

CHAPTER EIGHT

Progress under Mr.McFeeters 1905-1923¹

THE PRE-WAR WORLD

As the First World War approached, major developments were taking place across Europe. In Ireland Sinn Féin was founded in 1905, while the landslide victory for the Liberal Party in 1906 paved the way for a range of social reforms including Old Age Pensions and National Insurance. Prime Minister Asquith committed himself to Home Rule for Ireland, which mobilised Unionist opposition. Further afield the Russo-Japanese War, which ended disastrously for Russia, provoked 'Bloody Sunday' and the 1905 Revolution. In 1906, San Francisco suffered a devastating earthquake and in 1912, *R.M.S.Titanic* sank with the loss of over 1,500 lives. Meanwhile Amundsen had found the North-West Passage and Scott reached the South Pole in 1912. In 1910, the notorious murderer, Dr.Crippen became the first criminal to be arrested with the help of radio.

In science, Einstein began working on relativity and Paul Ehrlich founded the science of chemotherapy with his discovery of Salvarsan 606. The world of literature saw the creation of Baroness Orczy's *Scarlet Pimpernel* and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan*, and the writings of John Buchan, E.M.Forster, Robert Frost, James Joyce, D.H.Lawrence, John Masefield and J.M.Synge, while the Arts were being enriched by the work of Utrillo and Modigliani, and the music of Mahler, Stravinsky and Irving Berlin. Diaghilev was beginning to popularise ballet, and Sir Thomas Beecham first appeared as a conductor in 1905. Cinema was becoming a new art form, as the first films of Cecil B.de Mille and Charlie Chaplin were screened.

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY BANGOR

During Mr.McFeeters' time in Bangor, the town continued to develop, gradually taking the form it was to have for much of the century. The recently formed Urban District Council proved itself to be 'an impressive regime', displaying what Ian Wilson has called '*financial aplomb allied to a wise assessment of the town's future needs*'. In 1905 it bought the land which was to become the *Marine Gardens* and two years later, when the new reservoir at Ballysallagh came into operation, the Council laid out *Ballyholme Park*. In 1909 Bryce's brick works was acquired for another park, named *Ward Park* in 1912. By the end of the Edwardian era, the population had reached 7,776, having doubled in just twenty years, the town spreading both east and west with roads such as Donaghadee Road, Downshire Road and Farnham Road being developed. The *Dufferin Hall* had been built in 1905 and, thanks to the generosity of Andrew Carnegie, *Bangor Technical Institute and Free Public Library* opened at the beginning of 1910. Later that year, another of Bangor's benefactors, W.K.Crosby, opened the new Hospital, the foundation stone of which had been laid a year earlier by Miss Connor. Just before the outbreak of the Great War, the Council acquired Neill's Pier and purchased, from Col.Sharman Crawford, Strickland's Glen. Bathing boxes were built at Ballyholme in 1914, (although mixed bathing was not permitted until 1916), and the following year the McKee Clock was erected thanks to the bequest of a former Town Clerk, James McKee, and Kingsland was acquired by the Council. The introduction of charabancs by the *Bangor Motor Service Company Ltd.* in 1911 and the opening of *The Picture House* a year later provided further evidence that the twentieth century had well and truly arrived. Amidst all these new developments one feature of Bangor life came to an end: the '*Bangor Boat*' ceased to operate in 1915 just three years after a new steamer, *Erin's Isle*, had replaced the *Slieve Bearnagh*. A year earlier Bangor had seen a different type of maritime activity, when guns had been landed from

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, the information for this chapter has been gleaned from the reports of the School Prize Distributions, which appeared in the *County Down Spectator*, 7 February 1908, 18 December 1908, 4 February 1910, 3 February 1911, 16 February 1912, 6 December 1912, 26 December 1913, 28 May 1915, 24 March 1916, 11 May 1918 and 29 May 1920.

the *Clydevalley* at the old pier at the height of the Home Rule Crisis. A great Anti-Home Rule Rally had been held in the *Marine Gardens* in 1912.²

When Mr. McFeeters became Headmaster there were just eleven pupils attending the School. With him came one of the boarders from *Rainey Endowed*, George Watters, who later qualified as a doctor. However many of the pupils attending Miss Woods' school on Hamilton Road transferred to the School and the number of pupils continued to increase. By Christmas 1905, there were 26 pupils and by September 1909 there were 68, which not surprisingly necessitated additional staff.³

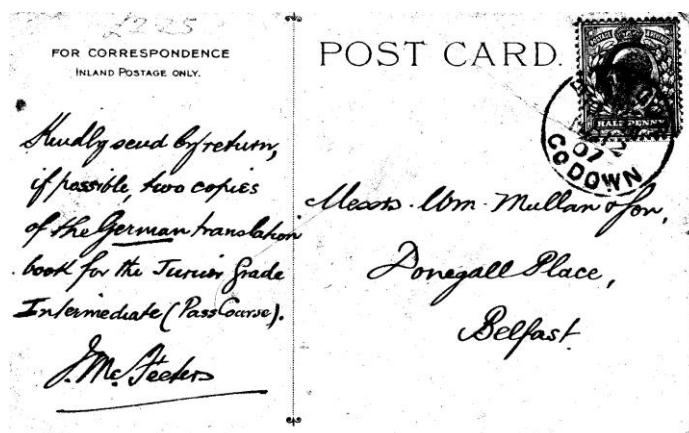
MR. McFEETERS

S. Minnis, a pupil at Rainey during Mr. McFeeters' Headmastership, recalled him as:

'physically . . . a small man, pale and of rather fragile appearance and rather nervous temperament. His devotion to his work was unlimited and must have put a severe strain on his by no means robust constitution. His subjects were Classics and English, which he taught with thoroughness and real love for good literature'.⁴

Reference to his *'fragile appearance and nervous temperament'* strikes a cord when it is realized that there was no Prize Distribution between 1918 and 1920 *'owing to a sudden nervous breakdown'* suffered by Mr. McFeeters, and that when he retired in the summer of 1923 his successor, Maurice Wilkins, found him *'broken in health'*.⁵ When writing to his former college in New York in 1926 Mr. McFeeters acknowledged his own failing health, when he apologized for not having replied earlier *'on the ground that I have been ruinously "down and out" with shattered nerves for more than two years'*.⁶

In Bangor he was known to the boys as *'the Wee Man'*. He was very keen on handwriting and would write lines on the blackboard in copperplate style and the pupils had to copy them down to a very high standard. Apparently he often told his family that when he came for interview with the Board of Governors, one of them gave as his chief recommendation: *'He writes a lovely hand'*.⁷



'He writes a lovely hand.' The reverse side of one of Harding Watson's postcards shows the way in which textbooks were ordered before the School had a telephone.

² Jane E.M. Crosbie, *A Tour of North Down, 1895-1925: Historic Photographs from the W.A. Green Collection in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum* (1989), pp 9, 12, 15, 23, 26, 32 and 33; K. Haines, *North Down Memories: photographs 1860s-1960s* (2000), p.61; Marcus Patton, *Bangor: An Historical Gazetteer* (1999), passim; I. Wilson, *Bangor: Historic Photographs of the County Down Town 1870-1914* (1992), pp ii, 12, 18, 60 and 80; I. Wilson (ed.), *North Down: A Century of Photographs* (1999), pp 29, 30, 47 and 48.

³ *Bangor Grammar School Attendance Register*, Volume 1, 1905-1930.

⁴ *History of Rainey's School and the Rainey and Salters' Endowments 1707-1952* (undated).

⁵ *County Down Spectator*, 14 March 1925.

⁶ From a letter, dated 1926, held in the archives of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

⁷ J. McFeeters, op.cit., p.14.

In fact a greater recommendation came in the form of a private letter to Rev. John Waddell one of the Governors from Professor McMaster, Fellow of the *Royal University of Ireland* and one of the greatest classical scholars in Ireland, in which he said that the Governors had 'got a prize' in Mr. McFeeters, whom he considered to be '*one of the foremost educationalists in the whole of Ireland*'.⁸ He did however have his idiosyncrasies: he had the habit of inserting his thumb into his mouth and pressing it upwards to keep his dentures in place. He was also, reputedly, very fond of sherry! He was popular with his pupils though, for in 1911 he was presented with '*a case of toilet brushes . . . as a mark of their affection and esteem*', and in 1916 with a hall barometer.

Not everyone, it seems, held Mr. McFeeters in such high regard. At the Prize Distribution in May 1918 Rev. R. J. Morrell, a Governor for many years, made reference to '*a little criticism . . . such as ministers and teachers and all public servants have to put up with*'. He was almost certainly alluding to some acrimonious correspondence earlier that year. Mr. George McCracken of *Seafield House* on the corner of Maxwell Road and Bryansburn Road, whose three sons, Maurice, Ivan and Staveley, attended the School, had taken exception to Mr. McFeeters' treatment of his sons following a period of absence due to a snowstorm. (It is said that the boys often deliberately got wet on their way home so that their mother, L. A. M. Priestley, *suffragette*, journalist and author of such works as *Love Stories of some Eminent Women*, who spoiled them, would let them stay off school the next day!) He also accused Mr. McFeeters of having hit one of his sons on the head on an earlier occasion – something to which he referred as '*the clenched fist versus the open hand controversy*'. He and Mr. McFeeters exchanged a series of letters, before Mr. McCracken had all of them published in the *Spectator*. To his credit Mr. McFeeters responded with a letter in which he said that he preferred to '*let my labours in the cause of education in Bangor for the last thirteen years speak for me and I am willing to leave myself in the hands of my fellow citizens and of my Board*'. The Board of Governors supported Mr. McFeeters, with Irwin Mahaffy, Secretary to the Board and a Governor for almost twenty years, writing an open letter to Mr. McCracken. Sergeant Herbert Gillespie, a scholarship pupil from 1906 to 1909, wrote to the paper saying that he had always found Mr. McFeeters '*a kindly, courteous gentleman, eager and willing to be of service to one and all of his pupils without favour*'. Mr. McCracken removed his sons from the School and the following advertisement appeared anonymously, and presumably with no humour intended, in the *Belfast Newsletter*: '*Wanted, a qualified teacher for a class of boys (Preparatory and Junior Grade) being founded in Bangor, where there is an opening at present for a select Boys' School*'.⁹

In fact the School enjoyed considerable success during Mr. McFeeters' eighteen years' stewardship. In 1908 he told his audience that,

'it takes time (a longer time than I have yet had, to set wrong things right – to master untoward circumstances. I feel confident however that you are disposed to allow some margin for the initial difficulties and embarrassing conditions under which this work was begun'.

And set things right he did. Early in his Headmastership Mr. McFeeters was invited to attend meetings of the Board of Governors, with whom he developed a close relationship. In February 1907 a Visiting Committee found the School '*in a satisfactory state and order and discipline were all that could be desired*'. The following year it was decided to start classes for boys of '*about 10 years old*'.¹⁰ A cap badge designed by Mr. Matthew Crosbie was approved by the Board, and the School continued to offer three Scholarships (increased to four in 1912) entitling the holders, who had to be under thirteen years of age, to three years' free education.

⁸ *County Down Spectator*, 9 November 1906.

⁹ *County Down Spectator*, 26 January, 2 February and 2 March 1918; *Belfast Newsletter*, 22 January 1918.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 10 December 1906, 22 February 1907 and 8 January 1910.

STAFF

Although the *Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory* names Mr.McFeeters and Mr.McBride as the only teachers at the School over the eighteen years of Mr.McFeeters' Headmastership, that is certainly not the case; speaking at his first Prize Distribution in January 1908 Mr.McFeeters said that there were '*now five teachers, all told*'. At the same time he expressed his '*special gratitude to Mr.McBride for his unswerving support from the first day until now*'. In 1909 Miss I.R.Small, A.T.C., I.S.T.D. (Cert.) became a part-time teacher of Drawing and Nature Study, also teaching at *Glennola* and *Sullivan Upper*. In July 1910 Mr.McFeeters told the Governors that he had appointed Miss Buchanan and Miss Patton as '*underteachers*'.¹¹ In 1913 he gave credit for good examination results to Miss Lewis who had joined the staff in 1911. Pupils from this time also remember Mr.Samuel Stokes Pierce, a History teacher, known as '*Stoker*'.¹² In 1910 Mr.McIlwaine coached the 1st XV rugby team and in 1912, Sergeant-Major Withers was appointed to take classes in Physical Culture. By 1918, Sergeant Gilbert, an ex-army drill sergeant with a wax moustache, had taken over that role. In 1917 the *Spectator* reported that Mr.McFeeters was '*ably assisted by Mr.McBride, Mr.Gibson and Miss Lewis*'. A printed compliments slip dated 1920 lists the staff as Mr.McFeeters, Mr.McBride, Miss Lewis, Miss Small and Miss M.E.Dick, (Hons.) B.A. (Cambridge University - Girton College) and M.A. (T.C.D.). The name of Rev.J.R.Brady B.A. (T.C.D.) has been deleted and G.H.Mansfield (Q.U.B.) typed in its place. The situation was unchanged when Mr.Wilkins arrived in October 1923.

Terence Ingold recalled his teachers over seventy years after leaving the School:

*'I never liked James McFeeters and often feared him. To be in his good books, one had to be devoted to Latin and Rugby. I failed on both counts. During my school years, Bangor Endowed School depended largely on Tom McBride (a splendid man and the real backbone of the School) and to some extent on Jack McFeeters, who often stood in for his father. . . Though so poor at French, I was devoted to Miss Lewis. I also remember Miss Small with gratitude, for she greatly encouraged my drawing which, apart from Maths, was my best subject. I liked Sammy Pierce but cannot remember his contribution to my education. Miss Dick came to the School in my last year. I remember, with some protest from her, how we tried to act a scene from Henry IV, Part One with real, but rusty, swords. On 1st January 1930 I took up a job as Lecturer in Botany in the University of Reading. In December, I had had tea with the McFeeters family - (Noel was one of my closest friends from the age of ten until he died two years ago) - in their Belfast home. I well recall the "Wee Man" asking caustically if it was wise to go to an institution which had only obtained full university status!'*¹³

¹¹ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 21 July 1910.

¹² Information provided by Tommy Ross, a pupil from 1916 to 1919.

¹³ '*Random jottings*' contained in a letter from Professor C.T.Ingold, C.M.G. to the author, July 2002.



Bangor Endowed School, 1912.

Unfortunately no names are included, but among the Staff are Mr.McFeeters and Miss Lewis.
(Photograph in the School Archives)

PUPILS

Examination results supported Rev.R.J.Morrell's assertion in 1918 that, while the School '*was in low water*' when Mr.McFeeters came, it was now '*on the flood tide of prosperity*'. In 1909 W.Heath Muir came 16th out of 3226 candidates examined in Junior Grade English, while in 1910 in the Preparatory Grade examination, Willie Hogg came fourth in Ireland, gaining first place in Latin with a record 393 marks out of 400. Mr.McFeeters' elder son, Jack, was without doubt the outstanding pupil during this period. In 1911 he was first in Ireland in the Preparatory Grade examinations coming first in Latin and English, and second in German; in the Middle Grade a year later he came first in Latin and German, and in the Senior Grade in 1915 he was second in Ireland, coming second in German and fourth in English. The following year he won a County Down Scholarship of £40 at his entrance to *Queen's*.

In 1908 George Mansfield passed the matriculation examination of the *Royal University of Ireland* and Willie Henderson did likewise at *Alberta University* Canada. Herbert Gillespie matriculated in the *Royal University* in 1909, and in 1910, W.H.Muir and Willie Ferguson matriculated in the new *Queen's University of Belfast* (established by the Irish Universities Act, 1908). The following year Willie Burns gained entry to *Trinity College Dublin*, and Frank Woods, Harry Mahaffy and Nat McCullagh passed the matriculation examination for *Queen's*, as did James Milliken in 1914 and Rory Elliott in 1915. In 1916, Jack Hazley entered *Trinity College Dublin*, as did Pat Sloan in 1919, the year in which Jack Cheyne was awarded his B.A. A printed document, clearly intended for promotional purposes, entitled '*Bangor Endowed (Grammar) School, Co.Down: A List of the Successes gained at Public Examinations from June 1920, to June 1922*', while it does not give the names of the boys concerned, includes reference to '*The Major Scholarship of over £30 (only one awarded for all Ireland), this being the second year in succession in which our students were successful*', at the *Municipal Technical Institute Belfast*, as well as successes at the Entrance Examinations of *Trinity College Dublin* and *London University*, two First Class Honours degrees at

Toronto University, Canada, an Exhibition in Moral Science at Trinity College Cambridge, and a host of successes at Queen's University Belfast, including two First Class Honours degrees, three medical degrees, a Master's degree and the Peel Prize for Philosophy.

In 1920, Mr.McFeeters said,

'In the past, the exception was to find a student from this School in any of the universities; practically all were claimed by the omnivorous demands of commercial life. I am not sure whether you will regard it as an advance upon the past, that we should have just now no less than fourteen at Queen's University Belfast, four at Trinity College Dublin, two at Aberdeen University, two at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin and two in the great medical schools in London'.

All this from pupils at a school which, little more than fifteen years earlier, had been able to boast no more than eleven pupils.

One other pupil deserves to be mentioned: in 1916, fourteen year old Morris McKee of Bryansburn House dived off the sea wall to rescue a young boy who had fallen into the eight-feet-deep water while watching a performance by a pierrot troupe on the Esplanade. Although experiencing some difficulty and quite exhausted, McKee saved the boy and was able to swim to shore. Mr.McFeeters said that *'the story deserves to live in our school annals'*.

One event stood out in the mind of Jack McFeeters almost seventy years later: the *Titanic* sailing down Belfast Lough in 1912.

*'My father gave us all half an hour off from School, so that we could go to a vantage point a quarter of a mile or so away, from which we could see her steam out from Belfast Lough. She certainly made a most imposing picture, as she glided majestically past Bangor. We had never seen a vessel with four funnels before, and this vessel looked tremendous. When we returned, my father summoned us into the Assembly Hall, and said to us, "When you boys grow up, you will be able to tell your children, and possibly your grandchildren, that you saw the greatest ship in the world set out on its maiden voyage". He was not to know that the tale would be one of tragedy.'*¹⁴

In 1908, the Intermediate Board decided to appoint a permanent Inspectorate because, said Mr.McFeeters, it was *'convinced of the fatuity of solving the problem of a school's efficiency, and a school's usefulness to the community, on the basis of examinations alone'*; the first six Inspectors were appointed early the next year. Their tasks included *'careful inquiry as to the suitability and situation of the school buildings, class arrangements, sanitation, discipline matters, as well as the capabilities and competency of the teaching staff'*. By early 1910 the School had experienced its first inspection and the Inspectors *'commended the School in every way possible. The masters and lady teacher all come in for the highest praise'*, reported Rev.R.J.Morrell. Indeed as a result of the Inspection the School received a special bonus awarded by the Technical Department in Ireland *'for conspicuous merit in Drawing in the first, second and third year, and also in the Chemistry course of the third year'*.

THE FABRIC OF THE SCHOOL

When the new building opened in 1906 the area surrounding the School was largely undeveloped. Jack McFeeters recalled:

'We had to go by a turnstile on Seacliffe Road, up a rough path to Ward Avenue, thence to Shandon Drive and by a field path to the School. It was a considerable time later before the lower end of Shandon Drive and the northern end of College Avenue was made up. College Avenue then ended at the School which was separated from the road by a high hedge with several crab-apple trees, the fruit from which, I believe, was the source of many stomach aches'.¹⁵

¹⁴ J.McFeeters, op.cit., p.25

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.14.

It is not generally realized that quite apart from the absence of *Crosby House*, the Headmaster's Residence, the building erected in 1906 was not as large as it is today. An examination of a photograph of the 1906 building reveals that the top (or north) end is missing. (Even today, it is noticeable that the pebble dashing and chimney are slightly different). For some years Mr.McFeeters had not been able to accommodate all the boarders who had applied for admission, and to his obvious delight in December 1913 he reported that *'The most outstanding event . . . in the history of the school year I have been reviewing is the extension of the building in which we are assembled'*. (Tommy Ross, who joined the School in 1916, remembered reference to *'the new wing'*). Mr.McFeeters continued, *'Workmen are at present engaged in erecting a residence – the gift of Mr.W.K.Crosby'*. Mr.Crosby had promised, in 1912, £1,000 for the purpose, and the following year he increased his offer to £1,200. The Headmaster's Residence, appropriately named *Crosby House*, was ready for occupation on 1 May 1914. And so in 1915 a proud Mr.McFeeters told his audience that,

'on this site where less than ten years ago there was not a solitary brick - unless a derelict specimen which might have been thrown after some roaming quadruped - there are now extensive classrooms and dormitories, more than enough, as it happens, for the immediate needs of modern Bangor'.



An undated postcard from Harding Watson's collection showing *'the new wing'*, *Crosby House*, and the railings, which were removed in 1943 to assist with the war effort.

During 1914 the School grounds were laid out and enclosed with substantial iron railings. The money to pay for those improvements was donated by, among others, Lord Bangor, Lady Clanmorris, Miss Connor, John McMeekan, James Milliken (the Town Clerk), Irwin Mahaffy, (town solicitor and Secretary to the Board of Governors), Rev.W.A.Hill, Rev.R.J.Morrell, Canon J.I.Peacocke, Rev.J.Waddell, John Pyper (Principal of the Technical School), Barker Mitchell (Gasworks Manager), J.H.Barrett (Petty Sessions Clerk), Dr.J.F.Mitchell, R.Logan (Manager of the Belfast Bank), a large number of businessmen, among them many whose names old Bangorians will recognize, such as: James H.Savage (builder), R.H.Finlay (estate agent),

E.W.Pim (grocer), James Lenaghan (boat builder), S.G.Montgomery (tailor), W.Hanna (chemist), F.H.G.Wilson (solicitor), J.M.Meharg (draper), James McMurray (Bangor Steam Laundry), Thomas H.Gray (master painter and future Mayor of Bangor), D.E.Alexander (founder of the *County Down Spectator*), and distinguished Old Boys, such as John Newell Jordan, B.A., K.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., K.C.B. and T.W. (later Sir Thomas) McMullan. Clearly the School had the support of a wide spectrum of local people.

When the School moved to College Avenue the playing fields were at Waverley Drive. At Mr.McFeeters' first Prize Distribution in January 1908 reference was made to the *'little piece of ground at the rere [sic] of the building . . . [which] lay so close to the School that it would make an ideal football or cricket ground, but unfortunately they had no money'*. Rev.John Waddell joked that he was sure the owners were generous men and they should give them an acre of ground as a free gift forever. He suggested that Mr.Thomas Matthews, who had already succeeded in having a clock erected on the School, should apply the same energy to getting them a playground. Nothing happened and in 1910, Mr.McFeeters, who believed that *'the physical development of the lad ought to keep pace with his mental development'*, (*'sana mens in corpore sano'*?), was still expressing regret at the lack of a suitable playing field *'in the immediate vicinity of the School or, better still, attached to it'*. Negotiations to buy a plot of ground *'immediately adjoining the School'* belonging to the Dixon Estate continued for a number of years. A fund was set up with Mr.McMeekan as Treasurer, and by 1911 £75 (including £53-6-9^d collected by the boys) had been subscribed. It was not until 1915 however that Mr.McFeeters was able to report that *'a large portion of land partly belonging to the Governors and partly taken by them on rental has been drained and levelled for football and cricket'*. An undated map states that in 1917 a piece of land to the north-east of the School was eventually purchased from the Dixon Estate. (See page 124).

SPORT

Although as Mr.McFeeters said, the fact that the playing field was a considerable distance from the School *'was prohibitive of practice at recess and in the evening time'*, sport at the School flourished. George McIldowie, who had attended the School before Mr.McFeeters arrived, became its first Rugby International when he represented Ireland against South Africa in 1906 and against the three home nations in 1910. That year the *'very fine [rugby] football club'* was said to be fulfilling its fixtures *'with spirit and success'* and during the 1912-1913 season the team won 18 out of its 21 fixtures under its Captain, James Milliken. Despite the laying out of a rugby pitch at College Avenue, it would appear that matches continued to be played at Waverley Drive for some years.

A glance at the photograph of the 1st XV in 1919-20 would appear to substantiate Brian Kelly's assertion that *'players of Medallion age were frequently seconded to play for the First XV not perhaps because of their ability but because of the lack of numbers'*. Patrick Riddell who attended the School between 1916 and 1919 once recalled that he had played for the *'Firsts'* at the age of 13.



1st XV - 1919-20

R.Moore, J.S.Dunseath, W.J.Johnstone, Fred McKee, M.R.Crockett, Frank McKee, Alfie H.Larmour, N.C.Reid, W.Shaw, E.C.McCullough, G.O.Taylor, N.E.Russell, (Captain), J.N.McFeeters, R.Pollock, Jack N.Hamilton, A.Lynn, E.V.Agnew, G.Buchanan.

(Photograph in the School Archives)

In the Spring of 1921 there were reports of matches against *Methodist College* (lost 8-3) and *Royal Belfast Academical Institution* (won 18-0) being played 'at Ballyholme' and 'at Waverley Drive'. N.M.Anderson, Fred J.Bramwell, Johnny Bramwell, R.Crockett, Jack N.Hamilton, G.Jamison, B.J.P.Kelly, A.H.Larmour, H.G.Maxwell, A.McCleery, J.Noel ('Monkey') McFeeters (Captain), J.McWilliams, N.Neely, W.Polley, W.Quee, Denis Strain, W.Terry Strain, N.Townsend made up the 1st XV squad in 1921-22. (A third Bramwell brother, Tom, became the School's second Rugby International when he played hooker for Ireland against France in 1928).¹⁶



Tom Bramwell being tackled by a French player in Ireland's 12-8 victory in Belfast in 1928.

(Photograph from *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 4 February 1928, provided by Mrs.Jane Young, née Bramwell.)

¹⁶ Brian Kelly, *Bangor Grammar School: Ulster Schools' Challenge Cup: The Story so far* (published c.1986); www.rugbyworld.com.

In 1921 a rugby lecture was given at the School by a Dr.Hunter and reference was made to 'the close association that had always existed between the School and Bangor Rugby Football Club'. In the early days of the town club 'its prosperity was in large measure due to the reinforcements that it drew' from the School. (During these years the town club played its matches on a pitch off Brunswick Road, where Rugby Avenue now is, having moved from its original pitch on the south side of Hamilton Road in 1906).

By this time cricket too was flourishing. A number of matches were played, including those against the same two schools. Noel McFeeters, Joe and Jim Kearney, J.N.Robertson, R.Crockett, Jack Hamilton, A.H.Larmour, Johnny Bramwell, Jack McWilliams, N.Townsend and Dennis Strain all played for the 1st XI in 1921.

Apart from these sporting activities the only other extra-curricular activity to be mentioned during Mr.McFeeters' period was a *Debating Society* which had been started 'of their own initiative' by the older boys. It would seem likely that this society did not survive for long, for in 1927 the current *Debating Society* was founded under Mr.Hawtin.

It was another twenty years before Mr.Hawtin founded *The Gryphon*, but even prior to his arrival there had been a magazine of sorts. Six of those magazines have survived, preserved for thirty years by Noel McFeeters and presented to the *Old Boys' Association* in 1950; they are now in the School Archives. Dated from December 1921 to the Summer of 1922, and simply called 'B.E.S.', each has between 16 and 24 handwritten pages; they contain articles on Photography, Nature, Boxing, the Scout Movement, Stamp Collecting, a Short Story, Rugby Notes (by 'Left Outside'), advertisements for local businesses including 'Robert McGimpsey, 118 Main Street, all kinds of repairs executed', 'Addy, Photographic Chemist', 'E.Caproni, the best ice-cream in Ireland', 'James Conolly, Stationer, Scrabo House, 68 Main Street' and the *Palace* picture house, where Lilian Gish was starring in *The Romance of Happy Valley* and Mary Pickford in *The Heart of the Hills*. Book Reviews included *Captain of the School* by Frank H.Shaw, 'one of the best school stories we have read'. The jokes pages included this timeless one: 'A kind-hearted old lady used to notice a very shabby-looking man passing her house every day. Taking pity on him, she sent out her maid with a ten-shilling note wrapped in a paper bearing the inspiring words, "Never say die". Two days later the man called at the house and gave the maid five pounds, telling her that her mistress was lucky as she was the only one in the street who had backed it.' Others were very much jokes of the time: "My lord, the carriage is without." "Without what, my man, without what?" "Without horses, my lord; it's an automobile." And: 'She: "I should be scared to death of an airship." He: "Oh yes, but your fears would be groundless."'

PRIZE DISTRIBUTIONS

During Mr.McFeeters' Headmastership a number of generous friends of the School presented medals and prizes. As early as 1907 members of the Board of Governors presented silver medals: Rev.J.I.Peacocke for English, Rev.J.Waddell for Latin, Rev.R.J.Morrell for French, Matthew Crosbie for Mathematics and Mr.T.E.McConnell two for Science. That year Irwin Mahaffy presented a gold medal for the best boy in the Junior Grade class and he later presented medals for English Composition and for English History and Literature. Miss Connor presented an annual large Gold Challenge Medal and a one guinea prize for 'Excellence in Chemistry', Mr.Thomas Matthews J.P. offered a five pound scholarship for three successive years to the pupil who gained the highest marks in English and Mathematics combined, and Mr.Thomas presented a Silver Medal to stimulate drawing 'in our preparatory class'. Honours Football Caps were presented, by Mr.James Milliken, (whose son, James, was Captain of a very successful First XV in 1913 and 1914), Dr.Bradley, Mr.T.P.McConnell and Mr.John McKee, father of

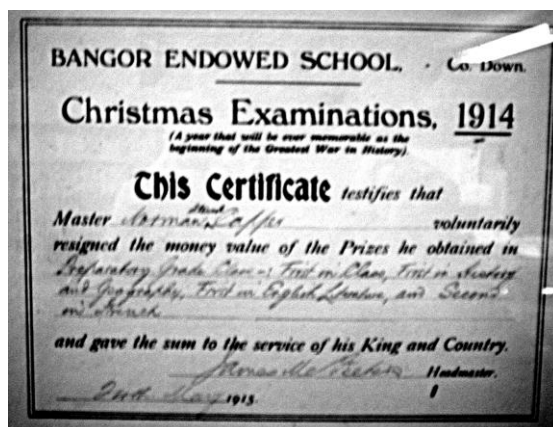
Morris. Until 1912 Mr. McFeeters had been paying for the book prizes but in that year the Governors established a Prize Fund.¹⁷



The obverse and reverse of The Connor Medal
(Photographs from glass plates presented by the Addy family to the School Archives)

During these years the Prize Distributions attracted the great and the good; a succession of dignitaries 'presided' and distributed the prizes. In December 1908, John McMeekan presided and Lady Clanmorris, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors, presented the prizes. Viscount and Viscountess Bangor did the honours in December 1913, and when the next Prize Distribution was held in May 1915 the guests of honour were Sir Robert Kennedy, K.C.M.G. and Lady Kennedy, sister of Lord Bangor. Sir Robert pointed out that the foundation of the School sprang from the gift of his maternal great grandfather, who was the brother of his wife's great grandfather; his own father, Robert Stewart Kennedy had been one of the original Trustees. In May 1920, when Mr. McFeeters apologized for the absence of a Prize Distribution the previous year, the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava and Mr. Robert Lynn M.P. officiated. Presumably Mr. McFeeters health was already failing for that appears to have been his last Prize Distribution.

During the war years, as well as raising money to provide 'cigarettes and other comforts' for the soldiers, the boys surrendered the monetary value of their prizes and thus contributed to the Prince of Wales' *National Relief Fund*. The boys received certificates in lieu of their prizes.



This certificate is in the School Library

ROLL OF HONOUR

Mr. McFeeters took very badly the loss of pupils during the Great War and it may well have contributed to the deterioration of his health. In 1915 he reported that 'almost seventy' former

¹⁷ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 19 July 1907 and 9 July 1912.

pupils had answered the call of King and Country, and in 1918 that number had risen to almost 160 including Col. Viscount Bangor, Chairman of the Board of Governors, who was Mentioned in Despatches at Gallipoli, Mr. R. H. Ashmore, a former Headmaster, who had been killed, and 'five teachers'. At least twenty-two had been wounded and 'twenty two more have gone west'.

In 1918 writing to Union Theological Seminary which he had attended more than thirty years earlier, he said,

*'These young heroes have been trained in our classrooms, on our football and cricket pitches, and in our Physical Culture and Drill classes, and in the training of them, (as far as I have been able, with the help of my colleagues), I think that I have been doing just a "wee bit", (that is an Ulsterism, of course), of War Service.'*¹⁸

When the War ended Mr. McFeeters was quick to say that he wanted 'a fitting memorial in the Assembly Room', and he continued,

'Owing to the disappearance of the school registers, that were supposed to be kept and preserved by my predecessors, I have absolutely failed to trace the military history of many of our past pupils, who undoubtedly rendered service to the Empire. I am certain, however, as the rolls behind the platform testify, that nearly 170 gallant soldiers and sailors, who "did their bit" in the greatest war of all time, were educated in connection with this School. Of these, 10 gained the M.C., one the D.S.O., one the M.B.E., one the Russian Cross of St. George, and several were mentioned more than once in despatches. It is a constant source of grief to me to think that 34 of our gallant lads laid down their lives.'

And so 'a handsome War Memorial' costing £119 was commissioned. It was unveiled on 30 October 1922 by Major-General Rev. Simms, D.D., C.B., C.M.G., Senior Chaplain to the Forces, at what seems to have been Mr. McFeeters' last public function as Headmaster. (The School had been 'distempered and varnished' specially for the occasion by Thomas H. Gray, the author's grandfather).¹⁹ Viscount Bangor, D.S.O., D.L. acted as Chairman, buglers from 1st Queen's Royal Regiment sounded the Last Post, a guard of honour was formed by Bangor Boy Scouts under their Scout Master Jack McFeeters, and Mr. McFeeters read the names of those who had laid down their lives.²⁰ In fact 174 had served and 38 had died. Mrs. Elizabeth Hollywood, a widow, lost two of her sons, both former pupils, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Again writing to his old college in New York, Mr. McFeeters said, with obvious pride,

*'I trust you will not think it presumptuous if I send you a paper containing a picture of the War Memorial Tablet we erected only a few weeks ago in the Assembly Room of our School. You may judge of the loyalty of Ulster to God and King and Empire by this one example – and please, "ab uno disce omnes".'*²¹

THE TRIAD OF FRIENDS

In 1920 Mr. McFeeters made reference to 'the triad of friends who have rendered signal service to this School'. He was referring to Mr. W. K. Crosby, Mr. John McMeekan and Miss E. J. Connor. Towards the end of this account of Mr. McFeeters' Headmastership seems an appropriate opportunity to provide a pen-sketch of each of them.

¹⁸ From a letter, dated 1918, held in the archives of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

¹⁹ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 7 June 1922 and 10 September 1922.

²⁰ *County Down Spectator*, 4 November 1922.

²¹ From a letter, dated 16 December 1922, held in the archives of Union Theological Seminary, New York. The phrase 'ab uno disce omnes', meaning 'from one example, learn about all', is found in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Mr.W.K.Crosby



(Photograph in *County Down Spectator*, 28 January 1916)

William K.Crosby was born in Bangor *circa* 1839 and he had emigrated to the United States of America at the age of 16. After almost twenty years working in Boston, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island, Mr.Crosby in 1874 set up his own department store in Wilmington, Delaware, where he remained for thirty years, building up a large business later known as *Crosby and Hill Company*. When his first wife, Augusta Foster, died he married her sister Mary and they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary shortly before his death. He maintained his interest in Bangor throughout his life, visiting his home town in the Summer, certainly from 1900 until the outbreak of war.²²

Not only had Mr.Crosby donated £614 towards the building of the School, in 1912 he wrote to John McMeekan offering a further £1,000 if the people of Bangor would raise £2,000 by January 1914. He hoped that it could be invested at around 4% to supplement the Headmaster's income until there were 100 pupils, or until his income reached £350. However because so much had been donated by local people towards the building of the Hospital (including, it must be said, £500 from Mr.Crosby himself) in 1914 he altered his offer, instead promising £1,000 to build a teacher's residence. On finding that it would in fact take £1,200, he again raised his donation on condition that the local inhabitants would bear the cost of preparing the grounds and erecting railings and gates. Lester Irving's tender was for £1,150 and it was agreed that *'the name of the new building should be associated with that of Mr.Crosby'*.²³

In 1916, Mr.McMeekan received a draft for £5,200 from Mr.Crosby. He had decided, he said, to be his own executor. £3,000 was to go to the School as an endowment fund, to be invested by the Governors, the income only to be used, largely if not entirely, to supplement Mr.McFeeters' income which he felt had been *'entirely inadequate as compensation for the splendid service he has rendered to the School since he took charge of it'*. In his letter to Mr.McMeekan, he continued: *'I sincerely hope that some person or persons who appreciate the value and importance of having such a superior school in Bangor will add largely to this £3,000 so as to make it an "Endowed" School in fact as well as in name'*. Mr.Crosby's gift was invested with the Urban Council at 5.25%.²⁴ In all Mr.Crosby had given the School *'well nigh £5,000'* (the equivalent of over £250,000 today).

Nor was his generosity confined to the School. A further £2,000 was to go to the new *Bangor Hospital* of whose Committee Mr.McMeekan was Chairman; again only the interest was to be used. £200 was to go to *Bangor Public Library* with the suggestion that £50 should be spent at

²² *County Down Spectator*, 2 May 1925.

²³ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 22 August 1912, 14 November 1912, 24 July 1913 and 28 August 1913.

²⁴ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 6 June 1916.

regular intervals on new books. In addition to the £5,200 sent to Mr. McMeekan, a further £1,000 had been sent to Rev. Dr. Henry Montgomery, himself a former pupil of the School and a personal friend of Mr. Crosby, to be used in the interests of the *Shankill Road Mission*. Mr. Crosby had already presented the Mission with the '*Florence Crosby Holiday Home*' on the High Donaghadee Road, in memory of his deceased daughter, Florence. He was also a generous benefactor of *Trinity Presbyterian Church*, and he donated the church organ to *First Bangor Presbyterian Church*, whose minister, Rev. Alexander Patton, received a Doctor of Divinity degree from *Omaha College*, Nebraska in 1892 through Mr. Crosby, who was '*an ardent admirer*'.²⁵ Little wonder then, that a public meeting was arranged by John McMeekan to express to Mr. Crosby the appreciation of the town.

Quite apart from those donations to various Bangor institutions, Mr. Crosby had regularly subscribed to the work of the *Bangor Christian Workers' Society* and he had given £2,000 to the *Cripples' Institute* Homes of Rest.²⁶

In 1918 Mr. McFeeters said that he hoped that 'the time was not far distant when a suitable tablet would be placed in a prominent position in the School recording gratitude to Mr. Crosby'. The following year 'a mural tablet', designed by Miss Connor and Rev. R. J. Morrell, was erected by the Governors in the Assembly Room 'to commemorate their abiding indebtedness and gratitude' to Mr. Crosby.



The inscription on the plaque, now in the entrance hall of the 1906 building, reads:

*“Hic etiam sua praemia laudi”
The tablet has been erected by
the Governors of Bangor Endowed School
to commemorate their
abiding indebtedness and gratitude to
W.K. Crosby Esq., Boston U.S.A.
for his munificent donation of £5,000
which has enabled them to secure
the greater visibility and endowment
of secondary education
in his own beloved
birth place’*

When he died, on 12 April 1925 in his 87th year, the *Boston Evening Transcript*, (he had moved back to Massachusetts when he retired), referred to Mr. Crosby's generosity to '*his native town*', saying that in addition to the '*Florence Crosby Holiday Home*' he had '*also presented the town with \$30,000 for the general improvement of the community*'.

²⁵ *A History of Congregations in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1610-1982* (Belfast, 1982).

²⁶ *ibid.*

Mr. John McMeekan, J.P.



(Photograph from the author's family scrapbook)

John McMeekan was born in 1851. He was educated at *Bangor Endowed School* and *Assembly's College* Belfast. In the early 1880s he took over the highly renowned embroidery and lace-making business of his brother-in-law, David McKenzie, but he spent much of his time serving the interests of Bangor and its inhabitants. He was Chairman of Bangor Urban District Council for 22 years, a post he first held in 1881. (He also became guardian of his four nephews and nieces, including the author's grandmother, following David McKenzie's death that year.)

A longstanding friend of Mr. Crosby - *'they were boys together'* - it was said that it was in large measure due to his enthusiasm that Mr. Crosby had become so interested in the education of the youth of Bangor for he had been *'impressed by the wholehearted earnestness and singleness of purpose that has characterized Mr. McMeekan's efforts for the good of his native town. . . . If he had devoted as much time and energy to building up his own fortune, as he has to looking after the affairs of Bangor, he would have been today a very wealthy man.'*²⁷

He had always taken a deep interest in the School and he had acted as both Secretary and Treasurer of the 1907 Bazaar; he presided at several Prize Distributions and when not presiding he almost invariably proposed one of the votes of thanks; he made frequent donations to the School. In 1909 he and Dr. Gorman were the first two Governors elected by Subscribers to the School. An undated document in the possession of the School, which can be dated between 1905 when Mr. McFeeters was appointed and 1915 the year of F.H.G. Wilson's death, lists the Subscribers as: Lord Viscount Bangor, Sir John Jordan, Colonel R.G. Sharman-Crawford, D.L.; Revs. J. Irvine [sic] Peacocke, John Waddell, R.J. Morrell and J.W. Mulligan, and Messrs Hudson Shepperd, William Hanna, John McMeekan, Thomas Matthews, William Caughey, James McFeeters, R.H. Finlay, F.H.G. Wilson, James T. Brice, A.C. Marshall, Dr. Mitchell, John Thompson, T.B. Gorman, Matthew Crosbie, S.G. Davidson, E.L. Woods, James Neill, W.I. Mahaffy, James Crosbie, W.F. Hunter, William Marshall, Robert Fegan, James McMurray, Walter Furey, James Campbell, Thos. E. McConnell, Dr. Gorman, H.C. Montgomery, W.K. Crosby, D.H. Dunseath, S.G. Montgomery, Miss Connor, Mark Finlay (New York), Miss Agnew and Mrs. John Aiken, twelve of whom were Governors.

Almost annually Mr. McFeeters paid tribute to Mr. McMeekan: *'Is it not fitting . . . that there should meet tonight on the same platform, in the service of the same school, Lady Clanmorris whose family instituted and endowed that school, and Mr. McMeekan to whose indefatigable efforts it so largely owes its present happy freedom from the trammels of debt?'* (1908); *'deepest gratitude for the signal services*

²⁷ *County Down Spectator*, 3 July 1908.

that Mr. McMeekan has rendered to this School. Again and again he has been at the heart of things' (1912); 'unstinted gratitude for all that Mr. John McMeekan has done for this School by ungrudging service and advocacy of its cause' (1915); he "put his hand to the plough" when he undertook the exacting task of carrying the bazaar to a prosperous issue, has never since looked back - never abated one jot of heart or hope, until he had himself raised the money to enclose these grounds, and set the coping-stone on his nine years' toil in the interests of this School' (1916); 'the work he has accomplished for us and the influence he has exercised in securing the effective aid of others has practically meant for us all the difference between success and failure' (1918).

In November 1918, a public testimonial to him included the paragraph :

'We can never forget your deep and practical interest in the Endowed School your inauguration of a scheme for a new building and your strenuous efforts, which never ceased until the School and Headmaster's residence were not only erected, but free from debt, and we are pleased that you are still acting on the Board of Governors'.

Reference was also made to his contribution to sewerage, the reservoir, the gasworks, the *Marine Gardens*, the *Cottage Hospital*, the *Technical School* and the *Library*, the *Golf Club*, the *Bowling Club*, and to the fact that he was one of two Chairmen chosen to represent urban districts at Irish Convention, which met in 1917-1918 in an abortive effort to secure a final settlement to the demand for Home Rule, as well as to his being an Elder and Sabbath School Superintendent in *Trinity Presbyterian Church*, and to his support of total abstinence; he was president of the *Irish Temperance League* in 1918.²⁸

He died on 5 January, 1919, less than two months later, aged 67. The *Spectator* described him as 'Bangor's foremost citizen', adding 'To him is largely due the finely equipped Grammar School'. Mr. McFeeters and a large procession of boys attended his funeral.²⁹

Miss E.J. Connor, J.P., O.B.E.



(Photograph in *County Down Spectator*, 9 January, 1932)

Emily Jane Connor was the daughter of Foster Connor, one of the pioneers of the Belfast linen industry. *Seacourt* on Princetown Road had been built for him in 1865. Her brother, Charles, had been Mayor of Belfast in 1888, 1890 and 1891.

John McMeekan once described Miss Connor as '*The Lady Bountiful of Bangor*', an apt soubriquet, for as the Rector of Bangor, Canon Bradley, said at her funeral following her death on 6 January

²⁸ *County Down Spectator*, 2 February and 9 November 1918.

²⁹ *County Down Spectator*, 11 January 1919.

1932, aged 80, *'for the past 60 years, no figure has been more prominent in the history of Bangor'*. A leading member of Bangor Parish Church, she bequeathed her house, *Raglan Lodge*, to the church for use as a Rectory.

She had launched the *Bangor District Nursing Society* and was one of the largest contributors, with a donation of £500, to the building fund for *Bangor Hospital*, the foundation stone of which she laid; she was Hon.Sec. of the *Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* and President of *Bangor Bowling Club*, *Bangor Amateur Swimming Club*, *Carnalea Ladies' Golf Club*, *Royal Belfast Ladies' Golf Club* and *Bangor Ladies' Golf Club*; in 1904 she had performed the official opening of *Bangor Golf Club's* clubhouse, a building which was later to become the home of the School's preparatory department, *Connor House*. For 25 years she was associated with *Bangor Technical School* and she contributed a substantial part of its prize fund. Rev.W.A.Hill, minister of *Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church*, once wondered aloud *'how Miss Connor found time to manifest such a deep interest in so many good causes about Bangor'*.

As well as officiating at many school functions over a period of 25 years, Miss Connor made a number of cash donations to the School, she presented the *Gold Challenge Medal for Chemistry* in 1908, she was appointed to the Board of Governors in 1910, and in 1924 she presented the *Connor Cup*, the premier athletics prize, to the first winner Dennis Strain at that year's Sports' Day.³⁰

As was the case with Mr.McMeekan, over the years Mr.McFeeters paid many tributes to Miss Connor: *'her repeated benefactions and generous devotion to the welfare of the School'* (1912); *'that most bounteous and faithful friend to the School'* (1913); *'a real friend to the School for many years and whose benefactions have been many and liberal'* (1915); *'gratitude to the lady who has, like the other two members of the triad, abounded in self-sacrificing and practical effort to provide a suitable dwelling place for secondary education in Bangor'* (1916).

WAR AND PEACE

During the second half of Mr.McFeeters' headmastership, as he tried to preserve an air of normality in the School, the wider world was dominated by the Great War and its aftermath, and by turmoil in Ireland.

The drowning of 1,198 people, when the *Lusitania* was torpedoed off the Irish coast, paled into insignificance beside the 10 million killed at places with names which would pass into history - Ypres, Gallipoli, Jutland (where Barry Bingham won his V.C.), Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele. And that figure was exceeded by the estimated 20 million victims of the *Spanish flu* in 1918. The Russian Revolution and the *Peace of Paris* marked the end of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires, and the setting up of the *League of Nations* gave a false promise of a peaceful future, while the *Balfour Declaration* promised the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine.

In Ireland, *'a terrible beauty'* was born at Easter 1916, with the Rising in Dublin and the execution of the leaders. The *Irish Republican Army* embarked on a War of Independence during which both they and the *Black and Tans* committed unspeakable atrocities. The *Act for the Better Government of Ireland* was accepted by the Unionists in the north and Northern Ireland came into being, but the war continued until the *Anglo-Irish Treaty* brought about the setting up of the Irish Free State. Civil War ensued in the south and sectarian violence in Belfast claimed over 450 in June-July 1922 alone. A survivor of the Easter Rising - Constance Markievicz - became the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons under the *Representation of the People Act*, although it was Nancy Astor who was the first to take her seat.

³⁰ *County Down Spectator*, 9 and 16 January 1932.

Despite the carnage, these were years of creative genius in every area of the Arts: in art there was Chagall, Monet, Matisse, and the Dada movement; in music Sibelius, Richard Strauss, Prokofiev, Puccini, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Jerome Kern and the beginnings of jazz; in literature Joseph Conrad, H.G.Wells, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Agatha Christie, Sean O'Casey, G.B.Shaw, Berthold Brecht, Eugene O'Neill, T.S.Eliot and Gerald Manley Hopkins. In some cases it was the carnage itself which stimulated the work: without the First World War, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon would not have produced their evocative poetry.

In the United States, 'Prohibition' was introduced and the *Ku Klux Klan* was revived, while in Hollywood, Fatty Arbuckle, Buster Keaton Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Lilian Gish were among the early 'movie stars'.

These were the years during which Suzanne Lenglen, Jack Dempsey, 'Babe' Ruth and Jack Hobbs dominated their respective sports, Rutherford split the atom, Marie Stopes opened Britain's first birth control clinic and Alcock and Brown flew across the Atlantic. In education, the school leaving age was raised to 14 and the *Burnham Committee* on teachers' salaries was set up. The coming to power of Mussolini was a harbinger of yet more carnage.

As Joan of Arc was canonised and Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered, 'Buffalo Bill' Cody, Theodore Roosevelt, Andrew Carnegie, W.G.Grace, Edith Cavell, Mata Hari, Lord Kitchener, Rasputin, Nicholas II and Michael Collins joined them in the next life.³¹

MR.McFEETERS' RETIREMENT AND DEATH

Mr.McFeeters submitted his resignation in April 1923. In his letter to the Governors, he urged them to make a strong case, to the new Northern Ireland Ministry of Education, for a teachers' superannuation scheme. The Secretary of the Board wrote accepting his resignation and expressing the Governors' appreciation of his successful stewardship of the School, and regretting that his health had not allowed him to carry on the good work. The letter ended with a hope that he would 'live long to enjoy his well-deserved retirement'.

At his first Prize Distribution in March 1925, Mr.Wilkins, paid tribute to Mr.McFeeters.

I was privileged to meet Mr.McFeeters but three times, I think, during a very short period preceding my entry upon office. I found him, so much my senior in years, a wise counsellor and a warm-hearted and understanding friend; and in my all-too-brief relations with him, broken as he was in health, I became strongly aware of certain fine influences with which, during all those years, he had impressed the boys and young men who came under his charge at this School. From his conversation with me, and from what I have been able to learn from others, I have attempted to define those elements of his character which struck me - affection for his pupils, a disinterested love of learning and literary culture, and a kind of moral earnestness, a passion for duty, which was contagious. Those qualities of his mind had carried him on through years of the very hardest sort of work, through the sorrows and anxieties of the war, in a battle against failing health, and the increasing uncertainties of the educational future. For two special services to the School's welfare, the memory of Mr.McFeeters deserves to be kept green: I refer first to his long labour of love on behalf of the beautiful War Memorial, erected in the Assembly Room of the School some years ago, and in the second place to the foundation by him, and the expansion under his guidance, of the lending library - one of the fullest and best in any Ulster school, as one of the Ministry of Education Inspectors described it to me. I trust that ere long, some visible memorial will be erected at the School to do honour to his long connection with its destinies. The final acceptance by the Governors of his resignation came in the Summer of the year 1923, which had already produced the Ulster Government's celebrated Education Act.³²

³¹ Information gleaned from P.Waller and J.Rowett, *Chronology of the 20th Century*.

³² *County Down Spectator*, 14 March 1925.

(It is said that the Minister of Finance in that new 'Ulster Government', Hugh M. Pollock, had been a pupil at the School, but under whose Headmaster ship has not been ascertained.)³³

Mr. McFeeters was not spared to enjoy a long retirement. He died on Friday 4 July 1930 at his home on Wandsworth Road in Belfast. He was 73. He had retired from the Headmastership of *Bangor Grammar School* due to failing health, which never permitted him to revisit the School. The *Spectator* commented:

*'Conscientious in everything he undertook, Mr. McFeeters showed a personal interest in the boys under his care and this interest extended beyond schooldays, into their subsequent careers. . . . He was punctilious, careful and always gentlemanly.'*³⁴

James McFeeters' contribution to the School had been enormous. During his eighteen years as Headmaster he had presided over the move to a permanent home, he had seen the building of the Headmaster's Residence, the School population had increased nine fold, and by the time of his retirement, the School Library, one of his special interests, amounted to some seven hundred volumes, several dozen of which had been donated by the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava. In 1925 the Board of Governors decided to re-name the Library '*The McFeeters Library*' 'in appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. McFeeters during the time he was Headmaster' and a brass tablet was to be placed there to that effect.³⁵ At the time of his death he was Patron of the recently formed *Old Boys' Association* which immediately set up a fund, with Mr. George Mansfield as Treasurer, to provide a visible memorial to him in the School Assembly Room. This took the form of a bust bearing the inscription: '*In memory of James McFeeters B.A., Headmaster 1905 to 1923. Erected by Governors, Teachers and Pupils. April 1934*'. In fact the ceremony took place in November 1934 when his widow unveiled the memorial, '*a lifelike figure in high relief carried out in Hoptonwood marble*' by Morris Harding, R.H.A. of Hollywood. Viscount Bangor, Mr. McBride and Mr. Wilkins paid tribute to Mr. McFeeters' memory in the presence of a large gathering of past and present pupils, teachers and Governors.³⁶



Mrs. McFeeters unveiling the bust of her late husband in 'A' Room, April 1934, accompanied by Mr. Harding (perhaps), Viscount Bangor, Mr. Wilkins and Mr. McBride.

³³ D. Godson, *Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism* (2004), p. 11.

³⁴ *County Down Spectator*, 12 July 1930 and 14 March 1931.

³⁵ Minutes of the Board of Governors, 17 December 1925.

³⁶ *County Down Spectator*, 10 November 1934.