

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### George Randall Mansfield Clarke, M.A., 1954-1975

#### I. Centenary Celebrations and the First Extension: 1954-1961<sup>1</sup>

##### MR. CLARKE'S APPOINTMENT

In April 1954, following advertisements in *The Times Educational Supplement*, as well as in the Belfast and Dublin press, eleven of the seventy applicants for the vacant Headmastership were invited for interview. These included Mr. Hawtin and Mr. R.E. Russell, who had been on the shortlist for the post seven years earlier, and four candidates from England. After over three hours of interviewing, these were reduced to four and then to two – W.R. Hutchinson, M.A., of *Royal School Dungannon*, and G.R.M. Clarke, M.A., Senior History Master and House Master at *Campbell College*. In the end, Mr. Clarke was the unanimous choice and *Campbell College* agreed to release him at the end of July 1954.

George Randall Mansfield Clarke, son of Rev. and Mrs. W.T. Clarke, was a native of Southern Ireland; he was educated at *Wesley College*, Dublin and *Methodist College*, Belfast, where he played fullback on two Schools' Cup winning teams. Having been awarded an Entrance Scholarship to *Queen's University*, he graduated with an Honours degree in Modern History, later completing his Master of Arts degree. He returned to teach at *Methody* and after a period on the staff of *Ballymena Academy* where, when he had more hair, he was known as 'Snowy', he moved to *Campbell College*.<sup>2</sup> In 1941 he wrote a widely used school textbook, *A Short History of Ireland*.



G.R.M. Clarke M.A. in 1975

##### RANDALL CLARKE AS HEADMASTER

Mr. Clarke was not universally popular, but the general consensus is that he was the 'architect of *Bangor Grammar as it now is*'. He had a unique management style; legend has it that he picked the new intake by the shape of their mothers' legs. He was a good disciplinarian and was not afraid to expel pupils; indeed he arrived from *Campbell College* with that reputation, which kept Jim Claney's contemporaries in check. At the end of one Summer Term, he expelled a number of

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information contained in this section has been taken from the Minutes of the Board of Governors, the Minutes of Meetings of Subscribers, or the *County Down Spectator* reports on Speech Days, Sports Days and *Old Boys' Association* Dinners. For those who may be interested in consulting the *Spectator*, the relevant dates are: Speech Day - 2 July 1955, 3 November 1956, 2 November 1957, 7 November 1958, 6 November 1959, 4 November 1960 and 3 November 1961; Sports Days – 4 June 1955, 2 June, 1956, 1 June 1957, 23 May 1958, 29 May 1959, 27 May 1960 and 19 May 1961; *Old Boys' Association* Dinners – 5 November 1955, 25 October 1956, 2 November 1957, 14 November 1958, 13 November 1959, 11 November 1960 and 17 November 1961.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gryphon*, 1975.

senior boys, who had kidnapped the Head Boy, '*roughed him up and left him semi-clothed at the Six Road Ends*'. He flogged a boy in Assembly, in front of the whole School, '*drawing his cane from under his gown like a sword*', for hitting a member of Staff. (In 1960 successive entries in the Board of Governors' Minutes noted the expulsion of three boys, and the forthcoming drama production *Dear Delinquent*). In 1965, he informed the Board of Governors that he '*had publicly flogged two sets of boys – one for persistent petty theft and the other for organised bullying*'. On another occasion he commented on '*an epidemic of obscenity in the School*' and expressed his intention to expel the culprit '*if found*'.

He tended to be autocratic, quite capable of ignoring Ministry circulars if they did not suit him. Nor did he suffer fools gladly; the story is told that, when a certain clergyman telephoned to complain about the pupils and about the running of the School in general, '*Randall listened and then told him that, since he didn't interfere in the running of his church, "Kindly don't interfere in the running of my School. Good day"*'. Nor would he tolerate sloppy report writing by his Staff; when Ernie Graham, a gifted young linguist, made the succinct comment '*Inky and indolent*' on the end of year report of a boy who was known to be untidy and lazy, Mr. Clarke insisted on an alternative.

He was also quite capable of antagonizing his Staff. Late in his headmastership, he was (allegedly) responsible for most of the Staff leaving the *Assistant Masters' Association* and joining the more militant *National Association of Schoolmasters*, because he replaced Jimmy Welch as 1<sup>st</sup> XV Coach, and it is said that his method of having a Staff with which he could work was to '*get rid of the older members of Staff, who had been in the School before he came*' - certainly Tommy Johnson left in 1957 after over 25 years' service, following a clash of personalities - and between 1958 and 1964, he appointed over twenty new staff, most of them '*young and eager*', many of whom stayed at the School for 20 years or more, '*producing a sound foundation upon which the School thrived both academically and on the sports field*'. He also appointed, in 1959, John Grummitt who had been Headmaster of *R.B.A.I.* for almost 20 years, a strange situation for the ex-Inst boys on the Staff of *Bangor Grammar School*. Despite his advanced years, he was not fooled by the boys' attempts to tell him that the period was over: '*That was just the primary tintinnabulation, boys.*'

His interview technique was also '*rather unique*'. He advertised for staff in the English newspapers and often interviewed them in a London hotel, thus enjoying an expenses-paid trip. (He also enjoyed regular trips to exhibitions of school furniture, equipment etc.) It is said that Bruce Greenfield believed that, following his London interview, he had been appointed to *Bangor Grammar School* in North Wales, until disabused of that notion when his timetable was sent to him in late August. Errol Steele was interviewed in Randall's house, on his way to a *Caproni's* dance, while Maurice McCord was interviewed in the *Shelbourne Hotel* in Dublin, without '*History*' ever being mentioned. He recalls:

*'He was not interested in any knowledge I had of History, but primarily in the sort of person I was, what interests I had etc. When I mentioned that I had no teaching qualifications . . . he said that was all to the good, as teaching qualifications were a waste of time. I felt that he was mainly interested in the fact that I had played a lot of rugby and so would be able to coach the sport at the School.'*

Bob McIlroy didn't apply for his job at all; he received a phone call from Betty Sangster, the Headmaster's Secretary, because Randall had heard from Jack Frost, the Headmaster of *Sullivan Upper*, that he was looking for a job. Even a decade later, little had changed. Barry Greenaway was appointed in 1973 after Randall had phoned his wife to ask '*if the job were offered would you be prepared to live in Bangor?*'

Nor was it just the initial appointment that was made in such an informal way. Maurice McCord recalls: '*Randall inviting me into his study at 3.30 on a Friday afternoon and asking me to "look after*

*History in the School*”, but not to tell anyone. Looking back on it, this seems bizarre. No notice was even put on the board confirming that I was in charge of History. At the time, this was a little awkward as not only Irwin [Bonar], but Miss Tipping was still there.’ But then, since ‘there were no Departmental Meetings and no Heads of Department Meetings’, who was to know?<sup>3</sup>

But at the same time, he was a fair man, prepared to give both pupils and staff a second chance and he was quite keen to give half-days for notable achievements by pupils or former pupils. He also did much to produce a sense of camaraderie among the staff; he and the Board of Governors held sherry parties for staff and their partners, which meant that socializing among staff became commonplace.

Mr. Clarke, like most Headmasters, often used Prize Day, or Speech Day as it was now called, to enunciate his educational philosophy. He was strongly of the opinion that ‘*the boy, who does not take a full part in the out of class activities of his school, is missing half of what it has to offer*’. He also believed that a good set of Prefects could ‘*set the tone of the School*’. Head Boy, John Fairleigh explained to members of the Rotary Club at its ‘Fathers’ Day’ in 1958, that:

*‘the Prefects’ sole purpose of existence was not to conduct a minor “reign of terror”. Their main duties were to help enforce the rules made by the Headmaster. . . . A Prefect learned how to use authority wisely and how to accept responsibility. . . . The Prefect system confers mutual benefit on both the School and the prefects themselves’.*<sup>4</sup>

Prefects also enjoyed certain perquisites, such as the holding of regular Prefects’ Dances in the School – with ice cream, jelly and minerals on sale in ‘B’ Room! In 1956 the Dance began with ‘*A Snowball Quickstep*’. ‘*The Headmaster and other members of Staff attended and obviously enjoyed themselves. The experiment of having a record player instead of a band was extremely successful and the music varied from Victor Sylvester to Chris Barber and Humphrey Lyttleton.*’<sup>5</sup>

On another occasion Mr. Clarke expanded on his view of education, thus:

*‘I do not regard a boy as educated if he is lacking in common courtesy, no matter how expert he may be in scientific techniques; I do not regard a boy as educated if he is untruthful, uncouth, or unsportsmanlike, no matter how much he knows about French irregular verbs or European history; I do not regard a boy as educated if he is lopsided - overdeveloped in one narrow specialist field at the expense of everything else.’*

Mr. Clarke was categorically not an admirer of the new ‘comprehensive’ schools, which were springing up ‘*across the water*’. ‘*The hysteria aroused by the . . . 11 plus*’ had led to:

*‘experimenting with monster schools. This is a large school of a thousand or more pupils’, he said without irony, ‘with Grammar and non-Grammar streams. It is said that interchange between the streams is simple; that the academic boys are not a segregated snobbish elite; and that the boy who is not in the Grammar stream will not suffer from an inferiority complex. . . . In practice it is extremely difficult to switch boys from a non-academic to an academic stream. . . . The comprehensive school is a bureaucrat’s dream. . . . What is comprehensive in the comprehensive school is the intake; all types of boys in a district are sent to one large institution where they are herded together for their first few years until they begin to sort themselves out by a process of natural selection. This is possibly stimulating for the less gifted, but it is not a good preparation for the academic boys who should be moving much more rapidly than such mixed classes will allow. . . . Separate schools - Grammar and Intermediate - . . . fulfil different functions and there is nothing to be gained by amalgamating them or replacing them by some*

---

<sup>3</sup> Recollections of Jim Claney, Irwin Bonar, Barry Greenaway, Maurice McCord, Bob McIlroy, Billy Mercer and Bertie Styles.

<sup>4</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 18 April 1958.

<sup>5</sup> *The Gryphon*, December 1956

*monstrous new model, which will try to be all things at once, and which will end by being a mere machine through which children are processed like so many sausages.'*

One suspects that, had he lived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Randall Clarke would not have been considered 'politically correct'.

On another occasion, Mr. Clarke proposed the radical idea that,

*'each child gaining a grammar school place should be entitled to free tuition whether he had passed the eleven plus examination or not. If the State was prepared to pay for boys who failed to pass the eleven plus examination in one type of school, there could be no great sum involved in paying for them in another'.*

By this he meant that unqualified pupils, whom grammar schools admitted, because they appeared to have the attributes necessary to make a success of a grammar school education, should have their fees paid for them. *'I am simply suggesting that the government should recognise the realities of the present situation and should implement fully the great principle behind the Education Act of 1947 – free secondary education for all.'*

Nevertheless, despite his somewhat rigid views, he, *'along with Joe McKeown and Bertie Styles, developed a system which has not changed much in the past 30 years, and which works well with very little direction from above'* and, throughout his time at the School, he was *'ably backed up by Betty Sangster-Nash'*, who had been appointed in February 1958. Initially sharing Mr. Clarke's office in Crosby House, Betty remained, *'an unshakeable rampart . . . behind which Headmasters could take refuge'*, as Headmaster's Secretary for 25 years, during which *'she did a great deal to lay the foundation of good administration and sound office practice'* as the School population grew from 350 to 900 boys.<sup>6</sup>



Betty Sangster-Nash  
Headmaster's Secretary 1958-1983

The management system of the School may not have changed, but Mr. Clarke's tenure of office witnessed huge changes in both the town and the wider world.

### **BANGOR PROSPERS DESPITE THE COLD WAR**

Bangor, the centre of the Northern Ireland tourist industry in the year Randall Clarke was appointed, lost its way - or so it seemed to many Bangorians - during the decade that followed. Unsure whether it wanted Bangor to be a seaside resort, a dormitory town for Belfast or an industrial town in its own right, Bangor Borough Council encouraged the building of new housing and the establishment of new industries. In 1955, *Debretta*, *G.W.B. Furnaces* and *Cyril*

---

<sup>6</sup> Jim Claney, in conversation with the author, December 2002; the reminiscences of former members of staff, Autumn 2002; *The Gryphon*, 1983; personal recollections.

*Lord Carpets* opened factories in the town; over the ensuing six years, *Gideon Baird's Knitwear*, *Madrigal Hosiery*, *Castle Manufacturing* (shirts), *Greenfield's Candlewick Bedspreads* and *Oneida Silverware* were among those who followed suit. Meanwhile, the *Tudor* cinema - Bangor's fifth, along with the *Tonic*, *Adelphi*, *Queen's* and *Astor* - opened in 1957, featuring such new releases as *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, and Bangor was graced with its last Royal Visit before the euphemistically named '*Troubles*', when the Queen came to the town in 1961.<sup>7</sup>

The late 1950s also saw the resignation of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister at the age of 81, and the commencement of an I.R.A. campaign (which had *Connor House* boys adapting the 1958 Perry Como hit *Catch a falling star and put it in your pocket, save for a rainy day* to *Catch a falling bomb and put it in your pocket, save for the I.R.A.*). In Europe, although the Treaty of Rome, setting up the *European Economic Community* or *Common Market* in 1957, pointed the way to the future, the '*Cold War*' intensified as West Germany was admitted to N.A.T.O., the *Warsaw Pact* was formed, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin led to the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, (which somewhat overshadowed Britain's involvement in the Suez Crisis), and the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, prompting President Kennedy to declare, two years later, '*Ich bin ein Berliner*', which told the people of Berlin that he was a doughnut! As if a Cold War in Europe was not enough for the United States to cope with, she was experiencing unrest at home as events in Little Rock, Arkansas, presaged the Civil Rights campaign, trouble in her own '*back yard*' as Fidel Castro established himself in Cuba and drew ever closer to the Soviet Union, and conflict in South-East Asia as she was drawn more and more into the developing civil war in Vietnam.

Literature was enjoying a new '*golden age*', as works which were to become classics appeared, among them Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, Robert Bolt's *A Man for all Seasons*, Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow*, Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie*. An earlier '*classic*', D.H.Lawrence's 1928 novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was declared to be '*not obscene*' in 1960. Although cinema audiences were falling with the arrival of commercial television, which reached Northern Ireland in 1959, people were still flocking to see the latest films, including Olivier's *Richard III*, Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*, Hitchcock's *Psycho*, and war movies such as *The Dambusters* and *Reach for the Sky*, (which *Connor House* boys watched, spellbound in the *Tonic*, in the presence of the hero, Douglas Bader).

Incongruous though it may seem, the early years of Randall Clarke's headmastership coincided with the birth of modern '*pop*' music. In the late 1950s, Bill Haley and his Comets were '*Rocking around the Clock*', Elvis Presley had hits with, among other songs, *Heartbreak Hotel* and *Love me Tender*, Buddy Holly was serenading his *Peggy Sue*, the Everly Brothers were singing *Bye Bye Love*, and Lonnie Donegan was recounting the sad tale of *Tom Dooley*.

In science, the new Salk polio vaccine was administered, on a sugar lump, to *Connor House* boys, who were blissfully unaware of other developments such as the opening of the world's first large-scale nuclear power station at Calder Hall and the setting up of the *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*. They were, however, enthralled by news of the launching of the *Sputnik* and *Explorer* satellites, of Yuri Gagarin and Alan Shepard, the first men in space, emulating the fictional hero of the popular *Eagle* comic, *Dan Dare*, and of the Munich air disaster of 1958, in which seven of *Busby's Babes* lost their lives.

## THE CENTENARY OF THE SCHOOL

Plans to celebrate the centenary of the foundation of the School were put in train in October 1955, when the Board of Governors set aside the last week in October 1956 to hold a Concert, an Open Day, and Speech Day at which it was hoped to have Lt.-Gen. Sir William MacArthur,

---

<sup>7</sup> J.McCoy, *An Index to The County Down Spectator 1904-1964* (1983).

K.C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., F.R.C.P., Honorary Physician to the late King George VI (1930-1941), Director General of Army Medical Services (1938-1941) and an expert on tropical diseases, perhaps the School's most distinguished former pupil, as Guest of Honour. The following April, it was agreed that Mr.Hawtin should produce an 8-page '*centenary brochure*', to include an outline history of the School, and details of school societies and personalities, with photographs. Mr.Wilkins was contacted, but he said that he had no notes of the talk he had given to the *Parents' Association* on the History of the School some years earlier. By September 1956, time was so short that it was decided to abandon plans for the brochure.

The celebrations commenced on 5 October with the first of five Centenary Lectures given by members of the teaching staff. Mr.Hawtin gave '*an interesting and amusing*' talk on '*Some Aspects of our Language*'; '*his reading from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales was particularly attractive*', reported the *County Down Spectator*. Later in the month, Mr.Browne attempted to answer the question '*What is Mathematics?*', while in November Mr.McKeown gave a talk entitled '*The History of Modern Science*' and Mr.Rea outlined '*The History of Paris*' with the help of colour slides and filmstrips lent by the *Institut Francais de Royaume-Uni*. In the final Centenary Lecture in December, Mr.Johnson spoke on '*The Place of Geography in the Grammar School*'.

The special week of events began on 27 October, with a Concert in the *Dufferin Hall*. An audience of over 500 enjoyed what the *Spectator* called '*a notably happy occasion*'. E.W.Browne conducted a small orchestra, led by another member of staff, R.Greenhalgh, and two School Choirs were accompanied by Gordon Thomson, the newly appointed Head of *Connor House* and by Mrs.A.C.Larmour. Well-known local soloists John C.Godfray (baritone) and Miss Mattie McKane (soprano) also made contributions.

The following day, a Centenary Service, conducted by the Rector of Bangor, Rev.A.A.Buchanan, M.A., Rev.W.J.McKinstry Wallace, B.A. of *First Bangor Presbyterian Church*, both Governors of the School and Rev. R.Wesley Littlewood, of *Wesley Centenary Methodist Church*, was held in *Bangor Parish Church*. In his Address, Mr.Buchanan said that it was '*no mere coincidence that we are celebrating the centenary of Bangor Grammar School and at the same time the 1,400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the school of St.Comgall*'. Lessons were read by Mr.Clarke and by John Taylor, the Head Boy. The organist was Dr.E.H.Emery, F.R.C.O., who had taught music at the School for thirty years until his retirement in 1956 and who had composed the music for the School Song. The collection was in aid of the *United Nations Refugee Fund*.

Open Day, on 29 October was attended by Sir William MacArthur, other Old Boys, parents and friends of the School. Messrs Greenhalgh, McKeown and Shanks manned the Science laboratories, in 'F' Room Mr.Hawtin presided over a display of photographs, and documents, including a lease of the land where the first school was built, lent (and subsequently presented to the School) by the Borough Council, the Geography Department under Mr.Johnson and Mr.McKitrick mounted its display in 'G' Room, the Modern Languages Department with Messrs Rea, O'Donovan and Eadie occupied 'K' Room, Mr.Browne, Mr.Dougan and Mr.Styles of the Mathematics Department were ensconced in 'D' Room, while Miss Tipping's History display and Miss Addy's Art occupied 'B' and 'C' Rooms respectively. Corporal Alistair J.Gilmour was in charge of the recently re-formed A.C.F.'s display of signals equipment, uniform and weapons in 'J' Room.

## Centenary Lectures

These Lectures will be given in the ASSEMBLY HALL in the GRAMMAR SCHOOL by Senior Masters on the School Staff. They will commence at 8.00 p.m. and admission will be free and open to the general public.

### OCTOBER 5th :

A. L. HAWTIN, ESQ., M.A. (Oxon) (Vice-Principal).  
*"Some Aspects of our Language."*

Chairman : S. M. CLANEY, Esq.

### OCTOBER 19th :

E. W. BROWNE, ESQ., B.A. (Q.U.B.)  
 (Head of the Mathematical Department).  
*"What is Mathematics ?"*

Chairman : N. H. HANDFORTH, Esq., A.C.A.

### NOVEMBER 8th :

J. C. McKEOWN, ESQ., B.Sc. (Q.U.B.)  
 (Head of the Science Department).  
*"The History of Modern Science."*

Chairman : J. P. SIMMS, Esq., B.Sc., A.R.C.Sc. (Ir.).

### NOVEMBER 22nd :

H. M. REA, ESQ., M.A. (Cantab)  
 (Head of the Modern Languages Department).  
*"The History of Paris."*

Chairman : Rev. W. J. McKINSTRY WALLACE, B.A.

### DECEMBER 7th :

W. T. W. JOHNSON, ESQ., B.Sc., F.R.G.S.  
 (Senior Geography Master).  
*"The Place of Geography in the Grammar School."*

Chairman : Rev. A. A. BUCHANAN, M.A.

## Other Events

### OCTOBER 25th :

#### OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION:

Annual General Meeting, 7.30 p.m.  
 Annual Dinner, 8.15 p.m., in the Royal Hotel, Bangor.

### OCTOBER 27th :

CENTENARY CONCERT in the Dufferin Hall  
 at 8.00 p.m.

#### Soloists :

Mr. R. Adair (Flute). Mr. J. C. Godfray (Baritone).  
 Mrs. E. W. Browne (Violin). Miss Mattie McKane (Soprano).  
 Accompanist : Mr D. G. Thomson.  
 Conductor : Mr. E. W. Browne, A.Mus.(T.C.L.), L.T.C.L.  
 (Concl.)

Chairman : S. M. ClaneY, Esq.

### OCTOBER 28th :

CENTENARY SERVICE, Bangor Parish Church,  
 4.00 p.m.

Preacher : Rev. A. A. Buchanan, M.A.

### OCTOBER 29th :

#### OPEN DAY.

An Exhibition to illustrate aspects of the School's Work and History. In the Grammar School, 8.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.

The Exhibition will be opened by S. M. CLANEY, Esq., Chairman of the Board of Governors.

### OCTOBER 30th :

#### SPEECH DAY.

Distribution of Prizes in the Dufferin Hall by  
 LT.-GEN. SIR WILLIAM MACARTHUR, K.C.B.,  
 D.S.O., O.B.E., F.R.C.P.

His Worship the Mayor of Bangor, and the Minister of Education, the Right Hon. H. C. MIDGLEY, J.P., M.P., will also speak.

Chairman : S. M. ClaneY, Esq., Chairman of the Board of Governors.

## Centenary Year 1856-1956: Programme of Celebrations

Speech Day took place on 30 October, graced by the presence of the Minister of Education, Rt.Hon.H.C.Midgley J.P., M.P. Sir William MacArthur recalled his schooldays under Dr.Conolly almost sixty years earlier, when the School had moved from Main Street to Ballyholme. He still had, he told the boys, the prize he had won in 1896 – Lockart's *Life of Scott*. The following year Sir William presented the School with a copy of his *The Medical History of the Famine*.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Reports of the various centenary events appeared in the *County Down Spectator* on 13 and 27 October and 3, 10 and 24 November 1956; *The Gryphon*, December 1957; programmes of the events are preserved in the School Archives.



Speech Day 1957 was also something of a unique occasion for together on the platform were the Mayor of Bangor, Councillor F.C.Tughan and the Guest of Honour, Alderman W.Cecil McKee, Lord Mayor of Belfast, both former pupils of the School. Alderman McKee, who had started the School in 1916, recalled how he had taken up swimming when he had discovered that he might occasionally be excused evening study. He remembered winning the *Palace Cup*, presented by a Mr.Rodgers, who also gave a free pass to the *Palace* picture house. He went on to deal with the different 'seasons' – *'the time for stink bombs, pluffers, darts with poisoned heads, marbles and conkers'*, several of which were still popular with the boys half a century later.

### EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

All talk of new accommodation had ceased when the Board of Governors opted for 'B' status in 1950, but by the time of Mr.Clarke's appointment, the situation was becoming critical. A sub-committee of the Board was set up in September 1954 and when it reported back six months later that an extension costing approximately £60,000 would be required, it also recommended that the School should transfer to Group 'A'. The following month, after a lot of heart-searching, the full Board of Governors took the decision to apply for Group 'A' status, and Harry A.Patton, D.A.(Edin.), A.R.I.B.A., A.M.T.P.I., an Old Boy, was appointed as architect of a new extension to the School. (Mr.Patton, a Governor of the School since 1952, had to resign from the Board for reasons of propriety. His grandfather, Rev.Dr.Alexander Patton had been the first Secretary to the Board of Governors 1893-1896.)

In the mean time, emergency measures had to be resorted to. By the Autumn of 1955, the boys were doing their Physical Training in the *Good Templar Hall* on Hamilton Road, which was costing the School £6 a month plus rates. However, in 1960 the climbing ropes were removed as it was felt that the ceiling was not strong enough. By the beginning of 1956, it was clear that additional classrooms would be necessary in September and so, in addition to *'The Barn'*, the dining-hall part of the old wooden canteen building, which overlooked *Glenlola*, came into use as classroom accommodation until mid-morning. 'M' Room *'was a very cosy place with a coal stove in the middle. Pupils tended to gather round the stove as it emitted great wafts of heat that mingled with the smell of cooking food'*.

There was what has been called *'a further outpost of BGS'* in the late 1950s: *Coombehurst*, formerly a private preparatory school, at the corner of Seacliff Road and Ballyholme Road. From September 1956, initially for two years but ultimately until June 1960, the School had the use of the ground floor at a rent of £80 per annum. Mr.Mercer recalls:

*'The upper floor was occupied by a mysterious lady who kept poodles – how many we never discovered, but enough to leave objective evidence that there were quite a few of them. The dogs were of course kept to their own quarters during the day, but in the evening and over the weekend they seemed to have the full run of the house. It was always important to inspect the rooms and to clear out any offending matter before classes started. Staff were usually timetabled for a complete morning session in Coombehurst, including morning assembly; the spiritual side was not forgotten! No member of Staff escaped from taking classes there, except for Joe McKeown, who drew up the timetable. Staff could never quite fathom why Joe was always able to have a series of free periods every Friday afternoon!'*<sup>9</sup>

Despite this extra accommodation, a Form 5 class in Ancient History was forced to meet in a pupil's house, the School was having to restrict the number of boys doing Science and it was even having to refuse admission to boys because of lack of space. In 1958 some classes started at 10.30 and then used *Glenlola Collegiate* laboratories after school. (*Glenlola* and *Bangor Collegiate* had amalgamated the previous year) It had already, in 1954, proved necessary to divide Forms 4B and 3B into three and so, with numbers continuing to rise rapidly - there had

---

<sup>9</sup> Reminiscences of Billy Mercer, December 2002.



been only 76 pupils in the three upper forms in 1956 and by 1958 there were 127 - more temporary accommodation was required. In 1959 four hutted classrooms were built in the north-east corner of the School Field and two years later, a further two huts - Rooms 56 and 57 - were erected beside *Glenlola's* 'Orlit' block.



The 'temporary' accommodation erected in 1959, photographed shortly before its demolition 37 years later.

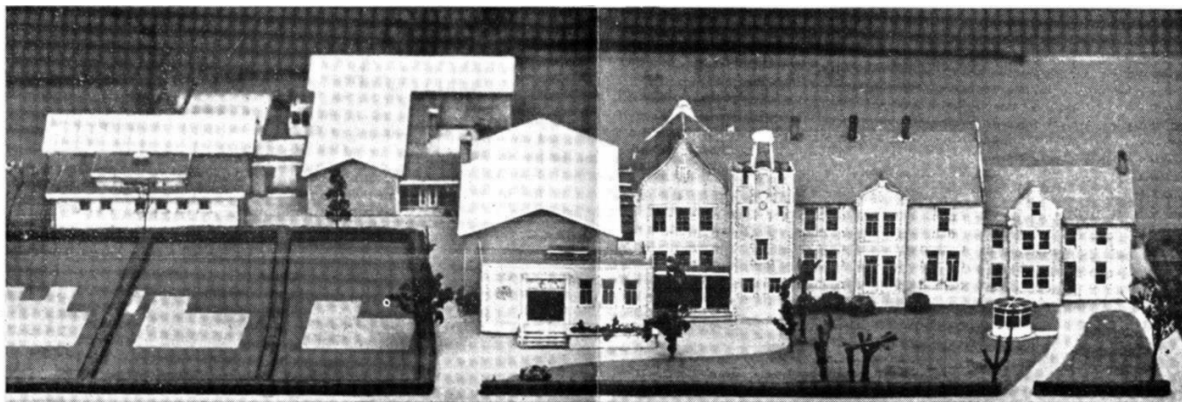


Rooms 56 and 57, minus the steps, shortly before their demolition in 1996

### THE NEW EXTENSION – AT LAST

Meanwhile the plans for the new extension began to take shape. In 1955 a deputation from the Board of Governors met representatives of the Ministry of Education, when they were told that, since the Minister *'was not in sympathy with high capital charges, a maximum of £5 would be sanctioned'*, although it was likely that a further loan of £20,000 could be granted. The Ministry gave permission in April 1956 for the building of a gymnasium/assembly hall, a new laboratory and general classrooms, and improvements to the cloakroom and lavatory block in the old building, but when the plans were submitted in September, the Ministry expressed itself not satisfied. It proposed the conversion of 'A' and 'J' Rooms into a third Laboratory, making modifications to the existing Chemistry and Physics laboratories and building general classrooms, an Art room, a 70 foot by 40 foot Assembly Hall - which Mr. Clarke later described as *'possibly the best school hall in Ulster'* - with a 40 foot by 20 foot stage, and a kitchen and a Dining Hall for 150. By the end of the year, the estimated cost had risen to £80,000 as the plans became more ambitious, with the addition of office accommodation, cloakrooms, changing rooms, a Headmaster's Study and the installation of central heating throughout the campus. (*'It will be no longer necessary for masters to shield their pupils from the direct rays of the fire by balancing on the fender with gown tail in one hand and book in the other'* reported an *Old Boys' Association Building Fund Appeal* brochure in April 1960.)

In November 1957, Mr. Patton produced a 'beautiful model' of the proposed new building, but it was not until exactly a year later that he told the Board that he hoped to invite tenders early in the New Year and to see the commencement of building in March or April. It would be necessary to demolish 'The Barn' and the bicycle sheds over the Summer, to make way for the new building, so two extra temporary classrooms and new bicycle racks would be required. With these additions, plus the conversion of the outhouses at the rear of *Crosby House* into a Bookstore to house the textbooks, which were issued on 'free loan' to the boys from 1958, the estimated cost was £100,000 by the Spring of 1959. Just months earlier, the Board of Governors had applied to the Ministry of Finance for a £25,000 loan.



Mr. Patton's model of the extension, as shown in the *Old Boys' Association Building Fund Appeal* brochure

By July 1959, 11 tenders had been received, the lowest being Henry Lavery and Sons' £80,857-15-0, which was accepted. (Harry Patton was not happy that the lowest tender had been accepted and felt that, as a result, he had to accept some poor workmanship.) Nor were some College Avenue residents happy about the proposed building however, claiming that the original lease had a restrictive covenant preventing the erection of school buildings behind their property, but eventually they withdrew their objections when it was agreed to build a wall between the School and the houses.

### THE DEMOLITION OF 'THE BARN'

By the mid-1950s, 'The Barn' was 'a very rickety building, probably totally unusable for human habitation by today's standards. . . . The upper floor was rather warped and seemed to sag in the middle. It was always preferable to be upstairs, despite the danger of collapse, as in the room below you could hear all the squeaks and groans of the floorboards every time anyone moved'.<sup>10</sup> Despite its unsuitability as classroom accommodation, it was, for some obscure reason, greatly loved; or perhaps the reason was not so obscure, for the upper floor provided an excellent view of *Glenlola* playground and volley ball court.

*'One sad day, a few weeks ago, the men who had been working in the School grounds committed an unspeakable crime – they knocked down the Barn. . . . During the Summer holidays, workmen arrived and proceeded to build four new classrooms in a henhouse-like building. These completed, they proceeded to de-slate and de-roof the old beloved seat of learning. With the roof off and the cobwebs away – which had held the roof in place – the poor old walls could not stand, so it was easy for a dirty grey crane to knock them down. The day before the Barn was due to be knocked down, the Sixth Form had a cruel task to perform. They took out the desks, cut deep with the names of now-famous men, and thus left the Barn empty. The next day the dirty task of destruction was started and the Barn was no more.'*

<sup>10</sup> Billy Mercer, loc.cit.

(Similar desks were to be found in several classrooms. They were two-seater desks, with cast iron side, a fixed plank seat and no back. The carved names and dates showed that they had been in use for over 20 years).

*'In Memory of "The Barn"*  
*'There stood by Bangor Grammar School*  
*An ancient-looking barn,*  
*Which served for many purposes,*  
*The first of which – a farm.*  
*Then from barn to classroom,*  
*Where many pupils learnt*  
*That barns were not the places*  
*For comfort – and they weren't.*  
*It was a good gymnasium,*  
*As boys were often found*  
*Swinging from the rafters*  
*And dropping to the ground.*  
*And then one day at last*  
*The builders had to come,*  
*And with hammers, picks and shovels,*  
*Knocked our barn to kingdom come.*<sup>11</sup>

Along with the Barn went the single-storey outhouses, which had served as Fred Conway's lawnmower shed and workshop.

## THE NEW BUILDINGS TAKE SHAPE



The digging of the foundations

Before a brick had been laid, it had been decided that Sam Claney should lay the Foundation Stone. The Headmaster thought that *'it would be a fitting tribute to Mr. Claney to perpetuate his name on the stone'*, since *'no Governor had contributed so much in time and energy to the School's affairs over the years'*. Mr. Claney had joined the Board of Governors in 1934. The Foundation Stone, bearing the inscription *'This stone was laid by Samuel McKee Claney, Former pupil, Chairman of the Board of Governors, March 1960'*, was laid on 26 March 1960 in a simple ceremony, which included a Dedicatory Prayer by Rev. W. J. McK. Wallace. Those present included the Mayor of Bangor, the Chairmen of the *Old Boys' Association* and the *Parents' Association*, the Builder, and

<sup>11</sup> M. McCauley (VI.B) in *The Gryphon*, December 1959; R. Porter (U.IV.A) in *The Gryphon*, December 1962.

the Architect who presented a silver trowel to Mr.Claney who used it to lay the foundation stone.<sup>12</sup>



Mr.Patton presenting Mr.Claney with a silver trowel  
on the occasion of the laying of the Foundation Stone,  
26 March 1960; looking on is the Headmaster.

Various gifts were made towards the new building. £343-14-0 was raised by the *Old Boys' Association*, which presented a piano, 16 donor-inscribed paintings representing different schools of art from Da Vinci to Picasso, at the suggestion of Horace Hamilton, and Honours Boards; the *Parents' Association* gave £100 towards the cost of stage lighting and £25 for a reading desk, for which Rev.Alan Buchanan, by then Bishop of Clogher presented a Bible; and Mr.Craig of the Surveyors, Messrs.Craig and Parks, offered £300 towards furniture for the Headmaster's Study in memory of his partner Mr.H.B.Parks, a former pupil, to whom a memorial plaque was erected. In addition, 600 chairs, 90 desks, 16 armchairs, filing cabinets, 248 additional lockers, stage equipment and blackout curtains were among the items which were needed for the new building. The Ministry of Education declined to consider a grant towards the School Coat of Arms on the new building.

Mr.Clarke enjoyed watching the new buildings take shape, commenting:

*'The rumble of the concrete mixer drowns the drone from the classroom. The bulldozer ploughs through opposition with a relentless force which is the envy of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV pack; and masters, fresh - if that is the word - from a session with some of our less receptive boys, have been seen casting longing eyes on the pneumatic drills which cut so quickly into the impervious rock. It is all very exciting and interesting. The boys have large sized "Dinky" toys to admire in action, the masters have the thrill of seeing really good teaching conditions materialise, and I have the fun of being , at one and the same time an Assistant Clerk of Works, a Deputy Surveyor, a Bricklayer's Assistant and a plumber's mate. It makes a change from beating boys – although I like to keep my arm in at that too!'*

---

<sup>12</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 1 April 1960.

## THE OPENING CEREMONY



The Caretaker, Fred Conway, preparing for the Official Opening

With the classrooms ready by September 1960 and the Assembly Hall a few months later, the new buildings were officially opened on 4 May 1961 by Lord Wakehurst, K.C.M.G., Governor of Northern Ireland. Among the 102 guests, who were treated to lunch in the new Dining Hall, provided by the *Star Catering Company* at 19/6<sup>d</sup> a head, were members of the Board of Governors, Staff, the architect, the builder, the Mayor of Bangor, Alderman C.A.Valentine, W.M.May, the Minister of Education, representatives of the *Old Boys' Association* and the *Parents' Association*, and the principals of local schools. Also invited to the ceremony itself were a number of people, whose connection with the School stretched back to the beginning of the century: Dr.McFeeters, son of Rev.James McFeeters, Mr. and Mrs Wilkins, Col.Ricketts, Mr.Mansfield, Miss Lewis and Miss Patton.

After lunch, the guests assembled at the main entrance and walked round the side of the new building through a guard of honour provided by cadets from the School A.C.F. contingent.



The Governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Wakehurst, accompanied by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.W.H.Langtry, inspects the A.C.F. guard of honour at the Official Opening of the new extension, 4 May 1961. Watching from behind 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.D.R.Jamieson are members of Upper Third, the author's contemporaries, including Harold Smyth, John Kirby, Paul Pringle, Dougie Rea, Martin Bleakley, Ronald McCann, Patrick Taylor and Dudley Neilly.

The ceremony, which included a short religious service conducted by Rev.W.J.McK.Wallace and the Rector, Archdeacon G.A.Quin, was held in the new Assembly Hall, while pupils in adjacent rooms had the proceedings relayed to them over loudspeakers. It opened with the singing of *O*

God, our help in ages past, and in a short speech Mr.Claney spoke on behalf of the Board of Governors:

*'We inherited a School with a wonderful tradition, therefore we felt that it was our duty to accept the challenge so that we would have a school up to modern requirements and worthy of this ancient Borough with its history of learning and missionary enterprise.'*

Lord Wakehurst praised the Board of Governors and, recalling that the School had almost trebled in numbers since the war, commented: *'I really don't know how you survived in the old building. It must have been like the Black Hole of Calcutta'*. The proceedings ended with a short musical concert. The School choir sang Quilter's *Non nobis, Domine*, pupil John Murdoch played three piano solos and an ensemble led by Mr.Greenhalgh and including on drums, pupil Desmond Kirk and on cornet, Kenneth Browne, the son of the conductor Mr.E.W.Browne, and himself a future member of staff, *'rendered movements from a Dramatic Suite'*. Connor House choir sang a group of Irish songs and everyone joined in the singing of the School Song.



An aerial photograph, taken in 1959 before the building work commenced.  
The old bicycle sheds, the Barn and the canteen are clearly visible.



Taken around two years later in 1961, this photograph shows the temporary huts, the new buildings, including the alterations to the outhouses at the rear of the old building, the dining hall, kitchen and the new bicycle sheds behind them. The old canteen appears still to be standing.  
(Both photographs are preserved in the School Archives)



The *County Down Spectator* gave a full description of the new facilities, with the usual journalistic hyperbole:

*'The new buildings fall into three well defined parts. To the west is a block of four classrooms – an art room, music room geography room, cloakroom and general classroom. These are all large, bright and fully equipped.'*

*'The Geography Room is one of the most up-to-date in the Province, equipped with a great variety of built-in furniture, a solar observation bay, cine-projector, sand table, tracing tables and filmstrip projector. In the Music Room will be a record player and amplifying unit presented by the Parents' Association and a large store for records and instruments.'*

*'South of the classroom block is the new dining hall and kitchen. The dining hall will seat 150 boys at each sitting for lunch, and will be a most suitable room for film shows and society meetings.'*

*'The third and largest part is the section of buildings centred on the Assembly Hall, which also serves as a gymnasium. This hall is capable of seating 600 and has a fully equipped stage which is one of the largest outside Belfast. Behind this are the boys' entrance hall, changing rooms and shower room. At the front are the administrative block and entrance foyer.'*

*'In the Assembly Hall, the gymnasium equipment has been partially concealed in the deep panelled ceiling and the wall ladders have been designed to form an interesting wall pattern.'*

*'The School War Memorials have been given a place of honour at one end of the hall and the stone bust of Mr. McFeeters, a popular Headmaster in pre-war days, has been built into one of the side walls. The hall is approached through a wide vestibule, with flush eucalyptus panelling, and the steps have been built with Mourne granite, salvaged from the original entrance. The new entrance has been designed in keeping with the original building and is linked by a pleasantly proportional covered way. The new slender columns in Mourne granite have replaced the old granite pillar under the tower which was so well known to all boys. This link has successfully retained the proportions of the old building while forming a transition from old to new methods of construction.'*

*'Externally the new wing has been finished in white pebbledash panels with dark brown bricks, thus avoiding expensive use of stone. It was intended that the new wing would eventually extend to Glenlola School, but this has been modified to form a sheltered quadrangle south of the cricket field. The dining room block will form part of a future quadrangle round a new paved play area, and space has been left for a future extension.'*

*'The original room has been converted to a physics laboratory and the chemistry laboratory has been enlarged and re-equipped. The old common room has been converted into a biology laboratory and extends partly into Crosby House.'*



The front of the School before the opening of the extension





The front of the School after the opening of the extension

Gone were the old names for the classrooms, names which had been unchanged for half a century. One Lower Third class, that final year of the old names, had a Monday morning timetable of English with Ernie Graham in 'M' Room, Latin with Jim Driscoll in 'E' Room, double Art with Edith Addy in 'C' Room and History in 'A' Room with the young Irwin Bonar, in pristine gown and with briefcase inscribed in gold with the initials T.A.I.B. (which he claimed stood for *The Almighty Invincible Bonar Teaches All Ignorant Brats*); there he had taught the class about Mohammed and M.E.C.C.A.! Now, instead of 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E', 'F', 'G', 'J' and 'K' rooms were Room 27 (the old 'A' and 'J' Rooms, later a Physics laboratory and later still a Drama room), and Rooms 38, 39, 44, 45, 40, 41 and 42. The 'temporary' huts, which had briefly been 'O', 'P', 'Q' and 'R' Rooms became Rooms 50, 52, 53 and 55 (the cloakrooms between them were 51 and 54). Mr. Hawtin moved to the new Room 13, Geography from the aptly named 'G' Room to Room 14, Room 16 was dedicated to Music and to her chagrin Miss Addy, who had enjoyed the sunny 'C' Room for many years, found herself in the north-facing Room 18. Gone too were the coal fires, a development which Messrs Hawtin and Rea, but not Fred Conway, may have bemoaned. The boys now had to wear sandals indoors to avoid marking the new floors, and ladies attending functions in the new Assembly Hall were expressly forbidden to wear the fashionable stiletto heels.

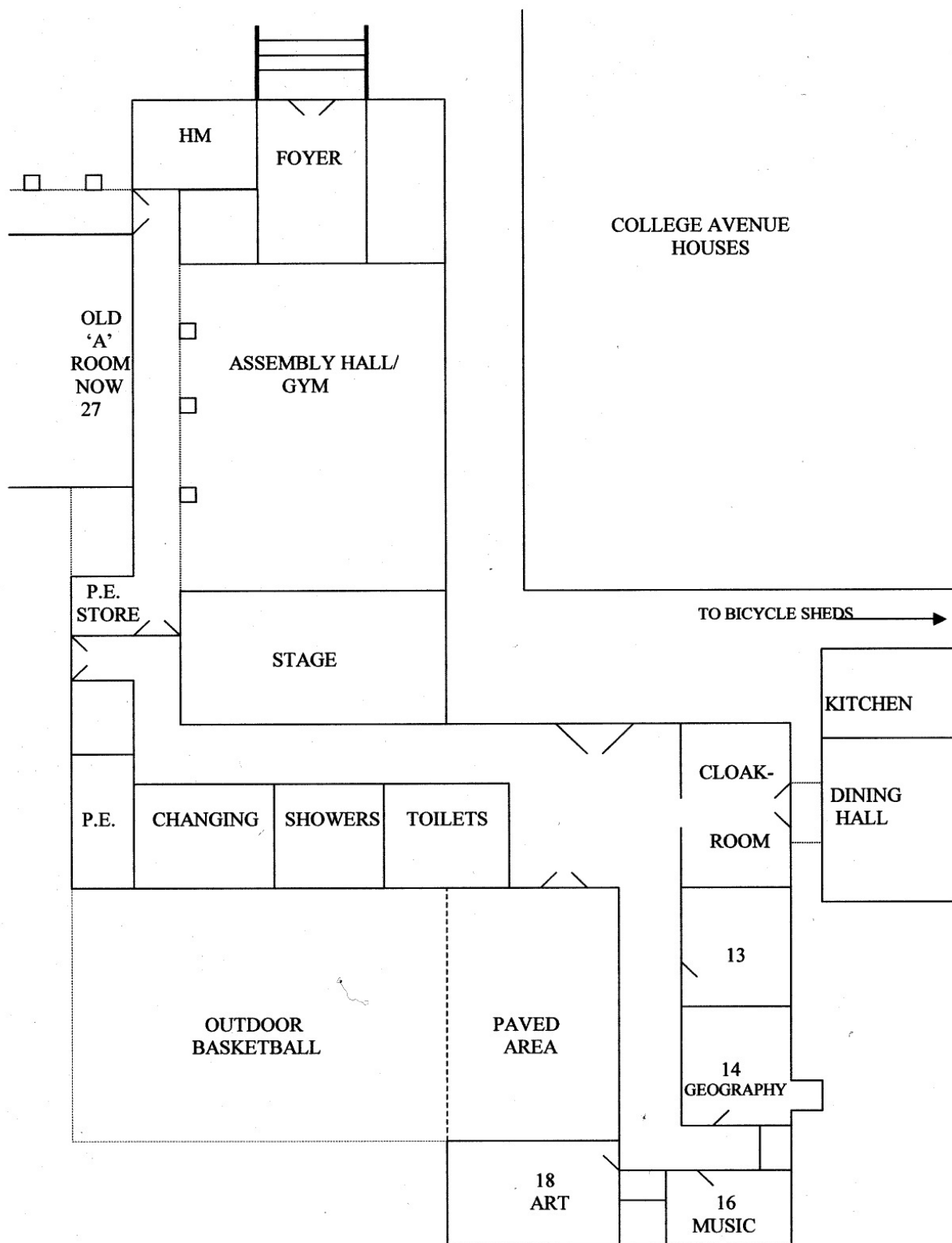


The 1961 extension

(Photograph taken by the author, from the back gate of 22 Clifton Road, c.1964)

The basketball area, as has been recalled by John Hunter, 'saw many a game of touch rugby where the school cap was folded neatly into three to look like a rather flat rugby ball'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 5 May 1961; John Hunter, *Forty Years on – and still at school*, in *Bangor Grammarians' Annual Report 2001*; personal recollections.



The 1961 Extension

## STAFF



The Teaching Staff, September 1956

G.D.Thomson, M.A.Hopkins, R.McIvor, W.McA.Shanks, J.S.H.McKitrick, B.A.Styles, D.Hayes, R.Greenhalgh, I.Dougan, B.F.O'Donovan, H.A.Eadie, Miss M.Stewart, Mrs.Bingham, Miss M.D.Pollock, J.C.Driscoll, G.A.Jamison, H.M.Rea, J.C.McKeown, Miss E.K.Addy, A.L.Hawtin, G.R.M.Clarke, T.W.T.Johnson, Miss M.Tipping, E.W.Browne, G.A.Heuston.

(J.H.Welch joined the Staff a month after this photograph was taken).

Amidst all the noise and disruption, school life continued as normally as was possible. These years saw an influx of new staff, many of whom were, as Bob McIlroy has put it, *'young and eager'*. Mr.Clarke was proud of his staff, once referring to them as *'men and women with high academic standards and a love and zeal for imparting their own knowledge to others'*. At the same time he believed that the higher salary scales and allowances in England were attracting some of the best young teachers to leave the Province and he feared that *'we will become an educational backwater comparable with Éire'*.

Mr.Hawtin and Mr.Heuston were far from *'eager'* to accept Mr.Clarke's proposal to advertise for a Head of English in 1956. They *'expressed their great surprise, keen disappointment and embarrassment'* at the proposal and Mr.Hawtin pointed out that *'he understood, along with many others, that he was Head of Department'*; but there was no record. He was given leave to address the Board of Governors, who attempted to humour him by explaining that, *'as the School was expanding, the Vice-Principal's responsibilities were becoming more onerous'*. Whether or not he was mollified, it was agreed that, should there be no suitable applicants, George Heuston was to be recommended for the post. This incident led to the Board writing to all members of Staff, pointing out that it was unprofessional conduct for them to approach Board members with their grievances. *'Tipp'* Heuston's promotion did not prevent him from venting his anger in the staff room at some alleged injustice perpetrated by the Headmaster. Having often been heard to complain: *'Someone should tell the Headmaster'*, on one occasion, thinking that Mr.Clarke was out of school, he announced that he was going to tell him exactly what he thought of him; imagine his consternation when he crossed the downstairs corridor in *Crosby House* and knocked on the Headmaster's door, only to be told gruffly to *'come in'*. The outcome of that meeting has not been recorded.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Irwin Bonar, in conversation with the author, March 2003; Chris Harte speaking at the *Grammarians'* Dinner, November 2004.



H.A.Eadie, B.A. (1955-1982)

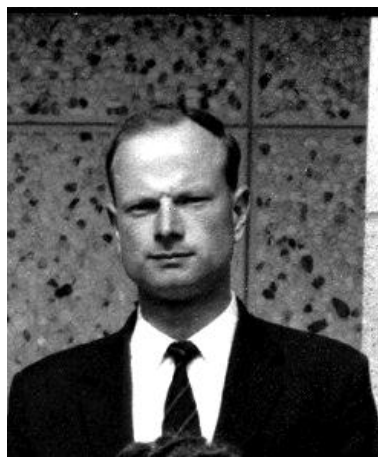
H.A.Eadie, B.A., an Armachian, trained at *Stranmillis* and was briefly a Primary School Headmaster before the War, during which he served with the *Royal Artillery* in Sicily, Italy and Greece. After demobilisation, he attended *Trinity College Dublin*, where he graduated in 1947. Following a spell teaching in *Portadown Technical College*, he was appointed to the staff of *Bangor Grammar School* in 1955. A gentle giant with a gruff voice, 'Big Harry' had never been known to hit a boy, with the result that the story was passed down from year to year that during the war he had been trained to kill with his bare hands, and so never hit anyone lest he killed him. No one risked provoking him - just in case. In 1982, the year he retired, the editor of *The Gryphon* said that his voice '*raised in anger (was it genuine anger?) was an awesome and effective weapon*' and added that an audio aid for nervous student teachers might well include '*his almighty bellow interspersed with his famous saying "Ah yer granny"*'. Errol Steele commented on '*the range and depth of Harry's involvement in School affairs over more than a quarter century - teacher of English and French, Senior Housemaster of Ward, Senior Master, Master-in-charge of the canteen, prefects, minibuses, hair, and of course his main love, cricket*'. He was a talented slow bowler and the cricket square in the back field, which had for many years been '*Tommy Johnson's cricket pitch*' became '*Harry Eadie's cricket pitch*'; it is said that he was often to be seen, all alone, on a Summer evening rolling the pitch with the massive roller. A schoolmaster of the '*old school*', he believed that learning depended on discipline and order, and he viewed with great suspicion innovations such as the Language Laboratory, which by the time he retired had been abandoned. Harry Eadie died in 1995.<sup>15</sup> Writing in that year's *The Gryphon*, Mark Robson, television sports commentator and 1<sup>st</sup> XI captain in 1978, recalled the hardest straight drive he had ever hit: '*The ball torpedoed straight at the chest of the tall man in the white coat. He watched it coming, but didn't move. . . . The ball crashed into the umpire's sternum. Did he flinch? Did he groan? . . . No chance! . . . That umpire was Harry Eadie.*'

Mr.Clarke's interest in games, and especially in rugby, was often reflected in his appointments to the teaching staff. It is recorded in the Board of Governors' Minutes that G.A.Jamison, B.A. (1955-1959) was to be offered the £40 over-scale allowance he was getting at *Coleraine Inst* because he was '*good at games*'; he coached the 1<sup>st</sup> XV for several years and he went on to become an international rugby referee. '*Big Alf*' as he was known (although not to his face) was certainly an imposing physical specimen and he could strike fear into most of his young charges with the command, '*Meet me in "D" Room, 3.30*'.

Bertrand A.Styles, B.Sc.(Hons.), who was appointed in 1956, had joined the School as a scholarship pupil in 1947, and had won colours for rugby, tennis, athletics and swimming. He was awarded a County Scholarship in his final year, which took him to *Queen's University*, where he graduated with Honours in Mathematics and Physics. During his early years on the staff, he was master in charge of swimming, he coached the Under-14 XV, the Medallion XV, the 1<sup>st</sup> XV,

<sup>15</sup> *The Gryphon*, 1982; *Bangor Grammarians Annual Report* 1995.

assisted with tennis teams and was Housemaster of *Crosby House*. Following the departure of Ernie Brown, he became Head of Mathematics and three years later, in 1966 at the age of 31, he was appointed Vice-Principal in succession to A.L.Hawtin, who retired after 40 years' service. Subsequently becoming Senior Vice-Principal, Bertie will be remembered by his pupils for *'his sense of dedication, his lucidity of exposition and the sincerity of his quest for perfection'*. Staff remember him for his many *'Bertie-isms'*, such as *'Umbelievable'* (sic) and *'I can't get my head round that'*. On one occasion, having outlined the structure of 'O' Level classes to senior pupils and having explained that the designation 'L' and 'S' (for *'Literary'* and *'Scientific'*) was to be changed to 'X' and 'Y' (as the demarcation was not strictly Literary and Scientific), he told the 'Y' group to go to one side of the Hall. One perplexed pupil asked where he should go, to which an irate Bertie replied, *'That side - "Y" for window'*! Mr.Styles retired in 1993 after a 46-year personal connection with the School (not counting his grandfather's time as caretaker).<sup>16</sup>



B.A.Styles, B.Sc.(Hons.)(1956-1993) in 1961 J.H.Welch, D.L.C.(1956-1993) in 1963

Jimmy H.Welch joined the Staff in 1956 having taught briefly in *Movilla School* Newtownards. To say that the facilities for P.E. (or P.T. as it was then known) were limited is a truism; apart from the recently acquired Bloomfield, the School Field and various halls in the town were all that Mr.Welch had to *'play'* with. Yet long before the excellent facilities of today had even been thought of, he had raised the profile of the School in the sporting world through his own efforts. Wins in the *Schools' Cup* and *Medallion Shield* rugby competitions and *Irish Schools' Championships* in both badminton and tennis came thick and fast, thanks in no small part to Jimmy Welch's skill, enthusiasm – and good humour. In mid-career he took his B.A. degree and in 1985 he became one of the first Teacher-Governors of the School. When he retired in 1993 after 37 years at the School, he left it with an enviable sporting reputation.<sup>17</sup>

Mrs.Greenhalgh, wife of the School's recently appointed first Biology master, Bob, became the School's first Laboratory Assistant in 1957. She had impeccable credentials for, as was minuted by the Board of Governors, she was *'a trained nurse and also an amateur carpenter of above average ability'*! It is said that, when her husband needed a piece of apparatus, his cry of *'Margaret!'* could be heard resounding all over the ground floor of the School. (It is also recalled that, in his broad Lancashire scent, he called a *'kettle'* a *'water-otter'* and that, as a pipe-smoker, he claimed that diesel fumes were the prime cause of cancer).<sup>18</sup>

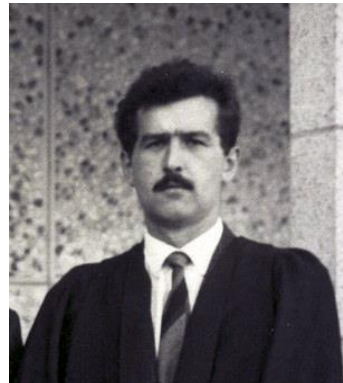
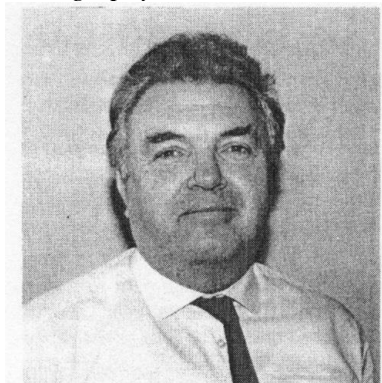
Raphael Sutter, B.A.(Hons.) was educated at *Ballymena Academy*, *Queen's University* and *Stranmillis Training College*. His first and only teaching post was in *Bangor Grammar School*,

<sup>16</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 18 March 1966; Noel Riddell in *The Gryphon*, 1993; Kenny Browne in a letter to the author, July 2004.

<sup>17</sup> John Smyth in *The Gryphon*, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Reminiscences of Bertie Styles, Irwin Bonar and Kenny Brown.

where he was appointed in 1958 to teach Mathematics and junior Science. He also taught R.E. and General Studies and in his later years he entered pupils for G.C.E. Photography. Closely associated with the *Dramatic Society*, where he took charge of lighting and, on one infamous occasion, make-up, he also took charge of the *Photographic Club* and he made a notable contribution to the School through his photography, leaving a comprehensive pictorial record of several generations in the School Archives when he was granted premature retirement in 1987. With his love of puns, he did not fail to appreciate the error on a letter addressed to 'Mr.R.Shutter, Master i/c Photography'.<sup>19</sup>



R.Sutter, B.A.(Hons.) (1958-1987) in 1987      William H.Langtry, B.Sc.(Hons.) (1959-1994) in 1964

William Herbert Langtry, who joined the staff in 1959 following two years teaching at *Annadale Grammar School*, was educated at *Coleraine Academical Institution* and *Queen's University*, where he graduated with Honours in Chemistry. Described as '*the complete scientist*', he was capable of teaching not only the three sciences, but also Astronomy and Navigation – making him the ideal teacher for *Bangor Endowed School*. A keen sportsman, he not only represented the Staff against the pupils in rugby, hockey, badminton and golf, but under his supervision the school *Sailing Club* enjoyed many successes. In addition he was in charge of the A.C.F. for many years and at the time of his retirement in 1994 he was Head of Chemistry and Senior Master.<sup>20</sup>



S.W.W.Mercer, M.A. (1959-1971)

Billy Mercer also joined the Staff in 1959. Known, rather cruelly, by the boys as '*the Jap*', during his eleven years at the School, he fulfilled numerous roles: talented teacher of French and German, Housemaster of *School House*, master-in-charge of the bookstore and tennis. He had crossed racquets with Bertie Styles when playing tennis for *R.B.A.I.* and he guided the Senior Tennis Team to the *Schools' Cup* in 1969. He left teaching two years later to take up the post of Assistant Education Officer with *Down County Education Committee*. The Board of Governors regarded this career move as '*a heavy blow to the School, as Mr.Mercer was one of the most valuable*

<sup>19</sup> Errol Steele in *The Gryphon*, 1987.

<sup>20</sup> Bob McIlroy in *The Gryphon*, 1994.



*masters on the staff*'. In 1973 he became Secretary of the *Northern Ireland G.C.E. Board* and he spent the rest of his career as a senior administrator of public examinations.

Thomas Alexander Irwin Bonar, another of those '*young and eager*' teachers, joined the Staff in September 1959. A product of *Down High School*, he had proceeded to *Queen's University* where, scholars such as Michael Roberts and J.C.Beckett heightened his already intense love of History. Although housemaster, librarian, master-in-charge of squash, table tennis and the canteen as well as business manager of the School Play, Irwin Bonar was first and foremost a teacher of History. A traditionalist at heart, he viewed many of the developments in history teaching with deep suspicion: '*It's all very well, but in the end they'll know no History*', he was heard to lament. His teaching was based on a detailed and precise knowledge, which he delighted in passing on to his pupils from his immaculately prepared notes. (He had made his application in *italic* writing, with the result that he found himself timetabled to teach '*Handwriting*' when he was first appointed.) He subsequently gained his Master of Education degree. Incidentally, he was also proud to be a Unionist and he has confirmed the story that he once wore a black tie to school '*because the Irish punt was worth more than sterling*'. Although he taught at the School for 38 years, it is said that he could always say how many periods he had to teach before retirement.<sup>21</sup>



Stalwarts of the History Department for 38 and 40 years respectively

T.A.Irwin Bonar, B.A.(Hons.) (1959-1997) and M.R.McCord, B.A.(Hons.) (1959-1999) in 1969

Matthew Robert McCord, universally known as Maurice to his colleagues and '*Stringer*' to the boys, joined the History Department a month after Irwin Bonar, following his Honours finals at *Trinity*. He recalls finishing his examinations on a Tuesday, travelling from Dublin on the Wednesday and starting teaching on the Thursday, his first time in a classroom since leaving school four years earlier. He had attended *Ballymena Academy* where he was Captain of a Shield-winning Medallion XV and the 1<sup>st</sup> XV; he also played rugby for Ulster Schools, and while at *Trinity* for Junior Leinster. An outstanding athlete, he held his school's *victor ludorum* cup for two years and represented his university at athletics. Throughout the 1960s, while teaching in Bangor, he held his place on the wing for a Ballymena 1<sup>st</sup> XV which included Syd Millar and Willie John McBride; he was often to be seen in his black Ballymena strip training in the School field during free periods and he helped Jimmy Welch coach the School 1<sup>st</sup> XV, as well as assisting with tennis, squash, athletics and swimming. But he was not just a sportsman; he had come 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively in Northern Ireland in his Advanced Level History and English in 1955, winning a County Antrim Scholarship which took him to *Trinity College Dublin*, where like his contemporary and colleague, Irwin Bonar, he had the privilege of being taught by some of the finest historians of their generation – in Maurice's case scholars such as T.W.Moody and F.S.L.Lyons. He combined his love of History with his love of Literature and he delighted in reading to his pupils from the works of some of the great historians: G.M.Trevelyan's account of

---

<sup>21</sup> Maurice McCord in *The Gryphon*, 1997; Bertie Styles, in a letter to the author, April 2004; Irwin Bonar's reminiscences.



the Battle of Blenheim springs to mind. He faced no problems when he first sat on ‘*the other side of the teacher’s desk*’, ‘*for the books used were ones that I was familiar with and methods of teaching were very similar*’ to those he had experienced as a pupil. Indeed, he admits (with some satisfaction) that ‘*in my case they didn’t change in essentials over a period of 40 years*’. (How the content taught changed over those 40 years. ‘*Somehow in Form I they got through all 250 pages of ‘From Flints to Printing’ and the Junior Certificate demanded an outline knowledge of British History from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*’) While his pupils - among them Nobel Prize winner David Trimble and newspaper mogul David Montgomery - achieved consistently outstanding results, Maurice, like his long-time colleague, found time to complete his Master of Education degree part-time in 1973 and to lead the School *Debating Society* to numerous successes in inter-school debates over a period of more than thirty years. (Incidentally, his maiden speech at the *Society*, on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1965, was in favour of the motion “*That this House approves of compulsory games*”). Although some had the pleasure of being taught Latin, English and even Mathematics by Mr. McCord, it was as a teacher of History that he will be most remembered; by the time of his retirement in 1999, the department which he had led for 35 years was, to quote his successor as Head of Department, ‘*one of the strongest, if not the strongest, academic departments in the School*’.<sup>22</sup> Of the staff appointed by Randall Clarke between 1954 and 1961, Messrs. Eadie, Styles, Thomson, Welch, Sutter, Langtry, Bonar and McCord served a total of 268 years, an average of 33.5 years each. Maurice McCord deserves a special place in the annals of the School, having taught there for 40 years, as had his predecessor as President of the *Debating Society*, Mr. Hawtin. But many of those whose stay was shorter also made their mark – and not only in the classroom: Ivor Dougan, Don Jamieson and ‘Yogi’ Hawthorne, in Drama, ‘Big Tam’ McVeigh in Music, Sam Davidson in his *Ford Zephyr*, driving Messrs. Bonar, Graham, Jamieson and Mercer, ‘*like a maniac*’, over the Craigantlet Hills, and Ernie Graham, ‘*the greatest character*’ Irwin Bonar ever knew. A brilliant raconteur and fluent in perhaps ten languages, Ernie appeared on *Brain of Britain*, served on the local council and, having left teaching, ended up as Head of the *Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board* in Brussels. While at the School, he had the dubious distinction of mistaking the Chief Inspector of Schools for the man sent to unblock the toilets at Coombehurst.<sup>23</sup>

## CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENTS

1956 was the first year of the new Senior Certificate examination; its Advanced Level courses were more comprehensive and specialised than the old Senior programme, and would normally take three years from Junior. Mr. Clarke cited the example of History, in which one 3 hour paper had been the norm, whereas now the boys would sit three 3-hour papers, in which they would be expected to ‘*produce work of at least first year university honours standard*’. He explained to members of the *Parents’ Association* that the extra year, in which boys might have up to 15 ‘*free*’ periods, would equip them better for Honours courses at university. At the same time it had been made somewhat easier to obtain an Ordinary Level Senior Certificate, since it became possible to take three subjects one year and to complete the necessary number the following year. A further innovation was the introduction of a ‘*top set*’ of qualified boys, who would take Junior after three instead of four years, giving them an extra year in the senior school where, Mr. Clarke believed, it would be most useful to them. Also, in 1956 German ‘*for scientists*’ was introduced and a class was started for those wanting to specialise in Music, bringing to 18 the number of subjects taught in the School.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Maurice McCord, in a letter to the author, October 2003; Rodney Jones in *The Gryphon*, 1999; *County Down Spectator*, 15 October, 1965.

<sup>23</sup> Irwin Bonar’s reminiscences.

<sup>24</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 29 September 1956.

## PUPIL SUCCESSES

Although Mr. Clarke could claim no credit, he was proud to be able to announce that in 1955 Roy J.M. Anderson, who had won the French government's prize for coming 1<sup>st</sup> in Senior Certificate French, and had also come 1<sup>st</sup> in German, had been awarded the *Reid-Harwood Entrance Scholarship* to *Queen's University Belfast*. Colin A.S. Walker also received an Entrance Scholarship to *Queen's*, where he went on to win the *Dr. Henry Hutchinson-Stewart Scholarship* and a *Foundation Studentship*. In 1961 he became an Assistant Lecturer in German at *Bristol University*.

Although the School's academic record was steadily improving, Mr. Clarke argued that its record could have been even more impressive, had the *County Down Education Authority* not been so 'penny wise'. Addressing the *Old Boys' Association* in 1956, he pointed out that,

*'Alone among Education Authorities, County Down has refused to adopt the Ministry's suggestion that university scholarships should be awarded to pupils who obtain 55% or over in four Advanced Level subjects. In County Down - and in County Down alone - 60% is needed. Had the Authority adopted the same standard as all the other Authorities, it would have awarded 58 Scholarships instead of 35 this year.'*

However, a week later, he was congratulating them on having reversed their stance.

In 1957 John S. McA. Curry was awarded one of three *British Thompson-Houston Industrial Scholarship* and T. Greer McKenzie a State Exhibition. Out of an Upper VI of just ten boys in 1958, four obtained County University Scholarships, two Training College Scholarships and C. Ronald Beattie won an *R.A.F. University Cadetship* to *Cambridge University*. Such were the results in 1959 that they were referred to at a meeting of the Borough Council, which sent a letter of congratulations to the Headmaster. In addition to Ian Adair's State Exhibition, Brian McDowell's *A.E.I. Industrial Scholarship* and David A. Reid's Ministry of Agriculture Scholarship, 21 boys were awarded County Scholarships – out of only 77 for the whole County; the Director of Education told Mr. Clarke that no school in the County had ever taken so many.<sup>25</sup>

The Headmaster had called 1959 'a record year', but he was forced to admit at Speech Day the following year that 1960 had been 'even better'. Undoubtedly the outstanding performance came from Peter S. Fullerton, who several years earlier had distinguished himself by winning the Junior Class for Original Verse at *Bangor Music Festival*, the *Moore Cup for Interpretation* in a *Young Farmers' Club* Public Speaking Competition and one of the three Exhibitions offered by the *London Guildhall School of Speech and Drama*. In 1960 he won a State Exhibition coming 1<sup>st</sup> in the Literary Group with 95% in 'A' Level English Literature, 92% in History and 78% in Ancient History. He followed this up in 1961 by winning one out of 130 History Scholarships to *Gonville and Caius College Cambridge*, while Head Boy. In 1964, having graduated with a Double First in History, he was elected President of the *Cambridge Union* while pursuing research into the Roman Senate. Two years later he published his first novel, *'An Hour for the Gods'*, while holding a *Henry Fellowship* at *Jonathan Edwards College, Yale*, where he was researching a biography of Simon Bolivar.<sup>26</sup>

Anthony R. Butler also won a State Exhibition with 6<sup>th</sup> place in the Literary Group; that year he had also represented Ireland in the *Junior International Dinghy Championships* in Portugal and the following year he was awarded an *English Electric Industrial Scholarship*. A third State Exhibition, out of only 37 awarded in the whole of the Province, was won by Nicholas A. R. Leroux, who came 17<sup>th</sup> in the Scientific and Mathematical Group. In addition to these awards, A. Chris Knipe won an Entrance Scholarship to *Queen's University*, D. Trevor E. McMurray earned an *Architects'*

<sup>25</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 4 September 1959; *The Gryphon*, December 1958, December 1959.

<sup>26</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 1 January 1965 and 9 September 1966; *Old Boys' Association Minutes*, 1966.

Registration Council Scholarship to Edinburgh University and 16 County Scholarships were also awarded.

1961 saw another State Exhibition, won by Alan R.Hill, who also came 1<sup>st</sup> in 'A' Level Geography, winning a prize from the *Royal Geographical Society*, and the *Allen West Industrial Scholarship* was won by Michael R.Curry. Mr.Clarke, who often repeated his belief that for a complete education a wide range of extra-curricular interests was important, was able to report that these boys *'are not mere bookworms, but they are scholars; they have wide interests which include yachting, golf, amateur dramatics, the Cadet Force, dancing, debating, jazz – and probably a number of others which I do not know about'*.

Tragedy hit the School in the Summer of 1959, when one of the pupils, Robin MacDonald, *'a lively, vivacious and intelligent boy [who] gave promise of a brilliant career'*, was drowned at Castlerock.

### **DAVID TRIMBLE**

One pupil, whose success was some years in the future, was William David Trimble. When he joined the School in 1956, Mr.Clarke wrote that he was *'possessed of good speech and manners'*, but added that he was *'over-studious and over conscientious. Nice child. Highly intelligent. Precocious'*. Teachers remember him as nervous, highly strung and *'a bit of a loner'*. For his part, Trimble recalled that Mr.Clarke *'treated me like a remedial pupil'*, and that he *'disliked Randall intensely as a person because he was reluctant to let me in [to the Senior History class], but he did eventually concede in the two years that I was there that I was very good'*. In 1963, his final year, he finished 1<sup>st</sup> in Ancient History and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Geography and Latin, but apparently he found the School so uncongenial that he came to regard his main achievement as having avoided sports for two years. Nevertheless, he did go on to gain a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours degree in Law from *Queen's*, and the rest, as they say, is history. It is also alleged that, while at the School, he was a member of a group of boys who bullied another pupil; that boy apparently bought an old .303 rifle and took it to School intending to frighten - or shoot - Trimble, but he was caught by a teacher and handed over to the R.U.C.<sup>27</sup>

### **THE ARMY CADET FORCE**

During the 1950s and 1960s the fortunes of the A.C.F. Detachment varied as numbers rose and fell, but throughout these years the unit was blessed with the dedication of Lt.W.Shanks, Lt.J.S.Shanks and Lt.W.H.Langtry not to mention very supportive headmasters. In 1950 *The Gryphon* had reported that the A.C.F. had had a *'quiet year'*, and in 1954 the detachment was put into what Mr.Clarke called *'a state of suspended animation'* for a year. (Mr.Clarke said that it was hoped to form a *Combined Cadet Force* with a naval section, for in a seaside town such a section *'would be very useful'*.) During that year there was no drill, no parades, no uniforms, but there was *'intense and prolonged activity with the signals equipment'*, and the detachment was *'awakened'* the following year with numbers rising to an unprecedented 45 cadets and affiliation to the local *661 Field Regiment (T.A.) Royal Artillery*, which provided help with drill, weapon and signal training. Senior cadets sat the Certificate 'A' examination and, as a result, a number of N.C.O.s were appointed. The following year was the School's centenary and the unit played a full part, including providing communications on various public occasions. In 1958, the thriving Signals Section was asked to provide line and radio links for two provincial golf tournaments. In June of that year, the detachment was also on duty at the *Ulster Rifle Competition*, and as a thank you, the *Ulster Small Bore Rifle Association* presented a silver cup to be awarded to the best shot in the unit. By now it was the only A.C.F. unit in the Province with a fully operating radio station and members were attending an annual camp at Altcar in Lancashire or in the Isle of Man. In 1960

<sup>27</sup> H.NcDonald, *Trimble* (2000), pp 15-17; D.Godson, *Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism* (2004), pp 11-12.

the new A.C.F. colour, presented by the Duke of Edinburgh, was paraded before every battalion in the British Isles to mark the centenary of the cadet movement. Sergeant Kevin J. Milhench was part of the colour escort when it was paraded before the Armagh and Down battalion in Comber. The following year the *Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme* was introduced to the unit and it soon became a major part of cadet training.

### OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The long established school societies continued to play a major part in the life of the School; the *Debating Society* celebrated its thirtieth anniversary and the *Dramatic Society* presented its annual productions, ranging from the light satire of Madeleine Bingham's *The Man from the Ministry* to the dramatic tension and symbolism of Capek's *R.U.R.* Mr. O'Donovan and Mr. Dougan 'could probably make large fortunes if they set up as producers in the West End', quipped Mr. Clarke.

New societies were also set up: in 1956 the *Geographical Society*, with Messrs. Johnson and McKittrick as Vice-Presidents, held its inaugural meeting at which the Town Clerk, T.B. Graham spoke on *Bangor's Past*, with the help of the seventeenth century *Thomas Raven* maps, and the *Natural History Society* was established by Mr. Greenhalgh; in 1957 a *Gramophone Society* was formed and 1961 saw the birth of Mr. Hawthorne's *61 Society* and Mr. Horner's *Hobbies Club* which, said Mr. Clarke, presumably without intentional humour, 'gave the boys an opportunity to do things with their hands'.

In 1955 a *Central Games Council* was set up. Chaired by the Headmaster, it was composed of the Captains and Coaches of the various games and it discussed the problems associated with running games in general and inter-house competitions in particular, the latter made easier by the formation that year of a fourth 'House' which, at the suggestion of one of the Governors, J.B. Stark, D.F.C., himself a former pupil, was named 'Ward House'. For over twenty years, the House to which one belonged was determined by the area of the town in which one lived. At the same time, new badges were designed for the pockets of Honours and Colours blazers and there were plans for a new team tie.<sup>28</sup>

At one of his first public functions as Headmaster, in December 1954, Mr. Clarke bemoaned the fact that 'rugger was at present in a run down condition'. He speculated that this was probably due to the lack of adequate playing fields in the past, but said that although everything was being done to revive it, 'you can't make a 1<sup>st</sup> XV overnight or in one session'. Rugby, he said, was 'one of the most successful school morale builders one could find'. However, in 1956 the Medallion XV reached the semi-finals of the Shield competition, by 1958, schools such as Methody and B.R.A. were sending their 1<sup>st</sup> XV's against the School 1<sup>st</sup> XV, instead of their 2<sup>nd</sup> XV's as had previously been the case and Sean Graham became the first boy from the School to play for the Ulster Schools' XV for well over a decade when he played against Connaught in 1960.

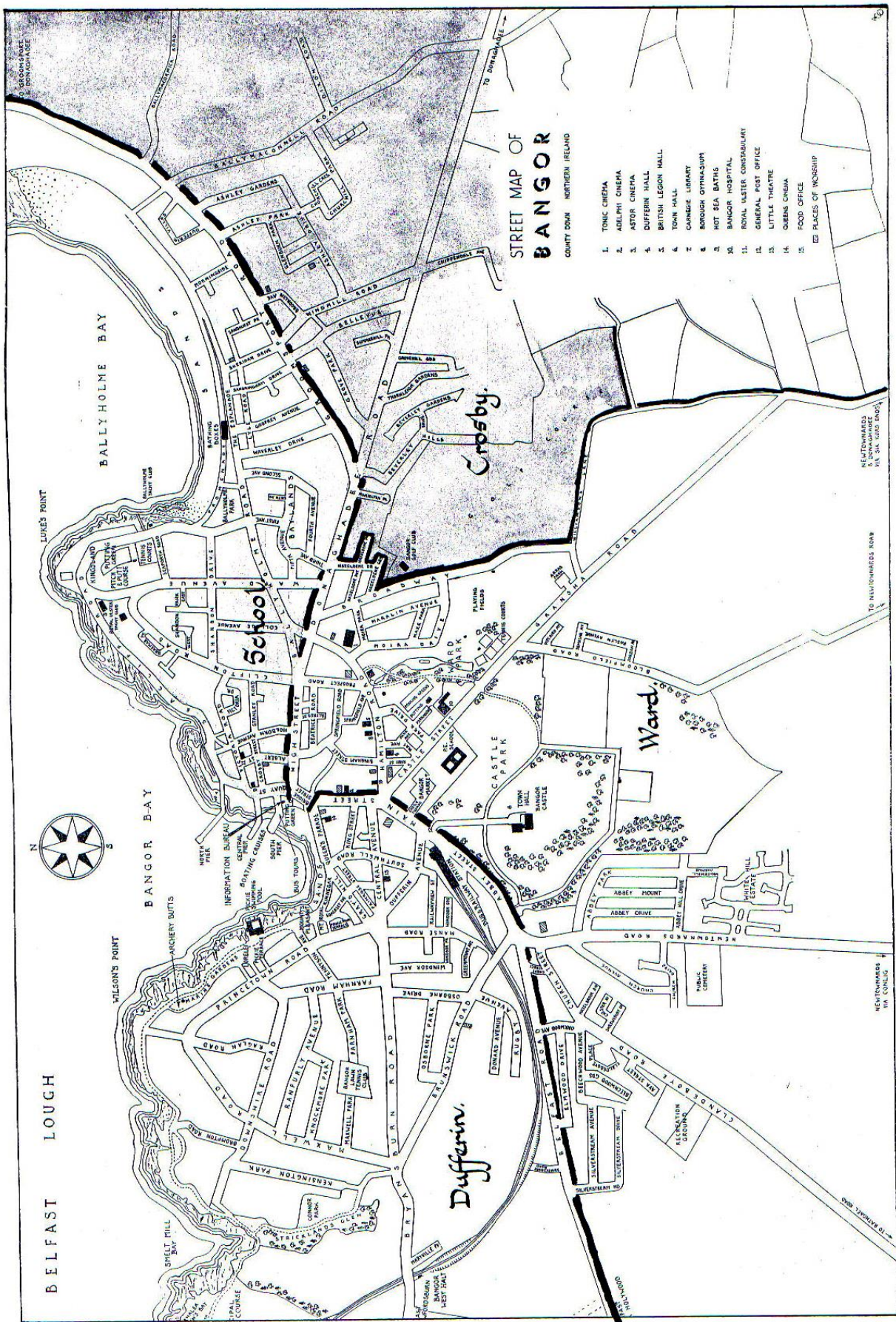


D.S.M. Graham,  
Ulster Schools XV 1960

---

<sup>28</sup> *The Gryphon*, December 1955.





This 1950s map of Bangor shows the area allocated to each House. The original was shaded in House colours, and is preserved in the School Archives.

Cricket continued to be played, but during these years *'without troubling the scorer'*. Messrs Eadie, Dougan, Driscoll and Matier were helping to improve the standard of the game in the School and in 1956 it was reported that the preparation of several new cricket pitches at Bloomfield was *'taxing Evans' capacity to the utmost'*; the Board of Governors authorised the purchase of a new motor mower.

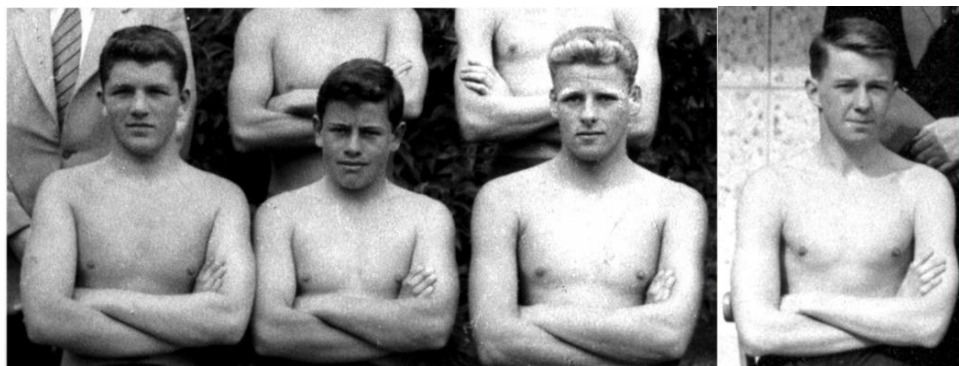
A school *Sailing Club* was formed at Easter 1957 and in conjunction with *Ballyholme Yacht Club*, a team was entered for the Public Schools' Yachting Championships. The following year, at only their second attempt the team won the *Clark Cup*, coming 1<sup>st</sup> out of 42 crews over five days of racing on the Clyde; the four members of the team became the first boys to be awarded Colours for Sailing. The School team finished in the top ten for the next three years, including being runners-up in 1961. That year the *Sailing Club* constitution was drawn up, with Mr.Greenhalgh as President. This was necessary to be recognised by the *Royal Yachting Association* and so be eligible to enter the *Public Schools' Dingy Championships*. The Board of Governors made a contribution to the travelling expenses of teams entering these events.



Winners of the *Public Schools' Yachting Championships*, 1958  
Donald J.Ritchie, W.Roger Killiner, Michael L.Nixon, Gregory B.Matthews

*'The Swimming Club had not been particularly active in the past'*, declared Mr.Clarke in 1954. *'This was rather a bad thing in a seaside town – the Club should be outstanding'*. As a first step, the School was reaffiliated to the Ulster Branch of the *Amateur Swimming Association*. Perhaps partly as a result of this move, but more likely due to the arrival on the staff of Bertie Styles, who had been Captain of Swimming while a pupil at the School, and to the discovery of some real talent, the fortunes of the *Swimming Club* were completely turned round in a very few years.





Ulster Schools' Swimming 'caps'

M.H.McCracken (1960), P.M.D.Montgomery (1960 and 1961), W.R.Blair (1958), and B.McCartney (1960).

The late 1950s and early 1960s was a golden age for the *Swimming Club* largely thanks to a handful of boys. Raymond Blair became the Ulster Boys' Breaststroke Champion in 1957 and the Irish Champion the following year. Not to be outdone, Pat Montgomery won the Freestyle event at the *Irish Boys' Championship*; he also became the Ulster Boys' Diving Champion in 1959 and the following year he, along with Maurice McCracken and Neil Weatherup, won 5 Irish and 2 Ulster Gold Medals between them, McCracken breaking the long standing Ulster Boys' 100 yards Freestyle record; *The Gryphon* commented that their feat '*has probably never been equalled by any Ulster school*'. McCracken went on to represent Ulster Schools in 1960 as did Montgomery in both 1960 and 1961, when he was joined by Brian McCartney who, as Ulster Champion, swam the 110 yards Butterfly and who played water polo for both Ulster Schools and for the *Ulster Water Polo Association Under-19 team*. In his final year at School, Pat Montgomery won the Men's' 1500 metre Freestyle title at the *Irish Championships* in 1961.<sup>29</sup>

In Athletics, Mark Cumming broke the Northern Ireland record for 440 Yard Hurdles in 1958. The previous year, Cross Country running had been introduced as an alternative sport for senior boys; that year Thomas R.Beattie won the *Ulster Schools' Cross Country Championships* out of 140 competitors, and in 1961 Peter A.D.Wilson became the All Ireland Cross Country Champion. Billy Mercer recalls that the less energetic '*athletes*' '*would hide during the first lap of the course at Bloomfield (which ran through what is now Tesco and Marks and Spencer) and rejoin the pack, fresh and fit, for the race to the line. Cross-country running was always the refuge for those who did not like the rough and tumble of the muddy rugby pitch*'. However, Bertie Styles and Irwin Bonar both recall one unfortunate runner who took a wrong turning and ran more than half way to Newtownards before realising that he was lost; he was eventually discovered '*bedraggled and exhausted*'.

In 1957 *Badminton Clubs* were formed for both pupils and staff by Mr.Welch, himself a useful player and the following year member of staff John R.McManus, a *Queen's* hockey '*blue*' and an international hockey player, introduced hockey for a few senior boys, the Staff having beaten a school team 13-3 the previous year, a result perhaps partly thanks to Miss Tipping's umpiring. Mr.McManus' younger brother, David, won the Under-18 *North Down* and the *County Antrim Hard Court Championships* in 1958 and the following year he won the *County Antrim* and the *Windsor Under-18 Singles Championships*. He played for the Ulster Schools' Tennis Team both years, and went on to become a Hockey international.

<sup>29</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 24 September 1955, 22 September 1956, 21 September 1957, 19 September 1958, 18 September 1959 and 15 September 1961; *The Gryphon*, December 1959, June 1960, June 1961 and December 1961.





T.R. Beattie,



D.R. McManus,

Ulster Schools' Cross Country Champion 1957    Ulster Schools' Tennis Team, 1958 and 1959

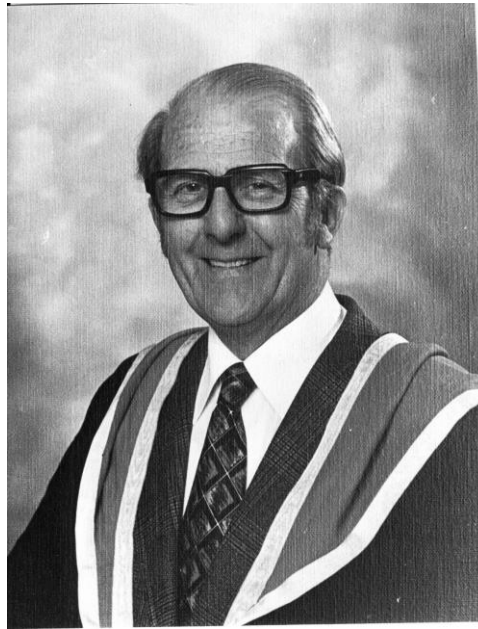
Meanwhile, Alan McDade won the *Ulster Boys' Golf Championship* in 1957 and, while admitting that the School '*cannot take direct responsibility*', Mr. Clarke clearly enjoyed the success of two pupils, Noel Tims and Brian Kissock, who finished 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the same championship in 1959. Brian Kissock went on to represent Ireland. Nor can the School take the credit for the later success of Terry Neill, Captain and Manager of both *Arsenal* and Northern Ireland in soccer, who attended the School for only one year, because he wanted to play football instead of rugby. He won 59 '*caps*' for his country and scored the winning goal against England at Wembley in 1972.

### **CONNOR HOUSE**

Mr. Clarke regarded *Connor House* as a very important part of the School. '*As an adjunct of the "Big" School, its value was in sending pupils on who were already imbued with the School spirit*'. However, since enrolment had risen to 112, having been only 40 when the *Connor House* building had been acquired, by 1955 the Preparatory Department was holding its Prize Day in the *Millar Craig Hall*, and there was a pressing need for new premises, as there were more applications than they could cope with.

In 1956, Mr. Andrews resigned to become Head of *Newry Grammar School* Preparatory Department and in his place the Governors appointed D. Gordon Thomson, B.Comm.Sc., H.Dip.Ed. from a shortlist of four, including Mr. Hopkins. A former pupil of *R.B.A.I.*, Mr. Thomson attended *Stranmillis Training College*, teaching in Belfast briefly, before joining the *Fleet Air Arm* on the outbreak of War. By the time he was demobilised, he had become second in command in the Staff Trials Flight, on the Staff of the Fifth Sea Lord. He subsequently took his degree at *Queen's* and joined the staff of *Belfast Royal Academy* Preparatory Department. A man of wide interests, he played both rugby and tennis for *C.I.Y.M.S.* and was accompanist for *Strandtown Girls Choir*.

At his first Prize Distribution in April 1957, Mr. Thomson was able to announce that a new class for 6-7 year olds, with their own specially trained teacher, Miss M. Joy Cooper, would be started the following September. This '*Transition*' class, initially of just 12 boys rising to 20 the following year, was so-named because it served as a transitional link between kindergarten and preparatory classes. The boys attended classes in the A.T.C. hut beside *Connor House* from 9 a.m. until 12.45 p.m. Mr. Thomson also looked forward to the day when they would be able to take boys from the age of 5. (The story goes that one young man was '*half killed*' because, when asked to write something expressing himself, he wrote '*I think Miss Cooper has jelly lips*'. Was the culprit '*half killed*' by a piece of chalk? It is remembered that, '*if throwing chalk had been an Olympic event, she'd have taken gold each time*'.)



D.Gordon Thomson, B.Comm.Sc., H.Dip.Ed.

Mr.Thomson's interest in Music soon made an impact at *Connor House*. At the 1958 Prize Distribution, the Guest of Honour, rugby legend Dr.Jack Kyle was entertained to '*delightful renderings*' of *The Ducks* and *Elephantaphus*, and the choir, (of which the author was a member), was awarded 88% for its Test Pieces at *Belfast Music Festival*. (That year the Lower III Choir won the *Robert McDonald Memorial Cup* for Choirs up to 14 Years at *Bangor Festival*; Mr.Browne was congratulated by the Board of Governors.)

The Governors had hopes of providing a new home for the Preparatory Department, and Mr.Thomson accompanied Mr.Clarke on visits to '*a couple of the more recent primary schools*'. Mr.Thomson said that '*it would be a very pleasant change to work in new, modern surroundings and to have the canteen, the gymnasium and our playing fields all within arm's reach*', but at the first Prize Distribution in the new School Assembly Hall in May 1961, Mr.Claney, Chairman of the Board, regretted that '*not a great deal of progress had been made*'. At least the boys now had the use of the senior school gymnasium and showers, although the *Tonic* carpark, part of which was covered with cinders, remained the boys' playground where they played marbles, '*conkers*' and more energetic games which often resulted in visits to Dr.Stim Smyth, whose surgery was opposite the School.

On that occasion, Mr.Thomson was able to announce the formation of a new Kindergarten class and the appointment of the '*very experienced*' Miss Maureen Fetherstonhaugh, who had been running her own private school in the *Downshire Tennis Club* pavilion for almost 20 years; she stayed at *Connor House* for a further 18. Randall Clarke appointed her, it is said, because he had appreciated her teaching of his son David. It seems that some of her senior school colleagues felt that her penetrating voice was guaranteed to destroy a peaceful lunch if they were sharing a canteen table with her, and so referred to her, *sotto voce*, as '*Miss F-Off*'! Having considered the *Tonic* café and the Tennis Pavilion, it was finally decided that, until new premises were built, this class would be held in the 1<sup>st</sup> Bangor Scout Hall at the Castle Street end of Ward Park, a hall later to become known to the older boys as *The Duck Pond* dance hall.



*'The Duck Pond'*

(Photograph taken by the author)

On the staff of *Connor House*, in addition to Mr.Thomson and Mr.Hopkins, who taught the two senior classes, were Donald Hayes, who was appointed in 1955, and Miss Mary Stewart, who had joined him on the staff a year later, replacing Miss Dickson. During his time on the staff of *Connor House*, Mr.Hayes not only gained his B.Sc. degree as a *London University* extern student, but he also acquired a wife – Miss Stewart.



Miss Dickson's last Form 1B 1955-56

Terry Davidson, Richard Armstrong, Terence Curling, David Rea, Mark Hunter, and Kenneth Darby-Dowman  
Paul Lyttle, Philip Arnold, Alan McConnell, Trevor Gray, Tom Corran, and (almost hidden) Derek Davis  
Brian Knox, Alan Pinkerton, Adrian Kerans, Peter Jarvis, Marcus Patton, Harold Smyth, and Patrick Taylor.

Meanwhile the, by now traditional, Hallowe'en outing, a fireworks display and perhaps a ghost story from Mr.Hopkins, continued; on one occasion, a spark got into the box of fireworks and *'the whole lot took off together, much to the amusement of the boys'*. Fire Brigade Headquarters in Belfast, Belfast Zoo, the Belfast Museum, Carrickfergus Castle, the *Belfast Telegraph* print room,



the *Ormeau Bakery* and, courtesy of the local M.P., Dr.R.Nixon, Stormont were among the exciting venues.

The boys also made their contribution to charitable causes, with substantial sums being raised for the *Barnardo Helper's League*, the *R.N.L.I.* and the *League of Pity*, and Christmas gifts were donated to the *Cripples Institute*, while Mr.Hopkins' 1<sup>d</sup> charge for filling one's pen with ink went towards the buying of jelly babies at the end of the term, which the boys were then encouraged to 'decapitate, amputate, masticate'.<sup>30</sup>



Form 2 at Stormont in 1957 with Dr.Nixon, M.P., Mr.Hopkins and Mr.Thomson

The photograph has no names attached, but the author, with the help of

K.H.J.Browne, D.H.Rea and G.Topping, remembers many of his near-contemporaries:

Back Row: Martyn Imrie, Roger McMurray, Roger Lightbody, Randall Gill, Richard Craig?, Ian Stoney, John Chestnutt, Michael McConnell, J.D.Stuart, Norman Lewis, Richard McMullan?, Michael Maybin?

4<sup>th</sup> Row: Michael White, ? , Michael Swanston, Gregory Taylor, Richard Gray, Ted Alexander, David Douglas?, Brian Thompson

3<sup>rd</sup> Row: Neal McCay, Peter Gay, Nigel Woods, David Greenhalgh, Gordon Topping, Andrew Ballantyne, Brian Roberts, Paul Brewer, Martyn Taylor, John Nixon, Timothy Buckler, Richard Morrow

2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Brian McLaughlin, David Cairns, Trevor Green, Richard McBride, Ian Soloman, Alan George, P.J.C.Blakely, Alistair Stewart, Ian Brown, ? , Jeffrey Berger

Front Row: Billy Kirby, Jim Dornan, Alan Railton, David Lowden, Barry Gray, Dougie Rea, Paul Pringle, David Herron, George Crowe, Peter Kelly, Michael McComb, Kenny Browne, Michael Barkatullagh, Rodney Stoney, Antony Cheeseman.

One thing is certain: there are two future members of Staff in the Front Row and one in the Third Row.  
(In an album compiled by Gordon Thomson, now preserved in the School)

### **THE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION**

By 1954 membership of the *Association* had reached 332 and at the Annual General Meeting that year there was a two to one vote in favour of reverting to the pre-war practice of 'dressing' for the Annual Dinner; Dudley Goodhall supplied cigarettes, tobacco and cigars. The following year it appeared that 'the thorny problem' of the Association tie had been resolved, with the Board of

<sup>30</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 2 April 1955, 23 June 1956, 13 April 1957, 16 May 1958, 22 May 1959, 13 May 1960 and 19 May 1961; reminiscences of Gordon Thomson, Autumn 2002 and of Peter Jarvis, February 2002..

Governors giving permission for the use of part of the new Coat of Arms; three years later, however, it was decided that, while that tie could be retained as a former pupils' tie, the *Association* tie should be black with blue and yellow stripes. In 1959 *Association* bow ties were introduced and the following year a scarf became available. But even half a century ago the Committee was grappling with something which has remained a problem ever since: how to attract recent school-leavers to join the *Association*; it was even suggested that the Head Boy should become a member of the Committee, in an effort to strengthen links with the School. Meanwhile, in 1957 the joint debate with the School was revived and the usual sporting fixtures were held, with the author's father opening the batting for the Old Boys in 1957.<sup>31</sup>



*The Old Boys Association Dinner 1961*

Among those present are, Staff members A.L.Hawtin, G.A.Heuston, Bertie Styles, sometime Governors of the School Sam Johnston, Martin Gray, Bob Magrath, Randall Christie and Jimmy Stark, as well as Tom McAuley. Raymond McGimpsey, Gordon Stephenson, Hugh Greer, Nevin Morris, Bertie McConnell and Billy McGimpsey. Derek Gorman is wearing his colours blazer.

### **THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

To mark the School's centenary, the *Parents' Association* presented Mr.Clarke with a cheque towards the cost of sound reproduction equipment. Mr Clarke said that it would be 'second to none'. It comprised a V.H.F. radio receiver, a tape recorder, a four-speed record player, a powerful amplifying unit and two large speakers. The equipment was, he said, '*the finest radio and sound system in Northern Ireland*' and would:

*'solve one of the School's problems – that of taking B.B.C. programmes. We have found in the past that it has been difficult and often impossible to synchronise classes with B.B.C. programmes. In future it will be possible to record these and play them back to the class at whatever time is suitable. The new record player will be of great use for music, as at present we have no machine capable of playing modern L.P. records'.<sup>32</sup>*

Among the activities of the *Parents' Association* were joint debates with the *Debating Society* and the usual careers talks on topics as diverse as architecture and nuclear physics.

### **THE CONTINENTAL TOUR**

At a *Parents' Association* meeting in 1956, Mr.A.Levine made the suggestion to the Headmaster that consideration should be given to sending boys from the School to the Continent for holidays

<sup>31</sup> *Old Boys' Association Minute Book 1954-1963.*

<sup>32</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 2 November 1957.

during the Summer months. Mr. Clarke expressed himself in favour, 'provided enough support was given and he could find a teacher to accompany the boys. He could not force a teacher to make the journey'. And so it was that the 'Continental Tour' was born. The following year, he and Mr. Thomson took a party to Paris for ten days in July; travelling overnight on the Liverpool ferry and by train to Euston Station, the party spent time shopping and visiting the *Imperial Science Museum* in London before boarding another train bound for Newhaven, crossing the Channel to Dieppe and catching the Paris express to the *L'ecole Normale Des Instituteurs*, where the boys slept in dormitories 'from 10 o'clock onwards owing to circumstances beyond their control'. Mr. Clarke said he wanted 'to contradict the rumour that the boys saw nothing of the night life of Paris, as they were locked up in the evening so that the masters could be free to amuse themselves'. In fact, while in Paris there were visits to Notre Dame, The Louvre, L'Hotel des Invalides and Versailles, and T.K. Philip Garity 'was lost so often that he had to have a bodyguard'.<sup>33</sup>

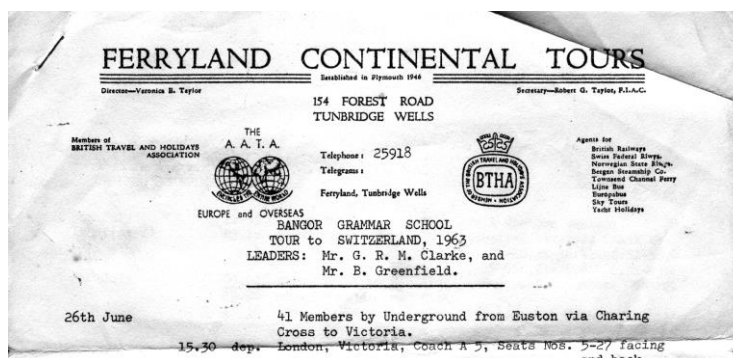
Over the next few years, trips to Boppard on the Rhine, Lugano, Interlaken and the Austrian Tyrol followed. The stories about the misdoings of the pupils and the doings of the teachers are legion: on one occasion an over-zealous young member of staff – Ernie Graham - locked the boys in their toilet-less dormitory, with the inevitable result.<sup>34</sup>



Philip Garity and Frank Boyle, his 'Bodyguard of the Day'.



The 1957 tour group outside Notre Dame



Part of the itinerary for the 1963 Continental Tour to Kandersteg, Switzerland



By 1963, fashions had changed. Brian Spence, Geoff Duncan, Nelson Milne Joe Thompson and Barry Gray photographed by the author *en route* to Kandersteg, June 1963.

<sup>33</sup> D.R.J. Burrows in *The Gryphon*, December 1957.

<sup>34</sup> An incident recalled by Irwin Bonar.

## THE SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT

The Scheme of Management had not been amended since 1939, and so in November 1957 steps were taken to include a clause making the School '*a designated body*' under the Local Government Superannuation Scheme, so that non-teaching staff would be eligible to receive a pension. Miss Henderson, who retired in 1961, was the first to benefit from this change, receiving a pension of £100 per annum. In 1960 a thorough-going review was carried out to bring the Scheme '*into line with modern conditions . . . as certain clauses were not in keeping with present requirements for the government and management of the School*'. Bangor Borough Council raised no objection to the proposed deletion of references to '*the proprietors of the Ward Estate*', but at first expressed the desire to retain the right to be represented on the Board. However in 1960, Fred Tughan and Bertie McConnell, two Old Boys who sat on the Council, were able to tell the Chairman that it would '*not now seek representation*' on the Board. By 1961, the amendments had been approved by the Ministry of Finance.

Although copies of neither the 1958 nor the 1961 Scheme have been found, it seems reasonable to assume that by 1961 reference to Lord Bangor was also deleted, thus making a final break with the founders of the School. The 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount Bangor who, like his father, had been *ex officio* Chairman of the Board of Governors, had attended meetings so irregularly that in 1943 Sam Claney had been designated Deputy Chairman and *de facto* Chairman. The 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount had died in 1950 and there is no record of the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount ever having attended meetings of the Board of Governors, although as recently as November 1956, he had been referred to in the press as Chairman of the Board. W.G.Wilson who, under §7 of the 1939 Scheme, had been Lord Bangor's nominee since 1946, had ceased to be a member of the Board in May 1958. It was minuted that Lord Bangor was to be informed and a year later that he was to be apprised of the amendments to the Scheme. These are the last references to Lord Bangor.

## FINANCE

Although entitled to a 65% grant towards capital expenditure, the Board of Governors had to find the remaining 35% and in view of the building programme it was inevitable that fees would have to be increased. In 1956 teachers were given a salary increase and, since half of this had to be borne by the School (and all of it in the case of the Preparatory Department), School fees had to rise by £4 (and by £8 in *Connor House*). The awarding of 'A' Level grants to staff the following year increased the need to raise fees and so in 1957, upper school fees were set at £37 and junior school at £32. By 1961 the fees were £42-10-0 and £40 respectively.

In 1955, the '*equal pay for women*' regulations had come into effect, which meant an increase of £16 in the salaries of the female teachers, bringing their basic annual salaries to £390. It is difficult to credit that a good Honours graduate, embarking on a teaching career in Northern Ireland just 50 years ago, could expect to earn no more than £526, and even one who entered industry would start on only £1,000 a year.

## PLANS FOR A FURTHER EXTENSION

Before the plans for the 1961 extension even went out to tender, the Board of Governors was already thinking ahead to yet another extension. The building work which was about to start was taking place on the assumption that the premises would eventually become available, and so the Board began to consider building more accommodation for the Senior School and a new Preparatory Department. In September 1959 it was recorded in the Board of Governors' Minutes that that the Ministry of Education would sanction a six-classroom Preparatory Department. The *Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority*, which had purchased Kyle's nursery to the south of the School, was approached to see whether it would be possible to acquire some of that land for the new Preparatory Department building. That land was not available, but plans went ahead for a building on the *Glenlola Collegiate* site when that school moved to its new premises in Castle



Park. The site was eventually purchased from the County Down Education Authority for over £20,000. The Board of Governors appointed as architect Mr.Patton, who in March 1960 estimated the cost at around £17,500

With a view to having a four-stream intake in the senior school eventually, the Governors talked of either extending the *Orlit* block northwards and possibly eastwards in an 'L' shape or putting a second storey on the new classroom block, and Mr.Patton was asked to draw up plans for an extension to the *Orlit* block to give eight additional classrooms '*to replace the current temporary wooden buildings*'. Application was made to the Ministry of Finance in the Summer of 1961 for a new £20,000 loan.

1961 would seem to be an appropriate point at which to end the first section of Randall Clarke's headmastership. Not only was it the year in which the first major extension was opened, it also saw the retirement of Sam Claney from the Board of Governors after 27 years. He presented a cheque for £100 to be invested for the continuation of his '*Prize for the Boys who has done Most for the School in the Year that is Past*'. Sam Claney died in 1963.



S.M.Claney in 1961,  
on the occasion of his retirement from  
the Board of Governors after 27 years

A number of other prizes had been donated to the School during these years. Presented in 1954 The *Elizabeth Orr Legacy* enabled the Headmaster to award a prize for whatever he wished; the first recipient was John Ravey who, having spent a year in hospital, proceeded to take part in the School Play, won an English prize and passed the Senior Certificate. Mr Clarke praised '*his outstanding courage, tenacity and cheerfulness*'.<sup>35</sup> 1959 saw the presentation of the *Jameson Cup for Handwriting*, and the *E.V.Agnew Trophy* for Outstanding Merit in any field, presented by *Old Boys' Association* to mark the contribution made to the *Association* by Ernie Agnew, who had emigrated to New Zealand. In the first three years of the prize, it was won twice by members of the Nixon family – Michael in 1959 and James in 1961. In 1960 an anonymous lady presented a Shield for Leadership; it was subsequently decided to name it *The Gryphon Shield of Honour*. Mrs.Margaret E.Millen presented the *John Millen Memorial Prize* for Merit in Physics or Biology for Boys intending to enter the Medical Profession in 1961. It was endowed by a gift of 100 guineas in memory of her son Dr.J.L.E.Millen, a former pupil and cancer specialist, who had died the

---

<sup>35</sup> *The Gryphon*, December 1956.

previous year at the age of 47. His younger brother James, a Reader in Anatomy and Fellow of *St.John's College Cambridge* died five years later at the age of 51. John had served in the *R.A.M.C.* and the *Indian Army Medical Service* during the war. Their father, Joseph, had been Principal of the *Hill School* on Brunswick Road. The first recipient of the Prize was James R.Nixon, himself the son of a doctor.

1961 also saw the retirement of Gladys Henderson after 22 years as School Secretary. She was presented with a television by the School and with an electric kettle by the *Old Boys' Association*, and she was invited to present the prizes at Sports Day just a month before she retired. Desmond Cole-Baker recalls: *'Her knowledge of changing Ministry Regulations was always right up-to-date. . . . She always gave a straight answer to your question, even if it was not what you wanted to hear'*. Miss Henderson was replaced by Miss Ivy E.Comyns, who looked after the financial side of the School Office and acted as Secretary to the Board of Governors for 21 years, until she retired in 1983, at the same time as Mrs.Sangster.



Miss Gladys Henderson



Miss Ivy Comyns

Mr.Cole-Baker also admired the School Caretaker, Fred Conway, who was to retire the following year: *'The upkeep of the School and grounds fell on the shoulders of Fred. All good janitors never seem to have a surname! I will always be grateful for his advice and co-operation when extra work was given him in the development of the canteen and biology laboratory. His advice was good and he was always able to find a tradesman rapidly, and ensured that their jobs were done properly'*.<sup>36</sup>

The Report of a Detailed Inspection by the Ministry of Education in 1961 identified two weaknesses: a weak 'C' stream was working its way up through the School and it was felt that G.C.E. would suit these boys better than Senior Certificate; and games accommodation at Bloomfield was not considered adequate to cater for the number of boys now at the School. These were issues, which would have to be addressed in the coming years.

---

<sup>36</sup> Desmond Cole-Baker, in a letter to the author, January 2003.