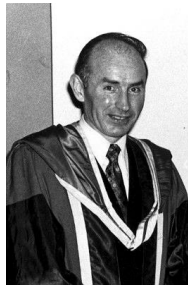


## CHAPTER TWELVE

### R.J.Rodgers, M.A., Ph.D., 1975-1979<sup>1</sup>



R.J.Rodgers, M.A., Ph.D., 1975-1979

#### DR.RODGERS' APPOINTMENT

There was a total of 45 applicants for the post of Headmaster. Among the seven shortlisted applicants were one serving teacher, Mr.Styles, and one former member of staff, Mr.Cole-Baker. The others were Messrs Anderson, Hooks, Tughan, Young and Dr.R.J.Rodgers.

The forty two year old Dr.Rodgers was the successful applicant and, since 16 Ward Avenue was on the market at £17,950 (although it eventually realised only £16,500), he was to be offered an extra £900 per annum in lieu of a house.

Educated at *R.B.A.I.*, in 1950 he was awarded a Foundation Entrance Scholarship to *Queen's University Belfast*, where he graduated with an Honours degree in History. He subsequently gained his M.A. in 1969 and his Ph.D. in 1973. He played rugby for both school and university. Having taught in *Annadale Grammar School* and *Grosvenor High School*, he moved to *Stranmillis Training College* in 1968, rising through the ranks from Lecturer to the post of Academic Registrar.<sup>2</sup>

As with any new Headmaster, Dr.Rodgers made a number of innovations on his arrival in Bangor. Perhaps reflecting the growth of the School's population, two Deputy Headboys were appointed in his first year. Two other changes were designed to reward more than the usual few boys for their contribution to the life of the School. 'Colours' were henceforth to be awarded for non-athletic activities such as Music, the *Combined Cadet Force*, Community Service, Debating and Drama, and on Speech Day a new category was introduced - '*proxime accesserunt*' - for those boys who, while not among the prize winners, had '*come closest*'.

Inevitably, former pupils have different memories of Dr.Rodgers. He is remembered for his ability to identify, by name, anyone fidgeting or talking in Assembly; for being able '*to tear strips off pupils with one swipe of his tongue*'; as someone '*who used a lot of big words*' (one of which may have been when he expressed his displeasure at seeing boys '*draped like convolvulus*' around the necks of *Glenlola Collegiate* girls); and for his deep Christian faith. The last of these qualities is movingly recalled by a boy, who had been summoned by the Headmaster for involvement in some minor incident:

*'he spoke firmly but gently to rebuke me. I did get told off, but in addition to his admonition, I received a lesson I never forgot. As he was finishing, he quoted a verse from the Bible - Philippians 3:13 - "forgetting what lies behind and pressing on to what lies ahead". It was there I learned that, in admitting guilt, there was a freedom to leave things behind and move on. I always intended to . . . thank him for one of the most important lessons I ever learned at school. So here is my opportunity - "Thanks Doc"'*.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information contained in this chapter has been taken from the Minutes of the Board of Governors, the Minutes of Meetings of Subscribers, or *The Gryphon*, which for these years contains the text of the Headmaster's Speech Day Report and, with exception of 1979, details of Sports Day. For those who may be interested in consulting the *County Down Spectator*, the relevant dates are: Speech Day - 5 November 1976, 4 November 1977, 3 November 1978 and 2 November 1979; Sports Days - 4 June 1976, 27 May 1977, 2 June 1978 and 1 June 1979; *Old Boys' Association* Dinners - 12 November 1976, 11 November 1977, 10 November 1978 and 9 November 1979.

<sup>2</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 6 December 1974.

As is true of almost every 'boss', opinions of Dr. Rodgers among his colleagues varied too. For one long-serving member of Staff, he was '*the most efficient Headmaster I've served under*'; for another, he was '*stiff and humourless*' and '*it grated on me intensely that he never used Christian names of Staff*'; on one occasion he is reputed to have introduced the brother of George Cameron, whom he had taught at *Grosvenor*, to a friend, with the words, '*This is Mr. Cameron's brother, Mr. Cameron*'. And yet, Barry Greenaway recalls him leaving a meeting in his study to shake his hand and congratulate him on the birth of his daughter.<sup>3</sup>

### THE LATE 1970s' WORLD

Throughout Dr. Rodgers' time in Bangor, the Northern Ireland '*Troubles*' continued unabated, despite the setting up of the *Peace People* by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan, who won the *Nobel Peace Prize*: sixteen were burnt to death at the *La Mon* hotel, eighteen soldiers died in the Warrenpoint massacre, Lord Mountbatten and Airey Neave were murdered by the I.R.A., and the '*Shankill Butchers*' went on trial. Meanwhile, in Great Britain unemployment topped the 1 million mark and the country suffered the '*winter of discontent*'. James Callaghan succeeded Harold Wilson as Prime Minister, only to lose the General Election to Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives. In the north Atlantic, the '*Cod War*' raged, in the North Sea oil reserves were exploited and in the skies Freddie Laker's *Skytrain* took off. Meanwhile, the Queen celebrated her Silver Jubilee and paid a visit to Northern Ireland, the first test-tube baby was born, the first direct elections to the European Parliament took place and the European Monetary System and the Exchange Rate Mechanism were established to regulate European currency fluctuations.

As world population reached 4 billion, Jimmy Carter, who was elected President of the United States, signed the abortive *SALT II* treaty with the Soviet Union, and brought together President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel, who were later awarded the *Nobel Peace Prize*. The Israelis rescued hostages from Entebbe, there were riots in Soweto, and the Shah of Iran went into exile, to be replaced by the Ayatollah Khomeini. In neighbouring Iraq, Saddam Hussein became President.

A number of statesmen passed away during the late 1970s. Britain lost Antony Eden (Lord Avon) and Field Marshal Montgomery, both of whom died peacefully, Brian Faulkner, elevated to the peerage only months earlier, died after a hunting accident, while the Roman Catholic Church had the misfortune to have to bury both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul I. In China the deaths of both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong marked the end of an era, and elsewhere, Jomo Kenyatta, Golda Meir and General Franco died; former President Bhutto of Pakistan was executed. Also during these years, showbusiness was mourning Charlie Chaplin, John Wayne, Gracie Fields, Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley and the Ulster-born star of *Ben Hur*, Stephen Boyd, while the Arts lost Agatha Christie, L.S. Lowry, and Benjamin Britten.

Cinema audiences were able to enjoy Hollywood's latest offerings, including *Jaws*, *Rocky*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Grease*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Annie Hall*, *Star Wars*, *The Deerhunter* and *Superman*, while on the small screen, Basil Fawlty was wreaking havoc at his hotel and George Dixon said '*Evening all*' for the last time. In the Arts, the writings of Harold Pinter, Peter Shaffer, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, V.S. Naipaul, and Alex Haley's *Roots* were among the best sellers, and while Michael Tippett maintained the classical music tradition, it was acts such as *Boney M*, the *Bay City Rollers*, the *Bee Gees*, the *Carpenters*, *Elton John*, *Led Zeppelin*, *Abba*, the *Eagles*, the *Sex Pistols*, the *Boomtown Rats* and the *Police* that topped the charts.

In sport, Bjorn Borg dominated the world of tennis, Trevor Francis became the first £million soccer player, Finland's Lasse Viren retained the Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metre titles, and Sebastian Coe captured the world 800 metres, 1500 metres and mile records in the space of six weeks. In cricket, Geoff Boycott scored his 100<sup>th</sup> Test century and Kerry Packer enticed a

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<sup>3</sup> Memories of (in no particular order) Simon Armstrong, William Thompson, Paul Wickens, Don Whittle and various members of Staff..

number of leading players to join his cricket 'circus'. *Red Rum* won his third Grand National and Virginia Wade won Wimbledon.

### **'BOMB BLITZ ON BANGOR BUSINESSES'**

This headline in the *County Down Spectator*, describing the effect of twenty incendiary devices on the town, was typical of the local newsworthy stories in the late 1970s. There seemed to be little cheerful news. There were articles about bombs on the Bangor train, about another 'loyalist' strike, accompanied by intimidation and about demonstrations against 'the evil of ecumenism' when *Bangor Council of Churches* held a week of prayer for Christian unity.

Nature too brought depressing news. A storm sank twenty one and drove ashore nineteen of the seventy six yachts moored in Ballyholme Bay, as if to strengthen the case for a Marina, a working model of which was unveiled at *Queen's University*. Dr. Rodgers' final winter in Bangor saw ten inches of snow in January and, for the second time in a fortnight, power lines were broken, railway points were frozen and roads were treacherous.

Although the new Health Centre on the Newtownards Road opened, *Warden's Corner* disappeared, the *Queen's Court Hotel* lost its liquor licence and closed, the *Tonic* cinema was put up for sale, and eighty two year old Minnie Delino announced that *Barry's Amusements*, which had occupied the premises of the old *Grand Hotel* on Quay Street for a generation, were in their final season.

Even the sports pages brought bad news. In 1975, Adrian Mencarelli, who had played at centre for the School 1<sup>st</sup> XV a decade earlier, was paralysed from the waist down following a rugby accident. A year later a star-studded 'W.J. McBride International XV' played a Bangor Rugby Club team to raise money for the Appeal Fund that had been set up.<sup>4</sup>

### **'THE REORGANISATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION'**

*'When a society is sick morally, socially and economically, it is not surprising to find that there are malcontents, who look for scapegoats, and well-meaning idealists, who want to know if schools are making the right kind of contribution to the well-being of the community. . . . Comprehensive schools, we are told, will provide the panacea.'*

So wrote the editor of *The Gryphon* in the Autumn of 1976. His remarks were prompted by what became known as 'The Cowan Report', named after the Chairman of the Working Party, Mr. T. Cowan, Senior Chief Inspector at the Department of Education. The purpose of this *Consultative Document on the Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland*, which was to hang, like the sword of Damocles, over the School for the whole of Dr. Rodgers' time in Bangor, was to sound out reaction to the possibility of introducing comprehensive education in the Province. Mr. Cowan had visited the School in May 1975 and did so again in October, shortly after Dr. Rodgers had taken up his position. He insisted that a uniform pattern of secondary education for the whole of Northern Ireland was not contemplated, but made it clear that the existing selection procedure had to be abolished. The Minister of State, (Lord) Roland Moyle, he said, 'would not contemplate' anything other than a network of comprehensive schools, and although Mr. Cowan privately admitted that he found the idea 'abhorrent', he believed that the Minister would throw out any plan that did not have built into it arrangements to contrive 'a social mix'. His successor, Lord Melchett, was of a similar mind. It seemed that the School was faced with two alternatives: full independence or becoming a non-selective 11-18 school.

Special meetings of the Board of Governors took place, meetings with representatives from other voluntary grammar schools in the area were held, papers on 'Transfer Procedures', 'The Voluntary Principle' and 'Four Non-selective Variants' were discussed. The Headmaster argued that the Governors should insist on the maintenance of academic and behavioural standards, respect for the rights of parents and control over the appointment of staff, future building programmes and finances, in short, the freedom to run the School's affairs without undue

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<sup>4</sup> Information gleaned from the files of the *County Down Spectator*; J.E. Doherty & D.J. Hickey, *A Chronology of Irish History since 1500* (1989); P. Waller, *Chronology of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (1995).

interference. While the *Governing Bodies' Association*, on which J.B.Stark, D.F.C. represented the Governors, examined the financial implications of going independent, the mood of the Board of Governors was often somewhat depressed, as members recognised that the grammar schools represented a minority interest and felt that the decision to introduce a comprehensive system had already been taken and that the '*consultation*' process was merely a façade. Indeed, in an effort to safeguard the School's financial independence, steps were taken to set up a trust fund, with seven of the governors acting as trustees. At the same time, the Board did make its position clear; a change of name - back to '*Bangor Endowed School*', for example - would not be acceptable and, while not committed to the existing 11+, the Board of Governors supported '*the particular form of education . . . for which, not only had the School always stood, but in which the Board continued to repose its utmost confidence*'.

In his first Annual Report, Dr.Rodgers explained that:

*'We are not saying that we offer the best education for all boys. That would be too absurd for words. We would not presume to speak, for we do not think in pejorative terms of those other schools, specially designed to cater for the non-academic boy, and which perform the function infinitely better than we could ever hope to do. We are simply repeating the educational thesis, for it seems that it needs to be restated in the face of misconceived sociology that would argue to the contrary, that each school has a distinctive role to play.'*

The Minutes of the Board of Governors continue:

*'It would be shortsighted to appear to be co-operating in the destruction of what we believe is valuable in our own traditions. Obstructive tactics, therefore, operating from a secure constructive base, would certainly disabuse the Minister of any fond hopes he might entertain that the grammar schools were surrendering without a fight, and could well compel the government to introduce legislation to effect change. This would not only saddle the government with the embarrassment of yet another controversial issue, but interpose also a delay which could only be to our advantage – especially if extended long enough to see either (in the short term) a change of government or (in the longer term) the dawn of realisation in Great Britain that the comprehensive dream was in truth something of a nightmare.'*

The *Report*, which the Minister of State called a '*feasibility study*', was published in July 1976. Its proposals for the Bangor area were that: *Bangor Grammar School* should become an 11-18 boys' school and *Glenlola Collegiate* and *Bangor Girls' Secondary* should amalgamate and become an 11-18 girls' school, both accepting pupils at 11 and at 16. It also put forward the view that Preparatory Departments '*will probably disappear*'; they would have the option of becoming primary schools or going independent.<sup>5</sup> Reaction was sought from all interested parties and the *Report* engendered fierce debate between the pro- and anti-comprehensive lobbies, and the consultation period, which had been thought by many to be too short, was eventually extended until Easter 1977. Grammar school principals wanted transfer at 11+ on the basis of the courses offered by the post-primary schools and the South Eastern Education and Library Board recommended '*election*' on the basis of the child's primary school record, something to which Mr.Cowan said he was '*adamantly opposed*'.

In September 1976, the Board of Governors circulated a statement, commenting on the *Consultative Document*, to all those connected with the School. It did not mince its words; while admitting that there was '*some disquiet*' about the procedure used to transfer pupils to post-primary schools, it went on to say that:

*'it is most certainly misleading to represent that disquiet as a widespread demand for the wholesale recasting of the province's education system – involving, moreover, the complete destruction of the voluntary grammar schools as they now exist. . . . It is equally absurd to suggest that educational advance can be made only through a monolithic system of comprehensive schools, each bearing a stultifying similarity to the other'*.

Over the past few years the School had worked closely with the *Bangor Boys' Secondary School* and the Board argued that:

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<sup>5</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 30 July 1976.

*'there is already a comprehensive system of education in operation in the borough. Through a genuine and expanding system of interchange between the two boys' schools – and between each of us and the local Technical College – no boy is denied the opportunity to develop his particular abilities and aptitudes to the full'.<sup>6</sup>*

In a joint statement several months later, Mr.J.McCollough, Principal of the *Boys' Secondary School*, and Dr.R.J.Rodgers, repeated their opinion that *'locally a comprehensive system of education is emerging'* and asked for time and the opportunity to learn from the developing situation.<sup>7</sup> Indeed by the Autumn of 1978 boys were attending the newly named *Gransha Boys' High School* for Technical Drawing, while *Gransha* boys were learning German at *Bangor Grammar School*, pupils from the *Girls' High School* were using the Language Laboratory, the two schools were sharing a languages assistant, Middle Sixth boys were attending a catering class, a student from the *Technical College* was studying 'O' Level Music, and a Lecturer from that College was involved in the Sixth Form General Studies programme. The Board of Governors, in its official response to the *Consultative Document*, also noted *'the growing degree of religious integration in the School – both among the boys and the teaching staff'*.

Nor was the *Cowan Report* the only threat to the nature of the School. Further reports were produced by the *Benn Committee* on *'The Role of Voluntary Schools'*, by the *Dickson Committee* on *'Preparatory and Boarding Departments'*, and by the *Astin Committee*, on *'School Management'*. And a year after *'Cowan'*, another consultative document was published, this time on Sixth Form Colleges, something which Dr.Rodgers opposed on the grounds that *'the continuity of contact between staff and boys begun before the Sixth Form years helps to produce the kind of sympathetic and understanding relationship . . . from which the boys derive benefits other than academic success alone'*. (He was somewhat bemused that the working party's conclusions were published nearly three weeks before the closing date set by its Chairman for the receipt of evidence). At the same time the *Schools' Council Joint Examinations Sub-Committee* recommended that the existing dual system of examinations at 16+ - G.C.E. 'O' Level and C.S.E. – should be replaced by a common examination *'as soon as possible'*. The editor of *The Gryphon* warned against *'the pseudo-egalitarian notion that it is wrong that pupils should reveal the inequality of their abilities in a competitive examination'*, but a decade later, in 1986, the General Certificate of Secondary Education came into being.

A new transfer procedure at 11+ was introduced in 1978, in connection with which an Open Evening was held, but there were no other major reforms, for in May 1979, Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives won the General Election and within two months of the election, Humphrey Atkins, the new Secretary of State, announced the decision to reverse the previous government's policy on comprehensive education'.

Under the circumstances, it was hardly surprising that Dr.Rodgers should have begun his Annual Report in 1977 by saying:

*'The most remarkable feature [of the previous year] . . . was its normality. At the same time, when one considers the strains generated by the continuing troubles, the confinement begotten of long-enforced economic stringency, the uncertainty resulting from a depressing political stalemate and the apprehensions aroused by the publication of government plans to restructure the whole post-primary education system, the preservation of normality represents, perhaps, no mean achievement.'*

## **A FIFTH STREAM**

Any uncertainty about the future of education did not adversely affect enrolment. In 1976 there was an *'unprecedented demand for places'*, with the parents of 132 boys making the School 1<sup>st</sup> choice and a further 70 making it 2<sup>nd</sup> choice. A further 17 non-qualified *Connor House* boys made the total 219. Having decided in 1975 that the present building *'could not accommodate a 5<sup>th</sup> stream'*, that it was *'impracticable to consider further building'* and that, in

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<sup>6</sup> 'The Consultative Document on the Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland: Statement by the Board of Governors', 20 September 1976.

<sup>7</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 7 January 1977.

1975-76, there should continue to be just four streams, with preference given to *Connor House* boys, the Board of Governors was forced to reconsider that policy, and to contemplate imposing a separate entrance examination in the future. The decision to allow a fifth stream - for one year only - was taken, reluctantly, because the Governors had always insisted on the importance of parental choice, and because they did not want to see the creation of a 'qualified' class at the *Secondary School*. (There were clearly no immediate plans for 'further building', for, when an 'old boy' told a member of the Board (erroneously) that two more houses on Clifton Road would soon be on the market, it was minuted that there were 'no plans to expand in that area'.) However, since 1975, the total enrolment, including *Connor House*, has never dropped below 1,000.

Although Dr.Rodgers believed that the size of the School was already '*at its optimum*', his staff did not want to limit the intake to four streams in the future, and primary school principals were not in favour of another examination for their P.7 boys. Another solution that was contemplated was to restrict the School's catchment area, excluding Donaghadee, Millisle, Glencraig and Holywood.

A year later, the School was again oversubscribed, with 20 qualified boys which could not be accommodated; the Headmaster's impression was that the Education and Library Board was '*not anxious to relieve any pressure on us*', in spite of assurances to the contrary, but after consultation between the Heads of *Regent House*, *Sullivan Upper* and *Bangor Grammar School*, places were found for those boys.

## THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The uncertainty generated by the education debate inevitably placed additional strain on the Board of Governors, but they worked tirelessly because they had the best interests of the School at heart. As Dr.Rodgers noted, they were part of the School Community, consisting, in 1977, of thirteen former pupils, six parents, eight past parents and two grandparents. (At the same time, the Headmaster pointed out that there were 226 boys with one brother at the School and 33 with two).

Much of the Governors' work concerned finance. During Dr.Rodgers' headmastership, fees rose from £255 to £314 *per annum*, and from £130 and £140 to £189 and £201 in *Connor House*. The Appeal Fund continued to bring in money; by 1979, £30,080 had been subscribed. Following the success of the 1974 Bazaar, the enterprise was repeated in October 1977; £2600 was raised for improvements to the Library. Robert Stevenson recalls how he and Harry Eadie manned the second-hand book stall, and were amazed to see a middle-aged lady filling a couple of suitcases with the books she had bought. The following day, Mr.Eadie and his wife came across the same lady at the *Nutt's Corner* market, selling the books at a good profit.<sup>8</sup>

However, much was also mundane to say the least: deciding to fit external lights and new locks following a burglary; complying with Health and Safety regulations as far as exit signs, handrails and speed limits were concerned; discussing whether or not the bell tower should be removed because of its dangerous state; providing a Christmas lunch for the Staff; and deciding to procure a school minibus on contract hire, rather than by outright purchase. Perhaps the tedium got to them occasionally, causing tempers to fray. One member complained, in the spring of 1979, that '*some members at Board meetings tend to talk too often on one subject and should concentrate their thoughts better so that the views of other members can be heard*'.

## STAFF

Three long-serving members of Staff who joined the School during these years took early retirement after 25 years' service.

Ken Browne, who joined the Staff in 1976, and took early retirement in 2001. Like his father E.W.Browne, Ken was both a mathematician and a musician. An academic, he had little

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Stevenson in an email to the author, June 2004.

patience for students who did not apply themselves fully. Under his baton, the School Band made many public appearances and serenaded the Staff with Christmas music at morning break just before the end of term. Ken Browne also enthusiastically kept the *Chess Club* going, despite a fall in the number of members. Other banal responsibilities in school included stationery and dealing with latecomers, while outside school his ruling passion was his pigeons. At his retirement dinner he entertained the staff with many amusing anecdotes about his 25 years at the School.<sup>9</sup>



K.H.J. Browne, B.Sc. (1976-2001)

Roy Mairs joined the Staff in September 1978 having previously taught at *Gransha High School*. He had been educated at *R.B.A.I.*, *Portsmouth Polytechnic*, and *Loughborough College*. Though very keen on Football in his early years, his development as a sportsman was largely through the field of Hockey, which he played for both *Instonians* and *Bangor*, winning several Ulster caps. In School, his very firm, but scrupulously fair, approach to discipline enabled generations of pupils to know exactly where they stood. *'Despite the wishy-washy approach so often foisted upon us by modern so-called politically correct thinking, the vast majority of boys thrive when they understand the parameters.'* He became famous for the expression *'Do you see me smiling, boy?'* This is allied to a great love for, and a deep knowledge of, his subject. *'Rocky'*, as he was known, had a particular penchant for Physical Geography (*'with a Bunnett and a Monkhouse you can't go far wrong!'*), and the results achieved, and the numbers continuing to study the subject post-'A' Level, are testimony to his success. For many years he was House Master for Ward House (Junior School), but he relinquished this role when he became Master in charge of Hockey following the retirement of John Smyth. His tour de force in Hockey coaching was the 1997-1998 XI, captained by Michael Harte, which won both the *Irish Schools'* and *McCullough Cup* Trophies, only to lose their final match, the *Burney Cup* final, to *R.B.A.I.* He had first coached the nucleus of this side in 1992-1993, when as Under 13s they shared the *Bannister Bowl*, and, apart from Cup successes, this group of boys produced four Irish Under-18 and an Ulster Under-18 caps. Indeed three of this group made it as far as the Under-21 World Cup in Tasmania in 2001. Roy also looked after Tennis in School with trophy winning teams built around Bryn Cunningham and, latterly, Chris Cargo, and more recently he took taken up Golf with no little success. Chris Harte suggests that perhaps Roy Mairs' main regret was the passing of the blackboard *'whereon his diagrams were of a quality to compare with those of Ray Mowat; I can offer no greater compliment'*.<sup>10</sup>



R.H. Mairs, B.Sc., P.G.C.E. (1978-2005)



D.H. Rea, M.Sc. (1978-2005)

<sup>9</sup> Robert Stevenson in *The Gryphon*, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Information provided by Chris Harte; Dougie Rea, speaking at the *Grammarians'* Annual Dinner in November 2005.

Dougie Rea was educated at *Connor House* and *Bangor Grammar School*, where his father Henry was Head of Modern Languages. He proceeded to *Queen's* where he gained a First Class Honours degree in Physics and an M.Sc. Having played fullback for the School 1<sup>st</sup> XV, he continued to play in that position for the university team and gained a full rugby blue. He taught for six years at *Methody*, where his father had also taught, before being appointed to the Physics department in Bangor in 1978, on the retirement of his old mentor, Joe McKeown. In 1993, he was promoted to Head of Science, following Peter Moore's appointment as a Senior Teacher. Dr. Moore believes that Dougie '*achieved his goals as a manager, not by bludgeoning, but rather by diplomacy, tact and unfailing good humour*'. Dougie also acted as a marker and Chief Examiner of 'O' Level Physics and as Assistant Reviser at 'A' Level. In 1990, he was elected as a Teacher Governor. Responsible for School Golf for some time, his period in charge of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV from 1981 to 1988 was the most successful in the School's history. Since the end of the Second World War, only four schools have contested four consecutive *Schools' Cup* finals - *Methodist College*, *Campbell College*, *R.B.A.I.* and *Bangor Grammar School*, coached by Dougie and Duncan Macpherson between 1985 and 1988. He also pioneered the School's first overseas rugby tour. His three sons are also *Grammarians*.<sup>11</sup> Both he and Roy Mairs took premature retirement in 2005.

Others who went on to serve for twenty five years are Messrs. Jones, MacPherson and Stevenson, along with Mrs. Weir and Miss Erwin (Mrs. Kerr). Former pupil, Gordon Topping, who joined the Staff in 1975, later went into education administration and eventually became Chief Executive of the North Eastern Education and Library Board.

Although reputed to be something of a '*ladies*' man', Randall Clarke had appointed no females to the permanent teaching staff during his twenty one years at the helm. Dr. Rodgers appointed four during his five years in Bangor, starting a trend which was to be followed and accelerated by Tom Patton. Two of Dr. Rodgers' appointments were Miss Erwin and Miss Salmon.

Caroline Erwin was appointed to teach English and R.E. in 1978. She told the then Head of English, Jack Murphy, that '*she liked to be called "Caroline" when she was in a sophisticated frame of mind; at other times, the more informal appellation "Carol" would suffice.*' She had initially embarked on a career in Social Work, and in addition to her teaching duties, which included History and Drama, she looked after Community Service for two decades, during which time the *Clifton Special Care School's* Christmas Party was a highlight of the School year. Her natural flair as a communicator was fully exploited in her teaching of Psychology as a General Studies option, and her enthusiasm influenced a number of Sixth Formers to pursue Psychology-based careers. A Hockey player of considerable distinction while a pupil at *Ballymena Academy*, she also found time to take both Tennis and Hockey teams. When she became Mrs. Kerr, at least one of her colleagues began to refer to her as '*Wee Kerrso*', although her diminutive stature belied her strong personality. She took early retirement in 2004.<sup>12</sup>



Miss C. Erwin, B.A., Dip. Soc. Stud., P.G.C.E.  
(Mrs. Kerr) (1978-2004)



Miss L. Salmon, B.A., P.G.C.E.  
(Mrs. Macklin) (1979-1994)

<sup>11</sup> Information provided by Dr. Peter Moore.

<sup>12</sup> Information provided by Mrs. Kerr and Robert Stevenson.



Appointed a year later to teach Spanish and French, Linda Salmon, later to become Mrs. Macklin, 'was assigned "chess" as a means of filling up her 1265 hours', and one of Ken Browne's 'greatest challenges was to teach her to play the game'. Popular with colleagues and pupils alike, it is said that she once hit a 6 foot 6 inch pupil, who subsequently bought her a box of chocolates. She left to take up the post of Head of Spanish at Grosvenor High School in 1994, but sadly died in 2001 after an eighteen month battle with leukaemia.<sup>13</sup>

Several long-serving members of Staff were rewarded with promotion under Dr. Rodgers. Bertie Styles became Senior Vice-Principal, Joe McKeown became Vice-Principal, and Henry Rea and George Heuston, who were to retire in 1977, were appointed Senior Masters. On Mr. McKeown's retirement in 1978, Harry Eadie was also made Senior Master and Mr. J. V. Smyth became Vice-Principal.



The Staff in 1978

**Back Row:** Messrs. Bonar, Foley, Moore, Johnston, Stevenson, McIlroy, Harte, Blake-Knox, Cameron, Hughes, Mowat, Greenaway, Mohan, Ragg, Gildea, Mackie.

**Third Row:** Messrs. Jones, Dalzell, Hall, Brown, Topping, Macpherson, Cromie, Greenfield, Fitzgerald, Wilson, Harbinson, Bradley, Lagrue, Clegg.

**Second Row:** Mrs. Walker (Canteen Manageress), Mary Cheyne, Margaret Hamilton, Etta Ross, Betty Nash, Jennifer Shirlow, Sandra Williams, Helen Ritchie, Maureen Fetherstonhaugh, Isabelle Weir, Pat McWilliam, Rosemary Baird, Dorothy Burke, Ivy Comyns, Dorothy McMullan, Joy Burns, Elizabeth Sibbold, Mr. Sutter.

**Front Row:** Messrs. Steele, Hunter, Driscoll, McCord, Welch, Smyth, Johnston, Styles, Dr. Rodgers, McKeown, Langtry, Brown, Eadie, Thomson, Morrison, Murphy, Abraham

## PUPIL SUCCESSES

As the School increased in size and widened its range of activities, this chronicler can concur with Dr. Rodgers' view, expressed in his 1976 Annual Report, that *'the sheer volume of the evidence at his [a headmaster's and a historian's] disposal can well appear to be in direct proportion to the impossibility of recording it all'*. No attempt therefore has been made to record all the academic and sporting successes achieved by the boys during these years. Only those that seem to have been outstanding have been included.<sup>14</sup>

Public examination results continued to be impressive, with twenty subjects being studied at G.C.E. 'O' Level and eighteen at 'A' Level. In 1977, a new system of grading 'O' Level was introduced to replace the old classification of Grades 1 to 9. The concept of pass/fail was, in theory at least, abolished, the new Grades A, B and C being deemed equivalent to *'the formerly accepted pass standard'*. Dr. Rodgers commented that the removal of the pass/fail distinction was,

*'doubtless in deference to the fashionable vain pretence that such distinctions are odious. Such a view is little short of a mirage – chasing fantasy, in that even in their own published results, the examining boards had to introduce a category below A, B, C, D and E, labelled "U", standing, presumably for unrecorded or unclassified – or unspeakable? and representing, in phraseology delightfully explicit, clinically exact and yet positively Orwellian in its double-think, "a standard below the minimum required for a Grade E"'*.

In fact, as the Headmaster was not slow to point out, a *'fail'* was now certified, for certificates recorded Grades D and E, which were below the old *'pass'* standard.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Stevenson in *The Gryphon*, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Lists of those who won scholarships and representative honours, as well as team and individual sporting successes, can be found in the appendices.

That year, 47 boys were also entered for the C.S.E. (Certificate of Secondary Education) examination in one or two subjects for the first time. In 1978 Geoffrey Gawne, a member of the *Photography Club*, passed A.E.B. 'O' Level Photography.

The number of boys going up to university continued to grow, as did the number gaining admission to *Oxford* and *Cambridge* colleges, who included J.R.Christy, who had achieved five Grade As at 'A' Level, and C.A.Woodrow, who had joined the School from *Gransha Boys' High School*. In successive years, pupils from the School had been awarded the prestigious *Alice Edith Hamer Scholarship* to *Manchester University*, but D.R.Halliwell (who had also achieved five Grade As at 'A' Level), and M.J.McCann opted instead to accept places at *Cambridge* and *Oxford* respectively. W.E.N.Thompson became the first of Ian Hunter's protégés to gain an Open Choral Scholarship to *Cambridge University*, to the world-famous Choir of *King's College*. He was followed to *Cambridge* by Ian McDowell, Choral Scholarship to *Christ's College*, Alan Mills, Open Scholarship to *Churchill College*, David Thomson, Graduate Choral Scholarship to *St.John's College* and Christopher Gray, now the distinguished Director of Music at *Truro Cathedral*, Organ Scholarship to *Pembroke College*.

During the same period, T.G.Trouton not only won an Open Scholarship to *Queen's University Belfast*, but also won the *Hans Sloane Memorial Medal*, the *Royal Institute of Chemistry's* award and the *Institute of Physicists'* award for coming first in Northern Ireland in both subjects.

Past pupils also continued to distinguish themselves. Roy Laughlin was awarded First Class Honours 'in two disciplines', Don McQuillan and Mark Hughes both gained First Class Honours in Civil Engineering, the former being joint winner of the *Hugh Turtle Prize*, and the latter winning the *J.M.Jullet Prize* for the best maritime engineering project. Robert Bell won the *Royal Aeronautical Society* prize for best marks in his primary degree. Former Headboy, J.N.Byrne, was elected a Senior Scholar of *Caius College, Cambridge*, while Peter Calvert, John Elder, Ian Montgomery, Crosbie Smith and Raymond Whiteford were admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. D.M.Reid was appointed Professor of Biology at *Calgary University*, and David J.Roulston, Professor of Electrical Engineering at *Waterloo University, Ontario*.

Also during these years Bertie Styles won the Bangor Tennis Club Singles Title for the 12<sup>th</sup> time, Walter Dowdall was elected President of the *Irish Hockey Union*, David Feherty, having turned professional, won the *Irish Assistants' Golf Championship*, Garth McGimpsey won the first of his many North of Ireland Amateur golf titles and played for the Irish team, John Elder was recalled to Irish Cricket team and David W.Gray represented Ireland in the *World Rowing Championships*. (Dr.Rodgers recalls advising David Feherty to stay on at school: 'he demurred, saying, "Sir, a professional golfer earns much more than a headmaster"'.<sup>15</sup>) Colin Bateman may not have received the same advice, but he too left the School at the age of 16; he joined the *County Down Spectator* and went on to win a Journalist's Fellowship to *Oxford University* for his reports from Uganda and the *Northern Ireland Press Award* for his weekly satirical column (which on one occasion led to him being sued by the *Boys' Brigade*). While working as a journalist, his first novel, *Divorcing Jack*, won the *Betty Trask Prize*. A prolific writer, he has now written over a dozen novels, one of which has been made into a film which received enthusiastic reviews at the London Film Festival. His *Murphy's Law* was screened by the B.B.C. and starred James Nesbitt. Another former pupil turned best-selling author is Zane Radcliffe. Seven years younger than Colin Bateman and an English Literature graduate from *Queen's*, he credits Bateman with giving him the belief that he too could one day find a publisher; his first novel, *London Irish*, appeared in 2002 and won the *W.H.Smith 'People's Choice' New Talent Award*.<sup>16</sup>

Sadly, one pupil who did not live to fulfil his potential was John Kennedy, who suffered from cystic fibrosis; he died at the end of 1977 at the age of 12. Another death deserves to be

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<sup>15</sup> Dr.Rodgers, in a letter to the author, March 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Information from the websites [www.northernshow.biz/colin\\_bateman.htm](http://www.northernshow.biz/colin_bateman.htm) and [www.booksattransworld.co.uk](http://www.booksattransworld.co.uk).

recorded: Miss Patton died in 1978 and it was decided to establish the *Elsie Patton Memorial Trophy for Poetry* in her memory.

### **‘THE TRADITION OF SILLINESS’**

Sixth Forms at most schools had, for many years, used their early release, prior to the ‘A’ Level examinations, as an excuse to make mischief. On one occasion, ‘*final year rugby boys*’ went to *Glenlola Collegiate*, dressed as girls, with balloons as chests. ‘*We thought we had got away with it until Dr.Rodgers arrived with a minibus and proceeded to shepherd us in, ordering us to “remove those monstrosities”.*’ (The Headmaster then ‘*dropped them off in the middle of town and required them to walk back to school still in drag*’). On another occasion, it is said that a teacher was kidnapped and ‘*left starkers, tied to a road sign at Six Road Ends*’; the same former pupil recalls ‘*borrowing*’ Jim Welch’s mini and, with the help of planks, rolling it onto the roof of the sports hall. In 1976, ‘*a complicated system of strings and boxes*’ was devised in preparation for morning Assembly. ‘*As the Headmaster finished his speech of the day, of the term, of the year, the string was pulled and a confetti of paper fluttered down upon his unsuspecting head. He was infuriated. However, all he did was stare at the assembled boys, wipe the paper from his shoulders, and say, with a grimace, “Thank you”.*’ (Dr.Rodgers recalls being ‘*shocked*’ rather than ‘*infuriated*’, and his comment to the School as being ‘*I hope the person responsible for this litter will clear it up afterwards*’).<sup>17</sup> A similar - perhaps the same incident – is recalled, in which the confetti was preceded by a smoke bomb. A year later, Dr.Rodgers ‘*expressed the cautious hope that the tradition of silliness, with which he had no sympathy at all, was being ousted by a new tradition of more formal leave-taking*’; Middle Sixth were invited to join the Staff for coffee at Breaktime and for lunch, and although there were ‘*manifestations of the older tradition . . . nothing particularly offensive had taken place*’. One of those ‘*manifestations*’ may have been the lining up of dustbins on the roof of the Art Rooms, with a single letter painted on each, spelling out ‘*SILVER JUBILEE 1977*’. Dr.Rodgers made no mention of any ‘*silliness*’ in his final two years in Bangor.<sup>18</sup>

### **CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

The 1977 Prospectus listed 30 ‘*regularly supported interest area outside the classroom*’ – or ‘*co-curricular activities*’ as Dr.Rodgers preferred to call them. That year a Societies’ Convention was held for the new pupils, in an effort to encourage them to take part in some of these activities. It was Dr.Rodgers who introduced ‘*commendations*’, the equivalent of ‘*colours*’, for non-sporting activities

New activities included a *Model Railway Club*, a *Scientific Hobbies Club*, a *Skateboard Club* and a *Junior School Club*, with outings, games and treasure hunts. The *History Society* organised visits to places of historical interest such as Castleward, Inch Abbey, Nendrum, London and Paris, as well as debates and talks on historical subjects. The *Adventure Club* took groups of boys to *Carnacavel Cottage* at Castlewellan for hill-walking and camping and the *Natural History Society* also went on field trips, and in school reared a variety of fish and rodents. In 1978, the *Bridge Club* entered the inaugural Northern Ireland Schools’ Bridge Championships,

As the years passed, the Music Department’s repertoire became wider and more ambitious, in 1976 performing Haydn’s *Nelson Mass* with staff member Miss Ritchie as soprano soloist. The *Madrigal Group* won the Elizabethan class at Bangor Festival, where Ian J.McBride won the *Dr.E.H.Emery Cup* for Organ playing and J.McDonald was adjudged the ‘*most promising instrumentalist, 21 years and under*’. That year the Carol Service was repeated in the evening for the benefit of parents and former pupils. Old Boys, many of them adding colour to the occasion by wearing their academic dress, joined the school choir and orchestra. The School Band was formed in 1977, under the direction of Mr.Ken Browne. It made its first public appearance at the *C.C.F. Naval Section* vesting ceremony. That year the *Connor House* recorder group also made its first appearance. There was no Spring Concert in Dr.Rodgers’ final year due to industrial action by staff over salaries.

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<sup>17</sup> Dr.Rodgers, loc.cit.

<sup>18</sup> Incidents recalled by Jonathan Allison, Howard Blair, Don Whittle and John McBlain.

The *Dramatic Society*, under the direction of Mr.P.M.Lagrué from 1976, continued to present its annual production, with the help of girls from both *Glenlola Collegiate* and *Bangor Girls' High School*. In 1978, eighty-one young people were involved in Shakespeare's *As you like it*, the first occasion that the new lighting equipment enabled the lighting crew to work at the back of the auditorium and that year Geoffrey B.Miller became the first member of the society to receive an Honours award.

The *Chess Club* had its share of success, winning the both Division 6 and the *Dr.Harte Cup* for Division 3 of Inter-Schools' Chess League in 1977. In 1979, when C.M.Smyth, Irish Under-16 Champion, won the Senior Ulster Chess Championship and was on the Irish International Senior Team, teams won the *Albert Long Cup* for Division 4, as well as winning Division 5 and being joint winners of Division 7 of the League.



Dr.Rodgers and Mr.Hughes with the  
Winners of the Dr.Harte Cup for Division 3 of  
the Inter-Schools Chess League in 1977  
M.Dowie, R.Neill, C.McClenaghan  
W.Crawford, M.Smyth, J.Bayly, I.Younger, K.Robinson



Winners of the Albert Long Cup for Division 4 of  
the Inter-Schools Chess League in 1979  
A.Wilson, G.Ballantyne, I.Carson, J.Erskine  
P.Smyth, D.Forsythe, D.Bell, I.Younger

In 1976, in a change to the practice of almost fifty years, a senior committee member, instead of the President, chaired meetings of the *Debating Society* for the first time. Two years later, a team consisting of David J.Rhodes, Ian N.McDonald, Geoffrey B.Miller (the Best Individual speaker) and C.A.Woodrow won *Bob Ray Cup* for the Northern Ireland Regional final of the *Junior Chamber of Commerce* debating competition. Patrick McCutcheon, Stephen Rea, Mark Reford and Nigel Pentland retained the cup the following year.



Debating Teams which won the Belfast and Northern Ireland  
Junior Chamber of Commerce Debating Competitions in 1978 and 1979  
Dr.Rodgers, Mr.McCord  
C.Woodrow, D.Rhodes, I.McDonald, G.Miller



Mr.McCord, Dr.Rodgers, Mr.Jones  
P.McCutcheon, S.Rea, M.Reford, N.Pentland

The *Community Service Group* widened its activities during the Rodgers years. As well as assisting with supporting charities, such as the *Save the Children Fund*, members lit fires for the elderly, washed cars, collected newspapers and stamps and tutored a number of Form 1

and 2 boys. A team also won the local *Blue Lamp* quiz, organised by the *R.U.C.* In 1976, one member, Stuart Elborn, was awarded a travel scholarship enabling him to go to Turkey. Two years later five boys, led by Mr. 'Kipper' Hamilton, spent five weeks in Morocco in conjunction with the *Save the Children Fund*, thanks to generous sponsorship by local businesses and in-school fundraising. On their return, Mr. Hamilton presented a slide show and during one sequence he showed that 'we had made a number of friends while there – young ladies from both Morocco and France. Telling the audience to expect "many French letters to drop through your doors" was perhaps too specific, though he had no idea at the time of the implication of what he had said. It was, however, picked up by our quizzical parents, especially as the doctor, who had been asked for advice before the trip, was reported as having said that the most likely thing we would return with was gonorrhoea'.<sup>19</sup>

### **COMBINED CADET FORCE**

In the midst of the Troubles in 1975 *Bangor Grammar School Contingent of the Combined Cadet Force* was born from its *A.C.F.* predecessor. The only Contingent to have been formed in the Province over the last fifty years, it quickly became the largest voluntary Contingent in Ulster and one of the largest in the United Kingdom.

The birth of the new unit was not without its difficulties. When the founders applied to London, the *A.C.F.* authorities in Ulster opposed the move, mainly because they stood to lose one of the best *A.C.F.* detachments in the Armagh and Down Battalion. It was also suggested that the political circumstances in the Province made the formation of another *C.C.F.* Contingent an unwise act. Certain *A.C.F.* officers even went so far as to tell the Headmaster of the day that it could not be done and that the project would fail. However, Dr. Rodgers was not one to have any outsider tell him what to do in his school and the *Joint Cadet Executive* in London favoured the change, the demand for cadet provision at the School far outstretching the scope of an *A.C.F.* unit.

And so on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1975 Ulster's fifth *C.C.F. Contingent* was vested. The Pipes and Drums of the *Royal Irish Rangers*, to which the contingent was affiliated, led the march-past, as the Inspecting Officer, Major D. Cairns, took the salute. The Contingent was commanded first by Captain R.B. Mowat. A *Combined Cadet Force Contingent* is an independent cadet unit commanded by trained reserve officers and with the Headmaster as the ultimate authority. Initially the School contingent comprised only an Army Section, but a Royal Naval Section was vested in November 1977; its first O.C. was Lieutenant Alan Fitzgerald. A guest on that occasion was the then Officer Commanding the Royal Navy Section of *Campbell College C.C.F.*, Lieutenant Commander Tom Patton. Barry Greenaway recalls that one R.N. cadet passed out during the long inspection process and that, when he hit the ground, 'he was still at the "shun"'.

The first *C.C.F.* Annual Camp was held at Crowborough in Sussex in June 1976. A tradition established there was the raising and lowering of the school flag at Reveille and Sunset. Already two cadets had been chosen for the U.K. Land Forces Cadet Leadership course. It was also during that first year that the Contingent defeated *Campbell College, R.B.A.I.* and *Royal School Armagh* to come second in the Ulster *C.C.F.* Championships only three points behind *Portora*, the winners. In 1978 C.S.M. Noel Coop went on to win the Challenge Shield and L/Cpl Bertie Notley consigned *R.B.A.I.* to second place with his last round on the firing range; North Down Borough Council gave the team a Civic Reception. That year, the *C.C.F.* General Inspection was carried out by Rear Admiral A.J. Monk, C.B.E.

In the summer of 1978, 40 cadets spent time with the *British Army of the Rhine* in Germany. During their stay the cadets visited the Belsen War Memorial near Hanover and the following year the contingent won the *Royal Irish Rangers Champion Cadet Trophy*.

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<sup>19</sup> Incident recalled by Ward Crawford.



Alec Lightbody was the *C.C.F.*'s first S.S.I. (School Staff Instructor) and when in uniform he was always immaculately turned out. He presented the *C.C.F.* with its first trophy, the *Lightbody Shield*, in memory of his son, Jim, who was a sergeant with the *Irish Guards* and was killed while on exercise in Canada. Caretaker throughout these years, Alec Lightbody was a joiner by trade and he once made a rocking horse, complete with leather saddle and stirrups, for Mr.Greenaway's two-year-old daughter, Jenny. He preferred to base himself in the end hut in the outer quadrangle, rather than in the Caretaker's Store under the archway. A cynical member of the Teaching Staff claims that his maintenance methods were simple: if it stands still, paint it; if it moves, nail it down and then paint it. He was not best pleased when he discovered that the radiators in one of the building extensions had been located in the ceilings, and his habit of being '*verbally forthright*' with the boys did not always please the parents.<sup>20</sup>



Winners of the *Northern Ireland C.C.F. Challenge Shield* 1979

Cdt.McRoberts, Cdt.Dornan, Cdt.Gamble, Cdt.Stanfield, Cdt.Foster, Cdt.Crothers, S.S.I.Lightbody  
Capt.Greenaway (Army Section C.O.), Corp. Notley, Corp.McDowell,  
C/Sgt.Coop, Dr.Rodgers, Corp.Glover, Capt.Mowat (Contingent C.O.)

## SPORT

As the academic reputation of the School grew, so too did its reputation on the sports field. Successes by teams and by individuals were so numerous that it becomes difficult to catalogue them all.

Jimmy Welch and George Cameron took over the coaching of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV from Harry Williams and Stephen Blake-Knox in 1976, and that year the School won the Ulster Schools' 'Sevens' for third time, beating the *Schools' Cup* holders, *Methody*, 24-4 in the final. Kenny 'Blubber' Hooks, who scored four tries on that occasion, went on to represent Ulster and Irish Schools in both 1977 and 1978.



Rugby 'Sevens' Winners 1975-1976

Mr.Cameron, Dr.Rodgers, M.Patterson, K.Hooks, I.Halliday, Mr.Welch  
C.Mitchell, B.Law, I.Patterson, J.Bell, J.Willoughby

<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Barry Greenaway for the information in this section.

Richard Thompson played for the Ulster Schools XV in 1976, while staff members Stephen Blake-Knox gained a three international caps and Roger Clegg played for the Irish XV which toured New Zealand. In 1977 it was the turn of the Medallion XV, which won *Hospitals' Cup* for 'Sevens'.



Winners of the Medallion 'Sevens' in 1977

Mr.Topping, C.Cairns, C.Simpson, Dr.Rodgers, T.Richards, T.Sterling, Mr.Clegg  
D.Lennon, G.Halliday, D.Larmour

At the 2004 *Grammarians' Dinner*, Chris Harte recalled the story of how the School should have reached the 1977 *Schools' Cup* final. In the semi-final, 'Big Bob' McIlroy was acting as touch judge and the scores were tied. The ball was kicked into the in-goal area and Kenny Hooks dived on it to score a try. In his excitement, Bob jumped up and down, waving his flag in the air and the referee, Jim Irvine, took it that the ball had gone into touch-in-goal and so awarded Campbell College a '25 drop out'. The School lost the resulting replay but, says Mr.Harte, it was probably a lucky escape, for 'Methody hammered Campbell' in the final.<sup>21</sup> The following year the 1<sup>st</sup> XV had a most successful season, winning 23 out of its 25 matches, including a 17-9 victory over *Annadale Grammar School* to win the *Schools' Cup* for the second time. The match saw such an exodus of support from Bangor to Ravenhill that the start of the game had to be postponed for fifteen minutes, and even then people were still entering the ground. Each member of the team was presented with a plaque bearing the Coat of Arms of the Borough of North Down; (the Bangor coat of arms had been adopted two years earlier, after considering the estimated cost of a new coat of arms). The boys, their parents and the coaches were accorded a Civic Reception in Bangor Castle. That year, the 1<sup>st</sup> XV abandoned the traditional tour to Scotland, instead playing matches in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, and Derek Larmour and Gordon Halliday played for the Ulster Under-16 'Sevens'. A year later, in 1979, when the 1<sup>st</sup> XV reached semi-final for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 4 years, only to lose to *Methody* in the final, David Hooks and Garth Maxwell played for the Irish Schools XV, with Derek Larmour and Michael Hunter joining them on the Ulster Schools XV.



1<sup>st</sup> XV, *Schools' Cup* Winners 1978

Mr.Cameron, D.Larmour, R.Blackie, R.McCombe, J.Coffey, Dr.Rodgers, A.McAuley, J.Henderson, D.Thompson,  
N.Hamilton, Mr.Welch G.Maxwell, G.Halliday, D.Hooks, K.Hooks, J.McMaster, R.Yourston, M.Nolan, C.Rodgers  
M.Wilson, A.Webb

<sup>21</sup> Incident recalled by Chris Harte.

Hockey too went from strength to strength. In 1977 the grass hockey pitch at Ballymacormick was converted into an all-weather pitch and the 1<sup>st</sup> XI also played the first schools match in Ireland under floodlights, at Ward Park. During Dr.Rodgers' four years at the School, the 1<sup>st</sup> XI shared the *McCullough Cup*, won the Ulster Schools' 6-a-side competition and won the *Flick Cup* for the Summer 6-a-side tournament on two occasions.



The 1st XI Hockey team which shared the *McCullough Cup* 1976  
Mr.Harte, Dr.Rodgers, D.Stanfield, S.Timol, D.Henderson, W.Dickson,  
M.Dornan, S.Elborn, G.Hamill, Mr.Smyth  
S.Martin, J.Richardson, D.Chambers, S.Curran, T.Campbell



Ulster Schools' 6-a-side Hockey Champions 1979  
Dr.Rodgers, D.Dickson, G.Wilson, Mr.Smyth  
M.Smyth, M.Chambers, D.Stanfield, J.Eggleston, M.McGowan

Sean Curran, Stephen 'Sambo' Martin, David W.Stanfield and William A.Dickson played for Ulster and Irish Schools, Curran captaining the international team, and Michael H.Smyth played for Ulster Schools. The Under-15 team won *Richardson Cup*, while the Under-14 XI won the *Ferris Cup* and retained a share of it the following year.





Under-15 Hockey XI, Winners of *Richardson Cup* 1979

Dr.Rodgers, M.Thompson, S.Fulton, I.Eldridge, M.Dawson, R.Galashan, K.Reid, Mr.Harte, Mr.Mairs  
P.Murphy, P.Connolly, A.McClements, G.Bingham, S.Henderson, P.Cumper, S.Haigh



Under-14 Hockey, Winners of the *Ferris Cup* 1978

Mr.Hamilton, I.Baxter, P.Connolly, S.Haigh, A.McClements, M.Dawson, P.Cumper, S.Fulton,  
Dr.Rodgers P.Murphy, S.Henderson, A.Rodgers, G.Bingham, K.Reid, M.Thompson, T.McKenna



Under-14 Hockey, Winners of *Ferris Cup* 1979

W.McCabe, I.Dornan, I.Webster, M.Donald, I.Younger

Dr.Rodgers, M.Thompson, S.Mitchell, H.McKinty, A.Chambers, P.Smyth, Mr.Hamilton  
K.Boylan, C.McConkey, P.Stewart, N.McAlister, I.Clendinning, D.McShane, L.Rainey

The School continued to dominate schools' golf, winning the *Froggatt Cup* for the Ulster and the Irish Schools' Golf Championships in successive years and the Provincial Section of the *Aer Lingus* British and Irish Schools' competition on three occasions. P.Brunton became Ulster Schools' Champion. Not to be outdone, the Junior Golf team consisting of B.Elder, P.Wimpress, S.Henderson and I.Baxter won *Ulster Junior Schools' Cup* in 1979.



*Aer Lingus* Regional Qualifiers, Winners of Ulster Schools' Golf League  
and Ulster and Irish Schools' Golf Champions 1978  
Dr.Rodgers, P.Brunton, M.O'Donnell, Mr.Steele  
R.Blackie, M.Robson, G.Kerr, S.King  
(In 1979, Blackie, King and Brunton were joined by R.Blundell, P.Barry  
and they retained both the Ulster and Irish titles).

In cricket, the 1<sup>st</sup> XI won the *McCullough Cup* in 1979 and a team also captured the *Pollock Trophy* for a 6-a-side competition.



1<sup>st</sup> XI Cricket, Winners of the *McCullough Cup* 1979  
Mr.Eadie, P.Marshall, R.Hull, B.Douglas, Dr.Rodgers, D.Whittle, J.Carmichael, M.Chambers, Mr.Harte  
D.Larmour, S.McKeag, T.McMaster, P.Hewitt, G.Halliday, A.Millar

The Under-15 team won the new *Jubilee Trophy* in 1977 and Gordon Halliday, captained Ulster Schools' Under-15 XI, while the Under-13s won *Moyallen Shield*, Michael Rea scoring a century in one of the matches.



Under-15 Cricket Team, Winners of the *Jubilee Trophy* 1977  
Mr.Harte, Mr.Mackie, D.Larmour, D.Armstrong, T.McMaster, M.McAuley, C.Cairns, Dr.Rodgers  
T.McKee, P.Minnis, S.McKeag, P.Marshall, G.Halliday, G.McGimpsey, T.Richard

Other individual successes were the selection of Terry McMaster and Peter Hewitt (who scored over 500 runs for the School in one season) for the Ulster Under-19 team. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI continued to enjoy their annual tour to Lancashire and Cheshire.

The outstanding athlete of the late 1970s was undoubtedly Kenny Hooks. As well as captaining the 1<sup>st</sup> XV to victory in the *Schools' Cup* in 1978, and becoming the first boy to represent the Irish Schools' XV since fixtures were reintroduced in 1975, he set new records for the Ulster Junior 100 and 200 metres, won the 100 metres at the Irish Schools' Championships in 1975, retained the 100 metres title the following year, and gained a place on the Irish Schools' Athletics team. That year he won the Intermediate *Victor Ludorum* cup at the School sports, while his brother, David, won the Junior title.

C.Kenneth Thompson also represented Ulster and Irish Schools, having won the 400 metres at both the Ulster and Irish Championships. Sean C. Millar was the first pupil to win a place on the Irish Schools' Cross Country team, and Conrad Simpson became the Northern Ireland Schools' Biathlon Champion in an event which required a 3 kilometre run and a 300 metre swim; he was joined in the School team, which won the first Ulster Schools' Biathlon Team Competition, by Ralph Mahood, and David Thompson (the individual winner, who later finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the Junior Men's Section of the national competition at Gateshead).

In swimming Ross Carter, Neil Cooper, Mitchell Colville, Patrick Crothers, Terry Dillon, Ralph Mahood, Conrad Simpson and David Thompson represented Ulster, while Cooper and Carter were members of the Ulster Water Polo team.

Racquet sports also enjoyed some success during these years. In 1976 the Junior Tennis team won the Junior Tennis Cup for first time. Two members of that team, P.R.Minnis and A.L.Ringland went on to play for the Junior Ulster team, as did S.O'Hara a year later. Peter Minnis subsequently became Ulster Under-16, Under-18 and Irish Under-18 champion and the first boy from the School to play for the Irish Under-18 team. He went on to play *Davis Cup* tennis for Ireland, when he met Wimbledon champions Arthur Ashe and John McEnroe.



Winners of the Ulster Schools' Junior Tennis Cup 1976  
Mr.Mohan, C.McCutcheon, A.Ringland, Dr.Rodgers  
S.Law, P.Minnis, A.Miller

The outstanding Table Tennis player was Peter G.Barry, who played for the Ulster and Irish Cadets teams. In his final year, the School repeated its 1971 '*double*' by winning both the Senior *Schools' Cup* and League. Allen Robson and John Fuller also played for the Ulster Under-14s and Robson played for the Irish Cadet team.





Table Tennis Team, Winners of *Schools' Cup* and League 1979  
 Dr.Rodgers, J.Fuller, A.Robson, Mr.Bonar  
 R.Baxter, P.Barry, G.Boal

Although enjoying no team success in Badminton, Ian Boal became Irish Under-12 singles champion and along with A.Minnis won Irish Under-12 doubles.

The *Squash Club*, which had played its first match in the Autumn of 1975, enjoyed success in Dr.Rodgers' final year. With Ian McKeown representing Ulster at Under-19 level, Ian Eldridge at Under-16, and Jeffrey Hearst at both Under-14 and Under-16, both the Under-19 and the Under-16 teams won their sections of the Ulster Schools' League in 1979.

In Sailing, the School won the newly presented *O'Hara Trophy* on two occasions, sharing it on a third. The *Clarke Cup* for the *British Public Schools' Championships* was won by B.O'Hara, J.Simms and M.Creighton in 1977 and by J.Simms, K.Loughridge and P.Harwood in 1979, after a gap of thirteen years. Individual successes included Bill O'Hara winning the Irish Junior Laser championships, and Paul Weir winning the Ulster Cadet Championships and the Irish Junior GP14 championship, along with R.McDowell, and John B.Sims and C.A.Caswell sailing for Ulster. Bill O'Hara went on to become a double Olympian and an Olympic coach.

Although Association Football was not yet a School sport, it should be recorded that Gary Pagels played on the Northern Ireland Youth Soccer XI and had a trial with *Tottenham Hotspur* and former pupil, Peter Dornan, was playing for *Sheffield United* and *Linfield*.<sup>22</sup>



Irish Internationals 1979  
 D.N.Hooks (Rugby), D.W.Stanfield (Hockey), C.M.Smyth (Chess)  
 C.G.Maxwell (Rugby), M.H.C.Smyth (Hockey), P.G.Barry (Table Tennis)

<sup>22</sup> All information on these activities has been gleaned from *The Gryphon*.

## **THE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION AND THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

Many of the fixtures between the *Old Boys' Association* and the School continued, the Tennis match being reintroduced in 1976, although yachting was discontinued and both Golf and Debating had a chequered history due to fluctuating levels of support. The *Association* made a presentation to Maurice Wilkins, on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Two years later, at the age of 92, Mr. Wilkins travelled from his home near Dublin to see the two 'honours' boards, one bearing the names of Chairmen of the *Association* and the other, the names of the Headmasters of the School, which the *Association* presented for display in the School. (Knowledge of the School's history before Mr. McFeeters' time was so incomplete, that the name of Mr. Ashmore was only discovered as a result of some assiduous research by the Vice-Principal Mr. Styles, and even then the name of Rev. William Craig remained unknown.)

The joint dances continued with the *Parents' Association*, which also played its part in the life of the School, with a variety of fundraising activities and other events such as a sale of 'nearly new' uniform and games equipment, and both *Associations* manned stalls at the 1977 Bazaar.<sup>23</sup>

## **DR. RODGERS' RESIGNATION**

Dr. Rodgers tendered his resignation in January 1979, following his appointment as Headmaster of *Coleraine Academical Institution*. His appointment was announced shortly before the *Schools' Cup* semi-final against *Coleraine Inst.* 'The Bangor supporters carried a banner which read, "You may have our Head – but you're not getting our Cup"'.<sup>24</sup> (It is said that, after the arrival of his successor, some of the boys displayed a banner reading 'Come back Bob, all is forgiven').<sup>25</sup> The Board of Governors decided to offer an extra £2,000 when advertising the post, and also ruled that no approach should be made to existing Headmasters. In his final term, Dr. Rodgers went on a study visit to the U.S.A. where he taught in schools and lectured to principals in Indiana, Virginia and North Carolina. He was subsequently appointed as Principal of *Stranmillis College* in 1984, and he returned to Bangor as Guest of Honour at Speech Day in both 1992 and 2002.

Dr. Rogers died on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

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<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the *Old Boys' Association*.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Rodgers, in a letter to the author, March 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Recalled by Peter Moore and Chris Harte, in conversation with the author, August 2004.