapter 35

### Punishments and the prefect system. Development of academic structures. Holiday courses. 1973-9.

10 However galling it may have been to the seniors, who were no longer able to smoke openly, and to the pupils of all ages eagerly looking forward to their 18th birthday, there was some compensation when news got around that CRMA had instructed housemasters that there was to be no more 'beating'. This basic form of punishment, the main weapon in RJOM's armoury for dealing with recalcitrant youth, boys only of course, had created trouble for him with some influential parents in his last few years in command, whilst several housemasters quietly abjured the practice. It was not actually replaced by a different form of chastisement, but the system of 'defaulters', both school and house, was broadened and more strictly enforced, the policy being to make sure that the tasks were genuinely useful.

20 School and house 'gating' also went up a notch, with the recipients having to report to the duty prefect at given times, wearing 'away-match' dress with a white shirt. Detentions for class-room misdemeanours, which had been held at the week-ends in houses, were held centrally twice a week, while chicanery of a high order, for example drunkenness or flagrant breaking of the six-inch rule, could result in the offenders being sent home or, in the case of an overseas pupil, to their guardian's house.

30 The official end of fagging was greeted with varying degrees of pleasure and regret. Newcomers, especially those from Edgarley who had been aware of the practice, were relieved that they were not expected to clean other people's shoes, tidy beds, make toast and coffee, and be general dogsbodies for the prefects, but they regretted the loss of potentially helpful tips at the end of each term. It wasn't always the rich prefects who were the most generous, as the end of term hand-out, when they had been fags, had had little effect on their holiday finances. Second year pupils were irritated and in some cases quite angry that the new intake did not have to fag as they had done. Old and new prefects missed this particular privilege as the standards of cleanliness and tidiness in their rooms declined. Some houses, apparently with the agreement of the house authority, invented a new form of house punishment for misdemeanours, 'public fagging', not dissimilar from the Eton College pattern. As this could involve anybody in the junior and middle forms it was not popular.

40 In at least one house, volunteers were rewarded with privileges for doing menial jobs such as washing-up and waiting at table. To the majority, however, fagging was an anachronism and, whereas the reason for its existence was understood by the aristocratic and well-heeled families of Tom Brown's Schooldays, the rich who chose to send their children to boarding-schools in the later part of the twentieth century did not appreciate the need to inculcate a sense of service by making small boys clean and polish the soles of a bigger boy's rigger boots.

There were experiments and changes in the organisation of the prefect body which was largely responsible for the maintenance of good order and, where necessary, for the effectiveness of punishment. CRMA believed that every boy and girl who reached the upper  
50 echelons might be expected to serve the school as a prefect and to enjoy whatever privileges were thus earned. Boss had generally relied on housemaster's nominations, but there was almost always some murmurings of injustice amongst house staff and prefects, and indeed from staff in charge of senior games, who felt that their captains should have been promoted. Now everyone was to be promoted, and the murmurers reeled, convinced that 'it wouldn't work'.

Before the new system was put into practice, the headmaster consulted those who had been promoted to the newly created posts of senior housemaster and housemother, Barry Hobson of Shapwick, and Pam Warner of Millfield and the Cottage. It was agreed that  
60 there should be two levels of school prefect, the same title being retained for the upper one, while the lower would be deputy school prefect. Boy deputies, who were to wear a newly designated tie, a simple white windmill on a navy blue background, and girl deputies, who were given a silver bow brooch, were all to be on probation for a term. This latter was never enforced. Neither was the other decree, as the critics were proved correct by an overwhelming number of protestors who did not want to take on any responsibility, other than doing their best in their final exams. The probationary term died a fairly swift natural death as the vast majority treasured the privileges their appointment entailed, as well as the power, in some cases, and the opportunity to exercise the quality of leadership.

The position of honorary prefect was abandoned, but this did not stop older entrants to the school, especially girls, from gaining quick promotion to the highest positions of authority. In most cases it was the housemaster or housemother who recognised the potential leader first, and the recommendation of such a candidate to the headmaster was generally accepted nem con by the staff committee which he set up in September 1975 to vet the nominees. However the 'history' of home-grown pupils came into play, and the decisions by the committee to approve or disapprove of house recommendations came under severe criticism from almost all levels of Millfield society, who compared the claims of the promoted with those of the unpromoted. Heads of houses were usually made full school prefects, and appeals were issued if they were not. House authorities were intensely  
80 supportive of their prefects and at least one head of house, removed entirely from the prefects list by the headmaster for flagrant breaches of the conventions, remained in office in the house.

At the end of each summer term, the committee was also asked to draw up a short list of 'possibles' for the positions of head boy and head girl in the autumn. The headmaster thus had two months in which to mull over his decisions, taking into consideration the workload of each of those concerned. As both Oxford and Cambridge universities were in the stages of dropping their November scholarship exams, the summer term A-levels became of paramount importance, though the cachet of being head boy or girl at Millfield was believed  
90 to influence the grades demanded by the individual colleges. After three years in office, CRMA decided that it was asking too much of a seventeen to eighteen year old to carry out the duties involved for three terms. From September 1974 it would be for one term only, and an American, John Darnell, holds the distinction of being the last head boy to hold the

office for a year, while Nigel Fenner, who was a schoolboy soccer international, 1st XI batsman and 1st XV fly-half, very suitably kicked off as the first one-termer. The girls, through the good offices of Pam Warner, retained the old system for a further year, with Janet Jones holding the ropes for the first two terms of 1975 from the splendidly named billet at Meare, The Old Ring o' Bells, while Angela Bradshaw of Portway was the first of the first trio.

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Their most important job was overseeing the organisation of the day-to-day duties carried out by the deputy prefects under the direction of the senior prefects. Generally the system worked satisfactorily but there was unquestionably 'room for improvement'.

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In September 1978 CRMA divided the prefectorial body into four separate groups, each with a senior prefect in charge and overseen by an experienced housemaster in each case. Each group was to operate for half a term before moving en bloc to different duty area, thus gaining experience in all four. The areas were (a) the main school, (b) Street and Glastonbury, (c) the Maxine cinema in Street and (d) the dining hall, which had been opened in 1974. The latter was a wonderful bonus, apart from the high quality of its catering and the choice of food it offered, in that it created opportunity for school teams as well as clubs and organisations, such as the orchestra, to come together in entirety for coaching and practice, instead of losing members who had had to go to Joan's Kitchen or back to their houses for lunch. Inevitably it also created problems, for there were many more footloose pupils around the main school and Street, in particular, where prefects were expected to keep a weather eye open for smoke signals.

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At first, the adults behind the counter and one lone prefect on duty were left to supervise the tuck-shop and the senior common room, which were built above the dining hall. Teaching staff on duty were almost actively discouraged from visiting the area, as the organisers of the shop believed that their appearance would inhibit many pupils from visiting the area, so that they would lose their custom to Slys. After considerable debate amongst house staff, it was agreed that electronic slot-machine games should be allowed 'upstairs', as the area was known. However, as this was at a time when churches and other social groups were demanding the banning of these games as addictive, it was not long before murmurings of protest were heard from parents. Reports of damage to furniture, even in the senior common room, which had been comfortably equipped by the old Millfieldians, and of bad behaviour, particularly rudeness to the counter staff, eventually brought reaction in the shape of a new prefect team.

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Two others were to follow with the opening of the splendid library and resources centre in 1980, and the need for a supremely reliable group of pupils to escort the ever-increasing number of prospective parents and other visitors, some described by CRMA as 'rubbernecks', on tours of the school.

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A weekly gathering of prefects with the headmaster and his deputy Brian Gaskell, along with the staff team leaders, in the old Millfield house dining room helped to mould strong relationships and iron out any problems. A report of decisions taken was printed and posted on house notice-boards, so that pupils should not be able to plead ignorance. They did, of course, and it became steadily more obvious that regular assemblies were needed if



all the boys and girls in such a large organisation were to feel a commitment to it. Colin did hold one for the whole school on the golf course in front of the main house with a microphone and loudspeakers in place, while junior years were gathered from time to time in the recital hall of the music school, which was also used for beginning and end-of-term staff meetings.

150 With the appointment in 1978 of Eric Jackson, formerly headmaster of John Watson's, Edinburgh, as head of Lower School, the assemblies in the Music School became invaluable weekly events. Twelve months later each of the junior year groups had an appointed head, Eric for 4th year, Miriam Hopkins for 3rd year and Dick Ransley for 2nd year. The delegation of authority continued in September 1980, when Malcolm Robinson, another ex-headmaster, (Queen's College Taunton in his case), Rod Speed, old Millfieldian Oxford rugby and athletics blue, David Rosser, England rugby International, and Dr Ray Reynolds, inspirational physics guru, were created heads of 5th, Remove 6th, Lower 6th and Upper 6th Years respectively. The old year group nomenclature, which dated from the 1930s, had been brought into line with most other schools in 1975, when Pre RE (Pre Remove) became 3rd, RE became 4th, 4th became 5th and so on as above. Unlike Billy Bunter's Greyfriars, Millfield never had a Shell, or indeed a Lower Shell.

160 It had been agreed between headmaster and the new heads of the middle and upper years that an assembly hall was a vital factor if the new organisation was to function properly. The only building with sufficient floorspace was the fencing salle, but the floor itself was sacrosanct. So the bursar and his maintenance staff were required to lay and lift the temporary cover, weekly instead of biannually, when the salle and dojo were used for exams. This latter had first taken place in summer 1972, much to the dismay of Peter Turner, who had strengthened Millfield's standing in the fencing world immeasurably. It was perhaps just as well that he was joined in September by Welsh international fencer Tom Norcross, who found himself doing what Peter had had to do only a year or so before, teaching skills without a salle. Worse was to come for Tom's successor, Brian Lewis, when in  
170 1978 a large rectangular hole was knocked through the east wall, and a stage and changing rooms were tacked on to the building. The 'Salle Theatre' opened in a blaze of glory in December 1979, with a production of Bob Bolt's 'A Man for All Seasons', and also provided a stage for the new senior heads of year to strut their stuff before their somewhat bewildered Millfield audiences who were unused to seeing their tutors all dressed up in their finery. Even suits tended to appear only at a parade service or on Parents Day. Now not only were there suits, but academic gowns, for the few that still had them, because the new men were obviously determined to make their mark, not only with the pupils, but with the group tutors of their years, most of whom were far too steeped in Millfield's lack of tradition to be willing to co-operate. Colin, who had not been consulted about the move, stepped in gently  
180 and wisely, suggesting that the HoYs should think again. Only once, at CRMA's special request for the school's 50th anniversary Thanksgiving Service at Wells Cathedral, have the teaching staff paraded, gowned and hooded.

He had had a somewhat similar problem when in 1972, after the departure of 'Mac' Mason, he decided to create six academic faculties, each with its own director, responsible for the teaching, the staff, and the academic programmes in their area. Physical education and Resources were then given faculty status, also with directors. Though all decisions

190 taken by them had to be approved by Brian Gaskell, the director of studies, and, subsequently Colin himself, the individual faculty directors had little consideration for the others and this led to uncomfortable confrontations when they met in conference. These were mostly based on rivalry and a sense of their own and their faculty's intellectual capacity compared with the others, and their feeling that they deserved the biggest share of the cake. Not surprisingly that particular party ended abruptly in July 1974, being replaced by a termly headmaster's committee meeting, membership of which was drawn from all areas of the school, and was not dominated by the purely academic. Faculty disappeared from the Millfield vocabulary.

200 Thus Colin's first ten years at the top had seen considerable re-organisation in the scholastic hierarchy, with the main aims of better supervision of the pupils' programmes and progress, and better communication with parents. Many more senior pupils were given the opportunity to display their leadership qualities under the supervision of experienced staff, whilst younger ones could volunteer to represent their houses and year groups at the School Council meetings. This latter was set up in 1971, and not surprisingly was at first an opportunity for disenchanted youth to complain, but under the guidance of Grange housemaster Frank McCrea it was to become a useful sounding board.

210 Although academic holiday courses had been run at Millfield almost from its inception, and a few local children had been invited from time to time to play on the tennis courts, little use was being made of the steadily improving sports facilities, especially in the long summer break. Rugby players were persuaded to return early in September to get fit for the season, while day pupils and local OMs had free use of the tennis courts in the holidays, as of course did the teaching staff, but for much of the out-of-term time only the ground-staff were to be found on the playing areas, and the boarding houses were empty except for the relevant staff. Colin, in his days as director of PE and housemaster, was well aware of this wastage of opportunity.

220 Following up Patrick McArdle's wonderful initiative in creating a swimming pool in 1964 and the particular success of Malcolm Tucker in becoming Millfield's first international swimmer, it was decided to appoint a full-time coach, the first British institution of any sort to do so. Paddy Garratt arrived in April 1968 to start a 23 year stint which produced 12 Millfieldian swimmers who represented Great Britain in the Olympic Games, including winners of a gold and a bronze medal, whilst he became an Olympic coach. Colin, though assistant headmaster by that time, was still in charge of PE and was determined to make full use of Paddy's talents. He suggested that courses for beginners and for competitive swimmers should be organised for all comers in the summer holidays of 1969. Tennis coaching in the holidays had been taking place regularly since the employment of full-time coach David Rundle in 1959, so there was a precedent for further development. David, who had had outstanding success in nurturing the talents of Millfield's stars, was created master i/c tennis in 1969, while newcomer David Kemp became head coach. Thus swimming and tennis formed the basis of what was to develop into yet another innovation by Millfield, one which was to be copied by many other boarding schools, 'The Village of Education'.

230 In September 1969, when Boss was officially on sabbatical leave and CRMA was acting headmaster, John Davies took the latter's place in regard to PE and was given the title

of games co-ordinator. After Boss's resignation in December 1970, Colin was able to change thoughts into actions and, after necessary discussion, gave John the task of developing the holiday courses and making use of the school's accommodation to broaden the catchment area. The immediate result was the first 'Village' gathering in summer 1971, offering courses in fencing, hockey, judo, soccer, swimming and tennis at levels from beginners upwards. The young people found no problems with doing physical activities all day, but some older participants found the demands too heavy and suggested having quieter activities for part of the time. Arts, crafts, music, academic and other categories of courses were added, while more sports were included. By 1980 some 4000 places were on offer over five weeks, and this continued up to 1997, although by then the length had been reduced by a week.

CRMA has sometimes been known as 'the builder'. He certainly learned how to use what was built.

## Chapter 36

### **New sporting and academic facilities. Changes to boarding houses and billets for boys and girls. CRMA becomes Principal. 1971-86.**

10 Boss had been at odds with the governors for a number of years over their priorities for buildings. He wanted his dream, an indoor sports stadium, part of which could double as a canteen, whilst they wanted a dining-hall which would save costs by bulk buying of food and reducing transport to and from the out-houses. Colin, in spite of his sporting background, had little choice but to back the governors who had supported him in his pursuit of the headmastership. If he had not felt this obligation, he would almost certainly have followed the same course anyway. CRMA had an astute approach to financial matters which had been made clear in his dealings with heads of department over their budgets while he was working alongside Mac Mason and the bursar, Dick Redman.

20 Steadying the ship was of paramount importance, and there were to be no large capital building projects for some time. The Bolt buildings, only temporary, were erected in 1971 in the shadow of the staff common room, and included a new private study room as well as common rooms for prefects and senior pupils. The popular Crystal Palace, where 'hops' were held, was re-designed and re-decorated. Work began on the Biology block, the gift of Julian Sacher (Millfield 1963-8) and his father, who together opened the doors ceremonially on Parents Day 1972. Built in the Camp, close to the Martin chemistry labs, its advent gave the opportunity for the first mass slaughter of the Nissen huts which had withstood strafing by GIs, British soldiery and twenty-five years of Millfieldian occupation. The first to go were those linked together to form biology and physics labs, and their clearance left open space. Some tears were shed, mostly by veterans.

30 A major investment had been made in 1971 with the purchase of the Butleigh Wootton field, a large rolling meadow which was to prove an invaluable asset over the years, firstly for the athletes, secondly for the rugby players, cricketers, and golfers, and most recently for the hockey players. Bearing in mind that the school's two Olympic athletic representatives, Gordon Miller and Mary Bignal, were both jumpers, it was not surprising that the first area to be levelled was for run-ups and pits, followed by a grass 100 metres straight, whilst the 440 metre circuit, as long as it remained there, and that was some twenty years, was never flat.

40 Other more esoteric activities were in need of support, particularly in the way of storage facilities. A largely corrugated iron extension was added to the indoor riding school, which itself bore resemblance to an extremely tall and extremely wide Nissen hut. It had been built in 1960 to replace the 20 year old open-air manege when its site, where the indoor tennis courts now stand, was needed for development. For some years the lean-tos provided cover for canoes, sailing boats, go-karts, and stage scenery, and in 1974 the riding school itself was converted into a sports hall. Largely through the awe-inspiring generosity of Captain MMC Clark, a new and much larger riding school was built close to the Somerton Road, at the bottom of the slope. It was end-on to another important facility developed at the same time, the first all-weather hockey pitch, which was convertible to tennis courts for the summer terms. Old Millfieldian John Yeoman, who was also a current parent and a

quarry owner, provided the necessary for this project with magnanimity equal to that of Captain Clark. Three years later, his firm, Foster Yeoman, transferred the stables to Little Waterbarrow, a field alongside the riding school, as well as levelling and providing top-soil for the pitch about to be named Jubilee Field in commemoration of HM the Queen's first twenty-five years on the throne. Boys of that time will remember giving up part of their lunch-hour to collect stones off the new pitch, and watching or playing in the inaugural match between the school XV and the headmaster's XV, which included British Lions heroes Gareth Edwards, JPR Williams, and Gerald Davies.

The hockey pitch too had had an exciting inauguration when a star-studded team, led by the former West of England captain, CRM Atkinson himself, played the 1st XI on 5th March 1975, just two days after the official opening of the new dining hall with its attendant tuck shop. Arguably this building has been the most important creation since the school began, for it gave time for everyone to pursue their interests, organised or just recreational, as well as to eat a good meal, in the hour and a half between morning and afternoon school or games. Tutors i/c games inevitably seized the opportunity for more intensive practices, but the greatest beneficiaries were the musicians, the actors, the debaters and those who needed to catch up with their work. From the other side of the fence it might be noted that the standard of bridge played in the staff common room improved rapidly. It also gave the Millfield Society an opportunity to play a part in the physical development of the school by paying for the furnishing of the 6th form common room which was alongside the tuck shop.

Those who 'needed to catch up with their work', and the others, who took their work seriously (of course) were to benefit even more with the advent of the library and audio-visual centre which in 1980 took up the site of the old biology and physics Nissen hut laboratories by the Butleigh road. This splendid building, designed by local architects Jeremy and Caroline Gould, provided study areas on two levels with facilities for programmed learning and the use of audio and video tapes. Within the complex was a cinema/lecture theatre, and a magnificently equipped television studio and recording centre which could help all departments to make their own teaching aids or to use those broadcast by the BBC and other media.

Unfortunately librarian Clive Thomas, also head of the politics department, found very soon that he had to use his diplomatic skills to persuade headmaster and bursar to pay for carpeting the ground floor, which consisted of attractive red quarry tiles. At these times Somebody's law invariably operates, so leather soles and heels were in vogue, and every footfall echoed round the building. Action was taken. A further problem occurred when the vestibule became a meeting place for pupils in free time, and their chatter disturbed those who were trying to study in the library itself. It was a natural place to gather because the school shop was included in the building, immediately alongside the main entrance. Duty prefects had to draw a firm line, especially on wet days, which had always been a subject for discussion at housemasters' gatherings. The girls were able to shelter in the Cottage, but the boys had nowhere to go for cover before the dining hall and tuck shop existed, except for classrooms which might be left unlocked by sympathetic and trusting staff, who were not always well repaid for their kindness. Eventually empty Nissen huts were allocated to the day boy 'houses', so that they had somewhere to leave their books and other belongings whilst in school. Boarders from the out houses were each given a locker in the entrance

halls and other spaces in the A and B teaching blocks, but keys were lost, and locks and doors forced open. Under these circumstances the pupils ceased to use them for fear of losing books and other valuable kit, so the experiment was a costly failure.

100 It was at this period too that the governors decided that it was time to call in an expert on the development of the material side of the school, rather than to continue in the haphazard way caused by lack of money in the early days. Neville Conder of the Casson Conder Partnership was asked to visit the school and subsequently draw up a list of 'guideline principles' for the evolution and enhancement of the buildings and grounds of both Millfield and Edgarley Hall. His report was presented in 1980 and swiftly followed by Colin Atkinson's evaluation. CRMA suggested that the financial situation was sound enough at that time (November 1980) for a five year plan to be put in place, starting in 1982. He forecast that the two schools, Millfield and Edgarley, would be able to spend £1,500,000 on development over the five years.

110 The immediate reason for engaging the services of Neville was the condemning as dangerous of most of the beech trees, which lined the main drive. These beautiful Clark relics were cut down in 1978, leaving an ugly gash to greet visitors arriving at the Lodge. New trees had already been planted at various sites in the grounds as part of the Queen's silver jubilee celebrations, for over one hundred elms had been lost to Dutch elm disease during the previous five years. A decision had to be taken as to whether to replace the beeches or to have a completely new lay-out which could be planned to link with the landscaping of the areas around the Jubilee field and the library, which was then under construction. Eventually, much to the disgust of some of the old Millfieldians, who had complained bitterly about the loss of all the Nissen huts, it was decided to accept expert  
120 guidance and remove the drive altogether. The motive behind this was to exclude cars from the main campus and to confine staff and visitor parking (the staff alone had more than a hundred cars) to one area, thus creating greater safety for pupils and purer air for all. Members of the new Shapwick, opened in January 1981, might disagree, for the only area close enough to the school and large enough for a car park was the field alongside their house.

Shapwick's arrival to a site across the Butleigh road from the Lodge was the first development in the move to bring the boys' houses into the central part of the school. Butleigh house came along the road from the village to occupy half of the newly constructed  
130 complex in the field called Keen's Elm, which lay in the dip between Millfield itself and the Butleigh Wootton playing fields. At the request of the field's previous owner, chairman of the governors Tony Clark, it gave its name to the other half of the complex, which was filled with boys from Ashcott in the summer of 1984.

The term YLC for girls had been quietly dropped, a shame in many ways as it was indicative of the way the school expected them to behave. They had had more than their fair share of upheavals in their housing. Up to 1965 most of them lived in billets, including Wraxleigh and the mixed Elmsett Hall. At that time the demand for places was increasing so rapidly that the decision was taken to close all the small residences and open a proper  
140 house. This was The Grange at Somerton, which started with 27 Young Ladies. Disaster struck just after Easter 1966, when Elmsett closed, leaving 17 YLs requiring a residence, to

say nothing of 39 boys. The latter were found a home at Glaston Tor, the redundant prep school, where they were joined by 23 boys from Holmcroft, which was given to the young ladies and the astonishingly accommodating Bryant and Ginny Fell, who made them welcome in a house equipped for boys. Thus a sort of pattern was laid.

150 When Colin Atkinson bought The Hollies in Glastonbury and turned it into a super-billet by transferring his boys from Portway, the latter received 19 girls in September 1966, whilst a year later six of the original Elmsett members were moved, along with the rest of Holmcroft, to Ashcott House, newly rented by the school and alongside Etonhurst. Holmcroft reverted to being a boys' house.

In the summer of 1968 Bud Atkinson and his wife Mary announced their retirement and the closure of Wraxleigh, which was replaced by two billets in Ashcott, The Lawns and Cheddar View, the latter having been a boys' billet in the past. However these did not provide enough beds, and Holmcroft reverted to the YLC, with Helen Hawkins, archer extraordinaire and survivor from Elmsett, returning for the second time, on this occasion to be head of house.

160 There was nothing for it in September 1969 but to open three new billets, The Grey House at Keinton Mandeville, The Great House at Meare, and The Rookery at Lydford Cross Keys, which together provided more than thirty bed spaces. Christine Johnson's house on the Butleigh Road, which had been the cause of considerable controversy between Boss and Bert Smith, was in process of being made habitable for some twenty young women, and it was opened in January 1970.

170 So that pupil numbers could be increased, no billets were closed at this time. However in September 1970 The Rookery was transferred to the boys' side, along with Cheddar View at Ashcott after the purchase of Southfield, an elegant house in Glastonbury, for the girls. Although it did not completely solve the accommodation problem, this purchase was acclaimed by Boss and Pam Warner, the uncrowned lady i/c the YLC, who as major-domo of Millfield house for the previous fifteen years had found herself acting more and more as judge and chastiser of the girls. She was to be officially recognized the following year by Colin Atkinson as senior housemother, a slightly misleading title, as her area of influence was in the discipline of the girl pupils, and not in the running of houses, other than the Cottage and Millfield house.

180 When Colin took over in January 1971, there were two major boys' billets, Kernick, owned by Commander RJA Hammond, and Hornblotton, owned by Charles Lillingston, lately senior housemaster at Harrow, as well as nine small ones, varying in size from twelve down to one pupil. However the bulk of the boys' accommodation was in the larger houses established in the forties, fifties and early sixties, so it is not surprising that the first CRMA housing developments were in the female sector, starting with the expansion of the bungalow built originally for Joyce Meyer's widowed mother. It was occupied by the Meyer family for two years after Boss became warden, after which they moved to 'Little Scotland', the house between Wells and Wedmore built by the governors for them as a retirement house. The bungalow opened as Oaklands in September 1973 with twelve girls. Pam Warner moved there from Millfield house to be housemother in September 1974, and,

having a much smaller house, was able to devote more time to her duties as senior housemother.

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Tragically this almost ideal situation was not to last, as in the spring of 1976 Pam was diagnosed as suffering from cancer. Treatment merely delayed the spread and she died on 15th December 1976. Her loss was deeply felt by both staff and pupils, for her twenty-two years of devoted service to the school had given her a status second only to the headmaster. It did not matter whether it was Boss, who had persuaded her to join Millfield after she had nursed him at the Radcliffe in Oxford, or Colin, who valued her just as much for her remarkable skills in dealing with his ever enlarging regiment of women. She was known to have the head's ear and was frequently approached by young and old wanting advice on how to tackle him. Perhaps not unremarkably CRMA made no attempt to replace her.

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Large increases in the numbers of boys' beds had been made in 1975 with the purchase of Georgian Cottage, the extension of Orchards, and the building of dormitory blocks at Holmcroft, whilst at Joan's Kitchen the dining area was replaced by dormitories.

All these changes helped to ease overcrowding in the other houses, even though it was decided to turn Kernick, which had just been bought from the semi-retired 'Wally' Hammond, into a girls' house. Additionally, at the start of the year The Lakes, a Georgian house close to The Great House at Meare, was opened at very short notice with 20 girls. It was overseen by Janet Gibson, who had just completed six very successful years at Ashcott House and was fortunately able to hand over the reins to her daughter, Margaret Murray.

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January 1976, brought an interesting change for the boys of the Combe Hill billet who moved with their housemaster, Tim Newman, into newly completed accommodation in the orchard of Orchards house. They chose to call their house Keinton, a name which it retained until swallowed by its neighbour in 1988. However, more significant was the opening in September 1977 of the first complete, purpose-built boarding house in Millfield's history. Named Ivythorn after its site on the western fringes of Street, it was well designed for both staff and pupils but had the disadvantages of the out-houses, namely limited facilities for letting off steam, the necessity for coach transport and the fears for individual members passing through 'Indian territory'. Nevertheless it laid down guide lines for the future development of the school.

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At that same time, September 1977, a lias-stone villa, Northfield, across the road from the Lodge at Millfield, became a new boarding house after the addition of a block of dormitories for 24 boys. It had belonged to the school for almost twenty years, and had been used as changing rooms for games staff, as teaching rooms, and finally as part of the growing music department. After 1981 the Northfielders were linked by a shared common room to a new much larger block housing Shapwick, who had 'come in from the cold'. They were naturally on the defensive, and a difficult time was had by all. By 1984 hardly anyone in the house could remember the happy days of independence, and Northfield was quietly subsumed by its neighbour.

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Meanwhile the girls, still increasing in numbers, were not forgotten. A small extension was built onto Oaklands, and a separate house constructed in the back garden of



Johnsons was dedicated to the memory of Pam Warner. Both were first occupied in September 1978. The first complete house designed for boarding pupils, and built on the original campus, was Acacia, opened in 1980 for 43 girls in the care of Mrs Jean Wilkinson and her husband Tom, who was the school chaplain. They had run Kingweston for a dozen years up to 1978, when Tom was advised to take on less work for health reasons, and had now been persuaded by Colin to come back to a school house. It turned out to be an ideal appointment, as Jean was able to use her professional nursing skills in the main school surgery and Tom, living in the heart of the school, could safely give more time to its spiritual life, whilst both together created an extremely happy and successful community.

In conjunction with this move, the chalet, the first building on the Mill Fields, was converted into a study/teaching room for Tom on the ground floor, whilst the room above became a chapel which was consecrated, by the Bishop of Bath and Wells in September 1981. It was subsequently blessed by the Pope and has been used as a place of worship by the Christian churches, by Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and other faiths individually, and as a meeting place for inter-faith discussion.

Unfortunately the winter that followed, and which led into what was to be the first year of the five year plan, was particularly severe, and it upset the applect by destroying the barracuda. This remarkable blister, it is too easy to say carbuncle, had been part of the Millfield skyline since 1968 and had played an invaluable role in the world of PE. Originally gifted to the school by the parents of tennis players persuaded to contribute by Compton-Dando, father of the remarkable and profoundly deaf Ashley, it looked not unlike half a dirigible balloon, sliced through horizontally. Air was pumped in constantly to keep it fully inflated, and the one entrance was through an air-lock. Though tennis generally had first call on it, there were many other interested parties, especially tutors in charge of PE on wet days. Unfortunately its unusual appearance attracted unwanted attention, and it was attacked and slashed with knives by vandals on a number of occasions, but still survived. Nature finally proved too much for the barracuda in the winter of 1981/2, and a decision was taken to replace it with a sports hall on the same site. Work went ahead immediately and the new building, opened in September 1982, was promptly named the Barracuda Sports Hall.

'The Plan' began to take shape in 1984 with an extension to the Sacher biology block, and the beginning of the construction of a large extension to the music school, including a dance studio. The extraordinary variety of uses to which the Barracuda hall had been put in its eighteen months of existence underlined the need for a much larger covered area for indoor sport, and approval was given by the governors for the building of what was named the Jubilee Sports Hall, commemorating the first fifty years of Millfield. The words 'Wet Weather Programme' would never again have the traumatic effect familiar in the good old days.

1985 was a year for celebration, and this was achieved with an immensely successful banquet for old Millfieldians at the Royal Hotel in Bristol on 1st June, at which both headmasters spoke, and a Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication at Wells Cathedral on 27th September, when the multi-faith aspect of the school was emphasised.

Sadly, however, the year was not without its afflictions, the first of which was the sudden death of Tony Clark, chairman of the governors and friend of the school since its inception. Not only had he united the governing body and shown a strong hand in maintaining the best interests of the school during the unfortunate events of 1970-1, but he was a very visible chairman, a regular supporter at school matches and musical and theatrical performances, as well as being an important link between town and gown.

290 The second affliction, the significance of which was not made public at the time, was Colin Atkinson's operation for the removal of a cancer of the colon. So fit was he that he was back at his desk two weeks later. So concerned were the governors, now under the chairmanship of Clinton Sayer, that Colin should not work so hard, that they persuaded him to give up the headmastership of Millfield and accept a new role and title as principal of the Millfield schools, which now included the pre-prep Abbey in Glastonbury. He was to oversee the running and, especially, the finances and future development of the three schools, but was to leave the day to day organisation in the hands of the heads. In the case of Millfield it was to be the faithful Brian Gaskell, promoted in September 1986.

300 Colin had in effect taken on the role of bursar himself when Dick Redman retired to warmer climes in 1983. It meant that he was no longer on call to face irate parents and recalcitrant youth, and could choose what school events he wanted to attend, rather than feeling obliged to go. His dedication to Millfield was in no way affected, and he continued his work from the study which he had taken over from Boss in 1971. It is important to note at this stage that he and the governors fully recognized the importance of Edgarley Hall as a feeder for Millfield. Many improvements had been initiated there, and it was being built up to become one of the largest preparatory schools in Britain. The senior school was not forgotten however, and plans went ahead for a technology block on the site of the old indoor riding school, which had been converted into the first sports hall, and a superb athletics facility, the Bromfield track, declared open in 1989 by David Hemery. Perhaps the  
310 crowning glory to Colin's plan is the amazing building completed just after his untimely death in 1991. The Fine Arts Centre contains a gallery dedicated to his memory.

## Chapter 37

### Sport under CRMA. The growth of soccer. 1960-7.

Colin Atkinson's contribution to Millfield should not be measured by the number of permanent buildings erected during his twenty years at the top, for he was carrying out the directions of the finance and executive committee of the governing body. Not that the developments were insignificant, but they were just the background to the school's progress towards the fulfilment of Boss's dream - recognition by the academic world, and that the school would not be just a nine days wonder.

With all the unpleasantness that occurred at the time of his predecessor's departure, Colin must have been utterly determined to show that he had all the attributes of a great headmaster and that Millfield would develop in every possible way under his leadership. However he did not rush to make sweeping changes, as new heads of organisations seem to be expected to do, but, rather similarly to the New Labour administration in 1997, took on a large proportion of his forerunner's policies. He did of course jettison a number of the leading figures in Millfield's equivalent of the Civil Service, and introduced his own advisers.

CRMA had learned much from RJOM and acknowledged it, but he also based his philosophy on what he had learned from the headmaster of the Friends' School, Great Ayton, where he had taught before joining Millfield. Quaker schools have always tried to concentrate on the development of the individual pupil in a free environment, and this is not too different from the way Boss had worked. But the larger Millfield had become, and it had galloped away in the sixties, the less the opportunities to earn freedom, it seemed to the pupils. The more pupils that there were, the more staff and prefects that there were, apparently placing more restrictions on those claiming the human right to freedom of action. Both headmasters had made clear to all that privilege had to be earned, but this did not sit well with many who were growing up in an era of protest, especially among the intellectual cream, the future university students. Changes needed to be made, but they had to be introduced with care.

The banning of all corporal punishment was well received, but that on smoking was only sincerely welcomed by the parents, while prefects complained of loss of privilege. Then came the introduction of the School Council, which was to be an elected body of representatives from each house and each year group, who would meet selected members of staff and prefects regularly to discuss ideas and complaints. Inevitably it was the latter that dominated the proceedings, and matters of great moment, such as the length of boys' hair and the height of girls' shoe heels were handled with great skill by a succession of members of the teaching staff acting as chairman. Reports of the discussions were passed to CRMA, and were then published with his responses for the whole school to read. Occasionally he attended himself, so that he could make his rulings doubly clear, and also emphasise the importance of the Council. His weekly meetings with the school prefects and their staff team leaders kept the majority on their toes, and frequently produced useful solutions to the handling of awkward problems expected in the near future, often in connection with 'hops', the Maxime cinema, and pub visits on Saturday nights.

Colin seems to have been happy with the way in which the boarding houses were run. It was not long since he and Shirley had been doing the same thing, and he did recognize that some pupils were not willing to confide in their house parents. In 1975 he asked senior year tutor Roger Adams to organise a group of volunteer counsellors from the staff who were willing to be approached by pupils with problems. They were drawn from the staff, their wives and local members of the governing body. The pupils' work too, he felt, needed more careful supervision, which resulted in the appointment of a number of group tutors as senior group tutors, inevitably known as super group tutors, who kept a weather eye on half-a-dozen groups and were able to help and advise their tutors. The boarding house authorities were responsible for seeing that their charges sat 'doing their prep' for the requisite period in the evening and supervising those who, before the opening of the first dining hall in 1975, were sent to detention for classroom misdemeanours. They spent an hour or so working on a Saturday evening, while their fellows enjoyed a visit to the cinema, or a 'hop', or TV, or simply relaxed with or without their friends.

As might be expected, the sporting side of the school continued to flourish with a steady increase in the number of applications for places from those who thought that Millfield could help them to reach the top of their particular game. Colin insisted, as Boss had, that applicants must have reached a reasonable academic standard as well as proving themselves beforehand in their sport.

It is really impossible to say which was the top Millfield game during the twenty years of Colin's management, but it is safe to say that the one in which he gained his own greatest personal triumphs, cricket, was among the contenders. Under masters in charge Lloyd Williams and Frank Fenner, and coach Gerry Wilson, who was also head groundsman, the 1st XI swept all before it. Over that period 32 members went on to play first class cricket, 17 of them for Somerset, whilst Paul Terry, who joined Hampshire, also gained an England cap against the West Indies. The lower echelons fared equally well, often benefiting from coaching during the winter months from Somerset and England stars Tom Cartwright and Ken Palmer, who were employed on the ground staff in the cricket close season. In addition, the incomparable Harold Gimblett was still coaching up to 1975.

It would be invidious not to mention that a good number of excellent prospects came through to Millfield from Edgarley, all of whom had been coached by Bryan Lobb, Somerset's opening bowler in the 1950s, who was the prep school's director of studies.

Rugby, which of course had hit the headlines in the sixties, continued to flourish under the guidance of Roger Whyte, distinguished Barbarian and Harlequin, aided by Bristol and England forward Bev Dovey and Welsh Rugby League international Dick Boustead. Players of that period who particularly distinguished themselves later were Richard Harding, scrum-half and captain of Bristol and England, and Pat Daniels, centre three-quarter for Cardiff and Wales.

In 1975 Roger handed over his keys of office to David Rosser, Wasps and England international three-quarter, who had joined the staff from Sherborne School eighteen months before. He had followed old Millfieldian Oxford blue Rod Speed, who had rejoined Millfield in 1972, this time as a tutor and also from Sherborne. Together they were to

create an incredibly formidable team which ran the school's rugby for the next decade and beyond. An English tutor from Wales, Alun Ford, had taken charge of the Senior Colts XV in 1975, releasing Rod to coach the 1st XV forwards, whilst David could concentrate on the backs and tactics in general.

100 Outstanding XVs there were at all levels, but some were more outstanding than others. In 1978 the senior colts, led by Richard Davies, won all its matches, a feat only once achieved before, in 1967. Richard, a brilliant wing-forward, captained the 1st XV the next year, when only 16, and the next, 1980, when he also skippered the Welsh schools Under 19 XV. This latter appointment was a signal of changed times. The Welsh schools' selectors had had to recognise the claims of Welsh boys being educated outside the Principality ever since Gareth's time, fifteen years earlier, but now they were admitting that the conversion of the grammar schools to the comprehensive system had affected their rugby badly, and the old pride had gone. By 1986 Millfield's Welsh opponents were confined to the three public schools, Llandovery, Christ's College, Brecon, and Monmouth, the glory days of Llanelli, Neath and Brynteg being long gone. The gaps in the fixture list had been filled by Sherborne and Taunton, who had had changes of heart, and others such as St Brendan's and Belmont Abbey.

Although Richard's teams were excellent, they failed to achieve the success of Nick Devonald's 1982 XV, which won all ten of its inter-school matches and included on the wing Chris Oti, who was later selected as Millfield's second full England international player. The feat was not repeated until 1988 when John Mallett, the third England representative and the first forward, led the school to victory in 13 out of 13 matches.

120 By this time Rod Speed was in charge, having taken over from David Rosser in the spring of 1987. In addition to his forward coaching, Rod had been in charge of the seven-a-side teams with huge success. The national schools competition at Rosslyn Park was won in 1980, 82, and 83, while defeat came in the final in 1984 in thick mud and by old rivals, Neath. After two leaner years, the 1987 VII recovered the national trophy and won every competition it entered, a truly outstanding effort. Runners-up in 1988, the Seven slipped to defeat in the semi-finals in 1989, and sadly failed to regain the trophy in 1990 as a parting present to Colin Atkinson on his retirement as principal. Nevertheless the rugby boys had done him proud during his twenty years as supremo.

130 Hockey had never been the Cinderella sport at Millfield that it had been at other schools where rugby ruled, and it continued to flourish as splendidly as it had done in the fifties and sixties and even before then. A good fixture list, mainly with clubs, before Christmas, and an even stronger one after, which included the top West of England schools, gave the opportunity for the real enthusiasts to strengthen their individual skills throughout the winter, sometimes to the chagrin of the ruggar coaches. The efforts of Paddy Newbery, Richard Woodhead, Gavin Featherstone (an England international), and Tim Wilbur produced ten under-19 schoolboy internationals, seven of whom subsequently played for their respective national teams :- David Tooze, Rupert Welsh, Steve Batchelor, Rob Hill, Jason Laslett (captain), David Luckes, all for England, and Bill Davidson for the USA, while the latter five appeared in the Olympic Games. Steve Batchelor took part in three tournaments for Great Britain in 1984, 88 and 92, winning a bronze medal at Los Angeles and a gold at

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Seoul. Other senior internationals, who were at Millfield in the sixties, and represented their countries in Colin's time, were Auke Bloembergen (The Netherlands), Steve Long (England and GB), Tim Hill (Wales), Cemlyn Foulkes and Peter Marsh (both Wales and GB), the latter playing in the Olympics at Munich in 1972.

150 The creation of the all-weather pitch in 1974 gave Millfield hockey an extra fillip (which it hardly needed) as the game speeded up, an enormous advantage in home matches against teams still training and playing on grass. For some time it was the only pitch of its kind in the west, and requests were made by the county and area men's teams to use it for their important matches. As these fixtures brought both good relationships and good publicity, they were accommodated as long as they did not interfere with the school's schedule for both the boys and girls. The latter continued playing most of their matches on grass, the main reason being that the boys, much greater in number, had first choice, or rather their coaches did, in spite of the presence of Shirley Atkinson on the distaff side. The girls were Somerset schools champions with some regularity:- 1985, 86, 87 and 90, and occasionally they won the under 15 title. Only one player from the sixties, Shoona Franks, never a schools international, went on to play for the full England team in the seventies, whilst Charlotte Cornwallis, a member of the schools national championship winning Millfield XI of 1990, Colin's last year as principal, became the first to play for the England under-18 side.

170 Competing with the girl hockey players were the netball teams which won the national schools championships in 1983, 88 and 89, whilst the under 14s completed a double by winning their national age group competition in 1988. Two players from that year's senior team, Rachel Greenwood and Katherine Letchworth, won further honours in the England schools side, as in 1991 did Jane Hallowell, a member of that splendid under 14 team three years earlier. Much credit for these successes was given to the coaching and enthusiasm of Sue Woods, who was in due time to be in charge of junior girls' games, to succeed Margaret Hawker in charge of senior girls' games, to be overall head of games, and then joint director of sport.

180 Margaret too had coached the netball team and been in charge of girls' cross-country and athletics. Between 1971 and 1990 under-19 international honours were won by one cross-country runner, while nine went to athletes, two of whom, Lesley-Anne Skeete and Kirsty Wade, née McDermott, ran for Britain in the Seoul Olympics of 1988. Compared with these records, those of the boys seem rather meagre; no cross-country and six athletic international honours, with one Olympic appearance, Ford Dennis of Liberia, in Munich 1972. In fact this is a most unfair jibe as first class teams were produced year after year and from them many athletes of both field and track were selected to represent Somerset at the national schools championships. There was a distinctly Oxford University flavour about the coaching, with the ubiquitous Rod Speed in charge till 1974, Gordon McBride from then until 1990, and Tim Taylor playing a leading part before his appointment as headmaster of Edgarley in 1978. All three of these blues showed great determination, along with other members of staff and of course Margaret Hawker and her aides, to overcome the difficulties of having no proper track. The Victoria sports club ground in Street served well enough, but could not be used on summer Saturdays for matches, as the local cricket club had first call.

By 1977 the Butleigh Wootton field had been improved sufficiently for it to be used for house matches, and subsequently for inter-school matches.

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Finally by 1988 the money was there, and the transformation of the Keen's Elm field into the best athletics track in the West began. Opened by Olympic gold medal holder David Hemery MBE, ex-Millfield housemaster and one who coached the hurdlers in the Butleigh-Wootton and Victoria Park days, it was ready for action in summer 1989. Named in honour of John Bromfield, ex-housemaster of Chindit and master i/c athletics in the fifties and sixties, it includes a tartan 6-lane circular track with a water-jump and 8-lane straight. Facilities are provided in the centre for shot, javelin, discus and hammer, as well as high jump, long jump, triple jump and pole vault.

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Swimmers had to make do with Patrick McArdle's pool behind the cricket pavilion, though by 1989 the roof no longer blew away in the gales. Fortunately the 6 am risers had been able to do their pre-breakfast training at the Strode pool in Street, which had been opened in 1974, and they did it because Paddy Garratt told them to. When appointed as coach in 1968 he was the first in any school in Britain, and his personality and skills won the co-operation of the ambitious pupils over two decades. If medals at the Olympics are to be the benchmark, then of course, Duncan Goodhew's gold at Moscow in 1980 takes pride of place, followed by Paul Howes's bronze at Los Angeles in 1984.

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But these were just the icing on a remarkable cake of other top performers, Nigel Johnson and Sue Jones (Munich 1972), Peter Lerpiniere and Duncan G. (Montreal 1976), Suki Brownsdon, Ian Collins, Neil Harper and Paul H. (LA 1984), and Helen Bewley, Suki B., Caroline Foot, Mark Foster, Neil Harper and, for his third Games, Paul H. (Seoul 1988), all accompanied on this last occasion by Paddy G. himself as GB coach. Between 1971 and 1990, fifty-two Millfield swimmers in all represented their countries in open or under-19 competition.

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Tennis was similarly placed as far as practice and match areas were concerned, excellent outdoor courts, grass and hard, with but one covered, by the Barracuda. However changes had occurred in the coaching team immediately before CRMA took on the headmastership. David Rundle, part-timer from 1955 and full-timer from 1959, had been the mentor of many outstanding players, including eight Millfieldian British representatives in the Davis Cup :- Mark Cox, Russell Hodgkinson, Peter Curtis, Gerald Battrick, Paul Hutchins, John Feather, Jonathan Smith and Andrew Jarrett. A permanent assistant coach, David Kemp, had joined him in 1967, but Rundle became alarmed at a possible threat to his own position when master i/c Colin Graham left and was replaced by the well-qualified Cambridge blue, Geoff Woodward. Next the Davis Cup player turned coach, Alan Mills, was appointed to a part-time post by Boss, with a hint of full-time in the near future. Unhappily this uncertainty about his own future led David Rundle to handing in his resignation and departing at precisely the same time as Boss quit as headmaster. There can be no question that this pair, Rundle and Boss, totally dedicated to the development of tennis, had created the best academy of its time in Britain. Their legacy was well used and continued to develop under the new regime, with David Kemp picking up David Rundle's mantle.

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22 boys and 3 girls reached International status, with the Glanville cup for boys and the Aberdare cup for girls being won with some regularity. Added to the list of OM Davis Cup representatives were Paul Hutchins as non-playing captain of the GB team, Kelvin Ng for Hong Kong, and Andrew Castle, who as British No 1 also played in the revived Olympic tournament at Seoul in 1988. It must be recorded that David Atkinson, elder son of CRMA, as well as winning the national junior covered courts championship in 1977, captained Cambridge University at tennis, as well as at hockey, whilst his younger brother Jonathan was more in the family tradition, being elected to a similar honour at cricket. With so many Millfield players at the forefront of British tennis, there is a danger of forgetting that many became coaches and continue to pass on their skills in diverse parts of the world.

The last of those that became recognized as 'major games' in the school needed a fairy godmother to lift it, not exactly from the cinders, but from a slough of despond in the fifties and early sixties. It was not even included in the Churchill Cup for its first two years, but in 1954 the Windmill was able to report that soccer was recognized as a sport and that house matches would be in the same category for points as basketball, boxing and cross-country. Chindit won the first tourney, but by 1956 so few people were playing that it was reduced to the level of badminton, golf, squash and table-tennis. However, with the school's overall growth in numbers at that time, a greater demand for the game created a need for organisation, fixtures and coaching. Sid Hill, master i/c rugger, volunteered to guide the way in 1960 and with the coaching skills of Max Higgins, the Kingweston groundsman, and the two young cricket professionals, John Shaw and Gerry Wilson, the game began to build a following other than just at house-match times. Then in 1962, much to the relief of Sid, the fairy godfather arrived in the person of Keith Nokes who had been headmaster of Street's Strode school, which was to close, along with Elmhurst GS, in order to facilitate the opening of the new comprehensive school, Crispin. Keith was a man of many parts, not least as an accomplished amateur footballer, keen to help the school develop a team capable of holding its own with the best. By 1964 he was confident that it was time for better fixtures, and, being in something of a soccer desert, he persuaded Alleyn's in Dulwich, Lancing in Sussex, Ealing GS, Torquay GS, Malvern, and the Corinthian Casuals, amongst others, to play the upstarts. Names such as Gareth Edwards and Vaughan Williams from rugger, Peter Marsh from hockey, Ken Weatherley and Keith Reynolds from tennis were drawn in to help the purists, 'Doughie' Adams, Andy Bales, Phil Smith (schoolboy international, late arrival from Aldenham) and John Rudd, home-grown schools international goalkeeper.

Thus by the time CRMA, a county amateur soccer player himself, became headmaster, the game was well established. Keith, a war-time naval officer and one of the few survivors from the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle, sunk in the Mediterranean, felt that his legs had done enough and passed his wand to a younger man, Peter Mitchell, who in turn, handed it on in January 1971 to Pat Vaughan, Cambridge blue and Pegasus player. The success of the late sixties was carried on through seventies and eighties with increasing numbers of players. The acceptance of the principle that the game could be played by juniors as their choice produced amazing results.

The national schools competition provided opportunities for Millfield soccer to attract the attention of sports writers, and to earn good publicity for the school, not just for



the players' skills but also for their good bearing and behaviour on and off the pitch. The 1st XI of 1968, inspired by skipper John Rudd and including luminaries from other sports such as 'Dasher' Denning (cricket), Peter Marsh (hockey), Paul Sussams and Stuart Creed, (tennis), and also Steve Hamer, one day to be chairman of Swansea City, reached the quarter-final at the first attempt. The team of 1972 went one better, losing in the second replay of the semi-final with St Clement Danes. Led by Mike Ashwin, a final trialist for the England schools XI, the side contained future international player Nigel Fenner in goal, and Simon Stokes in midfield. The latter captained the 1974 XI, which included Shaun Penny, who was sponsored by Bristol City FC, whose directors wanted him to be able to complete his school education before signing professional forms. The fact that even he, who was expected by the footballing world to have a highly successful career and had been brought up to expect to reach the top, remained in the lower divisions, helps to explain why Millfield's records show no OM in the Premier League. The exigencies of the training regime for aspiring soccer pros could not be matched in schools where the priority is the development of intellect.

The captain of 1976's outstanding team, Neil Rowlands, won a place in the Public Schools XI and a soccer scholarship at Brown University in the USA, whilst Nick Morrill went on to gain a blue at Oxford. It was almost ten years before another 1st XI climbed the heights beyond the Somerset cup, which was almost annually in the Library trophy cupboard. In 1984 they reached the quarter-final of the National, and in 1985 the semis, including a replay of course.

Pat Vaughan had given way to Phil Cookson, who saw his lads win all their other inter-school matches, whilst Nick Gates was selected for England under-18. Injury prevented him playing, though he was able to join skipper Paul Baverstock, Jamie Hill and Nick Francis in the Public Schools XI. In 1986 Paul, in his second season as coin-spinner, led a much less star-studded side to the national quarter-final, where they were stymied again in a replay. The following year saw some excellent results in inter-school matches, but that elusive something that creates a great side was not there. However in 1988 it was.

Cumbrian farmer's son John Holliday, captain and centre of the defence, played the vital part in uniting a group of which only three had held regular places in the previous year's 1st XI. Interspersed with the normal fixture list were eight away matches in the national competition, before they at last played at home in the semi-final, winning 3-1 against Norfolk College of Art and Technology on 'The Jubilee'. The final, played at Leicester City's Filbert Street stadium, ended in triumph for Millfield over Lutterworth GS by one goal to nil. John had already played for the England B junior team, whilst two other members of his team were selected for the England XI the following year. Sadly Will Royall had to withdraw through injury, but Robin Taylor won his cap, the first Millfieldian to do so for fifteen years.

These successes were a wonderful near-retirement present for Colin, who as master i/c games in the sixties had insisted on a fair crack of the whip for soccer, along with the encouragement of all sports which could be run practically in the school environment. Thus, apart from the wealth of swimmers and athletes, Millfield was represented at the Olympics during his headship and principalship at fencing (Robert Bruniges, 1976, 80, 84), hockey,

330 modern pentathlon (Michael Mumford, 1984, Dominic Mahony, bronze medal, 1988), sailing (Chris Law, 1984), skiing (David Cargill, 1980), tennis (Andrew Castle, 1988) and water-polo (Amin Shahin, 1984). As for under-19 international performers, many of whom appeared more than once, athletics provided 16, basketball 4, biathlon 1, canoeing 3, cricket 20, cross-country 2, diving 1, fencing 19, golf 7, hockey 12, judo 4, modern pentathlon 6, modern tetrathlon 3, netball 3, orienteering 7, polo 1, rugby football 9, show-jumping 1, skiing 6, soccer 3, squash 5, swimming 52, table-tennis 1, tennis 25, triathlon 1 and water-polo 1. It is important to remember that these numbers include boys and girls.

340 Equally worthy of note, of course, are the organisers and coaches of the 'minor' games, Major Paddy Burke for all things to do with the horse, Paul Wootton and Ian Hunt for basketball, Bryant Fell with the pentathlon and other 'thlons', Renée Oderfeld on the ski slopes, Brian Lewis and Norman Golding in the salle, Eric Westwell on the links, Rob Eagle on the Brue, and every one of those who gave their time and energy to ensure that every pupil had worthwhile tuition and experience in sport and all those activities which make up the Millfield Activities programme, descendant of the Combined Training scheme.



## Chapter 38

### Teaching and Learning. Music, Drama and Art. CRMA continues to develop the school. 1972-90.

10 What is much more difficult to gauge is the quality of classroom teaching over the twenty years. Millfield's early success was built to a considerable extent on the ability of the tutors to cope with the learning difficulties of individual pupils, and the school quite rightly takes pride in its remedial departments. Their skills have helped their protégés to fulfil their potential, which inevitably is not going to be university entrance in a fair number of cases. However, it is interesting to compare the numbers entering university in 1972, the end of CRMA's first full year as headmaster, and those on his retirement, bearing in mind that the isp list increased by some 200 during that period. The first figures are:- 65 into British universities, including 25 to Oxford or Cambridge, plus 10 to the USA, while the second are :- 118 overall, 22 of whom qualified for Oxford or Cambridge. I think it is fair to note that in 1989 the Oxford - Cambridge entry was 31 out of a total of 117. Swings and roundabouts!

20 The vastly improved teaching conditions, especially in the science laboratories, obviously encouraged staff and pupils, while the huge extension of the use of audio-visual aids in all the classrooms made a considerable contribution to the pleasures of learning. Colin was particularly interested in this latter development, and along with Peter Turner, published a guide book to help other schools set up a successful system in the light of Millfield's experience. He was well aware that the school was already known for innovation in the educational world, and was determined to keep that aspect going by welcoming visitors from other schools, particularly those boys' boarding schools wanting to assimilate girls into their monastic organisations. There were regular visits from universities and teacher training colleges, and, perhaps not surprisingly because of the school's constantly widening and improving record, the minister for sport, Denis Howell, came in 1976 to see  
30 how it was done. Much talk of the government recognizing 'Schools of Sporting Excellence' naturally came to nothing, but CRMA and the governors were already embarked on a voyage to gain acceptance in the arts world.

Music was the first beneficiary when the headmaster announced an increase in the number of scholarships to be awarded, along with the opening of the newly built concert hall added on to the Lodge, which had been redecorated. Lunch-time recitals became a regular feature of the department's programme, whilst the school orchestra and a new motet choir flourished under the enthusiastic direction of Geoff Keating.

40 The choir was particularly successful in bringing the school's music to the attention of the local public by taking their songs to churches and, especially memorably, to Montacute House. The high quality of instrumental teaching helped 19 pupils to gain

selection for the National Youth Orchestras between 1971 and 1990, and one of them, horn player Jeremy Pooley, was a finalist in the Young Musician of the Year competition in 1989-90. The department has been equally successful in sending its products on to universities and music colleges, as well as creating a love of music in the school, even if amongst some it is only the excitement of taking part in the 'house-shout', the annual inter-house song contest. The inaugural competition was held at Strode theatre in 1973 and was won by the then Millfield, Hollies and Oakland house grouping.

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The extension to the music complex completed in 1985 brought the whole department under one roof for the first time and at last provided a home for what had been a peripatetic art at Millfield, the dance. An octagonal building, with music practice rooms on the ground floor, contains a splendid dance studio. Up to that time the teachers too had been peripatetic, but they were not easily defeated, even when faced with rugby players anxious to increase their mobility. Along with many others, the latter were encouraged to develop strength by using the good equipment provided by the school in the 'weights shed'. Naturally this was carefully supervised by members of the games staff, but, although properly qualified, they were not necessarily good dancers.

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The school's golden jubilee year finally brought home another kind of dancing, ballroom, and, for that matter weight-training. The huge new sports centre, the 'Jubilee', provided space for both of these activities, as well as basketball, hockey, soccer, cricket, table-tennis, climbing and what-you-will. The Christmas ball and the leavers' ball had in their time been held in such divergent settings as Glastonbury Town Hall, the Grand Hotel (now the Wessex) in Street, Wells Town Hall, Crispin Hall, Kingweston, and, from 1975, the dining hall and tuck shop, each presenting their own particular problems for the organisers. One of these was that of decoration of the rooms involved, which was invariably taken on by the art department.

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To all intents and purposes it was Elnith Sankey who introduced art to Millfield in 1940, persuading her cousin to allow her to teach drawing and painting in the Chalet as well as helping the juniors with their English. She was succeeded in turn by Selma Hedges, Anthony Rossiter, Austen Hall, and Dugal Reid. Each had to struggle with pupils working in a scattering of huts, though the last named had the benefit of a concentration of them in the old orchard car park area for some three years.

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Results were remarkably good under the circumstances, whilst staff and pupils regularly showed themselves to be good painters of theatre scenery. The turnover of heads of department continued with some regularity until 1987, when Len Green, who was the first to benefit from Colin's last important building project, the Fine Arts Centre, took office. Subsequently dedicated to the memory of CRMA, and containing a superb work space and art gallery, along with the Millfield Sculpture Commission first awarded in 1989, it at last brought the study of art to the attention of the whole school, rather than just the chosen few. These latter were of course among those who painted scenery for the drama department.

The school is well known for its connections with the stage, films, and television. These began early in the post second world war period, when stars, directors and producers

90 entrusted their offspring to the tender mercies of educators who operated in most unsophisticated surroundings. Fergus Ferguson-Young, with occasional help, and original works, from Robert Bolt, and then Olive Murphy showed wondrous skills in coaxing splendid performances from their amateur actors and actresses in unlikely spaces and in very diverse shows.

Excellent co-operation between the drama department and the music department created high quality musicals derived from London and New York theatres, such as 'Oliver', with the bursar, Dick Redman, as Fagin (who else?), 'Guys and Dolls', and 'Oh! What a Lovely War'. For the latter the woodwork department helped to extend the length of the stage by about a third of the length of the salle, in order to allow the dancers to show their paces. Of the great diversity of stage plays presented over the years, one production stands out particularly in the memories of those who took part and of the audiences. This was Robert Bolt's 'Man for All Seasons' in 1979, written in its radio and, a little later, TV format, in his thatched cottage just below the Rose and Portcullis at Butleigh, while he was an English tutor at Millfield.

110 On reflection one might well consider that all this frenetic activity must have had a deleterious effect on Colin's health, especially after 1985, the onset of cancer being so unpredictable. He had already proved himself a good delegater and he had excellent delegates in the new headmaster, Brian Gaskell, and the heads of years, two of whom had been headmasters in their own right before joining Millfield.

Brian stepped into the hot seat seamlessly. He was popular with the teaching staff, who knew him as a top-class director of studies and deputy headmaster, as well as a delightful if occasionally eccentric colleague. So Colin should not have had to worry on the senior school score, and Edgarley was in safe hands of his own ex-assistant housemaster, Tim Taylor.

120 Unfortunately the latter was negotiating his own departure to the headship of Bromsgrove, where he was to create, in the view of many, a mirror-image of a well-known co-educational school in Somerset. Tim's replacement at Edgarley, who won the job in open competition, was George Marsh, a member of Brian's directorate of studies team who had been a pupil and subsequently a teacher at the Dragon school in Oxford, the largest prep school in Britain. Thus the organisation of day-to-day affairs in both schools continued without serious problems, and the new pre-prep Abbey school found its feet.

130 However Colin was not willing to restrict his activities in the way that the governors had hoped that he would. He continued to work for Somerset cricket as president of the county club, raising funds for new facilities at the ground in Taunton. Not surprisingly the pavilion was named in his honour. He had joined the board of the local independent television company, HTV West, in 1982 and became its chairman in 1988. His work at Lords as chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board went on as long as he felt fit enough to do it. This meant finding a new but perhaps less strenuous outlet than in the past, and he took to golf, which he claimed to have rather despised in the past. Inevitably he showed the natural ball-game player's ability to adapt to a new stance and swing, quickly catching

up with the handicaps of his partners from the teaching staff. So pleased was he with his prowess and the comradeship, along with the challenge of the links or course being played, that in January 1989 he suggested to the master i/c golf, Eric Westwell, that he should investigate the possibility of forming a golfing society among the Millfield staff. On Good Friday, 24th March, the first competition was held at the Sherborne golf club.

In a sense this was a further extension of Colin's efforts to build up the Millfield 'family', which included the regular 'Headmaster's Parties', where pupils mingled socially with tutors and their families, and the formation in 1975 of the Twenty-One Club, which brought together all those who had served the school in whatever capacity for that number of years consecutively. If the latter was more popular than the former, it was only because the youngsters approached the gathering with trepidation, wondering how they could possibly hold conversations with the 'oldies'. Little did they know then that some of the oldies felt much the same.

What perhaps no one knew, with the exception of Colin himself, Joyce Meyer, and Boss, was that he was trying to bring the then ailing founder back into his rightful position of honour.

On 12th February 1989 Colin wrote him a note, accompanied by a small gift:

"R.J.O.M.

Some sustenance - with every good wish.

If you could bear it, I'd much like to come to see you: and I'll 'phone Joyce first to check on how you feel about that.

I'm very sorry your lungs are in poor condition. By the way, I agree with you re. S. Africa. But Counties are running scared of T.C.C.B. money (not that it's a lot anyway!)

Regards, Colin"

The card was carefully filed, but neither knew that there was so little time left, and Colin's award of the CBE unquestionably stuck in the craw of his predecessor. Rumour had it, however, that the great man was seen watching a 1st XI cricket match from a car in the summer of 1990, fifty-five years since he had first seen the ground through the window of a taxi on the road from Castle Cary.