

CHAPTER TEN

Lt.-Col.William John Ricketts, M.A., 1947-1954¹

COL.RICKETTS' APPOINTMENT

As soon as the Governors had received Mr.Wilkins' resignation, the task of finding his replacement got underway. Applications were invited for the post of Headmaster, which was to carry a salary £50 above the basic; there were 104 applications. In February 1947, a shortlist of ten was drawn up, including Mr.Rawlings, and Mr.Russell, who had served on the staff for 12 years before his appointment as Headmaster of *Ballyclare High School* in 1939. That shortlist was cut to 7 and then to three, T.A.Cowan, R.E.Russell and Lt.-Col.William J.Ricketts, M.A., who was unanimously elected.

Since *Crosby House* would no longer be the Headmaster's Residence by the time Col.Ricketts took up his post, the Governors took steps to find a suitable alternative. They looked at 7 College Avenue, but in the end they paid £3,850 for 123 Groomsport Road, which Col.Ricketts felt would '*make a very pleasant home*'. With a deficit of over £1,200 in the bank, it was necessary for the Governors to cash in some of the School's investments. After less than three years in residence, the Ricketts were finding the house on Groomsport Road '*not altogether suitable*'; it was too far from the School, suffered from damp and was having a depressing effect on Col.Ricketts' wife Pamela, who was, reported the *Spectator*, '*a Yorkshire lady*'. In the Autumn of 1950, 123 Groomsport Road was sold for £3,350 and 15 Ward Avenue purchased for £3,000 in its place; a garage was built and other renovations carried out. Just 3 years later, it was discovered that the Ward Avenue property also suffered from rising damp, since the paths were above the damp course.



W.J.Ricketts, M.A. (1947-1954) in 1948

W.J.Ricketts was born in 1914 and was educated at *Wolverhampton Grammar School*, where he won an Open Scholarship in Mathematics to *Jesus College Cambridge*, together with a Borough of Wolverhampton Major Scholarship and a State Scholarship. While at school, he had captained both the rugby and cricket teams, and at *Cambridge* he won the distinction of a Double First in the Mathematical Tripos, gained his rugby 'blue' and represented the College at cricket. He

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the information contained in this chapter has been taken from the Minutes of the Board of Governors, the Minutes of Meetings of Subscribers, or the *County Down Spectator* reports on Prize Days, Sports Days and *Old Boys' Association* Dinners. For those who may be interested in consulting the *Spectator*, the relevant dates are: Prize Day – 27 March 1948, 2 April 1949, 18 March 1950, 24 March 1951, 29 March 1952, 28 March 1953 and 27 March 1954; Sports Day – 12 June 1948, 4 June 1949, 3 June 1950, 2 June 1951, 6 June 1952, 6 June 1953 and 29 May 1954; *Old Boys' Association* Dinners – 27 December 1947, 25 December 1948, 26 November 1949, 18 November 1950, 8 December 1951, 29 November 1952, 21 November 1953 and 18 December 1954.

joined the Mathematics Department of *Campbell College* in 1936 and became Signals Officer in the *Officer Training Corps*.

During the War, he went through the Burma campaign as second in command of the *Royal Signals Branch, 36th Division*, which was the first unit to cross the Irrawaddy. In 1945, he was appointed to the command of the *Waziristan Signals* on the North West Frontier. On his demobilization in December 1945, he was awarded the honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Returning to *Campbell College* as Senior Mathematics Master, he took over command of the *O.T.C.* and became a Housemaster.²

POST-WAR BANGOR

By the time Col.Ricketts became Headmaster, tourism had become Bangor's main industry. In 1950 *Bangor Tourist Development Association* was formed. The following year the census recorded the town's population as 22,000 and there were 22 hotels and 112 guest houses with over 1,200 beds, not counting the furnished houses available for rent during the Summer season. In Col.Ricketts' final year in Bangor, the Northern Ireland Minister of Finance, speaking at the *Tourist Development Association Dinner*, praised the town as the centre of the Northern Ireland tourist industry. Meanwhile, Bangor Castle had become the Town Hall, and in January 1953 Northern Ireland had been stunned by the sinking of the *Princess Victoria* off the Copeland Islands; one of those lost - within sight of his home near Donaghadee - was Sir Walter Smiles, M.P. for North Down, who had been the Guest of Honour at Prize Day just three years earlier. Another friend of the School, The Rt.Hon.Lt.-Col. the Viscount Bangor, P.C., O.B.E., D.L., Chairman of the Board of Governors since 1911, died in 1950, aged 82.³

AND THE POST-WAR WORLD

Despite the death of Stalin in 1953, on the world stage Col.Ricketts' time as Headmaster was dominated by the early stages of the Cold War and the fear of Communism: the Berlin airlift, the formation of the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, the victory of Mao Zedong's Communists in China, the Korean War, 'McCarthyism' in the U.S.A., the defection of Burgess and McLean, and the capture of Dien Bien Phu by Ho Chi Minh's Communist forces, which marked the end of French colonial rule in Indo-China and increased American involvement in Vietnam.

Elsewhere, India gained her independence, Gandhi was assassinated, the state of Israel was proclaimed, increased *Mau Mau* activity in Kenya marked a further stage in the disintegration of the British Empire, and the policy of *apartheid* was introduced in South Africa. In the United Kingdom, London hosted the first post-war Olympic Games, the Ireland Act recognized the independence of the Republic of Ireland and Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne. Her coronation took place on the day the news broke that Hilary and Tenzing had scaled Mount Everest. (A new Union Jack was presented to the School and pictures of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were hung in 'A' Room for Coronation year.)

While worrying about '*Reds under the beds*', some comfort might have been derived from Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh in *A Streetcar named Desire*, Alec Guinness in *The Lavender Hill Mob*, or *The Archers* on the wireless, although it was estimated that there were already 42,000 television sets in Britain.

In science and technology, the first British nuclear reactor was built at Harwell, the *de Havilland Comet*, the world's first jet airliner, came into service, the contraceptive pill was first made, immunization against polio was introduced, Crick and Watson unravelled the structure of D.N.A. and the *National Health Service* came into being.

² *County Down Spectator*, 1 March 1947.

³ J.McCoy, *An Index to the County Down Spectator 1904-1964* (1983); Bangor Civic Week Souvenir Handbook, 1951.

THE RICKETTS' ERA BEGINS

Writing in *The Gryphon* at the end of his first term, Col.Ricketts paid tribute to Mr.Wilkins' devotion to the school and he continued:

'I am very proud and honoured at being appointed its Headmaster. In the history of education, the School is still a young one, but by the efforts of its teachers and its boys, it has achieved great distinctions and has built up fine traditions. Since its foundation in 1856 it has grown rapidly and today it is still growing fast; such expansion has called repeatedly for material changes in the fabric of the School, and even in my short time here considerable changes have taken place, including the conversion for school use of Crosbie [sic] House, the home of my predecessors. Now with the widening of educational opportunity offered by the new Act, we are again faced with problems of development, rendered extremely difficult by the acute shortage of building material even for temporary constructions.

*'But through all the material changes and developments which are necessary to suit the modern requirements of education, the spirit and character of the School must remain unaltered. There has been a change of Headmaster, but there will be no change in the great ideals for which my predecessors and their staffs, with the loyal support of the boys, have striven since the School was founded. In the difficult tasks which lie ahead we need as much as ever the loyalty and support of boys, present and past, that the School may fulfil its great destiny and move on to even greater glory. I hope that the boys of today, and of tomorrow, will always be able to look back on their school with the same pride and affection which, I know, is felt by the boys of yesterday.'*⁴

THE 1947 EDUCATION ACT

The 1947 Education Act ushered in a new era. One of Col.Ricketts' first public appearances was when he addressed 120 parents on the Act. It made morning prayers compulsory, brought an end to the small *Regional Education Committees* and brought into being the *County Education Committees*, and a '*Qualifying Examination*', first held in 1948, was to be taken by pupils at the newly named '*primary*' schools at '*eleven plus*', to select those pupils who were deemed to be suited to a grammar school education. (That year, 17 boys from *Connor House* and 38 from the Junior Forms of the Senior School sat the Qualifying examination). Col.Ricketts thought it was '*a great tragedy that the most important examination of a boy's life took place at the age of eleven*', but he accepted that '*there seems no better way of sorting out the boys for the University Examination*' and he believed that, '*The diligent boy of limited ability will succeed where the intelligent lazy boy will fail in examinations, as he will in life*'. The Act also proposed raising the school leaving age to 15, although that was not done until 1957.

An important choice was given to voluntary schools under the Act. They could become Voluntary 'A' schools, which were obliged to accept not less than 80% of '*qualified*' pupils in their intake; in return, these schools received a 65% grant towards approved expenditure. In Voluntary 'B' schools, admission was at the discretion of the governing body, but those schools were not eligible for capital grants. They were entitled to charge higher fees than the scholarship, and parents of scholarship-holders would have to pay the difference. These schools were free to apply any profit as they chose.

Speaking to the *Old Boys' Association* only months after his appointment, Col.Ricketts commented on what he called the '*material deficiencies*' of the School; despite the conversion of *Crosby House*, they needed '*new classrooms, a gymnasium, a good library, playing fields, a pavilion and changing rooms*'. In November 1948, the Board of Governors asked him to report on the immediate extension requirements and several months later an architect was appointed to draw up plans '*for the additions required in September 1950*', for accommodation was already '*taxed to capacity*', with 224 boys in the Senior School and 86 in *Connor House*. In September 1949, the Ministry of Education gave its approval for plans to build a new block with three laboratories

⁴ *The Gryphon*, December 1947.

and five classrooms, while converting the existing laboratories into additional toilets and cloakrooms, to conform to its standards of one washbasin for every ten boys and five feet of urinal per 25! In addition, 'A' Room acquired a sliding partition, thus creating 'J' Room and a classroom in the Barn was to be converted for extra dining accommodation, while a new block with 3 laboratories and 5 classrooms was to be built. (Commenting on the Barn, which remained in use as classroom accommodation until 1959, Col.Ricketts said, *'I always used to avoid the Barn while showing parents around the School. Confiding this to another very wise Headmaster, he told me not to do that, but to show it saying "You won't find a worse classroom outside of Eton"'*).⁵ In December 1949, the editor of *The Gryphon* was *'eagerly looking forward to the erection of the new buildings.'* He continued,

*'There appears to be some difficulty, however, about funding our share of the cost. . . . Two alternatives seem to present themselves: either we raise about £10,000 by some method not specified, or we lose our independence and are handed over to the Local Education Authority.'*⁶

S.M.Claney, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors told the *Old Boys' Association* that their *'nest-egg'* had been spent and he admitted that the Board did not yet know how they were going to solve the problem, but he said that any decision which meant that *'the traditions and independence of a School like ours should be lost . . . would be a matter of great regret'*.

Under the circumstances, it was necessary to delay any expansion plans while the Governors debated whether to opt for Group 'A' or 'B' status. A Sub-Committee was set up to investigate the matter and, although a report in the *Northern Whig* in July 1950 anticipated the decision of the Committee, it was not until the end of the year that Norman Handforth reported its findings to the full Board: if the Governors chose Group 'B', then there would be no capital grants under the 1947 Education Act, and as a result *'any large development scheme would have to be drastically modified'*; if, on the other hand, Group 'A' status was opted for, the School would lose a degree of independence. The sub-committee made no recommendation, but after very serious consideration, the Board opted for Group 'B' and greater independence, bearing in mind that the decision could be reversed at any time. Mr.Claney averred that they had *'made a wise decision'*. However, there was no more talk of the *'new block'* until the beginning of 1954, when the Headmaster reminded the Board of the need for new laboratories and toilets. In the meantime, the paths round the School were tarmacadamed and electric heaters were installed in the Chemistry laboratory and in 'A' Room. In 1953, however, J.P.Simms, Secretary to the Board of Governors admitted that in his experience there was not any tremendous Ministry interference in the running of Group 'A' schools and, *'as one man has rather wisely put it, the only difference between an "A" school and a "B" school is 65%'*. The Headmaster was asked to report on how Group 'A' status was working, so that the Governors could review the School's Group 'B' status.

In the School's centenary year, 1956, it was transferred to Group 'A', because of the huge cost of the planned extension to the buildings. It was a wise decision, because at least one other school sank so far into debt, while preserving its independence, that in the early 1960s it was forced to become a controlled school, entirely under the County Education Committee.⁷

THE CHARLESWORTH REPORT

In 1950, the *Charlesworth Committee* recommended changes in the organization of secondary school education. Prior to that, pupils had spent three years studying for the Junior Certificate, and could remain at school for a further two years before taking the Senior Certificate examinations. Some schools, like *Bangor Grammar School*, already offered a sixth year, but now

⁵ Col.Ricketts, in a letter to the author, November 2002.

⁶ *The Gryphon*, December 1949.

⁷ This was the fate of *Cambridge House School* in Ballymena, where the author later taught.

admission to university was to be dependent on the results of 'Advanced Senior' examinations, first held in 1952, when the School had 4 successful candidates. Col.Ricketts deplored the fact that *'in the absence of specimen papers, we are left to judge for ourselves how "advanced" or how "ordinary" those papers will be'*, and indeed when the boys sat the examinations, it was apparent that there were *'wide anomalies in the standard required by the different advanced level papers, which appeared to be much more severe in the literary than in the scientific subjects'*. To illustrate this, Col.Ricketts pointed out that Bertie Styles (a future Vice-Principal at the School) was placed 20th in Calculus with 366 marks, while Ken Hawtin (or 'Tweet', son of 'The Bird') was placed 14th in History with only 283 marks. The syllabuses in all subjects except English and Mathematics were the same for both ordinary and advanced papers, but the examination, said Col.Ricketts, favoured the larger schools, where the candidates for the two papers could be taught in two distinct sets. The *Charlesworth Committee* had rejected the recommendation of both the *Headmasters'* and the *Assistant Masters' Associations* for a general certificate of education which, like the new English examination, abolished the 'group' system under which a candidate failed the whole examination if he failed in one compulsory subject. Continuing his criticism of the new arrangements, Col.Ricketts said,

'There is a tendency already for schools to enter pupils for the ordinary papers only, and put them in for a supplementary certificate of advanced papers the following year. These are not scholarship papers and to spend a second year on the same syllabus to answer harder questions for the award of a scholarship may be expedient, but it is not education. It is the intention to introduce scholarship papers on an increased syllabus to be taken one year after Senior, but until these papers are introduced we have serious misgivings about the value of the advanced level papers on the evidence of what we have seen.'

He was clearly not alone, for in 1954 he was able to report that panels of experts were redrafting the syllabuses to increase the standard of the advanced level papers. This would in future, he believed, make it necessary to teach Ordinary and Advanced Level candidates in separate classes or to enter them for the Advanced Level the year after sitting Ordinary Level.

Biology was introduced into the Senior Certificate in 1949; Desmond Cole-Baker regards this as *'a major development'*. Although the School had neither the staff nor the space, it was not going to be left behind. Mr.Cole-Baker, a Chemist who had never taught the subject, volunteered to take it on and, since classes were expected to be small initially, the attic of *Crosby House* was utilized. Mr.Cole-Baker recalls:

'An old water tank was used to preserve objects for dissection. Students were few, but very keen; one by the name of [Alistair John] Gilmour became interested in underwater photography and tried to make an underwater camera using a normal camera with a Perspex case. Much of what we required in the first year was made by ourselves but, by the final year of the course, we were quite well equipped. If examination results were a guide to success, we obtained three students in the top ten marks'.

Col.Ricketts reported that A.H.G.Love came 2nd in Senior Biology in 1951. He went on to graduate with First Class Honours in Physiology and in Medicine from *Queen's University Belfast*. (In 1978, Gary Love, B.Sc., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., F.R.C.P., Professor of Gastroenterology at *Queen's*, was the Guest of Honour on Prize Day).⁸

COL.RICKETTS MAKES HIS MARK

Col.Ricketts' seven-year tenure saw a number of innovations: in 1947, Report Cards were introduced, and a Head Prefect – Norman G.Derby – was appointed for the first time. (Forty

⁸ Desmond Cole-Baker, in a letter to the author, January 2003; *County Down Spectator*, 26 November 1951; *The Gryphon*, 1978.

years later, Col.Ricketts was 'privileged' to meet him again, in Australia, where he had been sent as a civil engineer to complete a bridge-building contract).⁹

THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL BANGOR

INTERIM REPORT CARD

THIS card reports on Progress and Industry from time to time during the term. The first letter in a column refers to Progress and the second letter to Industry.

A indicates GOOD
B indicates FAIR, but not his Best
C indicates UNSATISFACTORY

Parents are requested to sign the card and to co-operate in obtaining greater effort from boys with adverse reports.

Date	GRAM	WYN	ENGLISH	GEOMETRY	ALGEBRA	SCIENCE	Conduct	House Master's Initials	Parent's Signature
25/9/62	B A	A A	A B	B A	B D	B A	✓	W.D.	J.M.S.
16/10/62	B A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	A.B.G.
13/11/62	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	J.M.S.
21/11/62	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	A.B.G.
22/1/63	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	J.M.S.
12/2/63	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	J.M.S.
5/3/63	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	A.B.G.
26/3/63	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	J.M.S.
14/5/63	A A	A A	A B	B A	B A	B A	✓	W.D.	J.M.S.

A Report Card, dating from the early 1960s

(The first 'A', 'B' or 'C' was for 'Progress', the second was for 'Industry'.

A 'C' for Industry resulted in a 'C' Card, which was filled in each period for a week, taken to the Headmaster at the end of each day and signed by a parent.)

In 1949, a Prefects' Tie and metal cap badge were designed; and the following year, Honours Badges instead of Caps and around 6 'colours' were awarded each year for Cricket, Rugby and Swimming. (Honours Caps had been unobtainable during the War and by 1950 they were very expensive, so at the *Old Boys' Association* Dinner that year, Mr.Wilkins presented the Honours Badges awarded for rugby since 1939. It was also pointed out that no names had been engraved on the sports cups since 1939, due to shortage of silver and craftsmen.) Grace was introduced before canteen lunches in 1949, where the meals, by 1952, cost 10d. At the instigation of the *Old Boys' Association*, shortly before Col.Ricketts' resignation, Sir Gerald W.Wollaston, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., *Norroy and Ulster King of Arms* agreed to prepare the correct School Crest for a fee of £66. In addition, Miss Addy offered to prepare Rolls of State Exhibitioners, County Scholarship holders and Headboys.



The Grant of Arms

⁹ Col.Ricketts, loc.cit.

A Prospectus, dating from around 1949, lays down guidelines for homework: boys under 12 should spend 1 to 1½ hours each night and boys over 12, 1½ to 2½ hours. It also listed a number of School Rules including: *'Billiard Halls and buildings containing gambling machines are out of bounds'*, (although the *Old Boys' Association* noted in 1954 that former pupil Billy Dennison had won the Junior Individual Billiard Championship and *'seems to have a great future ahead of him'*). Writing out the School Rules and doing *'cubes'* - multiplying a three or four digit number by itself and the result by the original number, then dividing until one arrived at the original number again, showing each stage of the calculation - remained popular impositions for miscreants for many years.

THE SCHOOL SONG

The Gryphon, June 1950, recorded that, *'The three stanzas of our new school song link the missionary work of the three early saints with the learning for which Bangor was still noted in the early Middle Ages and our aspirations for the School today. A blend of classical and medieval Latin has been used, and has proved eminently singable. Many will recognise Juvenal's "mens sana in corpore sano", still the scholastic ideal'*. The song had its first performance on Speech Day, 16 March 1950. The words are by Miss Patton and the setting by Dr. Emery. Tom Boal, who was in the first class to perform it in public, recalls that *'when Miss Patton wrote the original words, she sent them to her Oxford Don to have them checked. We had been learning them for a few weeks when she announced that the word ubique should be changed to quolibet - it was apparently more accurate'*.¹⁰

Carmen Noster

Comgall Noster, Columbanus,
Sanctus noster Gall Britannos
Effecere Christianos,
Floreat Bangoria – deo laus et gloria.

Sana mens in corpore sano
Hic quaeratur, et humano
Quisque sit, discipulus
Animo. Ne pavidus
Exeat, Laboratorus
Inter pares, oraturus
Oraturus,
Fidem quolibet laturus.

Veritatis hinc cultures
Ibant olim professors,
Hinc Oxonian doctores.
Floreat Bangoria – deo laus et gloria.

Sana mens . . .

Hinc eamus verecundi
Viri; nunc arcane mundi
Sacra ferimus fecundi.
Floreat Bangoria – deo laus et gloria.

Sana mens . . .

Our own Comgall and Columbanus,
our own St. Gall made the Britons
Christian. May Bangor flourish – to
God be the praise and glory.

Here let a sound mind and a sound
body be sought, and let every pupil
be of a civilised spirit. Let him go
out without fear, to work among his
fellows, to pray, to carry his faith
with him everywhere.

From here the devotees of truth used
to go formerly to make its claims;
from here they went to Oxford as
teachers. May Bangor flourish – to
God be the praise and glory.

Let us go from here as men with a
sense of reverence. Nowadays it is
the holy mysteries of the teeming
universe that we carry. May Bangor
flourish – to God be the praise and
glory.

¹⁰ Tom Boal, loc.cit.

THE SCHOOL CREST

T.M.Boal (Form V) wrote an article in *The Gryphon* in June 1953 entitled *Our School Badge*. In it he explained:

'We cannot consider our badge as a Coat of Arms mainly because it is not registered, but the badge is heraldically composed and follows the rules of Heraldry.

'The main parts of our badge are the shield, the gryphon and the foliage or "lambrequin". In a coat of arms or an achievement the shield plays a very important part because on it are depicted the emblems of the house or person to whom it belongs. The shield is divided into different heraldic parts and in the case of the school badge the division is known as "per bend". . . . A bend is a division going from the top left hand corner or "chief dexter" corner to the lower right hand corner or "base sinister", that is when one is facing the shield.

'In the School shield the division is "bend dancette" this being the wavelike line, which actually represents the sea. These parts are gold coloured or heraldically termed "or". The field of the shield or the colour of the ground of the shield is blue or "azure". At the top right hand and the bottom left hand corner, that is the "chief sinister" and "base dexter", are "mullets" or stars. When the School was opened it was to train boys for the sea and so the stars represent such a career. . . . The shield has a "bordure" or border of gold.

'Surmounting the shield and upon which the gryphon rests is the "torse". This is a wreathlike object immediately on top of the shield. This is divided into five and coloured alternatively "azure" and "or".

'The gryphon, or as it is sometimes spelt, the griffen, surmounts the torse. This is a monster with the body, hind legs and tail of a lion and the head and claws of an eagle, the latter being the forepaws. It has the wings of an eagle which are never represented closed. The head has ears, the only difference between an eagle's and a gryphon's. In the badge, the gryphon is "couchant", that is lying with the head erect and alert.

'The lambrequin or foliage, which has been added recently, is of the acanthus nature. This is coloured red and green or "gules" and "vert".

'Below the shield on a scroll are written the words "Bangor Grammar School".'

It was not until 1955 that the motto was chosen, by the Headmaster and Governors, after consulting Mr.Wilkins and Professor M.J.Boyd. *'Justitiae Tenax'* means *'holding fast to the right'*. According to *The Gryphon* (December 1955): *'justitiae is one of those Latin words which cannot be translated by one English word; it combines the ideas of justice, fairness, and uprightness. Living up to our motto, then, implies a determination always to do the right thing, to do our duty, and to refuse to be turned away into easier and possible more attractive paths. If we succeed, we shall be JUSTITIAE TENAX'*.

STAFF CHANGES

Several long-serving members of staff retired or resigned during these years. John Rawlings, effectively the first Head of *Connor House* left in 1950, having been on the Staff for seventeen years, in 1953 George Mansfield retired after 32 years' service, and Elsie Patton, whose lasting legacy was to be the School Song, resigned having been at the School for ten years. Mr.Mansfield presented the prizes at that year's *Connor House* Sports and Miss Patton did likewise at the Senior School Sports.

As the School population grew, so did the number of teachers. By 1952, there were 19 fulltime staff and Col.Ricketts could boast of class sizes of no more than 24 boys.

John Desmond Cole-Baker joined the staff in 1947. Educated at *Methodist College* Belfast, he had joined the *Royal Corps of Signals* on the outbreak of war in 1939, having been in the signals section of *Queen's University O.T.C.* During his seven years on active service, he spent time in Africa and in Asia where, by coincidence, he had served *'virtually alongside'* Col.Ricketts in

Burma. Following demobilisation in 1947, he returned to university to update his knowledge of Chemistry before embarking on his teaching career. Mr.Cole-Baker recalls that, when he arrived at the School, a great deal of new equipment was required for the Chemistry Department, and that no expense was spared in an effort to obtain it. This is best illustrated by his mercury barometer story:

'I felt the School should have one of these, although they were expensive. On investigation, I found that the barometer could only be obtained in England and could not be sent by normal freight. When packed in a wooden case, it stood about four feet high in a pillar shape. In discussion with the Headmaster, it was suggested that I should go and collect it from England! The journey will never be forgotten, as the barometer was heavy and hard to keep upright. I chose to use the Belfast-Heysham route, as the train pulled up alongside the boat in Heysham. I sat in the train for some hours, holding my precious cargo and unable to leave my seat. In Heysham, after some discussion, I was able to find a porter who would be allowed to take the barometer to my cabin. I managed to wedge it against the wash basin and rushed to get something to eat before the boat started. It turned out to be a rough crossing and most of the night I sat on my bed holding the case upright. Everything ended satisfactorily and I got it to the School without damage.'

During his eight years at the School, he helped Mr.Hawtin to run the bookstore and was involved in the school's drama productions, where he was frustrated in his desire to stage joint productions with *Glenlola*. An *I.R.F.U.* referee, he also coached the Medallion and 1st XV rugby teams. He left in 1955 to become Head of Science at the *International School* in Geneva. Although he spent most of his working life in international education, in 1974, when he was Guest of Honour at the *Old Boys' Association* dinner, he was teaching in *Limavady Grammar School*. He subsequently emigrated to New Zealand.¹¹



J.D.Cole-Baker, B.Sc.(Hons.)
(1947-1955) in 1950



W.McA.Shanks, B.Sc.(Hons.)
(1947-1957) in 1950

William Shanks also came to the School in 1947. A talented rugby player, 'Hooky' represented Ulster at hooker in the Junior Inter-provincial rugby match against Leinster in 1948 and helped coach both the Under-13 and 1st XV teams. In addition he assisted with the business side of the school play. Malcolm Thomson, who remembers him as 'Pony', recalls:

'Mr. Shanks would sit at his desk with a long wooden pole with a metal hook attached to one end, whose purpose was to open and close the high classroom windows, and when we were supposed to be engaged in working out some problem, being hunched up, heads lowered, writing a solution at our desk, there would always be someone trying to engage someone else in a whispered conversation and would be brought back to reality by a hard jab or hit from the metal hook. The problem was that anyone sitting in direct line between Mr. Shanks and the offender was liable to receive part of the side of the pole along the side of his head, which would result in him having more to think about than just some complex algebraic equation.'

¹¹ Desmond Cole-Baker, loc.cit.

Mr.Shanks left to join *British Petroleum* in 1957. He returned to teaching 18 years later and retired to live in Lincolnshire.

Ernie Browne came from *Methody* in 1948 as Head of Mathematics and, despite his outstanding examination results, he is perhaps better remembered for his contribution to Music at the School after Dr.Emery's retirement; the author was one of the unappreciative boys in his '*Music Appreciation*' classes in the early 1960s, who were told, more in sorrow than in anger, '*Go home and watch your Juke Box Jury*'; Ernie Browne was, according to Harding Watson, known as '*Bohoncus*' Browne; *bohonus* was Mr.Browne's word for a '*thingamee*' or a '*doofer*'!¹² Desmond Cole-Baker also recalls his ready wit; on the days before the Board of Governors was due to consider awarding extra bonuses to members of staff, Ernie Browne quipped that, '*as each Governing Board member goes home this week, he will be saying "The onus of the bonus is upon us"*'.¹³ In 1959, *The Gryphon*, deploring the demolition of '*The Barn*', commented that, '*It was fitting that Mr.Browne was the member of staff who taught – conducted, perhaps – the last class in that ancient pile of bricks and mortar*'. He moved to *Regent House* in Newtownards in 1962 and after his retirement from teaching he graduated from *Queen's University* with a Bachelor of Music degree. Having taught at *Methodist College*, *Bangor Grammar School* and *Regent House*, it must have been with tongue in cheek that he quipped that he had '*spent twenty five years teaching in the hell-holes of Ulster*'!



W.Browne, B.A., A.(Mus.)T.C.L.
(1948-1962)



H.M.Rea, M.A.(Hons.), H.Dip.Ed.
(1948-1977) in 1949

Henry Maxwell Rea became Senior Modern Languages Master in 1948. Educated at *Methodist College* Belfast and *Christ's College* Cambridge, where he rowed for the first eight and gained an Honours Degree in Modern and Medieval Languages, he returned to his old school in 1934, where he became Resident Master and Captain of the *Army Cadet Force*. Affectionately known simply as Henry, he was a gentle and somewhat excitable man, and the boys, at times, took advantage of his sensitivity; Joe Parke recalls the occasion, in the middle of Mr.Rea's illustrious career, when Alan Booth, a talented linguist, was absent. "*Where's Booth?*", asked Henry. Ian Huddlestone replied, "*Sir, he's dead – he had a motorcycle accident*". Well, poor Henry was dreadfully shocked – as were the rest of us. Next day, Henry nearly had a heart attack when he saw Boothy in the front row.' On another occasion, the afternoon absentee slip arrived in his room: '*On doing a headcount and ascertaining all were present, he despatched James McWha with the slip to the next room. Immediately a pupil raised his hand and said, "Sir, McWha's absent"*. Henry, noticing the empty chair, nodded. "*Bring that boy back*". He opened the door and after calling "*McWha*" once, he realised his mistake. He did appreciate the joke.' Mr.Rea was '*an inveterate stoker of fires, much to the amusement of his pupils*'. One, possibly apocryphal, story has it that one class heated up the poker to give Henry a rather too warm welcome when he went to poke the fire in his classroom. '*If a free*

¹² Recollection of Harding Watson [1944-1950], October 2002.

¹³ Desmond Cole-Baker, loc.cit.

period was due for him, Henry would be down to the Staffroom to make sure that the fire would be just right in 40 minutes time'.¹⁴ The story is also told of the occasion that Mr.Rea was due to take a class of boys who had been excused from games - referred to as 'defaulters'. He answered a knock on the Staffroom door, asking the boy, 'Are you a Defaulter?' 'No', came the reply, 'I'm McNab'. (It should, perhaps, be explained that the Headboy in 1958-59 was Michael Affolter). Outside the classroom he was a highly esteemed rugby referee, both for the School and for the Rugby Union, and he set up the *Photographic Society* in 1953. He also oversaw the introduction of language laboratories in the 1960s, although his younger son describes his teaching methods as 'very effective, if somewhat brusque. He would often greet pupils coming into his class by handing a book to each boy in turn and saying "get in, sit down and shut up".' He retired in 1977 after almost thirty years' service to the School and forty-three as a schoolmaster. Sadly he enjoyed just over two years' retirement; he died in January 1980.¹⁵

Morley A.Hopkins, who attended the *University of South Wales and Monmouth*, joined the staff of *Connor House* in 1948, having done his teacher training at *Larkfield Training College* after his demobilization from the army. He is remembered with affection by generations of *Connor House* boys, despite his gruff manner. On the cricket field, he had the habit of shouting, in his pronounced Welsh accent, 'Run, you fool' at reluctant batsmen and he enjoyed spending time at the crease 'demonstrating' batting technique. It was he who created 'The Connor House Ghost' - 'a happy spirit' - which he said resided in the old bar room. Although the teacher of Form 2B in *Connor House*, he also coached the Medallion XV for some time. Dougie Rea recalls that Mr.Hopkins was 'mad keen on rugby. To stimulate our interest in the game, he would tell us how important rugby was in Wales. He said that it was like a religion in his village and if the girls weren't good looking, even they played rugby. When asked had we any questions, one boy asked, "Sir, what position did your wife play? I then witnessed a severe case of corporal punishment. Nowadays such a pupil would be sent for special needs counselling".' An inveterate smoker, he was known to send boys to the *Peter Pan* confectionery and tobacconist's shop in the *Tonic* building to buy him cigarettes - was there a brand called *Ardath*? (Some years later, Tom McVeigh was to send pupils for '20 Blues'). Captain Hopkins, along with Major Cole-Baker, was given leave each year to attend the *Territorial Army Annual Camp*. Gordon Thompson remembered one occasion when he called into school 'in full official gear, sword and all' on his way to parade before the Queen. By the time he retired in 1976, he was a Colonel and his next promotion in the *Territorials* was to Brigadier; Mr.Thomson said that he would have loved to introduce Mr.Hopkins with the words, 'this is my second-in-command, Brigadier Hopkins'.¹⁶



M.A.Hopkins
(1948-1976) in 1954



J.S.H.McKittrick, B.A.
(1948-1957) in 1956

¹⁴ Joe Parke, in an email in March 2002; recollections of Billy Mercer, December 2002 and of Kenny Browne, July 2004.

¹⁵ *The Gryphon*, 1977; Dougie Rea, speaking at the *Grammarians' Annual Dinner*, November 2005.

¹⁶ *Reminiscences of Gordon Thomson*, Autumn 2002; Dougie Rea, loc.cit.

Other arrivals during these years were Horace ‘Rufus’ McKittrick, who was described as ‘a big softie, despite his red hair’; one boy recalls: ‘handing in my homework just copped from a classmate or the blackboard, upside down; his remark – “Very neat, boy, very neat”’. Bernard F.O’Donovan spent ten years at the School between 1949 and 1959, during which he produced several of the School plays. J.D.Andrews succeeded Mr.Rawlings as Head of *Connor House* in 1950. He left six years later to become Head of *Newry Grammar School* Preparatory Department.



B.F.O’Donovan, B.A.(Hons.), Dip.Ed.
(1949-1959) in 1954



J.D.Andrews, M.A.
Head of Connor House 1950-1956



One of the few photographs of Mr.Andrews during his six years at the School,
pictured here with the Cricket XI, c. 1954.

BACK ROW: Norman Lewis, Lance Andrews, Martyn Taylor

MIDDLE ROW: John Paterson, Brian Leith, Mr.Andrews, ? , Alan Littlewood

FRONT ROW : Jim Baxter, ? , Garth Beattie, Billy Kirby, ?

Jim Driscoll succeeded Miss Patton in 1953. He was educated at *Campbell College* and *Trinity College Dublin*, where he was a member of the Golf Team. Following teaching posts in Dublin and in England, he spent six years on the staff of *Ballymena Academy*. Affectionately known as ‘*The Drip*’, he was an outstanding Classics teacher, 1st XI coach and Housemaster, at different times, of both Dufferin and School houses. Errol Steele’s *Appreciation* of him in *The Gryphon* on his retirement in 1985 captured the essence of Mr.Driscoll:

‘Three images of the man remain uppermost in my mind: firstly the venerable, silver-haired pedagogue, begowned, briefcase in hand heading for the classroom in which he held court like some latter-day Socrates; secondly, the immaculately clad batsman, with his cream flannels and his impeccable style occupying the crease at Bloomfield or Ballymacormick; thirdly, the golfer swinging freely on one of Bangor’s fairways.’¹⁷

¹⁷ *The Gryphon*, 1986.

For his part, Mr.Driscoll found the atmosphere at Bangor much more relaxed than under W.H.Mol's stern regime at *Ballymena Academy*. He remembers that there was '*quite a friendly relationship with the pupils, while at the same time good manners generally prevailed with caps being raised and doors opened*'.

'On one occasion, when a member of staff was driving along Hamilton Road, he turned suddenly into Moira Drive but, failing to notice a cyclist on the inside, knocked him off his bike. No damage was done and the boy got up, dusted himself down, raised his cap and said, "Sorry, Sir". Big insurance case now!'

He remembers, too, what Desmond Cole-Baker has called a '*contented*' Staff, which formed a chess team, which was entered in the Bangor Chess League, and had a Cricket Team, which played quite a few matches.

'It contained a nucleus of very good players, for instance Bob Matier, ex-Woodvale and Harry Eadie, ex-Armagh, and guest players such as Walter Fawcett, Primary School Headmaster and ex-Gentlemen of Ireland wicket keeper and Rev.David Burke, ex-Waringstown.'

(Thirty years later, with the likes of Chris Harte, Jack Dalzell and John Smyth available, the Staff team continued to flourish; after one match in Donaghadee, followed by a [brief] visit to *Grace Neill's*, it is alleged that several of the team adjourned to the Vice-Principal's house for, *inter alia*, ice-cream sandwiches.)¹⁸



J.C.Driscoll, B.A.(Hons.), H.Dip.Ed.
(1953-1985) in 1954

Miss Addy, who had been shared with *Glenlola* since her appointment in 1939, joined the fulltime staff in 1948 and she continued the tradition of Art Exhibitions, sometimes in the *Tonic Café* and sometimes in *Tyrone House* in Belfast. These exhibitions displayed work in a variety of media, including oils, watercolours, murals, design, posters, scraperboards and illumination. Edith Addy is also remembered for her insistence on being addressed as '*Miss Addy*' rather than merely '*Miss*', and for her method of examination supervision; after giving out the instructions, she would position herself behind the candidates, maintaining that this prevented any cheating as nobody knew exactly where she was looking.¹⁹

Jim Scott recalled:

'Miss Tipping teaching History in "B" Room and Miss Addy next door teaching Art. Moving on to "F" Room, who could forget Mr.Hawtin (The Bird) standing with his back to the open fire, his gown hoisted to the waist, obviously enjoying the heat. Next door in "G" Room we had Mr.Johnson. He seemed to enjoy catching boys by their sideburns and giving them a hoist up. . . . The only light relief was when he recalled his days in the Forces with the words, "When I was in Burma", and proceeded to tell stories of the 2nd World War. . . . Henry Rea and Bernard O'Donovan shared "K" Room. Henry fondly recalled his days of youth, when he took his bicycle to the Rhine and cycled along the great river. . . . Down a few steps and round a corner was the

¹⁸ Jim Driscoll, in a letter to the author, January 2003; reminiscences of Chris Harte, August 2004.

¹⁹ Desmond Cole-Baker, loc.cit.

*Library, which could be used for small classes such as German. Mr. Browne had "D" Room for Maths. He would bark at us as we entered, "Come in, sit down, shut up". I remember when he was teaching Algebra to us, he always wanted each step of the sum shown. . . . He would say, "One step enough for me, Brother. What hymn does that come from?" I think he was quite impressed when I replied, "Lead kindly light". In my early years, Miss Patton taught Latin in "E" Room, followed by Jim Driscoll in later years. . . . Other fond memories were of the Barn – 2 extra classrooms near the Canteen – "X" and "Y" Rooms, football during Break and Lunch outside "A" and "J" Rooms, and if the weather was inclement, the top of the cricket pitch roller was used for shove ha'penny.*²⁰

FINANCE

In 1950, the Governors expressed sympathy with the staff about their salaries, but regretted that they could do nothing to help. Although annual increments had been raised in 1948 to £15 for men, and £18 after 9 years and for women £10, and £14 after 10 years, there had only been one general salary increase since 1939 and those increases, ranging from £10 to £50 p.a., had been out of date by the time it was awarded in 1950. Messrs Johnson, McKeown, Rea, Browne, Heuston and Miss Patton were also in receipt of Post of Special Responsibility allowances of between £80 and £40 a year. In 1953 men's salaries increased by £40 and women's by £32. (It was not only in the area of pay that there was sex-discrimination: when Miss Hawthorne asked the Board if she could continue teaching in *Connor House* after her marriage at Easter 1953, it was decided that her appointment should be terminated at the end of the school year.)

As a result of salary increases and the cost of the playing fields, fees rose rapidly. In 1951, Senior School fees, which had been £20 in 1949, were raised to £26, to £28-10-0 in 1952 and to £33-5-0 the following year. *Connor House* fees also rose – from £14 to £25 between 1950 and 1954. At the same time, the concession for two or more brothers was ended and it was decided that the sons of clergy should be charged 60% and the sons of teachers 33¹/₃%, rising to 50% in future cases. Meanwhile the problem of unpaid fees persisted. A second invoice was to be sent thirty days after first, and then, after 14 days, a further letter giving 7 days to pay before the Governors resorted to legal action.

PUPILS

Although Col. Ricketts 'had an air about him . . . and he left an impression as he strode masterfully towards the Barn, gown flowing', clearly not everyone was as impressed as Robin Andrews. On Denis Neill's first day at *Connor House*, he was approached by the Headmaster, who asked, 'What's your name, boy?' 'Denis'. 'Denis what?', asked the Colonel. 'Denis Neill, Sir. What's your name?', said Denis. 'Ricketts', replied the Headmaster. 'Ricketts what?' asked Denis. The Headmaster's reply is not recorded.²¹

In 1948, *Royal Humane Society* certificates were awarded to Desmond J. Pollock for having rescued a 10½ year old boy who had fallen off the North Pier while fishing, and to R.K. Davidson, who performed a similar act of bravery in Campbelltown harbour. The following year, John H. Sims received a certificate from the *Carnegie Hero Trust* after he saved the life of a young girl, who was in danger of drowning.

Former pupils continued to distinguish themselves in a variety of fields. In 1948 there were *Bangor Grammar School* boys lecturing at *Queen's* (W.G. Godden, who completed his Ph.D. in 1952, in Civil Engineering), *Trinity* (R.B. Elliott in Physics), *St. Andrews* (E.M. Patterson in Geochemistry) and at *Sheffield* (W.V. Denard in Classics); in 1950 Vincent Denard moved to *London University*, and later to *Trinity College Dublin* where for a short time he was the Tutor of T.W. Patton, a future Headmaster of the School. Also in 1948, one of Mr. McFeeters' former

²⁰ *Bangor Grammarians Annual Report 2001.*

²¹ Denis Neill confirmed this story in conversation with the author, November 2002.

pupils, T.C.Ingold, was appointed as Professor of Botany at *Birkbeck College, London*. In 1950, W.G.Godden was joined in the Civil Engineering Department of *Queen's* by his brother Herbert, who was captain of the Ulster Junior Hockey team, and by T.K.Allen in the Physics Department. That year the Murray twins, Robert and Thomas, were each awarded an M.Sc. at *Queen's*, having gained Firsts in Chemistry the previous year, Reginald E.Wright gained a First in Mental and Moral Sciences at *Trinity*, and K.I.Mayne won a *Nuffield Fellowship* for research in Physics at *Oxford*. In 1951, N.G.Derby gained a First in Civil Engineering at *Queen's*, adding an M.Sc. in 1952, the year in which Joseph W.A.Sloss was called to the Bar.

Meanwhile at School, J.C.Lyttle, having previously won a university scholarship on his Senior Certificate results, spent a year mainly on Latin and Greek and in 1951 '*brought distinction to himself and his School*' by winning a Sizarship and a Junior Exhibition in Classics at *Trinity*, gaining a First and the *Brooke Prize* three years later. Hugh F.Fulton won a State Exhibition in 1952, as did Ian Elliott, Denis E.Leavey, R.H.Ogborn in 1953 (3 out of only 19 awarded, as well as 5 out of the 11 county university scholarships awarded) and W.R.Elliott and K.McClements in 1954. Also in Col.Ricketts' final year, T.J.B.Conolly came 1st in Advanced Level Art, J.K.Hearst was 1st in Ordinary Level Alternative Mathematics, scoring full marks, and J.Graham gained Distinctions in all 10 subjects at Junior Certificate.²²

Nor was it only the academically gifted that the School catered for during these years; one pupil, Wesley Allen, was designated educationally blind and completed his school work in Braille²³, while there was also a sprinkling of juvenile delinquents, with two boys being expelled for stealing in 1949 and another two appearing in court charged with larceny in 1951.

THE 1952 GENERAL INSPECTION

The School experienced a General Inspection in the Spring of 1952. The Report praised the Headmaster, saying that he '*has proved himself to possess marked powers of organisation and leadership. . . . He has shown energy and enterprise in his endeavour to increase the amenities and efficiency. The good progress made in recent years is due in no small measure to his effort and inspiration*'. Of the staff, the Report said: '*The teachers are zealous and competent in the discharge of their duties. Some of them indeed teach with quite exceptional skill and many of them devote much of their leisure time to the School's extra-curricular activities*'. Col.Ricketts expressed himself '*gratified by the complimentary remarks which have been made . . . about the general tone of the School, on the happy relationship which exists between boys and staff, and on the courtesy and good manners which the boys display both in class and outside*'. However, the Headmaster criticised the boys for:

'reading little more than the sporting columns of the popular press and the type of stories which appear, liberally illustrated by pictures, in a certain type of weekly magazine. Much has been said about those papers, which we can classify generally as comics. They may have their uses for children in various stages of development, but the damage occurs when boys cling to them after they should have grown out of that particular mental stage; they do so because they afford recreation without any effort or thought whatever and as such they form a drug to boys of intelligence whom we are teaching to think and to express their thoughts in a clear imaginative way.'

He asked parents to encourage their sons to use the school and municipal libraries, an appeal, he said '*doubly necessary this year, when television sets will be installed in so many homes*'.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The *Dramatic Society* continued to flourish, first under the direction of Mr.Rawlings and subsequently under Mr.Cole-Baker, presenting such politically-incorrect offerings as *Ten Little*

²² This information has been gleaned from the surviving issues of *The Gryphon*, and may therefore be incomplete.

²³ Information supplied by Wesley Allen's brother, Terry.

Niggers, as well as full-length classics such as Molière's *The Miser*. In 1951, a play reading circle was formed and the *Dramatic Society* became a member of the *British Drama League*. Such was the success of drama in the School that from 1953 the *Dundealgan Cup*, presented by F.W.Cotter-Craig for verse-speaking in 1948, was presented for the best public performance in the *Dramatic Society*.

The *Debating Society*, the School's senior society, continued to flourish, needing the whole of 'A' Room on occasions. In February 1952 the *Society* cancelled its meeting for first time in its 25 year history as a mark of respect on the occasion of the funeral of King George VI. That year, Frank McKee presented a Challenge Cup for the best junior speaker.

As the School grew in size, so the range of extra-curricular activities increased. In 1948 a *Music Society* was established by Mr.Browne in an effort to develop musical appreciation; speakers included T.S.Turner, Inspector of Schools, who gave a talk on Bach. Three years later members 'had the delightful experience of hearing two of the new plastic long-playing records'²⁴

A *Photographic Society* was formed in 1953 and, under Mr.Rea's guidance, the boys learnt the techniques of taking, developing and printing photographs of, among other things, the School's social and sporting activities. Initially they used *Bangor Camera Club's* premises on Clifton Road and when these were no longer available, the 'washroom' in *Crosby House* was blacked out for the purpose.



The newly formed Photographic Society 1953-1954

T.R.R.Houston, D.C.F.Drew, A.S.Johnston, W.J.Ricketts, M.A., K.McClements, D.J.Roulston, G.Ashe, R.R.Rae
D.J.Smyth, C.Campbell, H.M.Rea, M.A., G.M.Glass, C.E.Ronaldson

While perhaps not, strictly speaking, an extra-curricular activity, the School was forced to close for a week in September 1952, because 50 boys and 11 staff attended the *British Association for the Advancement of Science* meeting when it was held in Belfast for first time since 1902, and the following year, 60 boys from Forms 3B1 and 3B2 held a Mock Council Meeting in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall and 'with the friendly guidance of the Town Clerk', Terry Graham, spent almost an hour discussing a range of topical matters.²⁵

Sport

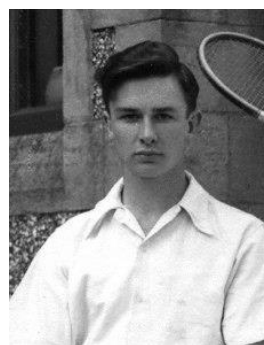
The School continued to maintain its enviable record on the sports field, perhaps most notably in Athletics. In 1947, N.Martin won the Javelin event at the *Ulster Schools' Athletic Championships* and the following year D.J.Morgan, who won the Intermediate 100 yards and came 3rd in the 220 yards, and Tom McAuley, who won the Pole Vault, were selected to represent Ulster Schools. I.Elliott won the Senior 440 Yards in 1953.

²⁴ *The Gryphon*, December 1951.

²⁵ *County Down Spectator*, 30 May 1953.



D.J.Morgan



T.J.A.McAuley

Ulster Schools' Athletics Team 1948

In cricket, Brian Mairs recalls Malcolm Thomson, *'probably the best schoolboy bowler in Ireland'*, and one memorable match against *'Inst'*:

'On this occasion we had a lethal weapon in the form of fast bowler Malcolm ("Scud" to his intimates) Thomson. . . . In this match we were bowled out for a paltry forty runs, so the Inst batsmen would have been confident of an easy and quick victory. Scud however was at his best and, bowling very fast outswingers which came back viciously, he clean bowled most of his 9 victims – some of whom had not even offered a shot, so bemused were they by the swing and sheer speed – and Inst were all out for around 20'.²⁶

M.J.Thomson, who was capped for Ulster and Irish Schools in 1949, took 4 wickets for 32 runs against Leinster, and claimed a hat-trick in his last match before leaving to California; the Headmaster presented him with an inscribed cricket ball. Michael Rea, who played for the Ulster Schools' Cricket XI in 1951, recalls that Malcolm Thomson went on to play for the famous *Hollywood Cricket Club*, whose members included Boris Karloff. Other film actors who played in the Southern California Cricket League included Basil Rathbone and Errol Flynn, while David Niven was a regular spectator. He played his last match in 1985 for *Santa Barbara Cricket Club*. His nickname, *'Scud'*, comes, he says, from Scud Eastman, best friend of the eponymous hero of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and was bestowed on him by either Graham Wallace or *'more likely'* Roy Loughead. His other nickname, *'Hasher'*, deriving from his activities in the front row of the 1st XV scrum, *'did not have the same permanency'*. He also recalls that, *'All the teachers I had were graduates of the same school of sarcasm'*. On one occasion George Heuston asked *'Thomson, why do you come to class? Would it not be better if you just took a walk in the park during the period? That way the rest of the class could get on with advancing their education'*.²⁷

The 1st XI played a match against the Masters each year; in 1949 the Masters won for the third successive year, with Col.Ricketts and Mr.Johnson the top scorers. Two years later, a concrete wicket with practice nets was laid at College Avenue.



M.J.Thomson

Ulster and Irish Schools' Cricket XI, 1949



M.Rea

Ulster Schools' Cricket XI, 1951

²⁶ Reminiscences of Brian Mairs, September 2002.

²⁷ Malcolm Thompson, in an mail to the author, November 2004.

In 1949 a *Swimming Club* was formed and the Annual Swimming Gala was revived. Ironically, Sir Walter Smiles, who was to be drowned in the *Princess Victoria* disaster, presented a Cup for Swimming, when he was the Guest of Honour at the 1950 Prize Distribution. The *Old Boys' Association* presented a Shield for Inter-House competition.



Swimming Team 1949-1950

(Swimming had been 'revived' in June 1949)

W.T.W.Johnson, B.Sc.

W.J.Ricketts, M.A.

R.D.Elliott E.McKeen G.Wallace C.K.Carter A.Reid B.Styles

Bertie Styles, who returned to teach at the School from 1956 until he retired in 1993 and who was Vice-Principal from 1966, was awarded Colours in Rugby, Athletics and Swimming and he shared the *Sir Walter Smiles Cup* with P.H.McKie in 1951. Bertie was also Captain of Crosby House, of which he was to become House Master. That year G.St.C.Barry won the Ulster Under-16 Diving Championships.

Rugby, of course, continued to be the major Winter sport at the School and in Summer the Ballyholme courts were used for tennis. Desmond Cole-Baker, who coached the Medallion XV during these years, recalls a team:

'which was in a winning vein. Our hurdle each year had been Methodist College, however this year we had beaten all teams including Methody in friendly matches. In the draw for the Shield competition, we found ourselves against Methody as a home fixture. The game was played at Ward Park and both teams had supporters. Alas the pressure was too much and the missing of a penalty goal in front of the posts brought tears to many eyes'.

One member of that team, Peter McKie, went on to become U.K. Managing Director of *Dupont* and in an interview published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Chemistry*, he attributed much of his success to the teaching he had received at the School. He returned as Guest of Honour at Speech Day in 1993.²⁸

²⁸ Desmond Cole-Baker, loc.cit.; *The Gryphon*, 1993.

1949	1st XV.	R	Medallion XV.	R	'Under 14' XV.	R
Sept. 17	Grosvenor	A	3-10	Regent House	H	9-3
27	Belfast High	H	3-3	Belfast High	A	11-0
Oct. 1	Regent House	A	0-0			
27			M.C.B.	H	9-3	B.R.A.
27	Sullivan Upper	H	20-3	Sullivan Upper	A	32-0
27	Larne Gram.	H	3-10			Grosvenor
27			HALLOWE'EN BREAK			Belfast High
Nov. 5	B.R.A.	H	3-3	Grosvenor	H	9-0
27	Grosvenor Grams	H	3-9			Down High
27	Medallion	A	10-0	Ballyclare	A	47-0
27	Down High	A	2-14	Larne Gram.	A	23-0
Dec. 3	Grosvenor H.S.	A	0-8			R.B.A.I.
27	Sullivan Upper	H	9-0	Wallace High	H	33-0
27	Regent House	H	10-0	Down High	H	3-3
Dec 21	CAMPBELL COLL. H		CHRISTMAS BREAK			
1950	BLUES V REDS (BEL)		14-3	R.B.A.I.		0-6
Jan. 14	Old Boys	H	3-9	Wallace High	A	29-0
27	Belfast High	A	6-14	Belfast High	H	42-0
27	Regent House	H		OALA/AHA	A	51-0
Feb. 4	B.R.A.	A	0-11	M.C.B.	A	0-3
27	Down High	H		Ballyclare	H	
27	Larne Gram.	A	0-3	Down High	A	0-5
27			IRELAND v SCOTLAND			(Dublin)
27	Dublin High	A	0-8	R.B.A.I.	H	
Mar. 4	R.B.A.I.	H		Sullivan Upper	H	6-3
27			IRELAND v WALES			(Belfast)
27	Dublin High	H	11-0	Larne Gram.	H	
27	Foyle College (Belfast)	A	0-10			Grosvenor
27			SCHOOLS' CUP FINAL			
27				Grosvenor	A	2-5
27	Sullivan Upper	A	16-8	B.R.A.	A	
April 1	Regent House	A		Regent House	A	
						R.B.A.I.

B.G.S.R.F.C. Fixture List 1949-1950, preserved by the Club Captain Brian J. Mairs.
W.J.Ricketts, Esq., M.A. (President), D.S.Dunlop (Vice-Captain), D.Cairns (Hon.Sec.).
Committee: B.J.Mairs, D.S.Dunlop, D.Cairns, R.H.McGimpsey, D.J.Morgan, W.T.W.Johnson, B.Sc., W.Shanks, B.Sc.

More than ten years before Hockey was re-introduced as an alternative winter sport, a Medallion XI played a friendly match against Collegiate 2nd XI, winning 4-0. Meanwhile, in 1948, basketball was introduced as a new sport in the School. In 1950, an approach was made by the *Irish Football Association*, but it was explained that the School had neither enough boys nor enough pitches for two Winter games. That did not prevent some of the boys fielding an unofficial soccer team, which played matches against local amateur sides. After one such match, members of the team were summoned to Col.Rickett's study, but instead of being congratulated on their win, *'we met with a tirade of condemnation for using the School name for a team, when the School did not play "soccer", would not play soccer, and we were reminded that rugby was the sport of the School in winter. In future the School name would only be used with his authority to do so'*.²⁹

Perhaps the most important news in the field of sport was the opening of the new playing fields at Bloomfield. During the late 1940s the Governors had looked at several sites with a view to acquiring land suitable for playing fields but the hilly nature of the ground around Bangor and its substrata of boulder clay had rendered the search difficult; in May 1946, an approach had been made to William Moore of *Demesne House* for some of his land on Bloomfield Road, and in early 1948 part of Lowry's Farm at Ballymacconnell Road and a site in Castle Park had been considered. Later that year they explored the possibility of purchasing some land from Mrs.Kinghan of *Glenganagh*, but it was decided that her land was not suitable. As a result, the Council's pitch in Ward Park continued to be used at a cost of £15 a year.

However, in 1950, four years after he had first been approached, Mr.Moore agreed to sell eight acres at £300 an acre and it was agreed to buy an additional two acres belonging to Mr.John McClure for £700, while Charles Neill allowed his outhouse was to be used as temporary changing facilities at £1 per bus. The new playing fields, which lay *'in a natural amphitheatre'* and would, it was said, be *'one of the most attractive sports fields in the province'*, would comprise a cricket field, two rugby pitches and a small pitch for the junior boys. There was also room for a 440 yard track, a straight 220 yard track for hurdles races, which had not been practicable at College Avenue, and permanent jumping and pole vault pits, making it possible to have two games afternoons, one for seniors and one for juniors. *'The facilities exist'*, suggested the

²⁹ Tom Boal, loc.cit.

Spectator, 'if the boys play their part, to reach the same high standards in games and athletics, which the School has achieved in work and scholarship'.

The Board of Governors set up a Playing Fields Sub-Committee and it was agreed to erect a suitable board at the entrance to the playing fields, to draw up plans for a pavilion, to make enquiries about a tractor and trailer, to plant cypress trees to form a windbreak on the northern bank and to replace the school lawnmower, which had been in use since the 1930s. In addition, a quintuple gang-mower was bought for £65 from *Bangor Golf Club*. Suitable seed was recommended by the *Sports Turf Research Institute* at Bingley with the suggestion that 'sheep could occasionally be grazed to good effect'!

The plans for the development of the site, and for the pavilion, were drawn up by Samuel McIlveen, M.R.I.A.I., Assoc.M.Inst.C.E.I., an Old Boy, (who donated part of his fee to the Pavilion Fund), considerable levelling and drainage work was carried out by John Graham of Dromore, and the pavilion was built by Messrs.Ervine and McCreadie of Bangor, who had put in a tender of £2,416-8-0. Since the School had by this time opted to become a Group 'B' school, there would be no Ministry of Finance grant, however amendments to the Government Loans Act (Northern Ireland) (1948), passed in 1952, did make available a loan of £9,000 at 4⁵/₈% over 40 years.

The *Old Boys' Association* set up a 'Pavilion Fund' in an effort to raise an extra £1,000. It was suggested that the pavilion should stand as a memorial to the late Grahame Anthony (Tony) Patton, who had been Secretary of the *Association* for several years and who had hoped to 'make a permanent written record of the History of the School'; he had died in December 1950 at the age of 32 and some months earlier the Board of Governors' Minutes had recorded that it was 'almost entirely due to his enthusiasm and keenness that the Association has reached its present flourishing position'. Among other events, the *Old Boys' Association* organised a 'Bring and Buy' Sale in conjunction with the *Parents' Association*, which raised £115, but this, along with a dance, donations by members and a contribution of £50 from *Bangor Rugby Club*, had only realised the disappointing sum of £545 when it was declared closed at the beginning of 1956.

The playing fields were taken over in March 1953 and the following month William J.Evans was appointed as Groundsman at a £6 week. Willie Evans was a shy man and on his retirement in 1979, after 26 years of service, he declined to come to the School to receive a gift, so a deputation of boys and staff went to the playing fields, by then situated at Ballymacormick, to make the presentation. He continued to work part-time for some time after his retirement and Chris Harte recalls that, in his later years, he could on occasions be over-zealous when watering the cricket pitches.³⁰



William Evans
Groundsman 1953-1979

³⁰ *County Down Spectator*, 9 March 1979; Chris Harte speaking at the *Grammarians' Dinner*, November 2004.

The pavilion, a building of sandlime brick comprising two changing rooms with hot and cold showers, and a dining room with a large picture window was completed in the Spring of 1954.



Bloomfield Pavilion, photographed in 2003

On Sports Day, 29 May 1954, Col. Ricketts' last public function as Headmaster, the facilities, which cost approximately £11,000, were officially opened by the Rt. Hon. Harry C. Midgley, P.C., J.P., M.P., Minister of Education, who regretted that the Ministry had been unable to provide a grant towards the expenditure incurred, explaining that it was due to the policy decided upon by the Governors in opting for Group 'B' status. *'I would respectfully ask them to consider whether they have decided wisely in this matter'*, he said.³¹



(Preserved in the School Archives)

CONNOR HOUSE

When, in 1952, The *Advisory Council Report on Selection of Pupils for Secondary Education* claimed that the curriculum was being narrowed to virtually English and Arithmetic, Mr. Andrews, the Head of *Connor House*, countered by saying that apart from cutting French '*several years ago*' there had been no such narrowing in his department. He continued:

'I would like to make it quite plain that the curriculum at Connor House is designed to lead on to the Grammar School course and that the Qualifying Examination, while an objective, is by no means the object'.³²

Nevertheless, by the following year, 6 years after the introduction of the 11+, 62% of Connor House boys had '*qualified*'.

Preparation for the 11+ was clearly not the only activity at *Connor House* during these years, for the boys enjoyed a range of outings, most of which, admittedly, had an educational purpose -

³¹ *County Down Spectator*, 23 Dec. 1950 and 29 May 1954; *The Gryphon*, December 1950 and December 1952.

³² *The Gryphon*, June 1952.

whether the boys realised it or not. These included visits to the Copeland Islands, Bellevue Zoo, the 12th century Cistercian abbey at Greyabbey, the 17th century bawn Kirkistown Castle, Carrickfergus Castle, Belfast Museum, Betsy Gray's cottage, Castleward the home of the Ward family, and Queen's Island to see the launching of the 32,000 ton tanker *British Engineer* - the largest yet built in Belfast - by Mrs. Anthony Eden. She noticed the boys and remarked on their good behaviour; at her request a number of the boys were presented to her by Sir Frederick Rebbeck, Managing Director of *Harland & Wolff*. Denis Neill, then in 2A, proudly recorded: '*We all raised our caps*'. IIA also visited Stormont as guests of Dr. R.S. Nixon, M.P. Many of these outings took place at Hallowe'en and were followed by sausage and chips in the canteen and a firework display in the school field.

Other extra-curricular activities included a Choir, which enjoyed its first public performance in 1952, a *Drama Society* which met in 'W' Room on Friday afternoon and yacht racing on Ward Park pond, on which the boys had skated during the cold winter of 1946-47.

Nor was sport neglected. The 1st XI football team was unbeaten in the 1952-53 season, the year in which Rugby was introduced at *Connor House*; there was an annual cricket match against the fathers, a Form II cricket league between the Lions, the Wolves and the Panthers, and weekly visits to *Templemore Baths*, which produced swimmers such as P.D.M. Montgomery, who swam for the School in the Inter-school Relay while still at *Connor House*.

Uniform consisted of a grey herring-bone tweed or grey flannel suit, a grey pullover, the School tie, plain grey stockings and a navy blue *Burberry*.³³

THE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION AND THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Reflecting the increased cost of living, Life Membership of the *Old Boys' Association* rose to 3 guineas in 1948 and to 5 guineas four years later, while the annual subscription was increased from 5/- to 7/6^d in 1953. Meanwhile there was much debate about the design of the *Association* tie. By 1949 the tie was '*now off coupons*' and a new design featuring a gryphon and shield between the stripes was agreed on. However in 1952 it was decided that the design of original association tie – gold stripes on a blue background – should be adhered to, at least until the issue of the School Coat of Arms had been decided. Meanwhile, in the hope of increasing membership, a *Golfing Society* was formed in 1950, for which Ritchie McKee presented a Challenge Cup, and boys leaving school were made honorary members for 12 months. The marriage of Gordon Moody and Pat Brown, née Wilkins in 1948 was a unique event in the history of the School; they were both past pupils. In 'A' Room in 1949, '*Grammarians, aided and abetted by boys of the School, fired questions at a team of experts in the B.B.C. Quiz, Let's Face It*'. In 1951 a set of *Bangor Endowed School* magazines was presented by Noel McFeeters who, the following year, presented a Cup for the Old Boys' Race on Sports Day. At the 21st Annual Dinner, one of the most senior Old Boys, Victor Salter, presented a framed photograph of pupils, which had been taken in 1888; the Chairman said that he was sure the Governors would '*treasure this donation as a link with the past*', and it now hangs in the corridor of the School, along with the photographs taken over 100 years later.

As well as co-operating with the *Old Boys' Association* in an effort to raise funds for the sports pavilion, the *Parents' Association* organised a series of talks on careers, including civil engineering, industrial chemistry, the linen industry, shipbuilding, the navy, the civil service, customs and excise and accountancy. (While on the subject of careers, Tom Boal recalls that, when he expressed a desire to pursue a career in law, the Headmaster asked whether he had '*any members of the family in the legal profession and when I replied in the negative, I was hastily informed that that career was not for me. End of discussion!*')³⁴

³³ The School Prospectus, circa 1949.

³⁴ Tom Boal, loc.cit.

COL. RICKETTS' RESIGNATION

Welcoming Lord Brookeborough, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, as Guest of Honour at Prize Day in 1954, Col. Ricketts commented, *'It may well be that you will meet here today some boy who in years to come will aspire to the same high office which you yourself occupy with such acclaim today'*. A.B.D. Faulkner, who became Prime Minister in 1971, had left the School in 1932, aged 11, after three years as a pupil, and ten year old David Trimble, who became First Minister of Northern Ireland and *Nobel Peace Laureate* in 1998, was not to join the School until 1956, when *The Gryphon* described him as *'a very promising newcomer'* to the *Debating Society*!



Lt.-Col. Ricketts' last Prize Day, 1954

Dr. R.S. Nixon, M.P., D. Ewart, Mayor of Bangor, Viscount Brookeborough,
S.M. Claney, Chairman of the Board of Governors, W.J. Ricketts, M.A., Headmaster

Speaking at the *Old Boys' Association* Dinner in November 1953, Col. Ricketts said that Mr. Wilkins had told him that the first five years were the easiest, as he could blame the previous Head for anything that went wrong during that period, but he had now been in Bangor for six years! Surely that was not in his mind when he submitted his resignation on 27 March 1954, having been appointed Headmaster of *Boston Grammar School* in Lincolnshire. At the Board of Governors' meeting two days later,

'expression was given of the Board's thanks for the excellent work he had carried out in the organisation of the School under the 1947 Education Act and also their appreciation of his efforts to bring the School up to its present state of efficiency and the happy atmosphere which exists with the staff and pupils'.

The Gryphon commented on how everyone had seen Col. Ricketts' *'enthusiasm and ability bearing fruit in the progress and success of the School'*, continuing that his successor *'faces problems of staffing, accommodation and policy'*.³⁵

Mrs. Ricketts died in May 1957³⁶ and Col. Ricketts left England in late 1969 to become Headmaster of the *Church of England School*, Mount Eliza, near Melbourne, where he continued to live during his long retirement. He died on 26th June 2004, aged 90.

³⁵ *The Gryphon*, June 1954.

³⁶ *The Gryphon*, June 1957.