

CHAPTER FIFTEEN¹

Stephen D.Connolly M.A., 2001-

‘Let us hope that it will again go route marching to much larger and better equipped premises, surrounded by a spacious domain of playing fields.’ (Thomas McBride, July 1939)²

Stephen Doble Connolly was educated at *Foyle College*, where his father was Headmaster, and at *Trinity College Dublin*, where he took a degree in Modern Languages. He subsequently did his teacher training at the *University of Durham*, before his appointment to the Staff of *Belfast Royal Academy*. There, he became Head of English and a member of the Senior Management Team, with responsibility for the Middle School, press relations and primary school liaison. He introduced Drama to the curriculum and was responsible for drama productions ranging from *Broadway* musicals to *Shakespeare*, he accompanied pupils on educational visits across Europe, coached junior cricket, and was in charge of activities as varied as junior debating, the *Railway Society* and roller-blading. In 1991 he chaired the Ministerial Working Party set up to devise a Programme of Study for teaching Drama at Key Stage 4 in the Northern Ireland Curriculum and he was also involved in developing C.C.E.A. syllabi in English Literature and Drama. A diocesan lay reader attached to Helen’s Bay parish church, he also found time to chair the *Helen’s Bay Players* and to appear on stage, with varying degrees of success; after one performance, a theatre critic wrote that ‘*Stephen Connolly has so little charisma that, when he comes on, the stage seems emptier*’.³



S.D.Connolly, M.A.

In his first report to the *Grammarians*, Mr.Connolly said that he hoped ‘*to put Bangor Grammar School back into the heart of Bangor in more than just a geographical sense*’. With the future of the School being debated by the Board of Governors and the future of grammar schools in general about to be put under threat by the government, Mr.Connolly was embarking on a challenging period of his career. Indeed he believed the early years of his Headmastership to be ‘*One of the most vexed and turbulent periods in the history of Northern Ireland education*’, while the Chairman of the Board called it a period of ‘*initiative overload*’. Referring to the list of qualities which Maurice Wilkins had believed a successful Headmaster must possess (see page 134), Mr.Connolly said that he wished to add to that list ‘*the deviousness of a lawyer, the stamina of a premiership footballer, the blameless reputation of an angel, the memory of a computer, the eye for detail of an accountant and the charisma of Harrison Ford*’. Admitting that he had

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the information has been taken from the Minutes of the Board of Governors or *The Gryphon*, which includes comprehensive coverage of Speech Days and Sports’ Days.

² *County Down Spectator*, 8 July 1939.

³ *County Down Spectator*, 14 June 2001; Stephen Connolly speaking at the *Grammarians’* Dinner, November 2004.

none of those attributes, he said that he did, however, like to think of himself as a Harrison Ford-like character, adding somewhat ruefully that when he looked in the mirror '*all I can see is Danny de Vito*'. Clearly a sense of humour is also a prerequisite for a twenty-first century Headmaster. He must also have developed a good rapport with his Staff. Addressing *Grammarians* in 2004, when Chris Harte was the Guest Speaker, Mr. Connolly said that he and Mr. Harte had decided to mount a charm offensive: as Headmaster, he would provide the charm and Mr. Harte would be his usual self! One member of Staff, while admitting that '*he's not perfect*', has commented that '*Stephen Connolly has words in his vocabulary which some of his predecessors rarely used: "please", "thank you" and "sorry". They are like water on parched earth, are just what the School needs and it doesn't half show in the atmosphere*'.

A NEW MILLENIUM

Two thousand years after Christ had preached the message '*love thy neighbour*', one might have hoped that the world would have become a more peaceful place, but in fact the atrocities committed during these years seemed, if anything, to be worse. Osama bin Laden's *Al-Qaeda* crashed planes into the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001 - the infamous '*9/11*' - in which almost 3,000 people died. This was followed by anthrax attacks in the United States and the bombing of a nightclub in Bali which killed almost 200. In a different cause, action by Chechen separatists led to sieges of a Moscow theatre, in which 119 died, and of a School in Beslan, North Ossetia, where over 300 died. Not all crises were man-made: in the Far East there was an outbreak of *S.A.R.S* (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), Africa saw yet another humanitarian crisis, this time in the Darfur region of Sudan and the countries around the Indian Ocean experienced probably the world's worst natural disaster when a *tsunami* claimed perhaps a third of a million lives.

In the Middle East, there seemed to be no solution to the Israel-Palestine issue, which many saw as the cause of much of the worldwide unrest. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon proposed dismantling Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, but the death of Yassir Arafat again threw the future of the region into doubt.

In Afghanistan, the *Taliban* were defeated and suspected terrorists were interned at *Camp X-Ray* at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. President George W. Bush then turned his attention to Iraq which, along with Iran and North Korea, he referred to as '*the axis of evil*'. Saddam Hussein's failure to respond positively to United Nations Resolution 1441, following the delivery a 12,000 page document on weapons of mass destruction ('*WMD*'), resulted in a U.S. led invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of the regime. The support of the United Kingdom government had repercussions for Prime Minister Tony Blair, after intelligence reports were found to have been '*dodgy*' and government scientist David Kelly committed suicide.

Other events to catch the headlines at home during these years were Michael Howard's election as the latest leader of the Conservative Party, the murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in Soham, the Queen's Golden Jubilee, the opening of the *Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain*, the drowning of 23 Chinese cockle-pickers in Morecambe Bay, the devastation of the Cornish village of Boscastle by a flash-flood, and the arrest of Sir Mark Thatcher, who was said to be implicated in an attempted coup in Equatorial Guinea. In Northern Ireland, '*direct rule*' was re-imposed as the '*peace process*' made unsteady progress, while in the European Union, most members states adopted the *euro* when it was launched, ten new states joined, and a European Constitution was drawn up.

The '*grim reaper*' made no distinction between those who took life, such as Myra Hindley, and those who prolonged it, like Christian Barnard; nor was age a factor, for these years saw the deaths of 41 year old Caron Keating, 94 year old Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, 95 year old Alistair Cooke and the 101 year old Queen Mother. Football lost two of its '*characters*' in Emlyn Hughes and Brian Clough. The world of entertainment lost 100 year old Bob Hope, Spike Milligan, Rod Steiger, Richard Harris, George Harrison, Peter Ustinov,

Marlon Brando, Ray Charles, Johnny Cash and John Peel, while each of the main British political parties was the poorer with the passing of Roy Jenkins, Barbara Castle, and Lord Hailsham. Ronald Reagan was mourned by those who had known him in both his entertainment and political careers. Innocents who just happened to be in the wrong place - in this case Iraq - Ken Bigley and Margaret Hassan were brutally murdered. Dolly the sheep died aged 6½ and Timothy the tortoise died aged 160.

In the cinema, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Gangs of New York*, *Cold Mountain*, *Mystic River*, and *A Beautiful Mind* were favourites with adult audiences, while the young were enjoying *Shrek* and *Finding Nemo*. The small screen featured *24*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Office*, *Little Britain*, *Cold Feet*, *Bad Girls* and *Footballers' Wives*, while so-called 'reality T.V.' shows, such as *Big Brother* and *I'm a Celebrity*, *Get me out of Here* (introduced by the ubiquitous and strangely popular Ant and Dec), spoke volumes for the taste of the viewing public. Another cult television programme, *Pop Idol*, spawned new 'stars' such as Gareth Gates and Will Young, who joined the likes of *Busted*, *Sugarbabes* and Daniel Bedingfield in the 'charts'.

The popularity of authors John Grisham, Robert Harris and J.K. Rowling continued, while Dan Brown joined the list of best-selling thriller writers with his *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons* and *Digital Fortress*. Popular non-fiction works included Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Hilary Clinton's *Living History* and the surprise best-seller, Lynne Truss's work on punctuation, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, which many felt should be compulsory reading in schools.

In sport, England won the Rugby World Cup and Athens hosted the Olympic Games, where Kelly Holmes won 'gold' in the 800 and 1,500 metres. In science there was a ban on human cloning in the U.S.A., although there were developments in stem cell research. Although the space shuttle *Columbia* exploded and the *Mars Express-Beagle 2* mission to Mars was lost, *Voyager 1*, launched in 1977, did reach the edge of the solar system.⁴

'THE QUEEN'S PARADE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE COMPLETED IN THREE YEARS'

This headline in the *County Down Spectator* in the Summer of 2001 was not the only one to hint at the prospect of wonderful developments in Bangor. The building of a 3,000-seater football stadium at Ballykillaire, and of the largest skate park in Ireland, the re-laying of the Belfast to Bangor railway track at a cost of £10 million, the *Loughlink* shuttle service linking Belfast with Bangor and Carrickfergus, and a 'vast space-age canopy' at the *McKee* clock to accommodate events in all weathers, were among the projects being mooted.

Despite the eyesore that the site of the proposed Queen's Parade development had become, as the negotiations dragged on, Bangor managed to win both the Northern Ireland and the Ireland title for 'Best Kept Large Town'. The Council finally approved the Queen's Parade scheme by 12 votes to 11, and unanimously rejected the application for a licence to open a sex shop. Meanwhile, *Dreamcatchers* sought the go-ahead to build a 300-seat theatre on the site of the old Borough Gymnasium and *Safeway* finally signed the deal that would reduce the size of Bangor Market, which was celebrating its 80th anniversary, while *Bangor Golf Club* marked its centenary. The *Flagship Centre* experienced a £10 million re-vamp, six C.C.T.V. cameras were installed in the town centre, and the *Royal Irish Regiment* received the Freedom of North Down.

Meanwhile, the last First World War veteran in Ireland, Thomas Shaw, died in the *Savoy* aged 102, and former pupil, Adrian Mencarelli, who had spent the last 30 years in a wheelchair following a rugby accident, also passed away.⁵

⁴ *Keesing's Record of World Events*.

⁵ Details gleaned from the files of the *County Down Spectator*.

THE AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

In 2003, the School Prospectus listed the aims of the School as being: to encourage the pursuit of academic excellence; to ensure that each boy, whatever his ability, fulfils his highest potential; to provide a system of close pastoral care in which the academic and wider welfare of each boy is carefully supervised and a valued liaison with parents is maintained; to encourage the development of *'the whole man'* by the provision of a wide variety of cultural, sporting and adventure activities; to maintain a high standard of healthy discipline and to teach boys to set and maintain personal high standards of self-discipline in their daily lives; to teach and promote sound moral and religious standards and to encourage a concern for the needs of the community. In 2005 pastoral care was further strengthened by the appointment of Year 14 Mentors, who were trained in child protection, classroom management and drugs protection, and were then assigned to the Year 8 form groups; as well as assisting form teachers with administrative tasks, they supervise Year 8 locker areas, organize team-building games and group discussion about examination and revision techniques, among other things.

THE CURRICULUM AND *'INITIATIVE OVERLOAD'*

In 2003, C.C.E.A. announced its new *'Pathways towards a more coherent, enjoyable, motivating and relevant curriculum for young people aged 11-14'*. There was to be a move away from subjects to *'general learning areas'*. It would be a good step, the Headmaster believed, *'If the proposals serve to liberate the Curriculum and allow schools the freedom and opportunity to tailor what they teach more precisely to the needs of the pupils'*, however he declared himself to be sceptical, fearing that *'the academic content may be diluted'*, for there seemed to be *'an assumption that knowledge is secondary'* to the development of skills. At Key Stage 4 the statutory curriculum was to be specified in terms of *'learning outcomes'*, in personal development, citizenship and education for employment. While room was found in the timetable for the introduction of Physical Education as an examination subject, sadly Latin, the subject from which *'grammar'* schools derived their name, had become an option taken up by a tiny number of boys..

Although the School was offering 20 subjects at G.C.S.E and 19 in Sixth Form, it was also exploring closer links with *North Down and Ards Institute of Further Education* in the hope that certificated *'enrichment'* courses could be offered to Year 13. By 2004 these included Catering, Law, Music Technology and computer courses.

Not all the initiatives in which the School was involved were imposed upon it. Voluntarily, it undertook to pilot *Citizenship*. The School was also one of only six Northern Ireland schools to pilot the *'Parents' Gateway'* computerized records scheme, which allows parents to access their children's school performance records and it hosted the *European Road Show* which provided an insight into European developments for students of Languages, History, Geography and Politics.

FURTHER REFORM PROPOSALS: THE *BURNS* AND *COSTELLO* REPORTS

In October 2001, the *Review Body on Post-Primary Education*, which had been set up by the then Minister for Education, Martin McGuinness, in the wake of the *Gallagher Report*, and was chaired by Gerry Burns, former Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, published its proposals, a 300-page document, *Education for the 21st Century*, popularly known as the *Burns Report*. It was, said the Headmaster *'imaginative and radical'* but *'almost entirely unworkable'*. The *Burns Report* expressed the belief that there would be no change in *'the ethos, educational identity or character of any post-primary school'*, something which Mr. Connolly found difficult to reconcile with changes which were being proposed, which he believed would *'undoubtedly change the character of schools and markedly reduce their independence'*. Despite the fact that two thirds of the *'household responses'* had favoured the retention of the grammar school and academic selection, the *Report* proposed an end to the 11+, and the drawing up of *'Pupil Profiles'* to assist parents in their choice of post-primary schools, which would select pupils on the basis of a number of prescribed non-academic criteria. In essence this would have meant the end of the grammar schools. In each area, networks of schools, to be known as

*'collegiates', would be set up , consisting of different types of schools, which would work together to make a wider range of courses available to pupils, and schools could decide to become specialist schools in, for example, science, the performing arts or sport. There was to be a consultation period ending in June 2002. (Speaking to the *Grammarians* in November 2004, the Headmaster pointed out that, 'at a time when in England, parents are allowed ballots to determine the status of their schools, it is perverse to deny people in Northern Ireland the same dignity').*

The Board of Governors drew up a 12-page response, in which it was acknowledged that *'there are significant problems with the existing transfer arrangements and they are largely unsustainable in their present form'* and that there was *'merit in some of the general principles'* contained in the *Report*. However, the Board believed *'the main practical recommendations to be seriously flawed'*. While favouring the development of pupil profiles, the Board believed that they should be *'underpinned by some sort of standardised testing [and] . . . should be made available to post-primary schools'*. As far as the standard admissions criteria were concerned, the Board believed that *'the receiving schools should be allowed to devise criteria which attempt to match the school's provision with the pupils' aptitude and ability'*. There was a feeling that, under the *Burns* proposals *'it is inevitable that distance from the school will become of prime importance and will lead to admission by postcode'*. As far as the proposed *'collegiate'* arrangements were concerned, the Board considered them to be unworkable in practice, a view with which even secondary schools, which largely favoured the proposals, concurred. As well as the official response to the *Report*, drawn up by the Board of Governors, responses were also submitted by the Staff, who had invited two members of the review body to visit the School, and pupils completed a questionnaire, resulting in their own response, which concluded that *'overall Bangor Grammar School pupils are content with the current system as it is'*.

The response of the Board of Governors suggested an alternative *'way forward'*: *'the redrafting of the curriculum before finding the structural means of delivering it'* (*'We need to know what our destination is, BEFORE we begin to try to get there'*, as Mr.Connolly put it), stressing that it was essential that *'an academic pathway'*, which, it was felt, the Review Body was trying to devalue, should be equal in status to other pathways.

The Headmaster, speaking a year after the publication of the *Report*, spoke of the *'stunned silence'* with which the whole educational sector had greeted the proposals, and pointed out that among the members of the review body *'there was numbered not one practising teacher or principal'*. Nevertheless, the debate which had followed, had, he said, given the grammar schools the opportunity to put their case.

The consultation period, during which hundreds of thousands of responses were submitted, clearly demonstrated the overwhelming desire to retain the grammar schools, while at the same time reforming the transfer procedure. Mr.McGuinness announced that the last Transfer Tests would be held in 2004, but when the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended in October 2002, the new direct rule Minister, Jane Kennedy, accepted that the 11+ could not be abolished without some other better method of selection being developed to take its place, and in April 2003 she established the *Post-Primary Review Working Group*, chaired by Steve Costello, M.B.E., Chairman of the *Northern Ireland General Consumer Council*, and a former member of both the *S.E.E.L.B.* and *C.C.E.A.*, to provide advice on options for future arrangements for post-primary education, taking account of the responses to the *Burns Report*, *'including the diversity of views on academic selection'*. The advice was to provide for the development of alternative transfer procedures and pupil profiles, and *'access for all young people to a broader curriculum providing greater choice'*. Members of that working party included Gavin Boyd, Chief Executive of *C.C.E.A.*, and former Headmaster, Dr.R.J.Rodgers, O.B.E., Honorary Secretary of the *Governing Bodies Association* and Chairperson of the *General Teaching Council*.

The *Costello Report* was submitted to the Minister in November 2003 and two months later she announced that she was accepting its recommendations, despite the fact that its radical proposals were untried and uncoded. The *Report* concluded that *'changes to our post-primary system are necessary if we are to develop our young people to their full potential'* and declared that an *'Entitlement Framework'* should be established, giving *'a sound general education'* at Key Stage 3, and at Key Stage 4, *'access to a menu of at least 24 courses of which one third must be vocational and one third must be academic'*. Since it was virtually impossible for any one school to provide so many courses, access to this Entitlement was *'likely to include school to school and school to Further Education collaboration'*, and the precise form of collaboration *'should be determined locally and be responsive to local needs'*, under the umbrella of *'Local Planning and Development Partnerships'*. Many schools felt that this would considerably dilute pupil identification with one institution, not to mention the difficulty of harmonising the timetables of several schools and colleges. Although the last Transfer Tests would be held in 2008, and schools would be required to *'draw on a limited menu of admissions criteria'*, Ms. Kennedy claimed that the new arrangements *'actually allow all existing school types to continue to exist, so long as they meet the Entitlement Framework'*, but the Board of Governors believed that she was simply reflecting the views of her departmental officials, who were driving its implementation. It was felt that she had accepted the *Report* without understanding clearly the Northern Ireland context or the impact it was likely to have.

Crucially the *Report* recommended that there should be no further consultation, but it did engender heated debate. On the one hand, the *Association of Head Teachers in Secondary Schools*, in an open letter to Barry Gardiner, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who had replaced Jane Kennedy in a government reshuffle in April 2004, said *'children do not need the 11+, nor do they need to be segregated at such an early age. It is simply wrong'*. Its chairman, Uel McCrea, of *Ballyclare Secondary School*, referred to what he called *'the significant inequalities associated with the present system, where young people from disadvantaged backgrounds do less well than others'*. On the other hand, Paul Hewitt, principal of *Royal School Dungannon*, undoubtedly speaking for many in the grammar school sector, claimed that the *Costello Report* would *'unleash the full power of mediocrity'* and that *'forty years of wandering in a comprehensive wilderness will have begun for Northern Ireland children'*. He highlighted the loss of time, the cost of transport and *'the nightmare of timetable synchronisation'* involved in the collaboration proposals and condemned the curriculum design proposed by the *Report* as *'unworkable and unnecessary'*. Such was the antipathy to the *Report* in the voluntary grammar school sector, that an adaptation of an old joke was doing the rounds: *When a leprechaun offered to grant Barry Gardiner one wish, the Minister asked for a bridge linking Ireland to the United States, but when the leprechaun said that that was too difficult, Mr. Gardiner then asked that the leprechaun make the Heads of the voluntary grammar school say something nice about the Costello Report. After a brief pause, the leprechaun said: 'That bridge: do you want lights on it?'*

Not surprisingly, the Board of Governors was very concerned about the acceptance by the government of the *Costello Report*, which expressed the desire to retain the grammar schools, while abolishing academic selection. As the Headmaster pointed out, it was *'difficult to see how that apparent contradiction can be resolved'*. The proposals which involved schools working closely in local partnerships, sharing staff and facilities, to Mr. Connolly *'do not seem to be at all practicable'*. *'Engagement with the Department is continuing'*, he told *Grammarians* in the Autumn of 2004, but *'if the Costello Report is adopted as written, the present system of post-primary education will be fundamentally changed and that means that Bangor Grammar School itself will be fundamentally changed'*.⁶

⁶ 'Bangor Grammar School: Response of the Board of Governors to the Report of the Post Primary Review Body *"Education for the 21st Century"*'; 'Response by the pupils of Bangor Grammar School to the Report by the Post Primary Review Body'; the Department of Education for Northern Ireland website; *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 January, 27 April and 31 May 2004; The Headmaster in *Bangor Grammarians' Annual Report* 2002, 2003 and 2004 and when speaking at the *Grammarians' Dinner*, November 2004.

Nor was this the only threat to hang over the School. In 2004, the Headmaster counted '*ten major and imminent changes and issues which will have a serious impact upon post-primary schools*', not the least of which was the proposal to introduce '*commonality of funding*', which would cut the share of the education budget received by the voluntary grammar schools. Although government funding amounted to over £3 million in 2004-2005, more than two-thirds of that was swallowed up by teaching costs. With other costs, such as the price of textbooks, heating and insurance all rising, the School was ever more dependent on the substantial voluntary contributions made by parents. With the announcement that the government was to introduce a common funding formula, to replace the seven different formulae used to divide funds among schools, there was a fear that the School's share might drop dramatically, since the scheme would transfer £4 million to the Primary Sector and £4 million to schools with special social needs. However when details were announced, it transpired that, had been it been applied in 2003-2004, the School would have received just £17,000 less, which was not as bad as had been feared. Nevertheless, at a time when the Board of Governors was working within, what the Mr.Connelly called, '*an exasperatingly tight budget*', he believed that it was '*simply bizarre*' that school budgets should be reduced even further. At least the sale of numbers 6 and 8 Clifton Road for £273,000 helped to reduce the bank loan,

Throughout these difficult years, the Chairman of the Board of Governors was David Thompson, who occupied that position for longer than anyone since Sam Claney's resignation over forty years earlier.

THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BUILDING

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State, Dr.John Reid, officially opened the £1.7 million Science and Technology building on 22 January 2002, after which Mrs.Noreen Blair, widow of Dr.Hal Blair, invited him to place in one of the walls, a time capsule which was to remain in place until 2056. Although he had arrived 45 minutes late because of his busy schedule, Dr.Reid, a historian, spent two hours touring the three-storey building, talking to boys and taking an interest in the experiments and displays.

The building contained three Chemistry laboratories and one general purpose Science laboratory, three state-of-the-art Technology workshops and a systems room. It also enabled the Business Studies department to relocate to refurbished accommodation in the *Wilkins Centre*. Mr.MacDonald, who had acted as unofficial clerk of works, was subsequently appointed as the School's Director of Development.



A rather fuzzy photograph of the site of the Science and Technology building following the excavation of the ground formerly occupied by numbers 16, 18 and 20 Clifton Road.



The Science and Technology building which was officially opened on 22 January 2002



Dr. John Reid, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
with the Headmaster, the Headboy, Paul McKenzie and
the Chairman of the Board of Governors, D.B. Thompson

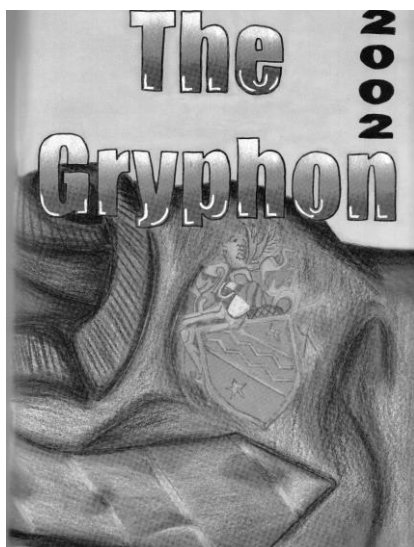
SIXTH FORM CENTRE

In the Autumn of 2003, the Headmaster was able to tell *Grammarians* that the Sixth Form Centre, along what had been known for forty years as '*the red corridor*', had been converted from '*a noisome, festering pit*' into something more suitable for students in the 21st century. It had been enlarged, repainted and ventilated during the Summer at a cost of £43,000 - although the Sixth Form initially complained that it resembled an airport lounge - and a catering manager had been appointed to provide hot snacks and drinks throughout the day; it is used almost as much by Staff as by the boys.

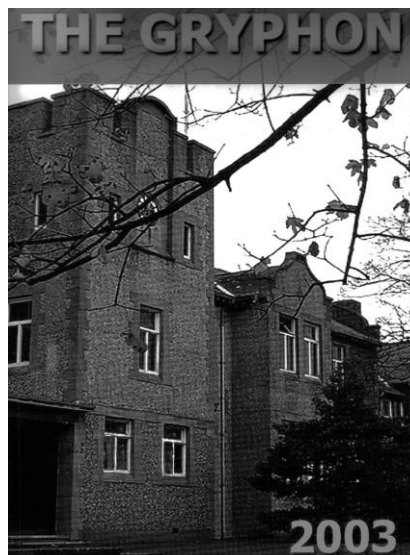
From September 2004, a means-tested *Educational Maintenance Allowance* was introduced to encourage pupils to stay at school post-16. £10, £20 or £30 a week, administered by a Student Loan Company, dependent on attendance, with a £100 bonus if educational criteria set by the School were met. In the first year of the scheme, over 30 pupils qualified.



The cover of *The Gryphon* 2001 by A.J.Brown (Year 14) ingeniously captured the façades of (clockwise, from bottom right) the 1906 building, the Clarke Hall, the 1974 extension, the Orlit block, the 1961 entrance, the Wilkins Centre and the 1966 extension, with the 2001 Science block in the centre.



The cover of *The Gryphon* 2002 by Jonathan Wilson (Year 13)



The cover of *The Gryphon* 2003
A digital photograph of a view, familiar to boys for almost 100 years

PUPILS

Boys continued to gain entrance to Oxford and Cambridge colleges, no fewer than six doing so in 2002, a number only equalled twice before, in 1985 and 1986. In 2001, Andrew Jackson not only gained a place at Churchill College, Cambridge, he also won a place on the *Smallpiece Engineering Careers Foundation Year*, enabling him to travel and take a work placement in Europe. The following year, 62% of 'A2' results were Grades A or B, and 20% of boys achieved 'straight As'. Ross Williams came Joint 1st in 'A' Level Physics, Adam Browne did likewise in Art and Design, as did Chris Cargo in G.C.S.E Maths Coursework. Admittedly there had been some controversy that year, with accusations of government interference in the establishment of grade boundaries, although Mike Tomlinson's *Inquiry into 'A' Level Standards* that Autumn, in some measure at least, exonerated the examination boards and the *Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*. Nevertheless, Mr.Connolly did believe that the Boards had not had sufficient manpower to service the new examinations efficiently, and that they had been introduced too quickly. He entered a plea for fewer examinations and for a system which was less complex both in assessment, where there was 'a plethora of what are referred to as Assessment Objectives', and in administration.

Boys continued to widen their education beyond the classroom and outside Northern Ireland. Philip Vance was one of only two from Northern Ireland to be selected to attend *Eurocamp 2003* at Freyburg, while Robert Johnston and Simon Harper worked in a Moscow orphanage; Robert also spent two weeks in the U.S.A. on a cross-community programme, *Forever Friends*. Ryan Nelson, Ben McIlwaine, Philip Whyte, Darren Mills, Philip Dunne and Luke Chambers took part in *Global Young Leaders' Conferences* in the United States, Rory McMullan won a trip to Chicago in a Rotary Club-organised essay competition on the subject of 'Conflict Resolution'. Michael Briggs and John Davidson attended an Initiative for Peace Conference at *Atlantic College* in Wales. Chris Eccles came joint 1st in a Science Time Capsule competition organised by the Centre for Molecular Biosciences at the University of Ulster.

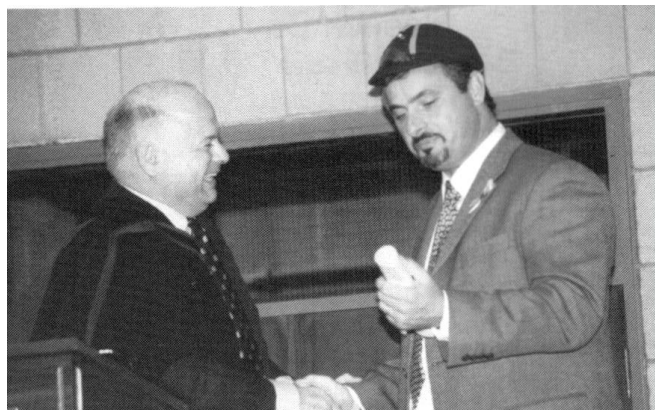
Although the Community Action Team continued to lead the School's charitable efforts, a wide range of activities took place, raising money for, among others, *Clifton Special School*, the *Abaana Ministry*, *Children in Need* the children of Chernobyl and of Iraq, Romanian orphanages and the *Phoebe Lyle Trust*. Alastair Majury, Gareth Proctor, Stuart McWilliams, Ryan Nelson, Martin Thompson and Robert Johnston were recipients of the *Diana, Princess of Wales, Trust Award* for Service to the Community.

Boys were involved in the *Top Link* programme, which 'is regarded as an effective tool through which schools can deliver the emerging curriculum. It utilizes P.E. and sport as a means of developing Key Skills in a work related context, while facilitating cross-curricular working. It also gains positive P.R. for the School'. The Festival of Sport for *Clifton Special School* was included in North Down Borough Council's Jubilee Year celebrations, and the following year the *North Down Sports Advisory Council* presented the School with a crystal rose bowl in recognition of its work. In 2002 girls from *Glenlola Collegiate* were on the Management Team.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Undoubtedly the School's most successful former pupil in the realm of professional sport, David Feherty, returned to the School as Guest of Honour at Speech Day in 2003. On that occasion, the Headmaster bestowed on him the degree of 'Graduate Of Links Fraternity' (G.O.L.F.) from the 'Universitas Bangoriae'. David Feherty grew up with aspirations to become an opera singer, until he discovered he had the knack of hitting a golf ball. He enjoyed a very successful professional career, with 10 victories worldwide and over \$3 million in prize money. He was a regular on the European Tour, with victories including the ICL International, the Italian Open, the Scottish Open, the South Africa P.G.A. tournament, the B.M.W. Open, the Cannes Open and the Madrid Open. He captained the winning Irish team in the 1990 *Alfred Dunhill Cup*. He also played on the European *Ryder Cup* Team in 1991, an experience that rejuvenated his fervour for golf, and in 1995 he finished fourth in the Open Championship at St.Andrews. In 1997, he retired from professional golf when offered a position as a golf commentator for *CBS Sports*. His light-hearted approach to broadcasting is appreciated by golf fans and critics. Writers have called him 'The Class Clown of Commentary' and according to a September 2002 *Golf Magazine* survey, golf fans chose David Feherty as their favourite golf commentator. He has also become an accomplished author, writing a monthly column for that magazine, and his books - the fictional *A Nasty Bit of Rough*, and his collection of humorous articles, *Somewhere in Ireland, A Village is Missing an Idiot* - have become bestsellers. His third book, *David Feherty's Totally Objective History of the Ryder Cup* was published in 2004.⁷

⁷ Details taken from the website www.tourtalent



The Headmaster with David Feherty, Speech Day 2003

As well as Mr.Feherty and the Secretary of State, Dr.John Reid, the School welcomed a number of distinguished visitors, including Chief Constable of the *Police Service of Northern Ireland*, Hugh Orde, the leader of the *S.D.L.P.*, Mark Durkan, Ian Paisley junior of the *D.U.P.*, Lord Alderdice and the *B.B.C.*'s Mark Simpson at the *Politics Society*. Former pupils, Wing Commander Andrew McAuley and Dr.Jonathan Carson, a lecturer in French at *University of St.Andrews* also visited the School and Professor Jonathan Allison, Associate Professor of English at the *University of Kentucky* and director of the prestigious annual *Yeats Summer School*, presented the Library with a copy of his latest publication, *Poetry and Contemporary Culture: A Question of Value*, and his introduction for young people to the poetry of W.B.Yeats. He later sent a signed copy of an unpublished Seamus Heaney poem, *The Lift*. Lady Sylvia Hermon, M.P., a former Governor and a frequent visitor to the School, was in the platform party at the 2004 Speech Day, when the guest of Honour was the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt.Hon.Michael Martin, M.P.



The 2004 Speech Day Platform Party

Mr.Ian Davis, train-bearer to the Speaker, Mrs.Thompson, Mrs.Connolly, the Headmaster, Lady Hermon, M.P., Rt.Hon.Michael Martin, M.P., Mrs.Martin, D.B.Thompson (Chairman)

NEW PRIZES

A number of new awards were presented during these years including a Cup for Junior Debating, the *Jim and Vina Hamilton Memorial Award* for Musical Composition, the *Donaldson and Weir Prize* for Art, the *Roberts Cup* for the House with the most conspicuous academic achievement, the *David Patterson Shield* for contribution to the life of the Middle School and the *N.S.E.Arnold Prize* for Art and Design. In addition, McKee McKenzie insurance brokers provided a new 1st XV kit and Medallion XV strips were sponsored by Webb's Pharmacy and by David Carson and Company, whose eponymous head, was a former 1st XV and Ulster Schools' hooker.

STAFF

By 2003, almost a third of the teaching staff was female, largely thanks to the appointments made by Tom Patton. Despite Randall Clarke's reputation as '*a ladies' man*', during his 21 years, only five women were appointed and even then most were temporary or part-time;

only Miss Addy and Miss Tipping served for more than three years, and Mr. Clarke had inherited them. Dr. Rodgers appointed three, but Mr. Patton appointed almost two dozen female teachers, nine of whom were still teaching at the School in 2005. By then, eleven members of the Teaching Staff had served for 25 years or more, although two, Dougie Rea and Roy Mairs, took premature retirement that year.



P.L. Moore, B.Sc., Ph.D.
appointed in 1972

Peter Moore joined the Staff as a Physics master in 1972, following a distinguished academic career at *Sullivan Upper School* and *Queen's University*, where he took his B.Sc. and Ph.D degrees. The then Head of Science, Joe McKeown clearly regarded Dr. Moore highly, for *'he was allowed to use apparatus with classes in his first year teaching, a privilege rarely accorded to new teachers by Joe'*. His promotion was rapid: in 1978 he succeeded Mr. McKeown as Senior Physicist and four years later, on the retirement of Bill Langtry, he became Head of Science. During the next eleven years, he led the department through numerous curriculum changes, at the same time finding it possible to serve the examinations council on working parties, as an assistant G.C.E. examiner, Chief Examiner for C.S.E. Physics and Chief Moderator of C.S.E. Technology. In school, following a period as Housemaster, he was appointed Senior Master in 1991, with responsibility for co-ordinating the new *C.L.A.S.S.* system, a job for which he was well suited having trained as the School's first computer specialist, along with Jim Johnston. In 1993 he became Academic Vice-Principal and four years later, Senior Vice-Principal, assuming a pastoral role. He has been a member of the Personal and Social Development Committee and the Curriculum Committee, has been responsible for producing most of the School's many policy statements, and the Staff Handbook, as well as serving a term as a Teacher Governor. His involvement in the extra-curricular life of the School has seen him assist with Under-12 Rugby, organize Under-12 Cricket and contribute to the many Scripture Union activities. He has also been a feared fast left arm bowler for the Staff Cricket team.⁸

'Suave, sophisticated and well-kempt, it has been said of Stephen Blake-Knox, "He doesn't look like a teacher".' Educated at *Campbell College* and *Trinity College Dublin*, he was appointed to the Staff in 1972 to teach English and History. He entered the Careers Department during the 1980s and became Head of Department in 1998. He is also Head of Business Studies, a subject which has become a popular choice at G.C.S.E and 'A' Level. His skills as a mediator and negotiator have been well-used, not just as a Head of Department and a Housemaster, but also as union representative for the *N.A.S./U.W.T.* Capped for Ireland against England and Scotland in 1976, his rugby playing career was cut short by injury, but he has given many years' service to School rugby, his name becoming synonymous with the First Form team.⁹

⁸ Information provided by Dougie Rea.

⁹ Information provided by Robert Stevenson.



S.E.F.Blake-Knox, B.A., Dip.Ed.



C.C.J.Harte, B.A., H.Dip.Ed.

appointed in 1972

'I write to tell you that I have appointed another candidate. I would very much like to have appointed you . . . , but the man I have appointed will solve some problems for me which you could not have solved'. So wrote Randall Clarke to the author in May 1972. The '*man*' he had appointed was Chris Harte, and although Mr.Clarke did not specify exactly what '*problems*' Mr.Harte was going to solve, could anyone have solved more problems? Over the next thirty three years he taught History, Geography, Law, Celtic Studies, Mathematics and Latin, coached Cricket and Hockey and established the Bridge Club, which provided an opportunity for the less sporting pupil to represent the School. Known as '*Pinky*', as a result of having been awarded a '*pink*' for Cricket at *Trinity*, he subsequently gained twenty '*caps*' for Ireland and, it is said, held the record for the most scores of less than 50; having reached 49 against Sussex, he had the distinction of being bowled by Imran Khan. He once heard his son, Michael, being referred to as '*PJ*' and on asking why, he received the simple explanation - '*Pinky Junior*'. Under Mr.Harte's guidance, the 1st Cricket XI has won every trophy open to it, has gone on tour regularly to Manchester, and in 1995 to Australia. In Winter, he has coached Hockey and even took up Rugby refereeing. In 1992-93 he arranged a teacher exchange with John Crossman from New Zealand, bringing back many innovative ideas, which he succeeded in persuading senior management to adopt; on returning to Northern Ireland with a good tan, his son, Johnny, who has rather narrow eyes, was heard being referred to as '*Pinky's little chinky*'! A member of the Senior Management Team since 1994, he has been a strong advocate of traditional standards of discipline, manners and appearance. Bob McIlroy, who has been associated with the School for 43 years, believes that '*The School will have difficulty finding his equal*'.¹⁰

Alan Mackie, a graduate of *Queen's University*, was appointed to teach History in the School in September 1974. As well as teaching History throughout the school he was also largely responsible for encouraging the then Head of Classics, Jimmy Driscoll, to reintroduce the teaching of Ancient History at Advanced Level. He was appointed a Housemaster for Ward House and retained this position until he became a Senior Teacher in with special responsibility as Head of the Junior School. During his time at the School he has coached Cricket, especially at Under-15 level and has been in charge of Cross Country and Sailing. He also pioneered *Records of Achievement* and ran three successful Bazaars. He co-directed ten school plays, assisted with the Library and conducted successful History Trips both locally and to Europe. He is currently responsible for Public Relations, Open Evenings, Primary School Liaison, Staff Induction and Development, the School Calendar and is Contingent Commander of the *C.C.F.*¹¹

¹⁰ Information provided by Chris Harte and Bob McIlroy.

¹¹ Information provided by Rodney Jones.



A.J. Mackie, B.A. Dip.Ed.
appointed in 1974



R.I. Jones, B.A. P.G.C.E.
appointed in 1976

An old boy of the School, Rodney Jones was appointed in 1976 initially as a teacher of general subjects. In his first year he taught seven different subjects to the newly created 1M class. Thereafter he streamlined his teaching, specialising in History and Ancient History both of which he has taught to Advanced Level. He succeeded Maurice McCord as Head of History on the latter's retirement in 1999 and he has presided over a series of curricular innovations, including the introduction of 'AS' and 'A2' examinations. On the extra-curricular front, he was coach of the Under-14 Rugby team which won the *Campbell* and *Sullivan* Sevens tournaments on a number of occasions in the 1980s and he also took this team to Narbonne in France for a tournament which they managed to win. In more recent times he has helped to set up a Senior Football team and he coached the side which in 2003 reached the final of the Belfast and District School's F.A. Cup Competition. He has also coached cricket mostly at Under-14 level. Elsewhere he has helped out with the *Community Service Group* and the *Debating Society* and since 1985 he has also run the School Bookstore, checking and ordering text books for the School.¹²

Duncan Macpherson attended school in Kenya before completing his education at *Magee College* and the *New University of Ulster*. Mrs. Weir remembers him as 'a long-haired rocker' and in his spare time he still plays rock guitar. He joined the French Department in 1977 and since then has played a full part in the life of the School. As well as his classroom teaching, he has served as Housemaster of *School House* and Chairman of the Curriculum Committee. He was promoted to Senior Master in 1999. For some time he was an officer in the *C.C.F. Naval Section*, completing his officer training at *Dartmouth Naval College* at the same time as Alan Mackie. For the past twenty years he has coached the 1st XV alongside Willie Cree, Dougie Rea and Jim Welch, bringing home the *Schools' Cup* on three occasions in the late 1980s. Energetic and enthusiastic, he first came into contact with French speakers and developed his love of the language while in Kenya. His pupils' favourite trick is to start him reminiscing about his time in Africa and his ability in Swahili. In 2004, he took a career break to return to the land of his youth.¹³

¹² Information provided by Alan Mackie.

¹³ Information provided by Mrs. I. Weir.



D.A.J. Macpherson, B.A., Dip.Ed.



W.R. Stevenson, B.A., P.G.C.E., A.T.C.L.

appointed in 1977

Robert Stevenson was educated at *Kilkeel High School* and *Liverpool University*. He was appointed to teach English in 1977, joining a department which comprised 'the great triumvirate' of Jack Murphy, Mike Foley and Jack Dalzell. In spite of the talent at his disposal, Jack Murphy immediately deployed Robert as an 'O' Level and an 'A' Level teacher and his traditional teaching methods helped Richard Coughlin and William McQuillan to finish first and third respectively in Northern Ireland 'A' Level English Literature. In his time Robert Stevenson has also taught Religious Education, French, Media Studies, I.C.T., Music, Key Skills (Communication) and Games, has contributed to numerous *Scripture Union* camps and has edited *The Gryphon* for over a decade. Head of Junior English, he was Acting-Head of Department during Mr. Andrews' absence and he also served a term as a Teacher Governor. A talented pianist and organist, he has the ear of a musician, making him an excellent mimic; 'his impersonations of Jack Dalzell and Nick Argent are splendidly accurate'.¹⁴ (His wife, Hilary, is a former pupil of the author, as are Deirdre Cannon of the Music Department and Julie Alexander of *Connor House*).

David Napier was educated at *Down High School* and brought up in the hamlet of Raholp, not far from Downpatrick. While at school, he captained Irish Schools at Cricket and he played regularly for the very fine *Downpatrick* club sides of the early 1970s. He subsequently played for *Saintfield* and *N.I.C.C.*, gaining both *Ulster Country* and *Ulster Town 'caps'*. He also captained *Down High* to victory in the *Schools' Cup Subsidiary Shield* in 1973, playing scrum-half, a position he later occupied in many *Junior* and *Towns' Cup* winning squads for 'the *Hinch*' in the days prior to their elevation to the Senior ranks. He later became one of Ulster and Ireland's top referees. Having studied at *St. Catherine's College, Liverpool University*, he taught first at *Aughnacloy County Secondary School*, before joining the Physical Education Department in February 1979. Almost his very first duty was to supervise the joint Medallion Rugby and Under 15 Hockey Tour to Edinburgh in the company of Duncan McPherson and Chris Harte. This was a task he accomplished 'with the aplomb for which he has become known, and the trade mark, unruffled way in which he dealt with any eventualities have been an outstanding characteristic of his time at the School'. Known variously as 'Sir Dave', 'Snapper' and 'the Flying Cochon (adapted)', his knowledge of the boys he has taught is astonishing, for he has always been able to provide background information to 'facilitate understanding of situations and actions'. At the same time he carries out administrative tasks effectively and without fuss.¹⁵

¹⁴ Information provided by Mike Andrews.

¹⁵ Information provided by Chris Harte.



D.J.Napier, Cert.Ed.



J.M.Andrews, M.A., P.G.C.E.

appointed in 1979

Mike Andrews took his primary degree in English at *Queen's* and subsequently gained his Master's degree in Victorian Literature at the then *New University of Ulster*. Appointed to the staff of the English Department in 1979, he plunged his Lower Sixth into such a painstaking examination of the imagery, characterisation and themes of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* '*that one wag in his class calculated that they would finish the novel in thirty five years*'. He has often said that it is teaching in the junior school that he most enjoys and he eschews the modern obsession with political correctness '*if he considers that a particular approach will be to the pedagogic benefits of his students*'. Someone who expects high standards both in discipline and in academic matters, his idiosyncratic ways of motivating pupils mean that his lessons are long remembered by his classes. In 1998 he succeeded Donald Cairnduff as Head of English and has proved himself to be a believer in '*the efficacy of departmental social activities*'. As a Housemaster, he forged close friendships with the boys in his House, and he remains an unapologetic supporter of the House system. His involvement in extra-curricular activities has included the *Literary Society* and on the sports field, Cross Country, Table Tennis and Year 8 Rugby, while he is also a founder member of *Tommy's Tours*. His colleagues speak of his common sense, his love of life, his passion for his subject and his abhorrence of hypocrisy.¹⁶

With the addition of Mr.J.W.Culbert (1981), Dr.S.W.Stevenson (1982, but on a Career Break from 2001 to 2004), Dr.M.Faulkner, Dr.N.E.Riddell and Mr.A.Cardwell (1985), over a quarter of the teaching staff will have served for twenty years or more by the time of the School's 150th Anniversary.

On top of teaching and co-curricular responsibilities, Staff enjoyed '*exceptional closure*' days to discuss topics such as the School Development Plan, and an '*away day*' at Tollymore Forest Park where, along with walks and a barbeque, there was '*much earnest discussion about C.C.E.A.'s new proposals for the K.S.3 and K.S.4 curriculum*'.

In 2003, the Headmaster paid tribute to his entire Staff, saying:

'Their professionalism is beyond praise. Their desire to serve the interests of the boys never in question; week by week, weekend by weekend, enthusiasm undiminished in term time or holiday, the staff goes the extra mile in the service of the pupils.'

And despite the greatly increased pressure of work, the Staff still found time to socialise together, with the *Friday Crucible Snooker Club* whose members '*somehow manage to play some form of snooker on a table that is about as level as Slieve Binion. . . . It occupies the room outside the*

¹⁶ Information provided by Robert Stephenson and Barry Greenaway.

Staff loo and presents a serious obstacle to anyone in a hurry'. There is also the 'infamous' Tommy's Tours party, (named after a former Headmaster), which attend a Rugby international every season. This 'entails male-bonding, . . . the publication of a Tour Brochure, the submission of a Treasurer's Report and the writing off to V.I.P.'s such as the Princess Royal and the Irish Prime Minister, in a bid for sponsorship or, at the very least, acknowledgement. Hilarious anecdotes from one year carry them through to the next'. It has even been known for tour sweatshirts to be produced.¹⁷

Nor is it only current Staff who find time to socialise; retired Staff, some of whom taught only briefly at the School in the 1960s and 1970s, and others who spent 30 or 40 years at the School, meet for coffee on a monthly basis, and enjoy a Christmas dinner together.



Proof that there is life after School

Bertie Styles (1956-1993), Bob McIlroy (1962-2001), Bill Langtry (1959-1994) and Joe McKeown (1946-1978) about to enjoy their Christmas Dinner along with, among others, Noel Wilson (1962-1964), Ivan Wilson (1973-2000), Irwin Bonar (1959-1997) and Errol Steele (1962-1999).

Others who often frequent these gatherings, and who may be out of sight in the photograph, include Allen Abraham (1962-1989), Ken Browne (1976-2001), Jim Driscoll (1953-1985), Joe Gildea (1973-1999), Matt Gillan (1962-1972), Don Jamieson (1959-1967), Maurice McCord (1959-1999), Tom McVeigh (1959-1964), Billy Mercer (1959-1971), Derek Mohan (1970-1985), Tony Montgomery (1962-1967), Ray Mowat (1971-2000), John Smyth (1964-1997) and Jim Welch (1956-1993),
(Photographs courtesy of Ian Hunter [1969-2001])

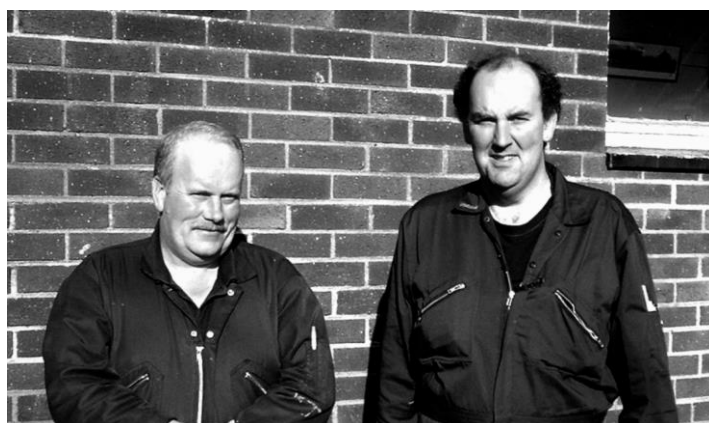
In April 2004, the entire School community was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Gareth McSorley, a 30-year-old member of the Modern Languages department, who had joined the Staff in 2001. Popular both as a teacher and as a rugby and tennis coach, Mr. McSorley's funeral was attended by Staff, Governors and boys, who formed a guard of honour. The School also held a short service of commemoration, attended by members of his family and a book of condolence was signed by a large number of boys, Staff and Governors.

In common with so many of the Teaching Staff, Administrative and Ancillary Staff have, over the years, also stayed the course. Gladys Henderson, Betty Sangster, Ivy Comyns, Fred Conway and Willie Evans all served for over twenty years. And the present generation is no different.

Margaret Hamilton joined the staff of the General Office in 1971 as telephonist and junior secretary. At that time, the telephone system was a six-line exchange with plug in jacks. All calls, external and internal, went through Margaret, who rapidly became the voice of *Bangor Grammar School* to all telephone contacts. Over the next decade and a half she rose steadily in seniority and was eventually appointed Headmaster's Secretary on the departure of Mrs. Dorothy Brooker in 1987. Margaret Hamilton's knowledge of *Bangor Grammar School* since the 1970s was encyclopaedic and, at the time of her retirement, she was the longest serving member of staff - teaching or administrative. It was said that the Headmaster often had to share her with tearful little boys, anxious and intense Sixth Formers, and young members of staff seeking advice. At the time of the Lindsay Brown affair, it was she who

¹⁷ Dougie Rea in his tribute to John Atkins, *The Gryphon*, 2003; information supplied by Barry Greenaway and Robert Stevenson.

had the unenviable task of dealing with the various external agencies. She has many stories to tell about her thirty three years at the School, from the day she accidentally startled Jimmy Welch in the showers (something from which neither has ever fully recovered!), to the site of the Bursar with tie caught in the shredder. Margaret took premature retirement in 2005, having served the School for over thirty years under five Headmasters.¹⁸



Margaret Hamilton (1971-2005) Maintenance Officers, Matt McClements and Peter Sharpe, who joined the School within weeks of each other in 1985

Known, apparently, as '*Bebop*' and '*Rock Steady*' or *Matt* and *Gloss*, Matt McClements and Peter Sharpe can give an entirely different perspective on School life. They recall the time that the police had to interrupt a School function to ask a certain member of the Teaching Staff to move his car from across a driveway, as the lady resident had gone into labour. The bells have proved troublesome: on one occasion, boys tampered with them, so that they rang at unscheduled times; and functions were often disturbed by what they refer to as a '*ghost bell*' - one which rang, even though it was not programmed into the time clock. Perhaps this was caused by the '*ghost*' Matt encountered in the middle of the night, when he was called into School to turn off a light in the bell tower; a door banged shut and he felt an icy breeze sweep past him, raising the hairs on the back of his neck. The boys, too, have proved a nuisance at times, by throwing stones at the maintenance store window; they were deterred when Matt pointed out that Peter, strategically positioned in the *Clarke Hall*, had a camcorder (although no footage was actually being shot). W.O.II McClements also served as S.S.I. to the *C.C.F.* for several years.¹⁹

THE ARTS

As well as having outstanding examination results, thanks in part to its state-of-the-art recording facilities, including a *Yamaha MD8s* multitrack minidisc recorder, the Music Department released a CD, *A String of Pearls*, and it continued to raise money for charity. The annual visits to *Bloomfields* at Christmas raised money for the *Ulster Cancer Foundation* (by 2002 totalling £14,000) and for the Liver Support Unit at the *Royal Victoria Hospital*, while the group originally formed to provide incidental music at the School Play, *Archie's Magic Fergus* (whose name owed something to the retired Director of Music), raised £650 for *Marie Curie Cancer Care*. Among the department's public appearances, perhaps the highlight was the Concert Band's performance in Parliament Buildings at Stormont, to celebrate 50 years of *The Save the Children Fund* in Bangor. In addition to playing in the *Ulster Youth Orchestra*, various *S.E.E.L.B.* ensembles and local brass bands, pupils featured in groups such as *Made in Korea*, *An Imperfect Art*, *Dream Team*, *Jazztime with Good Company* and a Barber Shop Group. (G02) Not to be outdone by his pupils, Director of Music, Jonathan Rea's composition *God of Grace* was released on a CD *Contemporary Celtic Christian Music*, with an orchestral backing by the Prague Symphony Orchestra. The department also added saxophone and singing tuition to its activities and it celebrated Andrew Kitchen's *A.T.C.L.*

¹⁸ Information provided by Barry Greenaway; the Headmaster in *The Gryphon*, 2005.

¹⁹ From an interview with Matt McClements and Peter Sharpe, May 2004.

After the production of two of Willy Russell's plays, 2004 saw a return to Shakespeare with *The Merchant of Venice*, albeit in modern dress. The place of the subject in the curriculum was further cemented with Laboratory 1 being given over to Drama. Pupils continued to enjoy success outside School. Philip Kennedy was cast in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Whistle Down the Wind* and Martin Gray was one of only 30 chosen, from the 3,000 who applied, to appear in the *National Youth Theatre's* Summer Season of Barry Hine's *Kes*; he subsequently was given a special achievement award by the *S.E.E.L.B.* and appeared in the *B.B.C.'s Give My Head Peace*. Joel Ormsby also gained a place in *National Youth Theatre* and Patrick Reid, Mark McCabe and Tim Parker in Ulster Youth Drama. Stuart Graham, who had first trod the boards over twenty years earlier in Peter Lagrue's productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *My Fair Lady*, *Playboy of the Western World* and *Juno and the Paycock* played the leading role in the television drama *Steel River Blues*.

Five Year 11 boys created a three-minute cartoon with the *Rogue Rocket* animation company and took part in the launch of 'Studio On', a creative learning centre funded by the *Hamlyn Foundation* and the *S.E.E.L.B.*

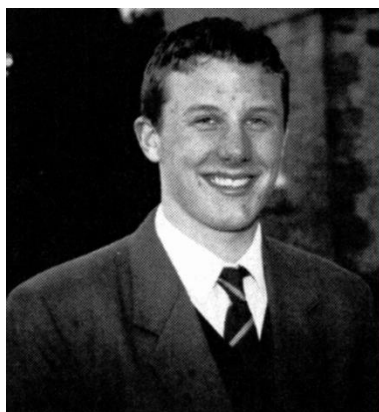
Keith Brown's art work was selected for the *Arts Society of Ulster* exhibition and, along with the work of Mark Deconink, was bought by *C.C.E.A.* to form part of its permanent collection, the first time *Bangor Grammar School* boys had enjoyed this accolade. Some of the School's art work was to be on permanent display on the North Pier, in the form of mosaics illustrating life in Bangor and North Down, which had been created as part of a community project involving five other schools, working with artist Martin McClure, and Year 10 decorated the *Flagship Centre* for Christmas.

SPORT²⁰

At a time when it was said that school sport was in decline, *Bangor Grammar School* boys were being offered a choice of 15 sporting activities and the School was fielding seven Badminton teams, six Rugby, Hockey and Cricket teams and two Soccer teams. 'We continue to be the envy of many schools in sport', boasted the Headmaster.²¹ Former pupils maintained their links with sport in the School as the all-conquering 1983 1st Hockey XI played the current team, and Dick Milliken, Roger Clegg, Stephen McKinty and Bryn Cunningham brought their wealth of experience to the coaching of Rugby in the School. In October 2005, the 1st and 2nd XVs flew to British Columbia, where the 1st XV won two of the three matches and the 2nd XV won all three of theirs. Earlier in the year, Michael Barker played for the Irish Schools' XV.



Michael Barker



P.D. McKenzie



C.J. Cargo

Paul McKenzie and Chris Cargo, both destined to become Headboy, continued to prove themselves to be outstanding all-round sportsmen. Paul, having played representative cricket at every level from Under-13, played for a third successive season on the Irish Schools' XI; he also played Ulster Schools' Rugby for two seasons. Captain of the 'Firsts' in both rugby

²⁰ A full list of individual and team successes and of representative honours can be found in the Appendices.

²¹ Stephen Connolly in *Bangor Grammarians' Annual Report 2002*.

and cricket, he was named Young Sports Person of the Year by *North Down Sports Advisory Council* and earned the *Ulster Sports' Trust School Leavers' Award* by the *Sports Council*. He also earned a place on the prestigious Cricket Academy at *Loughborough University*, one of only 14 awarded throughout the United Kingdom.

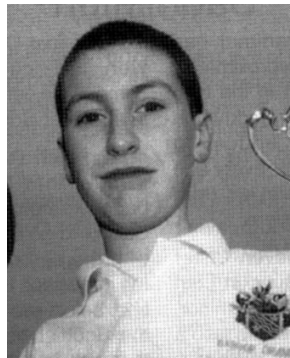
Chris ('Les') Cargo played for Ulster and Irish Schools in both Hockey and Cricket. In Hockey he also played for Ireland Under-21s and in his last Cricket season he scored three centuries, including 151 (or 152, depending on one's source) not out, probably the highest score ever achieved by a boy from the School. He had also played Badminton for Ulster at Under-13 level and played for the Ulster Under-14 and Under-18 Tennis teams. He was a member of the team which won the *Ulster Schools' Tennis Cup* in 2002. Not surprisingly he was awarded Honours in Badminton, Tennis, Cricket and Hockey. He crowned his school career by gaining four Grade 'A's at A2 level.



S.Cooper



G.S.J.Watterson



I.W.B.Jones



A.T.Conway

Another schoolboy Cricket international (and century-maker) was Scott Cooper, who had represented his country in Squash at Under-14 level, and was a member of the Northern Ireland Under-25 Bridge team. He also represented the School at Chess. Glenn Watterson, who had played Cricket for Ulster at Under-15 and Ulster Schools level, was capped for Irish Schools in 2004. Ian Jones continued to make a name for himself in Table Tennis, representing both Ulster and Ireland at Under-14 level and guiding the School team to victory in the Ulster Schools' Under-14 Champions. Andrew Conway won the *Lowry Cup* for the best individual score in the qualifying round of the Ulster Schools' Golf Championship, 2002



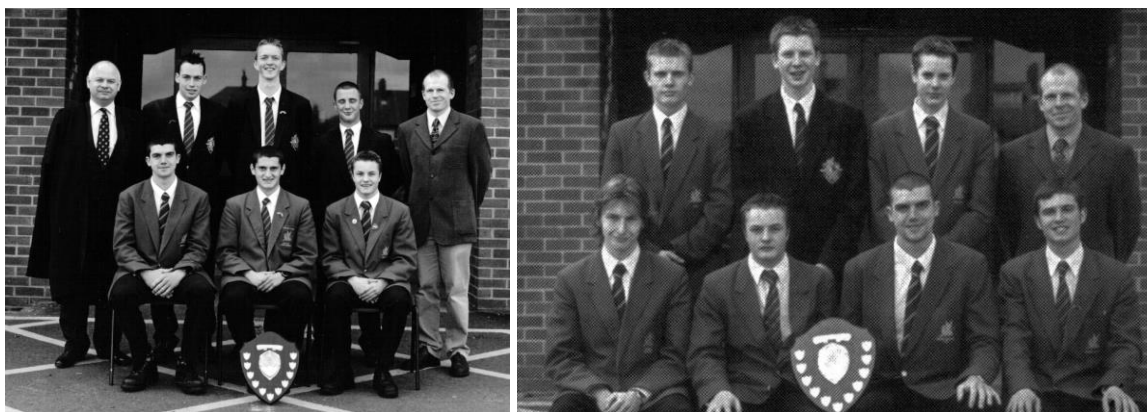
Mr.Nowotarski with the Under-15 Cricket XI, winners of the *Jubilee Trophy*, 2004

T.Law, D.Titmus, I.Jones, Z.Callan-Rushe

D.Hendry, M.Allen, A.Nixon, R.Gordon, R.Law

M.Nixon, J.Cherry, P.McCalister, E.Fraser, M.Dhanjai

The Under-15 Cricket XI won the *Jubilee Trophy*, the Squash team won the *Ulster Schools' League and Cup*, and in Badminton the Senior Team were Joint Winners of *Ulster Schools' Senior League* Division 1, while the Junior Team won the *Under-16 League*. The Cross Country team won the *Lurgan Cross Country Shield* in successive years. Although the School Football teams had not yet brought home any silverware, Stuart Best played for the Northern Ireland Youth Team and Shane Lowry was a member of the Northern Ireland Under-15 Development Squad, despite playing in what coach and Head of History, Rodney Jones, described as '*the Passchendaele-like*' Ballymacormick. In 2004, some '*remedial work*' was carried out, to prolong the facility's useful life.



The *Lurgan Cross Country Shield* winners 2002 and 2003

Back Row: The Headmaster, J.I.McMillen, P.S.Deconick
F.O.Harris, Mr.Titterington
Front Row: C.Funston, M.R.Wilson, A.M.Spratt

Back Row: S.Lyle, J.Marcus, P.Foster, Mr.Titterington
Front Row: M.Dyer, A.M.Spratt, C.Funston, H.Gaston

The School has produced several outstanding athletes in the past few years. David Robb, the Ulster and Irish Schools' High Jump Champion, represented Ulster in the A.A.A. Championships and in the *Celtic Games*, as well as representing Ulster and Irish Schools and Ireland Under-23; he also raised the School record to 1.88 metres, adding 15 centimetres to David Chambers' 1976 record, and then proceeded to add a further 7 centimetres the following year. Jeremy Harper, the Ulster and Irish Senior Discus and Shot Champion, also set new School records; he went on to represent Ulster in the *Celtic Games* and competed for Ulster Schools and Northern Ireland Under-23. Matthew Wilson also represented Ulster Schools, and Northern Ireland at both Under-21 and Under-23 levels.

As befits a school which was established '*to qualify the students to navigate and take charge of merchant vessels*', the School Sailing team enjoyed considerable success during these years, thanks in large measure to Paddy Adair, Robert Espey, Richard McCullough and Stephen Milne, who along with James Ritchie, won the Ulster Senior Championships and Ulster Schools' Regatta. Patrick Adair, Robert Espey, Richard McCullough and Stephen Milne were all members of the Northern Ireland Youth Squad, Patrick represented Northern Ireland in the *Nations Cup* Regatta and was the *Royal Yacht Association's* Young Sailor of the Year, Robert won the Northern Ireland Schools' Regatta and Irish Junior Schools' Championships, represented Northern Ireland in the *Nations Cup* Regatta, was a member of the Ireland and Northern Ireland Squads, and was I.S.A. Junior Helmsman Champion, while Richard became British Under-19 Laser Radial Champion. Michael Nixon, who had captained the sailing team to its first victory in the *Clark Cup* in 1958, died of cancer aged 61.

Equally appropriate for a school in a seaside town, Swimming too continued to flourish. In addition to the success of the Senior team, the Junior Team regained the *Junior Cup* at Ulster Grammar Schools' Championships and became Ulster Grammar Schools' Freestyle and Medley Relay Champions, while Jonathan Nixon and Steven McQuillan added to their collection of individual medals. Greg Quee became Ulster Secondary Schools' 100 metre Freestyle Champion, Alan Hawthorne, Ulster Grammar Schools' Junior Individual Medley

Champion, and Robert Hoal won two gold medals at the Ulster Age Group Championships. Those three boys, along with Keith Frizzell, represented Ulster at various levels.



Ulster Schools' Senior Swimming Champions 2002
The Headmaster, A.Hawthorne, R.Cushley, R.Hoal, A.M.Barr, B.B.Kennedy, Mr.Cardwell
R.McLarnon, G.J.Quee, C.A.Bailie, J.D.Nixon, G.Brown

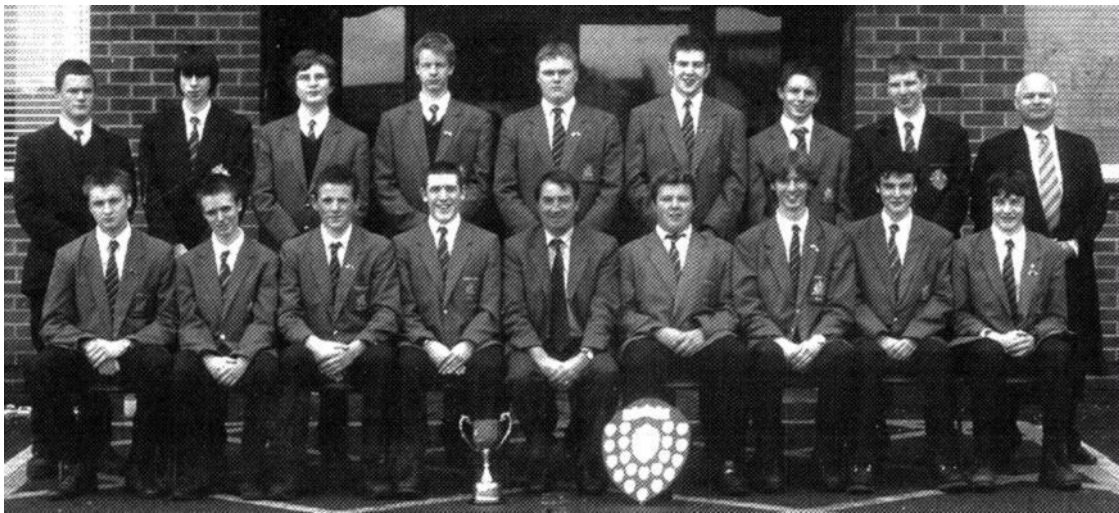
OTHER CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

At Speech Day 2002, Mr.Connolly referred not to 'extra-curricular' activities, but to 'co-curricular activities . . . [because] we regard them as essential to the well-being and full human development of the boys'. That he should have done so, on the occasion that Dr.R.J.Rodgers was the Guest of Honour, was particularly appropriate, for he had used that term during his headmastership a quarter of a century earlier.

The *Bridge Club* won Division 1 of the Ulster Schools' League in 2002, and two years later became Under-20 Interprovincial Champions and *N.I.B.U.* Team Champions, the first time that two major trophies had been won in the almost thirty years of the club's existence.



The Senior Bridge Team which won Division 1 of the *Ulster Schools' League* in 2002
Mr.Harte, M.G.McVea, A.Coulter, R.E.McMullan, the Headmaster
S.N.Bleakley, A.McCrea, S.Cooper, G.P.Williams



The Bridge Club, 2004

J.McMullan, G.Young, M.Morris, S.Lewis, K.King, R.Martindale, A.Hall, M.McCabe, the Headmaster
R.Corbett, R.McMullan, S.Cooper, A.McCrea, Mr.Harte, A.Coulter, G.Williams, R.Gallagher-Lyall,
R.McMullan

In 2002, the Debating Team reached the final of the Northern Ireland Schools' Debating Competition for the fourth successive year. That year James Edwards, of the *Junior Debating Society*, won the *Environmental Youth Speak 2002*. In 2004, when 'the charismatic and flamboyant' Mr.Philip Moore once again took the chair after a year's leave of absence, the School reached the final of the Northern Ireland Schools' Competition for the sixth time in the eleven years of the event. The School, represented by Philip White and Mark Bowers, won the contest for the second time, defeating *Thornhill College*. The organiser, Fionnuala Jay O'Boyle, an old girl of *Thornhill*, spoke at length, with some emotion and obvious pride, of her old school; David Trimble, an old boy of *Bangor Grammar School*, presented the prizes.



The Debating Society teams and committee, 2004

The Headmaster, J.Ritchie, K.King, G.Williams, C.Cargo, Mr.P.Moore
A.Jamison, C.Funston, P.White, M.Bowers, B.McIlwaine

Following the success of the Costa Rica expedition, a team of eight boys, accompanied by Mr.Nowotarski and Mr.Cardwell, embarked on a four week *World Challenge* expedition to Tanzania. Following eighteen months of preparations and fundraising, including Belfast Marathon relays, abseils and a non-uniform day, the party eventually reached their destination, after a detour by way of Johannesburg. In Tanzania, as well as helping to rebuild *Ijinyu Primary School*, they experienced rifle-wielding locals, baboons, scorpions and goat casserole, endured an eight hour bus journey, a seventeen mile walk and a six day climb on

Mount Kilimanjaro, reaching the 5,895 metre *Uhuru Peak*, despite altitude sickness and minus 20C temperatures.



Working at Ijinyu Primary School, Tanzania

A third World Challenge Expedition, this time to Thailand, took place in 2005, when eleven boys and two members of staff spent a month exploring the cultural heritage of the country as well as building a well for the Akha people and trekking through the mountainous jungle of northern Thailand.

C.C.F.

By the time of the 2004 biennial inspection the *Combined Cadet Force* contingent was able to field 240 cadets. As well as the usual parades, camps, inspections and competitions, the Cadets had the opportunity to attend courses run by the Ministry of Defence. These ranged from a leadership course at Frimley Park and at the Britannia Royal Naval College, to sailing, ocean diving and naval warfare at Portsmouth, climbing at Lympstone, power-boating at Plymouth, physical training at Aldershot, flying at Culdrose, windsurfing in the Firth of Forth, first aid, and Royal Marine band training. Judith Monson sailed to Iceland as part of the *R.N.C.C.F.* Summer Expedition, while Karl Bloomer and Stacy Foster represented Ulster at Her Majesty the Queen's Review of the Armed Forces in Portsmouth, as part of the Royal Jubilee; Karl was also '*Player of the Tournament*' at the *C.C.F.*s sevens rugby tournament in Edinburgh. Following the retirement of W.O.1 J.Frame, who had served as the Contingent S.S.I. for some years, Major Les Ingham was appointed in his place. Other events of note were the winning of the *Shooting Cup* at the *Challenge Shield Competition* in 2002, and the presentation of the *Rea Cup for Marksmanship* by Andrew and Stephen Rea, and of the *Harry Patton Bell* by H.A.Patton, Old Boy and former Governor, who had been a Commander in the *R.N.V.R.* during the war; it was to be awarded to the cadet who had demonstrated the most outstanding service to the Contingent during the year. Christmas 2003 saw the first public appearance of the reconstituted School *C.C.F.* Band, which was organised by the cadets. They then persuaded the appropriately named Miss Cannon to help them and she subsequently became an officer in the Contingent.



H.A.Patton presenting *Harry Patton Bell* to
Alison McKibben in 2002



The C.C.F. team which won the *Shooting Cup* at the *Challenge Shield Competition* 2002
 2nd Lt.Gray, S.D.Lyle, C.Funston, S.D.Milne, The Headmaster
 S.A.H.Rea, F.O.Harris, M.D.Montgomery

CONNOR HOUSE

In 2004 Mr.Connolly described *Connor House* as '*our happy, successful, thriving prep school*'. That year, almost 150 pupils were enrolled, including 33 girls and 14 in the Pre-prep class. Two years earlier, 80% of P.7 pupils had been awarded Grade A in the Transfer Procedure and the following year all but two had gained entrance to their first choice secondary school. Annually, the School was achieving almost twice the Northern Ireland average in the Key Stage 1 tests and at Key Stage 2, well above the provincial average in both English and Mathematics. The parent's of girls attending *Connor House* were concerned when *Glenlola Collegiate* changed its entrance criteria to accept '*girls from preparatory departments other than Cygnet House*' only after five other criteria had been applied; after negotiation, however, this criterion was removed.

Mr.Ekin, whose leadership of *Connor House*, the Headmaster described as '*inspired*', in turn praised his Staff, saying: '*I am privileged to work with a Staff of the calibre found in Connor House and I would thank them for the many talents and diverse skills which they bring to our School*'. And well he might have done, for as well as their teaching duties and their involvement in co-curricular activities, Staff completed the '*Learning Schools*' Programme' in I.T., which equipped them to use effectively the 11 new computers, along with printers and scanners, provided under the *Classroom 2000* or *C2K* initiative, and they took part in I.N.S.E.T. courses in Mathematics, the development of Language and Literacy, and structured play. During the 2002 *D.E.N.I.* Inspection, the Inspectors were impressed with '*the ethos, organisation and teaching*' and in addition, the School was awarded the *Best Public Service Award*.

Violin tuition was introduced at the senior end of the School and several pupils received instrumental tuition at the grammar school, sitting grade examinations in piano, violin, oboe and trumpet. Mrs.Baxter, despite having retired, returned to prepare the pupils for verse speaking and choral speaking, and was rewarded with a number of first places every year. In sport, teams won the *Armstrong Cup* and the Mini-Hockey Tournament, and a number of boys earned 5 kilometre swimming awards.

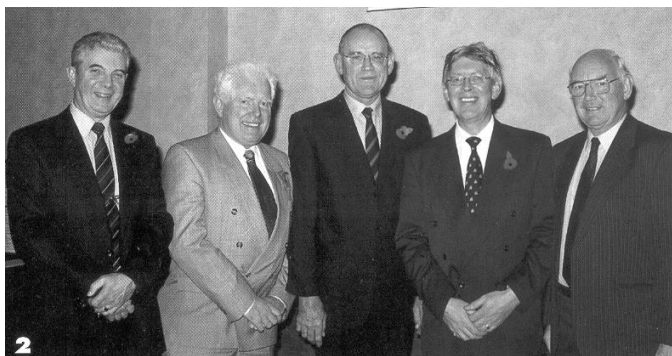
Pupils enjoyed a talk on the care of dogs, were informed by the *P.S.N.I.* '*Danger Stranger*' and '*Drugs Awareness*' schemes, while P.7 pupils were trained in First Aid. Among the School Trips were visits to the Egyptian Exhibition in Lisburn, *Exploris* in Portaferry, the Viking Exhibition at the *North Down Heritage Centre*, and Flight Experience Show organised by *Bombardier Aerospace*, which furthered pupils' understanding of the curriculum, while P.1 pupils went to the *Well Teddy Clinic* at the *Ulster Hospital*, where many of the bears had life-threatening ailments attended to.

The pupils raised almost £1,500 for charity each year and *C.H.A.F.F.* held wine and cheese parties, coffee mornings, and Summer Fairs, which raised a similar amount, financing, among other things, the new K.S.1 Maths Scheme. Members also painted outside games in the School playground.

THE GRAMMARIANS

Bangor Grammarians continue to flourish, thanks to the dedicated efforts of people like Walter Dowdall. He joined the committee in 1954 and has served on it ever since; this remarkable record was marked at the 2004 Dinner when he was presented with a plaque by outgoing Chairman, Jim Claney. He too has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the School, having served as Chairman of the Board, the *Grammarians* and the *Parents' Association*. As someone remarked, the only chairmanship to have escaped him was that of the *Connor House Mums' Committee*. In 2004, Jimmy Johnston flew in from New York for his 19th consecutive London dinner, a feat matched only by Tom Patton and Des Robinson. The previous year, the Bangor Dinner had a record attendance of 122, although it was noted that only half of those were actually members of the *Grammarians*.

A plaque was also presented to Kieron Dawson, in recognition of the 21 Irish Rugby 'caps' he had amassed by 2004. The traditional sporting fixtures were held whenever circumstance permitted, the Golf match featuring a team of old boys and pupils against one consisting of Staff and retired Staff, and in 2003 it was possible to play three Hockey matches, involving pupils, younger old boys, older old boys, and 'exiles'.



The author in illustrious company.

Barry Greenaway, Irwin Bonar, Ray Mowat, Trevor Gray and John Smyth at *The Grammarians' Annual Dinner*, November 2003.
(Photograph courtesy of the *Ulster Tatler*)



Grammarians' Chairman Jim Claney presenting Walter Dowdall with a plaque to mark his 50 years' membership of the *Grammarians'* committee.

THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Connolly regarded the role of parents as vital in a boy's education. Education, he believed was a tripartite partnership between parent boy and staff, and '*if one member of that partnership is not doing their job properly, then education is a good deal less effective*'.²² He therefore greatly appreciated the efforts of the *Parents' Association*, whose fund-raising activities including a Quiz Night, a Craft Fair, and an Antiques Road Show, enabled them to provide new curtains for the Assembly Hall, basketball nets in the outer quad, a new football kit, CD players for the Modern Languages department and display boards for the Library.

A NEW SCHOOL?

As recently as the Autumn of 2001, the Board of Governors were prepared to consider staying on the College Avenue site, for they discussed the possible sale of the College Avenue frontage and, with the impending move of *Clifton Special School* to Ballykillaire, acquiring that land, transferring the main entrance to the Ballyholme road and even building a third storey on the administration block, but in November 2002, representatives from the Department's Buildings and Development branches visited the School, acknowledged the inadequacy of many of the older buildings and as a result the Department said that it '*would now view the School as having Category 3 status and was therefore in need of a programme of major*

²² Mr. Connolly, in an interview for *The Gryphon*, 2001.

capital expenditure'. A 'feasibility study' was carried out and, having considered the status quo position and the possibility of refurbishing and extending the existing buildings, the consultants concluded that a new school would be the only practical method of bringing the School accommodation into line with government regulations. The Department then carried out an 'economic appraisal' and this eventually led to the School being placed on the 2004 Contender List for a new school building; the Chairman of the Board referred to this news as 'another substantial milestone successfully achieved'. The College Avenue site, Ballymacormick and Ballykillaire were considered, but since demolition and rebuilding at College Avenue was not deemed viable because of the size of the site and Health and Safety considerations, Ballymacormick was situated in a 'green belt' and Ballykillaire was difficult to access, in January it became public knowledge that the Board was hoping to get permission to build a new school on 24.17 acres of Bangor Academy's Gransha campus, which would become available when the Academy moved into its new school on the Castle Street campus. (The fact that the Gransha site was also known as 'the Clanmorris site' made it a particularly appropriate site for a new Bangor Grammar School, given the part played in the management of the School by Lady Clanmorris and her father R.E.Ward from its foundation until the 1940s).

Interviewed for the *Spectator*, Mr.Connolly explained:

'The School has as its primary concern the education needs of boys in Bangor, and believes that they will best be served in a new school on a site which will allow the development of sports pitches and new games facilities. We are currently on a small site which doesn't allow the kind of development we wish. Our dream is to have a totally integrated school in the middle of its own playing pitches.'

The new Bangor Academy was to be funded by a Public Private Partnership, as would any new Bangor Grammar School. The idea was 'to bring the efficiencies and professionalism of the construction sector to bear on what had normally been government funded projects'. During an informal meeting to discuss P.P.P., the Board was told that, 'D.E.N.I. was one of the first government departments to indicate how the public and private sectors could work together to bring about a major renewal of school infrastructure'. 'Pathfinder' projects had already been undertaken in Dungannon and Belfast, and the Headmaster, with senior colleagues, visited every completed school built under P.P.P., touring facilities and consulting with staff.

Under a P.P.P. the building of the school would be financed by a Private Operator, and built to meet Department of Education specifications, although individual schools could influence some aspects of design and how the buildings would reflect the school's ethos. The Operator would retain the right to maintain the building for the twenty five years of the lease and would provide 'the facility management' ranging from cleaning and catering to administration. In return, the Operator would receive an annual payment for the duration of the contract, provided the agreed service standards were maintained. This 'Unitary Charge' covers the cost of the services provided and also recompenses the Operator for his capital outlay. Ownership of the school buildings stays in the public sector. As the Chairman of the Board put it, it was 'a complex process, which few not directly involved in discussions with the Department of Education could be expected to understand'. However, since the School would still be required to find 15% of the c.£12 million, which would have required the payment of perhaps £140.000 interest per annum, the Board began to consider the implications of opting for 100% funding from the Department of Education, which would have altered the composition of the Board, reducing representative governors from 10 to 8.

The question also arose about the disposal of the School's existing assets. In 2003, the Department valued the 4.8 acre College Avenue site at £3.5 million, excluding Connor House's half an acre, which was owned by the Board of Governors, no public money having been used. D.E.N.I. also recognized that Ballymacormick had been bought out of private funds, but pointed out that public money had been used to maintain it, making it a 'public amenity in the education sector' and so should be sold for the benefit of education. Although the Board still wanted clarification of a number of issues, and wanted to consider carefully

whether *'the price of obtaining this high ideal was too great'*, it resolved to take the first steps towards having a new School, with *Connor House* and all necessary facilities, built on the *Clanmorris* site.

In October 2003, the Chairman told the Board of Governors that, *'It was obvious that the Development Branch of the Department of Education was very enthusiastic that the School obtain a new site and be included in the list of new schools to be published by 2004'*. As late as March 2004, the Department was *'still giving positive signals that Bangor Grammar School . . . would form part of a P.P.P. bundle proposal in the near future'*.

However, the announcement on the allocation of funding was delayed because of a cabinet reshuffle, and when the new Minister, Barry Gardiner, published the list of over fifty approved schemes, costing in excess of £222 million, the name of *Bangor Grammar School* was notable by its absence; apparently it was fifty-second on the list. Among the grammar schools to be promised new schools through Public Private Partnerships were *Loreto Grammar*, *Omagh*, *Rainey Endowed School*, *Magherafelt* and *Strabane Grammar School*, while *Banbridge Academy* and *St.Colman's College*, Newry were both to be extended and refurbished through conventional funding.

In the months after the announcement, much was done to remind Mr.Gardiner of the of the School's ambition and, at a subsequent meeting of the Northern Ireland Grand Committee at Westminster, prompted by Lady Hermon, he referred to the *'startlingly good results'* achieved by the School in less than ideal conditions.

Finally in July the Board received a letter from the Permanent Secretary at the Department; in it he simply explained that *'the government intended to address the issue of new school building in a rolling programme to be completed in 2010'*, and by the end of 2004, written confirmation of the *Clanmorris* site had been received from the Department.²³

2005 passed with no further news and then on Wednesday 1st March 2006, the Department of Education contacted the Headmaster to say that the School was being granted £16.1 million for a new school building. Mr.Connolly immediately informed the Staff, who greeted the news with a great cheer. It was, said the Headmaster, *"an endorsement of the School's success and future security"*. Later that morning Education Minister, Angela Smith, who was visiting *Kilmaine Primary School*, announced that forty seven other schools would be sharing the record £380 million which was to be spent on Northern Ireland schools.²⁴

This was eventually followed by an announcement that the *'procurement route'* would be conventional, not by way of a public private partnership initiative. This was regarded by the Headmaster as good news, for, as he wrote in *The Grammarian* in October 2006, *'in theory, a traditional approach should allow us a degree more autonomy in designing and building a Bangor Grammar School which preserves its character and ethos'*

²³ D.B.Thompson, in an email to the author, 7 April 2004; *County Down Spectator*, 8 January 2004; *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 April 2004; the Headmaster in *Bangor Grammarians Annual Report*, 2004; D.B.Thompson addressing the Annual Meeting of Subscribers, December 2004.

²⁴ Barry Greenaway, who was present when the Headmaster made his announcement; *Belfast Telegraph*, 2 March 2006.

