

## CHAPTER NINE

### Maurice A.C.Wilkins, M.A., 1923-1947<sup>1</sup>

#### MR.WILKINS' APPOINTMENT

When Mr.McFeeters tendered his resignation in April 1923, the Governors took steps to find a replacement. Advertisements were placed in the *Irish Times*, as well as in the *Northern Whig* and the *Belfast Newsletter*. Applications were to be submitted by 1 August. In July, Mr.McFeeters was asked to stay on until his successor could take up his post, and in August it was agreed that his resignation should not take effect until 1 January 1924. At the end of September, he was granted leave of absence until that date, since his successor, Mr.Wilkins, was able to commence work on 1 October 1923. (In 1977, when the *Old Boys' Association* decided to present the School with a board listing all the Headmasters, it was recorded in the Minutes of the *Association* that, although Mr.Wilkins joined the Staff in 1923, he 'deferred taking his appointed place until January, to allow his predecessor to gain an increased pension').

Considering the place which Mr.Wilkins, the School's longest serving Headmaster, occupies in the collective memory of the School, it may come as a surprise to learn that he was not the unanimous choice of the Governors. Three candidates were put on a 'select list': Dr.Knox, Mr.John Pyper and Mr.Maurice Wilkins. Both Mr.Pyper and Mr.Wilkins were proposed and seconded and the voting was four for Mr.Pyper and five for Mr.Wilkins. (Mr.Pyper, who had taught at the School briefly in the 1890s, was Principal of *Bangor Technical School* from 1905 to 1937 and he was a member of the Board of Governors of *Bangor Grammar School* for some six years. Like Mr.Wilkins, he was a distinguished classical scholar. His three sons attended the School and all qualified as doctors.)



Maurice Wilkins, M.A. (1923-47) in 1924<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information contained in this chapter has been taken from the Minutes of the Board of Governors, the Minutes of Meetings of Subscribers (from 1940), or the *County Down Spectator* reports on Prize Days, Sports Days and *Old Boys' Association* Dinners. For those who may be interested in consulting the *Spectator*, the relevant dates are: Prize Day – 14 March 1925, 8 May 1926, 14 May 1927, 5 March 1928, 11 May 1929, 22 March 1930, 14 March 1931, 5 March 1932, 18 March 1933, 3 March 1934, 23 March 1935, 21 March 1936, 20 March 1937, 19 March 1938, 18 March 1939, 17 February 1940, 12 April 1941, 4 April 1942, 17 April 1943, 15 April 1944, 31 March 1945, 13 April 1946 and 12 April 1947; Sports Day - 5 July 1924, 4 July 1925, 3 July 1926, 2 July 1927, 4 July 1928, 36 July 1929, 5 July 1930, 4 July 1931, 2 July 1932, 1 July 1933, 30 June 1934, 6 July 1935, 4 July 1936, 3 July 1937, 2 July 1938, 1 July 1939, 29 June 1940, 28 June 1941, 27 June 1942, 3 July 1943, 8 July 1944, 14 July 1945, 29 June 1946 and 28 June 1947; *Old Boys' Association* - 8 March 1930, 28 March 1931, 30 January 1932, 3 December 1932, 4 December 1933, 15 December 1934, 23 November 1935, 12 December 1936, 4 December, 1937, 10 December 1938, 3 February 1940, 8 March 1941, 13 December 1941, 12 December 1942, 11 December 1943, 9 December 1944, 3 March 1945, 15 and 22 December 1945, 14 December 1946 and 27 December 1947.

Maurice Arthur Charles Wilkins was born in 1885, the elder son of William Wilkins M.A., who had been Headmaster of *Dublin High School* for nearly thirty years, where he had taught W.B.Yeats.<sup>3</sup> Maurice was one of that school's most brilliant pupils. He enjoyed a distinguished academic career at *Trinity College Dublin*, where he was First Classical Scholar in 1906, winning Gold Medals for Classics and for Modern Literature (English and German), and graduating with a Double First in Classics and Modern Literature. He spent over seven years teaching English and Classics at the *Royal School Dungannon*, the *Royal Grammar School Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, *St.Stephen's Green School Dublin* and *St.Columba's College Rathfarnham*. In 1913, he interrupted his teaching work to read for a Fellowship of Dublin University and he was Fellowship Prizeman in the last two years in which that examination was held. At the time of his appointment to Bangor Grammar School, he had been on the staff of *Queen's University Belfast* for over three years, as assistant to the Professor of Latin, Dr.R.M.Henry; he had also been Chief Examiner for Latin in the Intermediate Examinations and was one of the examiners for the Civil Service Commission. Coming from an academic family – (his uncle, Rev.George Wilkins, B.D., was an eminent classical scholar, Professor of Hebrew and a Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, and his younger brother, Dr.Edgar H.Wilkins, M.B., was Chief Medical Inspector of Schools in New Zealand) – Maurice Wilkins was '*in every way qualified to fill the position of Headmaster of the School for, apart from his brilliant list of academic distinctions, . . . [he] possesses the further quality of a genial and winning manner*', reported the *County Down Spectator*.<sup>4</sup> On his appointment, '*one of the Bangor "big-wigs" assured him that he had "got a plum"*'.<sup>5</sup>

Speaking at the *Old Boys' Association Dinner* in 1931, Mr.Wilkins said that he felt it was '*a kind of sacred trust that he must succeed in Bangor and work up the School*', for both his own father and Mr.McFeeters, who had been at College together, '*had been headmasters of important Irish schools and had given their lives in the service of secondary education in Ireland*'.

Mr. and Mrs.Wilkins and their four children, Patricia, Roderick, Paul and Helen took up residence in *Crosby House*, which was to be the family home for the next 24 years. Roderick remembers '*the Headmaster's private garden, with rose beds and sycamore trees, separated from the front entrance to the School by a screen of veronica bushes*'.<sup>6</sup>

Roddy Wilkins' younger brother, Paul, who was born in 1920, in a fifteen page typed '*Memoir*', recalled *Crosby House* in considerable detail:

*'The house was freezing cold in winter . . . sited on the north end of the School building, with all the principal rooms facing east. The 'drawing-room was on the N.E. corner and seemed to attract every draught that God sent.*

*'Behind the drawing room was the kitchen, by far the most comfortable room in the house. It had . . . an enormous iron range set against the north wall . . . [which] was always lit, winter and summer, because it was the only source of hot water.*

*'The front door was on the east side . . . leading into the hall. On the right was the drawing-room door, beyond that the kitchen door, and directly in front was the stair with an alcove for cloaks to the right of it, beyond the kitchen door. To the left was the dining room and behind that the "Passage". This Passage was long and dark with borrowed light only, and connected at its southern end with the "Common Room". On the way however one encountered first, on the right, a service window to the scullery, then on the same side a door into the "store-room" and finally on the left the door of the study.*

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs come from the School Archives.

<sup>3</sup> As noted on the back of a photograph of Mr.Wilkins provided by his elder daughter, Pat.

<sup>4</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 1 September 1923.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Wilkins, *A Memoir*, December 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Roddy Wilkins, in conversation with the author, April 2002.

*'The dining room boasted a . . . full-width bay window, with a padded window seat. . . . Since this room was not much used for anything except meals, it was seldom heated except in the coldest weather. . . . In the study, which was a small room next to the dining room and also facing east, my father had a big roll-top desk.*

*'Opening on the left out of the kitchen was a dark low-ceilinged kind of lobby . . . where the gas stove lived, with a cupboard under the stair containing the Leclanche cells that powered the bell system. There was a bell-push in each bedroom and living room (except of course the maid's bedroom), and on the kitchen wall hung a glass-fronted box in which hung ten swinging labels . . . to indicate which room it was that had called. Beside the gas stove was the door out to the kitchen yard, and beyond this the lobby opened out into the scullery.*

*'In the scullery stood a large earthenware Belfast sink . . . [and a] large sash window that served as a service hatch opening onto and giving light to the aforementioned Passage. Opening off the scullery to the south was the pantry, a small room with a west-facing window that was outside the yard. The whole kitchen suite . . . was paved in red quarry tiles. . . . The yard . . . was enclosed by the outhouses . . . . A door in the south opened onto an area of macadam that . . . terminated at the back door and lavatory block of the School. The yard door was the tradesman's entrance of the house, and here the milkman used to call. . . . When the measuring was done, into our jugs, he would always add an extra cupful called the "tilly". It was not until years later I realised that this was the Irish word "tuilleadh", meaning "extra".*

*'Going down the Passage now, past the scullery hatch, next came the "store-room" on the sunny side of the house. . . . Behind the door of the store-room was the TELEPHONE, mounted high on the wall. . . . Telephoning was made as uncomfortable as it possibly could; the room was unheated; you had to be an adult to reach the thing; you had to stand up; and finally there was no shelf on which any notebook or pencil could rest.*

*'On the back of the store-room door there was a hook and on this hook my father hung his gown, whence he would snatch it off in his whirlwind passage from house to School. Something had gone wrong with the paint that was put on the back of this door . . . [and] every time my father took his gown off the door there was a tearing sound as the gown peeled off the tacky paint, and the door itself was covered with the permanent black fluff picked up from the gown.*

*'At the end of the passage was the Common Room, which was never quite sure whether it belonged to the house or to the School. I rather think that this and the room above it (later named K-room) were not built at the same time as the main school building, but were built at the same time as the house. . . . The only access from the Common Room to the School was by an outside back door, while K-room upstairs could only be reached from the school by going through another classroom. There was an evident intention to provide for boarders; the Common Room would be where the boarders would be fed and spend their spare time, while the upstairs room would be the dormitory. . . . The Common Room . . . was lined with my father's glass-fronted bookcases, crammed with Latin, Greek, German and English textbooks. . . . The Common Room was used primarily for School Dinner, which my mother and the maid provided every school day of term for up to 20 people. . . .*

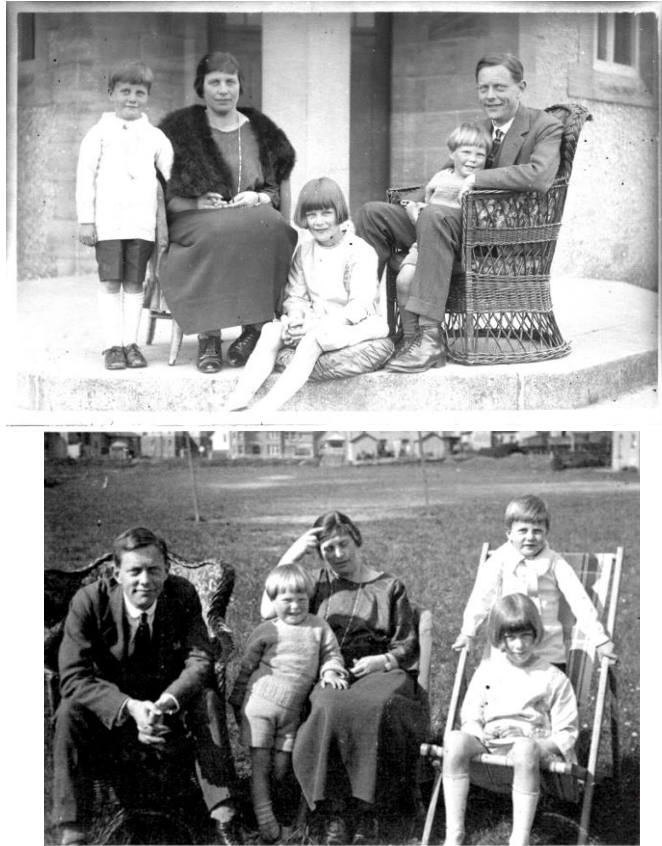
*'We had no electricity and relied on gas, using gas mantles, for lighting. . . . Heating was by open coal fires . . . and lighting a fire was an art on which my father prided himself. . . .*

*'At the top of the first flight of stairs was a half-landing . . . [from which] a short flight led to the upstairs corridor. On the left were two bedrooms, one front and one back at the north end of the house; the latter belonged to my big sister Pat. . . . Straight in front was a tiny room over the hall and next to it the parents' bedroom. . . . Next to this, beyond a door in the corridor, was a small bedroom which in early days belonged to a pipe-smoking teacher who lodged with us. . . . Opposite the master bedroom was the bathroom and W.C. combined . . . and next to it the hot cupboard. Then through the door of the corridor, on the west side, was a large wash-room with four hand-basins, which led into a W.C. on one side and a bathroom on the other. Clearly this*

*was intended for the boarders and the door in the corridor seemed to mark the boundary between the house proper and the boarders' quarters. . . . From this end of the corridor . . . a flight of stairs led up to the dormitory. . . .*

*'In fact there were boarders in the early days, who were looked after by my mother. . . . At one time we had two girls, Barbara and Sylvia Lord, who were distant cousins and about the same age as my sister Pat. . . . In my teens, and long after the boarders had gone, I got interested in photography. I fitted up the boarders' bathroom as a darkroom. . . .*

*'On a hot Sunday we would take the tea tray with its gleaming silver teapot, hot-water jug and cream jug and the best tea set out to the south wall of the school with chairs and rugs, to have a picnic at home, complete with buttered slices of barmbrack. . . .*



Two photographs preserved by the late Pat Moody, née Wilkins, showing Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins, with Roddy, Pat and Paul, at the front entrance of the School, and in the Back Field, not long after their arrival in Bangor. (It can be seen that many of the houses on the south side of Shandon Drive had not yet been built).

*'The stair of the house went on up to the attic. . . . There was quite a big lobby at the top with a skylight over the stairwell. To the north of this was the maid's room; . . . there was a tiny window in the north wall. . . . On the other side was the attic proper. . . . It also had a sky-light at the west end. This was an ideal place for deploying train-sets. . . . A small window in the gable provided a giddy view over the front garden and College Avenue, and was fitted with a wooden bar and wire netting to discourage us from climbing out.*

*'Opening off the attic was another small room almost entirely occupied by the water tank . . . and in the low eaves wall there were doors into the roof space. . . . [At the south end of the School] it was possible to climb by a ladder from the clock-room . . . out onto the roof of the tower, which provided a magnificent view all round. Above the roof was a sort of copper dome on stilts. . . . In sunny weather out of term-time my father would retire to this roof for a bit of peace and some quiet sun-bathing.'*

## MR.WILKINS' BANGOR

From that elevated vantage point, Mr.Wilkins could have watched as Bangor continued to grow; Baylands, with its imaginatively named avenues, was developed in the 1920s and Ballymagee Street was renamed High Street in 1926. By 1931, the '*Borough*' of Bangor, as it had become in 1928, boasted a new *Central Public Elementary School*, and the town enjoyed the advantages of an electricity supply, which had been switched on in 1930 by Lord Craigavon, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. The following year, the population topped the 14,000 mark. The 1930s saw further expansion eastwards as Ashley Park and Beverly Hills sprang up, while in 1933 the old *Ward School* building (now the Northern Bank) became the Town Hall and the *Old Schoolhouse*, which for over thirty years had served that purpose, was soon replaced by the new Bank of Ireland.

In 1925, a correspondent to the *Spectator* had made the complaint:

*'no visitors will come down [to Bangor] if there are no amusements to be had. I hope the ratepayers will join me in striving to make Bangor Council do something in this matter'.*

As if in response, that year saw the opening of Caproni's *Palais de Danse* and the *Miramar Café*. The *Adelphi Kinema* soon followed and in 1931 *Pickie Pool* opened. In 1936 Bangor became the envy of the Province with its magnificent '*art deco*' *Tonic Cinema* – Ulster's largest. Once the visitors did begin to arrive in their motor cars, they could take advantage of R.J.Hooke's '*kerbside petrol pump*', the first in Northern Ireland, stay in the new *Regent Palace Hotel*, *Hotel Pickie* or the rebuilt *Royal Hotel*, and play 18 holes on the expanded golf course with its grand new club house.<sup>7</sup>

## THE INTER-WAR YEARS

During Mr.Wilkins' early years in Bangor, it seemed as if the Great War had indeed been '*the war to end wars*' and that, either because of, or despite the new *League of Nations*, world peace would prevail, despite the hyper-inflation suffered by Germany as a result of a perhaps too harsh *Peace of Versailles*. The United Kingdom experienced its first Labour Government and a General Strike, while women were granted the vote on the same terms as men, and Margaret Bondfield became Britain's first woman Cabinet Minister.

The 1920s also saw John Logie Baird's demonstration of television and the setting up of the *B.B.C.*, Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart make their solo trans-Atlantic flights, and Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin. The '*silver screen*' was enjoying a heyday, by '*stars*' such as Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, Vivien Leigh and the incomparable Garbo, while *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first full-length cartoon was produced by Walt Disney and *The Jazz Singer*, the first full-length '*talkie*' film appeared. As the decade closed, the American economy was rocked by the *Wall Street Crash*, which was to have worldwide repercussions, both economic and political in the years that were to follow.

What F.Scott Fitzgerald called *The Jazz Age* was typified by the music of the likes of Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, and George Gershwin, and the work of Walton, Benjamin Britten, Shostakovich, and Ravel was being enjoyed for the first time. The book shops were carrying the latest offerings from Noel Coward, A.A.Milne, Ernest Hemingway, Thornton Wilder, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, J.B.Priestley, Graham Greene, Dylan Thomas, W.H.Auden and European authors such as Kafka and Sartre, while John Steinbeck was

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<sup>7</sup> K.Haines, *North Down Memories: photographs 1860s-1960s* (2000); Jack McCoy, *An Index to 'The County Down Spectator 1904-1964'* (1983); Marcus Patton, *Bangor: An Historical Gazetteer* (1999); I.Wilson, *Bangor: Historic Photographs of the County Down Town 1870-1914* (1992); I.Wilson (ed.), *North Down: A Century of Photographs* (1999); I.Wilson and A.Jaggers, *Bangor Bay and Harbour: a pictorial history* (2002).

highlighting the plight of the mid-western farmers during the Depression in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. In Art, the names of Salvadore Dali and Henry Moore were coming to prominence.

In Britain, the Jarrow March took place and further afield, Adolf Hitler the new German Chancellor, and F.D.Roosevelt with his *New Deal*, were putting J.M.Keynes economic theories into practice. Nearer home, Éamon de Valéra came to power in the Irish Free State, which broke many of its ties with the United Kingdom and adopted the name Éire, while the British establishment was rocked by the abdication of Edward VIII.

Other features of life in the 1930s included Sir Frank Whittle's jet engine, Sikorski's helicopter, the development of polythene by *I.C.I.*, the discovery of nylon and, crucially, the development of radar. In the world of leisure, Donald Bradman became Australian cricket captain, Joe Louis won the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship, Billy Butlin opened his first holiday camp at Skegness, and Sir Malcolm Campbell set a series of land speed records in *Bluebird*, ironically at a time when the 30 m.p.h. speed limit and the first pedestrian crossings with their 'Belisha' beacons were being introduced.

Meanwhile, the storm clouds were gathering with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, Germany's *Anschluss* with Austria, and the appeasement of the dictators, which was finally abandoned following Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland. In Spain, the bombing of Guernica during the brutal Civil War inspired works by Federico García Lorca and Pablo Picasso.

Maurice Wilkins' last years at the School were overshadowed by the Second World War, which was to change the world forever. By the time of his retirement, atomic bombs had helped to bring the War to an end, but the 'Iron Curtain' was being erected, the 'Cold War' was about to begin and the United Nations had been established. However, all that was in the future when, in October 1923, the 38-year-old Maurice Wilkins took up his post as Headmaster.

## THE 1924 PROSPECTUS

Mr.Wilkins immediately put his own stamp on the School. Class singing was introduced, along with Nature Study for the junior forms, Physics joined Chemistry on the curriculum, and a Resident Master was appointed. An undated '*Prospectus of Endowed Grammar School, Bangor*' is held (in negative) by the Public Record Office for Northern Ireland.<sup>8</sup> From certain deletions and handwritten additions, it is possible to date it fairly precisely to the Autumn of 1924, and so it paints a comprehensive picture of the School near the beginning of Mr.Wilkins' Headmastership. There is a photograph of the College Avenue building on the front cover and the document also features photographs of 'Bangor Bay', (taken from the bottom of Victoria Road and showing Edwardians on the promenade), and of 'Bangor Swimming Baths', (taken from Pickie Terrace, showing yachts in the Bay and the town in the distance). It reads:

### *'School Income:*

*As the income of this School, apart from Fees, depends on the Grants made by the ~~Intermediate and Technical Boards~~ Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland, and as the amount of these Grants is determined by the number of hours of attendance made by each pupil during the year, it is expected that no boy, who is loyal to the school, will absent himself from any class, except for the strongest reasons.*

### *'School Curriculum:*

*Writing, Reading, Spelling, History, Geography, English Grammar, Drawing, English Literature, [Nature Study, Choral Singing] (added), Latin, Greek, French, German, Science and Mathematics.*

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<sup>8</sup> P.R.O.N.I., T1812/8

*'Science and Drawing and a Modern Language shall be regarded as compulsory subjects for all boys over the age of 12 years, who are sufficiently advanced to profit by such instruction; departures from this rule will be allowed only for very adequate reasons.*

*'Certificate of Character:*

*No boy is received into the School, who is unable to secure a satisfactory certificate of character from the Head Master of his last school.*

*'Preparation of Lessons:*

*A class is held in the School every evening except Saturday for the preparation of lessons. Strict supervision is exercised by the presiding master and assistance is given if necessary. A charge of 5s.-0d per term is made for the advantages afforded by this class. The Headmaster advises parents who are in a position to superintend the study of their boys to keep them under their personal oversight at home.*

*'Timetable for Evening Study*

<i>Lower Preparatory Class</i>	<i>6.30-8.00 p.m.</i>
<i>Preparatory Class</i>	<i>6.30-8.30 p.m.</i>
<i>Junior, Middle and Senior Grade Classes</i>	<i>6.30-9.00 p.m.</i>

*'Extras:*

	<i>s d</i>
<i>Terminal Subscription to Games</i>	<i>1-0 per term</i>
<i>Terminal Incidental Fee</i>	<i><del>1-0</del> 2-0 per term</i>
<i>Terminal Contribution to Laboratory Expenses</i>	<i><del>1-0</del> 2-0 per term</i>
<i>Annual Fee for Drawing Materials</i>	<i>2-6 per term</i>
<i>Laundry</i>	<i>12-6 per term</i>
<i>Pew Rent</i>	<i>2-0 per term</i>
<i>Physical Drill</i>	<i><del>5-0 per term</del></i>
<i>[Choral Singing</i>	<i>3-0 per term] (added)</i>
<i>[Library</i>	<i>6 per term] (added)</i>

- N.B.* (1) *A reduction of 10% is made in the school fees in the case of two or more brothers.*  
 (2) *Six weeks notice or an equivalent payment must be given prior to the withdrawal of a pupil from the School*  
 (3) *All fees are payable in advance at the beginning of each term.*  
 (4) *All boys are required to wear the school cap.*  
 (5) *No reduction of terminal fees can be made for temporary absences from school.*  
 (6) *All boys ~~over twelve years of age~~ without exception are expected to obey the Rule of the ~~Intermediate Education Board~~ Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland, which requires a Certified Extract from a Public Register of Births to be lodged with the Headmaster on their entrance or as soon as possible thereafter.*

*'School Terms:*

*The complete school year consists of 4 terms, which begin on: 1<sup>st</sup> September, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1<sup>st</sup> February and 16<sup>th</sup> April.*

*'School Hours:*

*extend from 9 a.m. till 3.30 p.m. for the more advanced classes, with an interval of 65 minutes from 12.25 30 for dinner or luncheon. The first section of the ~~Lower Preparatory Classes~~ School is dismissed at 3 p.m. and the second section at 2.30 15.*

*'Fees for Resident Pupils:*

*Boarder from ~~£12-10-0~~ £16-16-0 per term (including tuition in all essential subjects on the school programme).*

*'Weekly Boarders from ~~£9-10-0~~ £12-12-0 per term.*

*Day Boarders – Dinners are provided for ~~£2-12-6~~ £3-10-0 per term (5 days a week).*

*~~No arrangement for dinner can possibly be made for any period shorter than a term. The Headmaster would be exceedingly glad if all parents without exception should make provision for~~*

~~their boys having dinner at home. The recess is sufficiently long to permit of that arrangement except indeed in the case of those who come long distances by rail.~~

*'Fees for Day Pupils:*

*Under 12 years of age – from £2-5-0 to £2-10-0 per term. (This includes Writing, Spelling, History, Geography, English Grammar, Drawing, Arithmetic, Algebra, [Nature Study, Choral Singing] (added), and Elementary French.*

*'Over 12 years of age (unless for boys in the Lower Preparatory Grade, whose fee will be £2-10-0), £3-10-0 per term.*

*'Bangor Endowed School  
(known also as Bangor Grammar School)  
was founded in 1856. The present*

*School Buildings*

*were erected in 1906 on an elevated and healthy site quite close to the shore of Ballyholme Bay, Bangor. They include a large Assembly Room, finely equipped Physics and Chemical Laboratories (designed for 20 students), and six spacious classrooms, with perfect ventilation.*

*'The Residence, Crosby House*

*in connection with the School affords accommodation for boarders, but only a very limited number can be received.*

*'The Preparatory School*

*Provision is made in this department for boys from ~~nine~~ eight years of age, or even a little earlier, provided they can read and write fairly well and understand the simple rules of arithmetic. There is a special class in certain elementary subjects for those in this section who, for sufficient reasons, have failed to reach a standard of knowledge commensurate with their years.*

*'In the Upper School*

*Pupils are prepared for the Intermediate Examinations, for Matriculation in the Universities, for Banks, [Civil Service] (added), and Commercial life; a sound knowledge of English, Arithmetic, and Modern Languages is given and provision can be made for instruction in bookkeeping and short-hand if desired.*

*'Governors:*

*Maude, Lady Clanmorris  
Miss Connor [J.P.]  
Lt.-Col. Viscount Bangor, D.L.  
Rev. [Canon] J.A. Carey, M.A.  
Rev. W.J. Currie, B.A.  
Robert Logan Esq., Hon Treasurer  
and Secretary*

*Rev. R.J. Morrell  
~~Rev. R.C.H.G. Elliott, M.A., C.F.~~  
[Rev. R.A. Deane, M.A.] (added)  
W. Irwin Mahaffy Esq. Solr.  
~~Matthew Crosbie Esq.~~  
[James Milliken Esq.] (added)  
[T.W. McMullan Esq., M.P.] (added)*

*'Headmaster:*

*Maurice Wilkins, M.A. Double First Honours (Classics and Modern Languages);  
Fellowship Prizeman T.C.D.; late Lecturer in Latin in Q.U.B.; late  
Intermediate and Civil Service Examiner.*

*Assistant Staff:*

*Thomas McBride Esq. R.U.I.: Science, Mathematics and Book-keeping  
Miss S.F.J. Lewis, B.A. (Honours in French and German) Q.U.B.: Modern Languages  
and English.*

*Miss M.E. Dick, M.A., T.C.D.: Geography, History, Latin, French  
G.H. Mansfield Esq. Q.U.B.: Mathematics, English, Shorthand and Games*

*Miss I.R. Small, A.T.C., I.S.T.D. (Cert.): Drawing and Nature Study*

*E.H. Emery Esq., F.R.C.O.: Class Singing*

*[Resident Master: W.A. Bell Esq., M.A. (Honours in Classics): English, Latin, History, Mathematics,  
Games] (added).*

This fascinating document provides a wealth of information, not only about practical matters such as curriculum, fees, Governors and Staff, but also something of the ethos of the School with the references to *'loyalty'* and *'a certificate of character'* and the requirement that *'the school cap'* be worn.

### THE IMPACT OF THE 1923 EDUCATION ACT

The start and the end of Mr. Wilkins' twenty-three years as Headmaster were both marked by the coming into force of Education Acts, which brought sweeping changes to education in Northern Ireland. Many of the handwritten amendments to the 1924 Prospectus were necessitated by the political changes, which were taking place in Ireland during the early 1920s.

The Northern Ireland Ministry of Education had been established in June 1921, following the *'partition'* of the island. In September, the Lynn Commission had been set up to investigate the state of education in Northern Ireland. The Lynn Commission's report led to the passing of the 1923 Education Act, by which the County Councils were made the Local Education Authorities, with important powers and duties. However the Act did recognize:

*'the vivifying influence that springs from healthy local interest, for a community, which knows what it can do or ought to do for the education of the young, will not grudge the extra expense necessary to raise the schools to the level of efficiency, which they ought to occupy.'* (Paragraph 130)

In accordance with the *Lynn Commission's* recommendations, government aid was to be distributed in proportion to the control that schools accepted from local authorities. Existing voluntary schools, such as *Bangor Grammar School*, which wanted to retain their independence, would have teachers' salaries paid by the State.

The Minister of Education, the Marquis of Londonderry, was the guest of honour at Mr. Wilkins' first Prize Distribution in March 1925 and he spoke about the opportunities afforded by the new Education Act, which was to come into full operation several months later. He also brought with him a prize to be presented to the boy who was considered *'the best in all things, work, conduct and games'*; it was awarded to James Martin Imrie.

On that occasion, Mr. Wilkins spoke of having assumed his new role at *'a most difficult moment for all the schools in Ulster – the moment of transition from the old conditions of existence to the totally new set of circumstances created by the new Education Act [which] prescribed far-reaching changes in the management of schools, in school finance and the payment of staffs, and in curricula'*. He declared that he thought teachers *'scandalously underpaid'* in the past and expressed his satisfaction that there was now, following the government's acceptance of Lord Burnham's recommendations in 1925, *'the prospect of something better than hopeless poverty, as the ultimate reward of those who train the pick of the nation's youth'*! He also expressed delight that there was now *'a new and liberal scheme of grants, to be earned, not on the old objectionable basis of annual examination results, but by general courses of class-work approved by the inspectors, and a satisfactory total of daily attendances for each individual pupil in the school year'*. As a result, the new courses, the increase of salaries – and a piano for Mr. Emery's music classes – had been financed, not by an increase in fees, but by nothing more than *'a trifling and unavoidable rise in "extras"'*, which were detailed in the Prospectus. He also announced the introduction of a class for *'very young boys from eight or even seven years of age'*, which was accommodated in *'the teachers' staff room – an unsatisfactory makeshift'*. Numbers had grown so rapidly, that the timetable had had to be re-written during the year. Two years later, in 1927, Mr. Wilkins felt that the School was badly in need of *'a new and much larger Assembly Hall, a new laboratory for physics, an adequate Common Room for our increasing staff, and more extensive cloakroom accommodation'*, and to make available extra teaching space, the Boarding Department was closed, although existing boarders were accommodated *'elsewhere, at a convenient distance from the School'* and were supervised by two of the teachers. (Mr. McBride was

among those who regretted the end of boarding, commenting to Old Boys in 1935 that *'he was convinced that, if a suitable boarding establishment were set up, under the direction of a house master, it would be a great advantage, both to the numbers and to the importance and dignity of the School'*). Nevertheless, the School continued to flourish and not even a scarlatina epidemic in October/November 1928, which forced a three-week closure of all the schools in the area, could slow down the progress of the School.

The new Ministry of Education took control of schools on 1 August 1923 and would in future inspect schools. In 1925 the Intermediate Examinations were replaced by the Junior and Senior Certificate Examinations, which had the result, said Mr. Wilkins, of *'making every member of staff work like an Egyptian bondsman every minute of the week'*. Perhaps the most noticeable effect of the new regime was the addition of the phrase *'subject to the approval of the Ministry of Education'* each time the Governors took a decision, although Mr. Wilkins did acknowledge that the Ministry *'is showing itself, on the whole, tolerant and human in the application of its numerous regulations'*.

In addition to encouraging Physical Drill, the Ministry made *'Manual Instruction'* a compulsory subject. This began in 1925 in the workshop of the *Technical School*, (by the Principal, John Pyper), under the supervision of Mr. T. M. Kelso on Saturday mornings, because of the difficulty of finding room *'in an already compactly-filled time-table'*. In return, the *Technical School* was allowed to use a room in the School, and the piano for Music lessons, and the Governors agreed to pay two-fifths of Mr. Kelso's salary. A prize for carpentry was awarded at the following year's Prize Distribution. By 1932, when there were twenty subjects in the Senior Certificate Syllabus, the School was teaching fifteen of them. Six years later, the School entered pupils for the first time for the Cambridge Certificate examinations, which were an intermediate stage between Junior and Senior.

Mr. Wilkins commented that, *'from the standpoint of the philosophic onlooker, it seems an undoubted evil that the present system tends to steamroll all the schools to a common model – all teaching much the same thing under almost exactly similar conditions'*. He should have lived to witness the *'Common Curriculum'* of the 1990s! His main criticism was,

*'the lack of co-ordination between the elementary schools and our system, whereby every year boys come to us between the ages of 13 and 16, too late. These pupils come ignorant of any language other than English and, generally, of any mathematical subject save arithmetic. . . . It is obvious . . . that only in the largest schools would it be possible to form special classes for these pupils. The result is that with the best efforts . . . , our teachers can do full justice neither to these latecomers nor to the other pupils whose rate of progress they retard. I am glad that . . . the Minister of Education . . . [has] appealed to parents and headmasters of elementary schools to send on to secondary schools pupils intended for secondary education at an early age – eleven or twelve years and certainly not later than their thirteenth birthday'.*

The School Register for the 1920s shows the wide age-range in the different classes: the Lower Preparatory class had boys from 9 years of age to 14 years of age and the Preparatory class from 11 to 15, and in 1927 a separate class was set up for *'boys of 15 and over, who were for any reason backward or slow at study'*.

### **THE WILKINS 'TEAM'**

Mr. Wilkins, who seems to have had several nicknames including *'Ghostie'* and *'The Kiss'*, taught some Latin and English, and he also took a small Greek class, which included his son Roderick and Thomas Barbour, in 'S' Room. Mrs. Wilkins too played her part preparing lunches, served in the Common Room, for a dozen or so staff and pupils who travelled to School from a distance. For the senior boys she also organised Saturday evening dances in 'A' Room, to which girls

from *Glenlola* and *Collegiate* were invited. (If the evening was cold, Mr. Wilkins himself lit the coal fire). She also kept a few hens in the timber garage erected beside Crosby House.<sup>9</sup>

Paul Wilkins (1928-1939) recalled:

*'At the start of the autumn term my father's great task was the construction of the TIMETABLE. The timetable existed in the form of five foolscap-sized sheets of heavy cardboard, one for each day of the week. There was a column for each form, from Form 1 to Sixth Form, including 3B, 3A, 4B and 4A, and the periods were arranged in rows, 40 minutes per period. Before the term began a new blank sheet, carefully ruled out would be pasted on each board and would thus blot out the timetable of last year, and this blank would be filled in, in pencil, during the first week, with many an erasure and re-think and much whisking in and out of classrooms for teacher consultations. The object all sublime was to achieve 100% satisfaction of the needs and desires of all the staff and boys, of the requirements of the Ministry, and of his own ideals, within the iron constraints of time and physical space. . . . When complete, he would draw out and paste onto the boards the five charts in red and blue ink, and in each space would be marked the teacher, the subject and the classroom. Any amendments that might be needed later on in the year would be done by pasting over particular spaces and marking the new details.'*<sup>10</sup>

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ENGLISH A	ENGLISH C	ENGLISH A	ENGLISH A	ENGLISH A
ALGEBRA B	ALGEBRA A	ALGEBRA C	ALGEBRA A	ALGEBRA A
GEOMETRY G	GEOMETRY G	GEOMETRY G	GEOMETRY G	GEOMETRY G
HISTORY F	HISTORY B	HISTORY B	HISTORY C	HISTORY B
LATIN X	LATIN B	LATIN B	LATIN A	LATIN B
RECESS - 65 mins.				
LATIN B	ARITH. B	ARITH. LAB.	LATIN F	FREE X
GEOMETRY A	GEOMETRY F	GEOMETRY A	GEOMETRY F	GEOMETRY A
FRENCH C	FRENCH X	FRENCH C	FRENCH G	FRENCH A
PRACTICE				

William Wilson's 1931-32 Timetable, written on the inside back cover of his Rugby Club Fixture Card. He was a pupil from 1925-1934.  
(Preserved by his widow, Mrs. Elma Wilson)

The day began at 9 a.m. with Assembly in 'A' Room, when Mr. Wilkins would 'whisk in on the dot, his gown billowing in the breeze behind him. He always moved like a streak of lightning, and the flying gown was his trademark', recalled his younger son.

## STAFF

When Maurice Wilkins took up his post in October 1923, he inherited five members of staff and he soon appointed two more.

Thomas McBride had already taught at the School for twenty-three years. Affectionately known as 'Baldy', Mr. McBride, a native of Ballymoney, was described as an 'angular' man, who despite putting the fear of God into the boys by throwing a hard duster and using the cane, was popular enough to have been presented with 'a handsome clock in a mahogany case', as a token of

<sup>9</sup> Roddy Wilkins, in conversation with the author, April 2002; reminiscences of Ronnie Boston, July 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Wilkins, loc.cit.

appreciation from the boys of the School in 1920. The author's father, John Gray, a pupil at the School from 1924-1927, recalled:

*'On one occasion he had been preparing an illustration on the board, when he suddenly called out, "Mr.Gray". (I had not been paying attention). "Come and show the boys once again my illustration." So I went forward to the board and drew a chalk line north to south, and after surveying it for a moment, I gingerly reached for the duster and rubbed it out and substituted an east to west line. That was as far as I tried to go. "Mr.Gray", he snapped, "Do you know how to mesmerise a hen? You draw a chalk line on the pavement, and leave it standing with its beak touching the white line, and it will stay there for ever!"'*

He regularly gave a Special Prize for Mathematics and continued to teach Science, Maths and Bookkeeping until he reached the age of retirement in 1932. Despite his age, the Governors felt that it was *'in the interest of the School'* to keep him on, but the Ministry of Education would only permit him to teach for 18 hours a week, and so he continued as a part-time teacher, receiving some of the credit for R.Edgar McNeilly's *'splendid feat'* in coming first in the Northern Ireland Civil Service examination in 1935.

Mr.McBride was also an entertaining after-dinner speaker. At the 1935 *Old Boys' Association* Dinner, he pointed out that, since 1907 *'all the assistant masters who came to the School came in a state of single blessedness and every one of them with the exception of one – and he heard this one also was steering for disaster – developed a peculiar form of heart disease and passed over to the other side – the matrimonial side. Eight bachelors had been converted into eight benedicts. Could any matrimonial society beat that?'*

Although he officially retired from teaching in 1936, when he was offered the post of Assistant Secretary to the Board of Governors, *'the Peter Pan of schoolmasters'*, as he was called in 1937, did give bookkeeping lessons to at least one boy who was due to take the Bank of Ireland examination. Finally, in 1939, he was forced to relinquish his work for the Governors *'on the ground of a serious breakdown in health'*. He expressed his regret at *'the severance of a long-standing connection with the active life of the School'*. Mr.Wilkins spoke of *'the immense significance'* of Mr.McBride's contribution to the School over a forty year period, saying that the full story of all that he had meant to the School *'would fill volumes'*, and the *Old Boys' Association*, of which he was President for several years, presented him with a bureau with an inscribed plaque. Speaking on that occasion, Sam Claney said that,

*'Perhaps the greatest played by Mr.McBride was during the period immediately after Dr.Conolly's headmastership, when the School passed through a critical period in its history, and it is safe to say that we might not have had a Grammar School at all today, and most certainly not in such a flourishing state, if it had not been for Mr.McBride's loyalty.'*

Mr.Hawtin, *'Senior Assistant Master since Mr.McBride's retirement'* recalled that *'among the staff "Russell was Russell and Hawtin was Hawtin", but there was no such man as "McBride" - it was always "Mr.McBride"'*. In his reply, Mr.McBride, speaking just two months before the outbreak of another World War, said that,

*'It has been with mixed feelings of sadness and pride that I have often, at the end of the day when the School had been dismissed, gone round the classrooms and read, carved on the desks, the names of those who, in their boyhood days had sat there, but who, in their manhood, had given their all for the cause of God and Country and now sleep peacefully 'neath the red poppies in the fields of Flanders'.*

In 1944, at the age of 82, he gave *'a most interesting talk'* to the Association, dealing with personalities and events in his early years at the School, *'enriched by well-told stories, mostly in humorous vein'*. Unfortunately, the text of his talk was not preserved. A keen sportsman, he

remained Patron of the *Grammarians' Rugby Club* until his death on 1 December 1945, aged 83. He had lived long enough to see another 39 Old Boys die in war. Rev.Dr.W.J.Currie, minister of *First Bangor Presbyterian Church*, where Mr.McBride was a member of the Kirk Session, paid tribute to his *'wisdom, together with his friendly nature, his sympathetic disposition, his kindly humour and his eagerness to be helpful'*. Mr.Hawtin, who had known him for almost twenty years, recalled that, *'While Mr.McBride inspired terror in the wrongdoer and did not beat about the bush in telling a boy what he thought about him when he did not approve of his behaviour, he enjoyed their respect and admiration. He had a dry sense of humour and a caustic wit which the boys appreciated'*.<sup>11</sup>



Mr.Thomas McBride (1900-1936) in 1929

Miss Sarah Frances Jocelyn Lewis, (*'Ma Lew'* to generations of boys – although not to eight year old John McKibbin, who lived near her on Princetown Road and whom she *'escorted to and from school every day'* during his first year), had begun teaching at the School in 1911. A tall lady, who used the cane and always dressed in severe black, with a white collar, *'the dragon of 'C' Room'* is remembered as a *'strict, but effective French teacher'* and in 1932 her Junior Certificate pupils finished 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> out of around 1,000 candidates. She also helped with the *Dramatic Society*, for many years she ran the Library in 'F' Room, (it having been moved there from 'H' Room in 1930), and in her final year, 1944-45, she was given one of the new Posts of Special Responsibility, worth £30, making her salary £405 p.a. *'excluding bonuses'*. Mr.Wilkins, ever the gentleman, escorted Miss Lewis home across Bangor when she had finished supervising Evening Prep., until it was discontinued in 1932. Ten years later, it is remembered, she took afternoon detention, calling it her *'afternoon tea party'*, which could last until 6 o'clock, as she seemed to be in no hurry home.<sup>12</sup> In fact, she was a good friend of the Wilkins family and Paul remembers how different she was on social occasions, *'with a very quick wit, frequently barbed, and sparkling conversation. She was a wonderful person to have at parties, for thinking of exciting games, organising them and throwing herself into them wholeheartedly. . . . The only time I saw her lose her cool was the day Hitler defied the world and invaded Poland; she was spitting with rage at the impudence of this contemptible little man'*. When she was forced, by severe neuritis, to relinquish her duties, Mr.Wilkins recalled *'her abounding energy, her intellectual vigour, her keen wit and splendid teaching powers, so well known to generations of B.G.S. boys during her nearly 35 years teaching service'*. He also remarked that she had *'always hit hard at stupidity or misconduct but she was respected for it.'* On at least one occasion, neither he nor Mr.Rawlings could dissuade her from detaining Ernest Kemp's Sixth Form French class for an hour and a half's detention for misbehaviour, despite it disrupting 1<sup>st</sup> XV practice. Miss Lewis enjoyed a long retirement, dying in 1975.

<sup>11</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 8 July 1939 and 8 December 1945.

<sup>12</sup> Correspondence from John McKibbin, March 2002; reminiscences of Ronnie Boston, July 2002 and of Brian Sheil, September 2002.



Miss S.F.J. Lewis, B.A. (1911-45) in 1935



Miss Lewis in 'C' Room in 1937 with W.F.E. Gault who was killed in 1941, while serving with the R.A.F. (Photograph by Dr.E.M. Patterson [1932-38])

Miss Isabella Roberta Small was a gifted artist, who had taught part-time at the School since 1909. At one time she taught in six schools, including *Bangor Grammar*, *Glenlola*, *Sullivan Upper* and *Baymount*, a Prep. School on Seacliff Road. Paul Wilkins said that he '*would never forget her constant injunction when we were drawing. "Fill your space!"*'. She is recalled as '*quietly unimpressive, but a good drawing and painting teacher*', and this is supported by the frequent reference to outstanding results achieved by the boys, particularly in Drawing. In 1925, for example, the School gained 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places in Drawing in the Junior Certificate. (Charles Henry Godden, who came 1<sup>st</sup>, was the first of Mr.J.S.Godden's five sons to attend the School. In 1945, Mr.Godden presented an Ulster landscape watercolour by Frank Egginton, as thanks to the School for having educated his sons over a 23-year period!). There were also frequent successes in the *Royal Drawing Society* examinations; twice the School won the *Society's* Silver Star for Art and in 1938, E.M.Patterson was awarded a Silver Star for his Geographical Contour Map. In 1926, Mr.Wilkins said that '*in this subject we can claim to stand first among all the schools in the north of Ireland*', a feat repeated in 1927, when the School had five out of the top seven results in Ulster, and in 1937, not for the first time, she earned the Governors' congratulations. Of course, not all her pupils were gifted; on one occasion she told a pupil that the best part of his picture was the border round it!

The first Biennial Art Exhibition was held in the School in January 1927; in it the pupils depicted scenes from books they had read, such as *Treasure Island* and *The Merchant of Venice*. In addition there were Nature Study and Geography sections.<sup>13</sup> In 1929, the Exhibition was opened by Miss Rosamund Praeger, the noted local sculptress. In 1932, the future architect of the 1960 extension, H.A.Patton won the prize for Pottery, presented by Miss Lewis's mother. Miss Small's room, 'K' Room, was '*accessed through 'G' Room*'. In 1931, running water was installed in the room, which must have made her job somewhat easier! As with Miss Lewis, she assisted with the *Dramatic Society*. Even after Miss Small retired in 1939, after almost thirty-one years, she continued her association with the School by presenting an annual prize for Drawing. When she died in 1955, the School was represented at her funeral by Mr.Hawtin, Mr.Johnson and two senior boys.

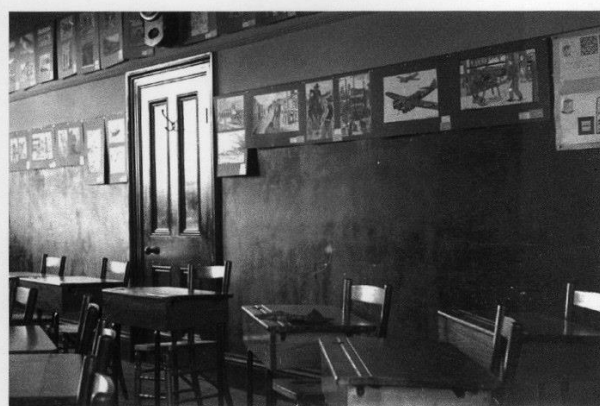
<sup>13</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 29 January 1927.



Norman Hughes, Roddy, Paul and Pat Wilkins and others are studying Art with Miss Small.  
On the back are the words, 'With kind regards from I.R.Small'.  
(Photograph and names provided by the late Pat Wilkins).



Miss I.R.Small, A.T.C., I.S.T.D.  
(1909-1939) in 1935.



Exhibition of sketches in 'K' Room in 1938.  
The door led through to Crosby House.  
(Photograph by Dr.E.M.Patterson [1932-38])

George H.Mansfield had attended the School in the early years of the century. He joined the staff in 1921 and retired in 1953, by which time, he was teaching the grandchildren of some of his first pupils. Like Mr.McBride, 'Pot' Mansfield, as he was known, had no degree, but he taught Maths, English and Shorthand, and he is remembered as '*a kindly father figure for new boys in Forms I and II*'. Paul Wilkins wrote: '*These little boys tended to make a lot of noise and in the afternoons after a hard day, poor Mr.Mansfield used to press a cold ruler to his forehead and beg us to be quieter because his head was aching so. He had a big green bicycle with a Sturmey-Archer three-speed gear . . . . He wore pince-nez spectacles, and when he took them off for cleaning I was sorry to see how red and sore his nose looked where they pinched him*'. He also coached the Medallion XV for some years, and in 1925 Mr.Wilkins praised his '*cheerful perseverance*'. He presented the prizes at the Connor House Sports Day in 1953, shortly before he retired after 32 years service. He received a Lump Sum of £675-4-6 and an annual pension of £253-5-0. When he died in 1962, the following tribute appeared in *The Gryphon*: '*Modest and unassuming by nature, he always gave his best, and the many generations of Bangor boys who passed through his hands look back on him with a considerable degree of affection. With his passing, another page has been written in the history of the School*'. The author's father recalled, with sympathy rather than with malice, that '*he was no teacher and the boys made a fool of him*'. Nevertheless, that had not prevented him, circa 1935,

from sending three boys to the Railway Station to bring Sidney Downey, who lived in Helen's Bay, back to detention in 'A' Room, when he went '*absent without leave*'.



G.H.Mansfield (1921-52) in 1924



Mr.Mansfield measuring the long jump in the School Field in 1937  
(Photograph by Dr.E.M.Patterson [1932-38])



Miss M.E.Dick, M.A. (1920-1933) in 1927

Miss Mary Elizabeth Dick joined the staff in 1920. She taught a range of subjects, including History, Geography, Latin and French. It is remembered that she was not very good at keeping discipline, and that the boys were inclined to make fun of her. E.M.Patterson recalled:

*“Ma Dick” was a charming and gentle grey-haired lady whose well-intentioned teaching of the boys was skilfully frustrated by those same boys using every form of noisy indiscipline that they could think of, carefully gauged so as not to reach the Head's ears. Ma Dick's reputation for her inability to control a class was firmly established when I went to the Grammar School in 1930 [sic], the senior boys making sure that the innocents of the First and Second forms knew the situation and perpetuated it. None of us would ever have dared to have behaved in such a cheery way when Baldy McBride or Ma Lew turned towards the board; we reckoned that some form of annihilating thunderclap would follow’.*<sup>14</sup>

Towards the end of her career, she chaired a '*French Circle*' for senior boys; its discussions, in French, were published in the *Spectator* – in French! When she retired in 1933, she was presented with a gramophone. Her retirement necessitated a redistribution of teaching

<sup>14</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 15 October 1982.

responsibilities, which resulted in the School reaching, as closely as possible, the Ministry of Education's ideal of a specialist teacher for each subject; English, Mr.Hawtin; French, Miss Lewis; Science, Mr.Russell; History, Mr.Haire; and Geography, Mr.Johnson.

Mr.Wilkins' first appointment was Ernest Heathcote (later Doctor) Emery, who took choral singing classes from November 1923. When a boy's voice broke, he was sent to Miss Lewis for extra French. The following year, the School acquired a piano at a cost of £43-10-0. In 1926 he was paid at the rate of 6/6<sup>d</sup> an hour and he began giving piano lessons to the boys at 2 guineas a term, the Governors to get 25%. In 1929, he was given an additional 25 hours to train '*monitors and pupil-teachers*'. Having come to Ireland from Manchester in 1919 after war service, Dr.Emery, Organist and Master of Choristers in Bangor Parish Church for almost forty years until his retirement in 1960, taught at the School part-time until 1956. In 1950, he composed the music for the School Song.



W.A.Bell, M.A. (1924-26) in 1926



E.H.Emery, Mus.Doc., F.R.C.O., F.T.C.L.  
(1923-56) in 1936

A year after Mr.Wilkins' arrived, he appointed a Resident Master, Wilson A.Bell. A native of Cookstown, he had graduated in Classics from *Queen's College Galway*, and had taught in *Cavan Royal School* and in England, before joining Mr.Wilkins at *St.Columba's College*. As well as teaching English, Latin and History, he took '*Physical Drill*', having '*much past experience of O.T.C. work*', and he helped to coach both the 1<sup>st</sup> XV and the 1<sup>st</sup> XI. Roderick Wilkins recalls his father's disapproval of Mr.Bell's habit of enjoying a drink or two on a Saturday night, while the author's father, aged 16 when Mr.Bell left, claimed, less diplomatically and probably with considerable exaggeration, that '*Mr.Bell was a heavy drinker and he left for Sullivan having got into trouble for his drinking*'. In fact, he '*left*' in 1926, to become Headmaster of *Sullivan Upper School* in Holywood. He subsequently became Headmaster of *Down High School* in 1933, and of *Ballymena Academy* from 1938 until his death on V.E.Day.

# BANGOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL

(Known as BANGOR ENDOWED SCHOOL).

BOYS are received from the age of eight, and prepared for the Northern Ministry's School Leaving Certificates, Banks, Civil Service, Commerce and the Universities. Every boy receives individual attention. Vacancies for **BOARDERS**.

Headmaster—**MAURICE WILKINS, M.A., T.C.D.** Late of Q.U.B.

## ASSISTANT STAFF—

Resident Master—**WILSON A. BELL, Esq., M.A.,** (Hons. in Classics)  
—English, Latin, History, Games.

**THOS. M'BRIDE, Esq., R.U.I.**—Science, Mathematics, Bookkeeping.

Miss **S. F. J. LEWIS, B.A.** (Hons. in French and German), Q.U.B.—  
Modern Languages, English.

Miss **M. E. DICK, M.A., T.C.D.**—Geography, History, Latin, French

**G. H. MANSFIELD, Esq., Q.U.B.**—Maths., English, Shorthand, Games.

Miss **I. R. SMALL, A.T.C., I.S.T.D. (Cert.)**—Drawing, and Nature Study.

**E. H. EMERY, Esq., F.R.C.O.**—Class-Singing.

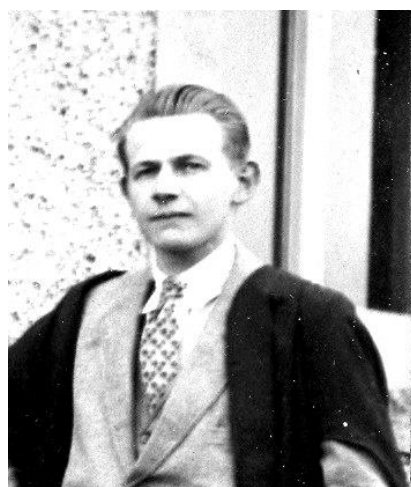
**PROSPECTUS ON APPLICATION.**

Advertisement in the *County Down Spectator*, 3 January 1925

In 1925, S.S.N. 'Stoker' Pierce, who had 'left the mark of his influence in bygone days under Mr. McFeeters', returned to teach Maths, Geography and English. During his five years on the Staff, he acted as assistant librarian to Miss Lewis, helped the Headmaster with administrative work and also assisted with rugby, coaching the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Medallion XV's. His two sons, Reginald Stokes and Cecil Bryan, attended the School. He left the School in 1930 to take up a post in *Belfast Royal Academy*, where he was a colleague of George Heuston. Although not one of the longest-serving members of staff, he was clearly remembered with some affection for, when he died at the end of 1953, the Governors and Staff sent a floral tribute, while Mr. Heuston and Mr. Hawtin attended his funeral. *The Gryphon* recalled that Mr. Pierce 'concealed the kindest and most understanding of personalities beneath a stern exterior'.



S.S.N. Pierce, B.A. (1925-30) in 1930



A.L. Hawtin, M.A. (1926-66) in 1927

As the number of boys on the roll rose, reaching 158 in 1926, so the teaching staff continued to grow. That year, Arthur Leslie Hawtin was appointed to teach English and Latin, having taught briefly in *Lurgan College* and *Sullivan Upper*. An Oxfordshire man and Oxford graduate, he is remembered by Paul Wilkins as 'not at all in sympathy with our provincial ways, and for him anything Irish was automatically inferior to what they had in England. In particular he couldn't stand our Irish grammar'. During a career spanning forty years, Mr. Hawtin – always known as 'The Bird', some say from his habit of walking around the classroom with his hands behind his back holding his gown bundled up like a tail – made an outstanding contribution to the School. In his early years,

he assisted with the Medallion XV, the Under-13 XV and the 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket team. In fact, during his first year on the Staff, he and Mr.Pierce also cut the grass on the playing pitches and marked out the lines! He was appointed Vice-Principal in 1946, but perhaps his most lasting legacy was the *Debating Society*, which he set up shortly after he was appointed. Some twenty years later, it was he who began *The Gryphon*. Like Mr.McBride, Mr.Hawtin had taught three generations of some families; towards the end of his career, he is said to have told one unfortunate boy: '*You're as bad as your grandfather – when he wasn't asleep in class*'. Particularly fond of the heat, he is reputed, on one occasion, to have scorched the bottom of his academic gown, when standing too close to the open fire in 'F' Room. On his retirement in 1966, *The Gryphon* contained an 'Appreciation' of 'A.L.H.', which concluded that: '*His warm, genial personality, quick gift of repartee and sound judgement won him the respect and affection of both staff and pupils*'; it ended with an extract from Chaucer, his favourite poet:

*'A large man he was, with eyen stepe,  
A fairer burgeys is ther noon . . .  
Boold of his speche, and wys and wel y-taught  
And of manhood hym lakkede right naught  
Eek thereto he was right a myrie man.'*

Sadly, he was not spared to enjoy a long retirement; just four years later, *The Gryphon* recorded his death.

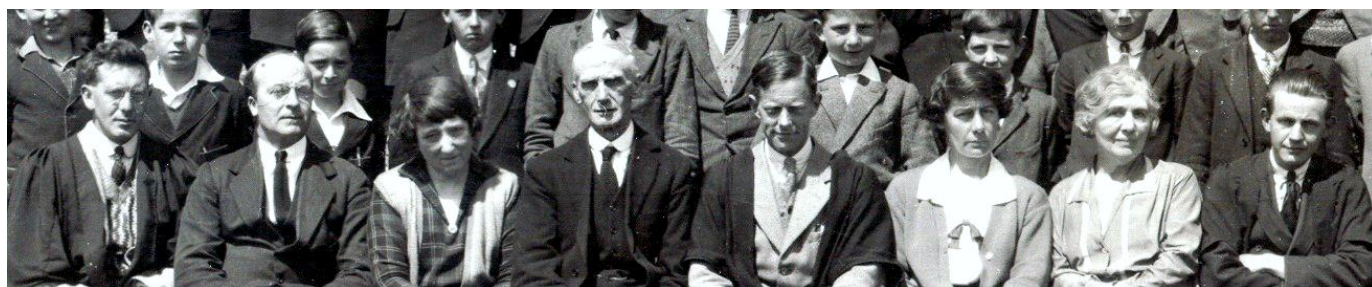


Messrs.Russell and Hawtin  
presiding over the *Debating Society*.



Mr.Hawtin on the distinctive platform  
at the front of 'F' Room in 1937.

(Photographs by Dr.E.M.Patterson [1932-38])



The Staff in the 1927 panoramic school photograph:

Mr.Pierce, Mr.Mansfield, Miss Small, Mr.McBride, Mr.Wilkins, Miss Lewis, Miss Dick and Mr.Hawtin.

When Robert Ernest Russell, like Mr.Wilkins, a Dubliner, who had played rugby for Palmerston, joined the Staff in 1927, he became not only a teacher of Maths and Science, but also Games Master, taking rugby, cricket and athletics. For several years he was Secretary of the *Ulster Schools' Athletics Championships*. He and Mr.Hawtin lodged together when both were still bachelors. A man of small stature, he was nicknamed '*Oscar*', after a character in a newspaper strip cartoon. Mr.Wilkins raised a laugh at the 1930 Sports Day, when he described the

organiser, Mr. Russell, as *'the giant who carried them all on his back'*. Roderick Wilkins recalls, without intending to link the two ideas, that *'he could not keep order in class and he was very popular'*, while Roddy's brother Paul remembers him as *'a delightful man'*. Nevertheless, he did, apparently, administer *'two slaps on the head'*, when he heard Julius Holland call out, *'The Wee Man is coming'*. He resigned in 1939, following his appointment as Headmaster of *Ballyclare High School*, where he maintained his interest in sport, serving as President of the Ulster Branch of the I.R.F.U. in 1958. He also kept in touch with his former school, returning to attend the unveiling of the Memorial to his former pupils who had perished in the Second World War and as Guest of Honour at the 1959 Prize Distribution. He applied unsuccessfully for the Headmastership in both 1947 and 1954. He retired from *Ballyclare* in 1966 and he died in 1981 at the age of 76.



R.E. Russell, B.Sc. (1927-39) in 1935



'Oscar', the cartoon character, from whom Mr. Russell derived his nickname.



Mr. Russell in the Laboratory in 1937, with Blackburn, Gibson, Savage, and Gault.  
(Photograph by Dr. E. M. Patterson [1932-38])

John Edwin Haire, who was appointed in 1931, was (according to Paul Wilkins):

*'a self-made man in every way, who had started off as a Bangor boy in humble circumstances, worked his way up through public elementary school, got himself educated and trained and finished the job off with an almost faultless elocution, that is to say an English accent. His great mistake . . . was to have taken a job in his home town where everybody knew his history . . . and we, I fear, gave him less respect than he merited . . . but as a young man he was, let's face it, pretty bumptious'.*

Although known as *'Bunny'* *'to his few friends and many enemies'*, 30 years later he claimed that he suspected that Norman Handforth was responsible for his first nickname, *'Cherub'*. While at the School, he was particularly associated with the *Dramatic Society*, which he founded.

*'He put a notice on the School notice board, which was then on the wall of the corridor opposite 'A' Room, asking for volunteers. Mad impetuous fool that I was in those days, I put my name down. A few days later, Bunny Haire sent for me and told me in no uncertain manner that, "You*

*have voice not fit to be heard on any stage or platform". Therefore instead of being an actor, I became a stage hand'.*

During the 1930s, he produced a number of plays, the first of which was 'X=O', by John Drinkwater (1882-1937), a classical one-act play about the futility of war, with Harry St.G.Gallagher playing the leading character, at the 1932 Prize Distribution in the Dufferin Hall. John McKibben recalled:

*'The walls of Troy had been quickly manufactured that afternoon by Miss Small and her senior Drawing class. . . . After the Prize Distribution was over, we hurriedly cleared the platform, drew the curtains and set up the "Walls of Troy". Edgar McNeilly and I lay supine on the dirty platform of the Dufferin Hall, completely hidden from the audience, holding down the "Walls of Troy", while Mervyn McDonald, thinly disguised as a Greek, used the small of my back to vault over the walls of Troy and stab to death Alex Reid, thinly disguised as a Trojan.'*

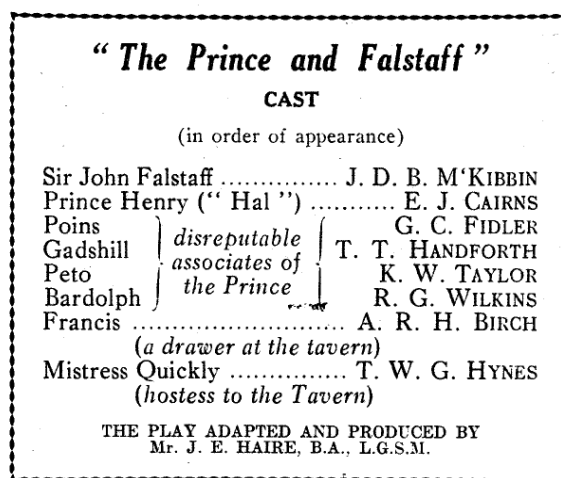
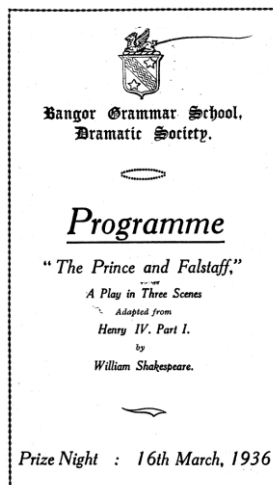


J.E.Haire, M.A., L.G.S.M.  
(1931-41) in 1938



'X=O', Prize Night 1932 (Mr.Haire's first production)  
S.J.Whyte as A Sentinel, H.St.G.Gallagher as Salvius, F.A.Reid as Phonax, R.W.Lightbody as Capys, L.W.Wells as Servant and R.M.McDonald as Ilius

In 1936 he adapted. Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, with E.J. (Teddy) Cairns playing Prince Hal and John D.B.McKibbin playing Sir John Falstaff.



Programme provided by J.D.B.McKibbin, O.B.E. (1930-36)

He also wrote and produced several full-length plays, and Christmas pantomimes were presented in School without the benefit of staging, curtains or electric lighting. *The Gryphon* commented in 1965, 'The present Dramatic Society is a monument to his keen interest, enthusiasm and hard work'. He was also 'the chief instigator', along with Ronald Ablett, behind the setting up, in 1934, of *Bangor Amateur Dramatic Society*, which for a while in the 1940s used *The Barn* for making scenery.

While he is remembered for his theatrical productions, he perhaps recalled more clearly the occasion, during Evening Prep., when a brick was thrown through the window of 'A' Room. He taught History in 'B' Room and John McKibbin recalled his teaching methods as being '*spectacularly different from everyone else's. He taught History dramatically (and noisily) with full class participation*'. He is said to have divided his classes into two countries - Northland and Southland. Each country had a King, a Senior Baron, Barons, Knights and Serfs. The number of homeworks you did each week depended on your rank. You could move up or down the rankings by challenging other members of the class; for example if you thought someone did not know the poem they had had to learn, you could challenge him and if you were right you moved up a rank and he moved down. Paul Wilkins recalled that he:

*'kept a spotless white handkerchief tucked into the sleeve of his jacket and he would pull it out with a flourish every now and then to polish his specs. We organised a group tease once, whereby every boy was to have a hankie up his sleeve, and as soon as Edwin pulled out his handkerchief, we were all to pull out ours. The planning and expectation of this exploit were far more enjoyable than the execution, which turned out to be a feeble affair, more embarrassing to us, I think, than to him'.*

He also found time to take tennis and to assist with the *Debating Society*. In 1936, he gained his Master of Arts degree. He married, in June 1939, Dr. Suzanne Kemeny from Hungary, who wore '*an adaptation of the official Hungarian court dress*' on her wedding day. A Ph.D from *Budapest University* and a D.Litt. from *Trinity College Dublin*, she was the author of several books on English drama. They spent their honeymoon in Hungary and Germany, enabling Mr. Haire to read a paper at *Bangor Rotary Club*, in which he gave his impressions of the Nazi regime. It is said that he was the first master at the School to own a motor car and to learn typewriting. He joined the R.A.F. in 1941 and tendered his resignation to the Board of Governors in 1945, having become the Labour Member of Parliament for High Wycombe in the General Election of July that year. A year later he was made Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Dominions Secretary. In 1965, *The Gryphon* recorded that, after losing his seat to the Conservatives, he was created a Life Peer as Lord Haire of Whiteabbey and became '*one of the leaders of the booming caravan industry*'. He died in 1966 aged 57, while on a lecture tour in Canada, less than a year after addressing the *Old Boys' Association* as Guest of Honour at their Annual Dinner.<sup>15</sup>

Another member of staff to leave an impression on his young charges was William Thomas Willford Johnson, who came to the School in 1931. Born in Scunthorpe in 1906, he graduated from *Durham University* in 1928, having studied maths, physics, chemistry and geology. Nicknamed '*Solstice*', because of the way he pronounced the word in his flat Lincolnshire accent, when he was first appointed the Ministry of Education refused to recognize him as a teacher of Geography to senior classes, but were satisfied after he took a Summer course. Tommy Johnson is remembered by some as '*a strict disciplinarian*' and by others as '*a bullying tyrant, who frequently hit boys on the back of the head*'. On one occasion, it is said, W.D. (Billy) Mayne took hold of his wrists; Mr. Johnson told him, '*You are a boy who has got too big for his boots*'. When sentencing some unfortunate boy to after-school detention, he would say, '*And you'll stop in tonight [sic]*'. He was, however, an excellent teacher, principally of Geography (in 'G' Room), with Fred Dougall gaining 1<sup>st</sup> place in Northern Ireland in Senior Certificate Geography in 1936. Roderick Wilkins remembers him as '*a good addition to the sports' staff; he once smashed a cricket ball through one of the Crosby House windows at deep square leg*', and following Mr. Russell's departure, Mr. Johnson became Games Master. On Sports Day '*his administrative presence was always rather splendid and colourful when he appeared from the Common Room clad in white trousers and the purple-red and white striped blazer of his university cricket club*'. A keen sportsman, he belonged to the

<sup>15</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 8 July 1939, 13 January 1940, 20 October 1956 and 3 December 1965; John McKibbin, loc.cit.; Paul Wilkins, loc.cit.; Godfrey Lindsay, in a letter to the *County Down Spectator*, 17 November 2005.

local golf and cricket clubs, and for some time he was Vice-Captain of *Bangor Rugby Club*. In 1946 he was appointed Head of Geography and Games. Following Randall Clarke's appointment as Headmaster in 1954, 'a clash of personalities' is said to have developed and Mr. Johnson 'reluctantly sought opportunities elsewhere' and he left the School in 1957 to take up the Vice-Principalship of *Beretun Secondary Modern School* in his native Lincolnshire. On his departure from Bangor, *The Gryphon* commented that 'his influence in the classroom and on the playfields was profound. Generations of past pupils will remember him for the very high standards which he introduced in every aspect of school life, for his skill as a teacher, and for his flair for meticulously drawn maps and diagrams in coloured chalks'! When he returned as Guest of Honour at the *Old Boys' Association Dinner* in 1968, he commented that he had been expecting the invitation as he had watched with interest the selections over the years: 'Russell, Rawlings, Haire, Hawtin – and I said to myself, well, they keep on lowering their standards – one day they'll get down to my level, and sure enough you have'. Having been appointed Headmaster, he retired, in 1970 saying that he was 'glad to be out of it'; within a month he had suffered a debilitating heart attack and he died in 1982.<sup>16</sup>



W.T.W. Johnson, B.Sc., H.Dip.Ed., F.R.G.S.  
(1931-57) in 1936



J.M. Rawlings, B.Sc. (1933-1950) in 1935

Variously described as 'a big, bluff, breezy, pink-complexioned man with lots of energy' and 'extrovert and friendly', John M. Rawlings arrived in 1933, having been told, he later claimed, that the School was planning a new Preparatory Department. Known by some of his young charges as 'Piggy', he took charge of Maths and Science in the junior school and shared, with Mr. Haire, the English teaching in the Preparatory Department. As well as his teaching duties, he took Games; Paul Wilkins recalled one occasion 'when we were playing soccer under his supervision, my hands got very cold. He took my poor little frozen mitts into his enormous glowing slabs of meat and rubbed them so vigorously I thought they would drop off'. Mr. Rawlings also acted as Stage Manager for many of 'Bunny' Haire's plays and produced the plays after Mr. Haire's departure. In 1940, he was appointed Head of the Mathematics Department and he is remembered as one of the best teachers at the School during the war years. In 1946 he exchanged that post to become Head of *Connor House*. He resigned in 1950 to become Head of *Somerton House* in Belfast. He was a loss not only to the School, but also to the town, for he was a founder member of *Bangor Drama Club*, o/c of 825 *Flight A.T.C.*, sometime captain of *Bangor Cricket Club*, holding the record for aggregate runs in a season for almost twenty years, and a member of *Bangor Hockey Club*. He was also an excellent soccer player, but it would have been frowned upon for a teacher to play soccer for a professional club; Ronnie Boston once saw him convert a rugby ball over the posts in Ward Park, from the corner flag – in his shoes. He maintained his connection with the *A.T.C.*, becoming Commanding Officer of the Northern Ireland Wing in 1958 with the rank of Wing

<sup>16</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 15 October 1982 and 22 November 1968; *The Gryphon*, June 1957.

Commander. He returned in 1964, when he was Guest of Honour at the *Old Boys' Association* Dinner.<sup>17</sup>



Messrs. Haire, Russell, Johnson and Rawlings emerge from 'X' Room after a break  
(Photograph by Dr. E. M. Patterson [1932-38])



Miss E. K. Addy, A.T.C., B.E.L. (Ind. Des.)  
(1939-1973) at the time of her retirement

Miss Edith K. Addy was initially appointed at the end of May 1939, as a substitute for Miss Small during her illness, but in July her appointment was made permanent at a salary of £132 p.a. She had been teaching in *Belfast School of Art* before coming to Bangor and until 1948 she was shared with *Glenlola*. She designed the new School Crest and was responsible for a beautiful memorial to those Old Boys who lost their lives in the War, which now hangs in the Headmaster's study. She presided over the Art Department until her retirement in 1973. In 2002, at the age of 96, she told the author that she was '*still fighting fit*', but sadly she died shortly afterwards.

In 1926, '*Scripture*' lessons were introduced in the lower school; they were taught by two of the Governors, the Rev. W. J. Currie and Archdeacon A. W. Barton. Over the years, a number of local clergymen, or Catechists as they were known, undertook this work. One Church of Ireland and one Presbyterian, they visited the School on two days a week. Among the Church of Ireland catechists was a local curate, the Rev. C. H. P. Lyndon, another Governor, who was an enthusiastic sportsman, even turning out to play with the boys, which made him very popular.

The increased administrative work led to the appointment of a School Secretary in 1928 to assist the Headmaster. Adeline Mitchell, a former pupil, held the post from 1930 to 1936, and following her resignation, her father Barker Mitchell presented a cup for cross-country running. In February 1939, Gladys Henderson was appointed and she was to look after the administration of the School's affairs until her retirement in 1961, in 1944 being praised by the government auditor for her bookkeeping.

Thomas Nicholls, who had been general handyman in Dr. Conolly's time and Caretaker from at least 1906, retired in 1924, to be replaced by William Styles. '*Jiggs*', as he was known, was a 55-year-old Englishman, who had served in the Royal Navy for 35 years until his retirement as a Petty Officer First Class in 1919. Paul Wilkins remembered him as. '*a thickset, powerful man, not very tall. . . . The boys never dared give him any cheek*'. He was initially paid 15/- a week. (His

<sup>17</sup> *The Gryphon*, June 1950; reminiscences of Ronnie Boston, July 2002; *County Down Spectator*, 4 April 1958; *County Down Spectator*, 30 October 1964.

retirement in 1938, did not end the Styles family's connection with the School, for his grandson, Bertie, joined the School as a pupil in 1947, became a member of staff in 1956, and was Vice-Principal from 1966 until his retirement in 1993.) 'Styles', as the Governors referred to him, was succeeded as caretaker by Fred Conway, whose starting salary was £2 a week. Among the caretaker's duties was the lighting of a coal fire in each classroom during the winter months, however it was often break-time before they had much effect. Fred was a delightful character, and the author, who for many years lived in a house on Clifton Road, since demolished to make way for the *Clarke Hall*, has happy memories of being carried in his wheelbarrow, on a bed of grass, freshly mown from the cricket pitch.



William Styles



Fred Conway

## PUPILS

Pupil numbers rose rapidly during the 1920s. In September 1923, just before Mr. Wilkins took over, there were 96 boys on the roll, and by the end of the decade, that number had doubled. The 1930s saw a small reduction in numbers, but once the war broke out, numbers again rose rapidly. In 1941 there were 180 pupils and by the end of the war there were over 250, including around sixty in *Connor House*.

Between 1923 and 1928 senior girls were admitted to the School. Most stayed no more than two years, although Mr. Wilkins' daughter, Patricia, attended the School from the age of 11 until she was 15. The other girls were: Susanna Eveline Brice, Josephine Arthur Graham, Barbara Isabel Brunette Lord, Sylvia Florence Elizabeth Lord, Margaret Arthur Marshall, Margaret Mellor, Margaret Joan Mercer, Adeline Mitchell, Eileen Annie Nicholson and Kathleen Doris Taylor. Barbara and Sylvia Lord were cousins of Mr. Wilkins, from southern Ireland.



A group of pupils circa 1924

Apart from the loss of 39 Old Boys during the Second World War, the School suffered the death of several pupils during Mr. Wilkins' Headmastership. Brent Andrew Musgrave Harris, the only son of the Rector of Groomsport, Rev. Ernest M. Harris, B.D. and the late Frances M. Harris, died of pneumonia on 21 December 1927, aged 13. *'He was a boy of exceptional gifts and a bright scholastic future was prophesied for him'*, said the *Spectator*.<sup>18</sup> Harry Irwin Gaw died in January 1933, aged 15. Only ten days earlier, he had been playing full-back in a practice match for the Schools' Cup, but he developed influenza, pleurisy and double pneumonia; at his funeral, which took place on the day the match was to have been played, relays of boys from the School carried his coffin along Ballyholme Road from his home. At that year's Prize Distribution, Mr. Wilkins made a moving tribute to him and mentioned the fact that, just the previous year, he had gained Distinctions in eight subjects in the Junior Certificate and had come 8<sup>th</sup> in Northern Ireland in French.<sup>19</sup>



H.I. Gaw in the Medallion XV 1930-31

On 17 August 1939, David John Gibson died after a short illness, aged 11. He was the younger son of Mr. David C. Gibson and his wife Jeannie, who lived on Groomsport Road. He was described as *'a loveable boy, popular with his schoolmates and keenly responsive to his teachers'*.<sup>20</sup> Former pupil, Stanley Wallace died, aged 25, of injuries received in the *Belfast and County Down Railway* accident of January 1945, when one train ran into the back of another at Ballymacarrett, killing twenty people. One pupil, Kenneth Douglas, lost his father in the same disaster.

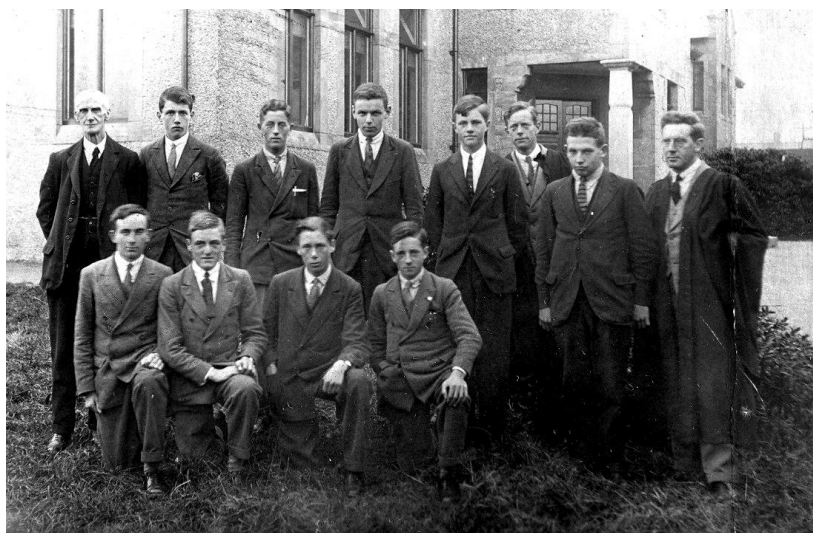
<sup>18</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 21 December 1927.

<sup>19</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 28 January 1933.

<sup>20</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 18 August, 1939.

Mr. Wilkins reckoned that over 1,200 pupils had passed through the School during his time as Headmaster. Inevitably, therefore, it would be impossible to mention the examination and career successes of every pupil. For that reason, only those achievements, which would appear to have been the most outstanding, have been included in this section.

Just six months after taking up his post, Mr. Wilkins could celebrate the first of literally hundreds of successes by his pupils: in 1924, 15 year old J.A.T. Smyth came first out of 150 in the Scholarship Examination for *De Beer School for Modern Business Training* in Belfast. Two years later, in 1926, H. McN. Cowan, having passed the Junior Certificate examination 'with distinction' in the first year of that examination, was awarded a university scholarship by *Down County Regional Education Committee*, although the authorities subsequently claimed that he was several days too young to hold it; the law, said Mr. Wilkins, 'would appear to be a four-footed animal'! (In 1930, Cowan gained a First Class Honours degree, and an M.Sc. two years later).



Sixth Form 1929

Mr. T. McBride, G. F. Hampton Wynne, George E. Hambly, George L. Charters,  
Charles H. Godden, Mr. M. Wilkins, David S. K. Coulter, Mr. S. S. Pierce  
William H. Poulter, J. Graham Pyper, W. John L. Cairns, J. E. Paisley Rodgers

1927 saw a number of noteworthy achievements. J. G. Pyper was 1<sup>st</sup> in Northern Ireland in Junior Certificate Maths and was awarded a Junior State Exhibition. In 1930 he received the French government's Prize for coming 1<sup>st</sup> in Senior Certificate French, winning a State Exhibition. He went on to graduate M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O. in 1935 and he became an F.R.C.S. in 1946. Also in 1927, C. H. Godden came 1<sup>st</sup> in Junior Certificate Art and was awarded a Junior State Exhibition, while Richard McCrudden and J. C. Taylor won two out of the six Agricultural Scholarships to *Queen's University*, worth £100 p.a. for 4 years. In 1930, both gained their B.Sc. degrees, and their Bachelor of Agriculture degrees in 1931. McCrudden followed this with an M.Sc. in 1932, when he was also awarded the *Musgrave Research Studentship* in Biology at *Queen's*, while Taylor was appointed as a Research Officer with the *Horticultural Association* in 1933 and an Assistant in Agricultural Botany at *Queen's* in 1940.

Not to be outdone by his brother Charles, Fred T. Godden came 1<sup>st</sup> in Junior Certificate Maths in 1928, taking 1<sup>st</sup> place in Northern Ireland in both Senior Geometry and Trigonometry two years later, winning State Exhibitions on both occasions. In 1928, J. L. E. Millen won the *Burke Memorial Prize* and in 1930 a State Exhibition; he was awarded his M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O. in 1935. Also in 1928, J. M. Imrie came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Northern Ireland Civil Service examination, gaining the highest marks in French and in the Interview. That year, former pupils, Frank McKee, Samuel

Conolly and W.M.Mahaffy passed their final solicitors' examinations. McKee and Conolly later became Governors of the School; Mahaffy was killed in the Second World War.

In 1930, C.T.Ingold, one of Mr.McFeeters' pupils gained his Ph.D. and the following year, one of his contemporaries, N.S.Capper was awarded a D.Sc. (Terry Ingold went on to become Professor of Botany at *Birkbeck College, University of London*, between 1944 and 1972, and was expressing an interest in his old home town during the Summer of 2002, at the age of 97). Also in 1931, Douglas Cochrane came first in Junior English out of 1,200 candidates, while former pupil Noel McFeeters was awarded his M.Sc. and A.J.P.Alexander, gained an M.D. with Commendation; he went on to become an M.R.C.P. in 1932 and an Honorary Teacher in Medicine at *Bristol University* in 1936.

In 1932, R.A.Pyper, a brother of Graham, came 13<sup>th</sup> in Northern Ireland overall in the Junior Certificate, winning an Exhibition of £15 for 2 years. By 1946, Robert Pyper had gained his M.D. Also in 1932, former pupil G.P.Carson was awarded a B.Sc. degree, which he followed up with an M.Sc. and the *Musgrave Research Studentship* in Biology at *Queen's* two years later. Eric Morrow finished first in his year in the final *Law Society* examinations and T.F.Glass, who was President of the Students' Representative Council at *Queen's*, gained his LL.B. with First Class Honours, finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the final *Law Society* examination in 1933.

That year, 1933, Mr.Wilkins' elder son, Roderick, was in the top 5 in five separate Junior Certificate subjects and 8<sup>th</sup> in Northern Ireland overall; he also came 2<sup>nd</sup> in Ireland in the *A.P.C.K. Synod Exam* in Greek Testament. He went on to win a State Exhibition in 1935 and a Sizarship and Entrance Exhibition to *Trinity College Dublin* in 1936; in 1940 he gained a First Class Honours degree in Classics. (The only previous Entrance Exhibition to *Trinity* direct from the School had been won by Jack McFeeters – also the son of a Headmaster – some twenty years earlier).<sup>21</sup> J.S.Fleming took 1<sup>st</sup> place in Senior Certificate Drawing. The Goddens were again making their mark with Fred gaining a B.Sc. in Civil Engineering, with 1<sup>st</sup> class honours and brother Charles, his B.A. and 6<sup>th</sup> place in Imperial Civil Service exam. While the School was turning out university graduates every year, including a number of medical doctors, G.N.Taylor, had the distinction of graduating B.Ch. at *Trinity*, with second place in his class in 1933.

Another distinguished doctor among the Old Boys of the School was Colonel William Porter McArthur, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., Honorary Physician to the King, Deputy Director-General Army Medical Services; in 1935 he was gazetted Major-General, appointed Commandant *Royal Army Medical College* and awarded a D.Sc.(Honoris Causa) by *Queen's University, Belfast*. That year W.B.Crouch became the second Old Boy, to be elected President of the Students' Representative Council at *Queen's* and Harold McKee came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the final *Law Society* examination.

Having come 3<sup>rd</sup> in Junior Geography in 1934, Fred Dougall came 1<sup>st</sup> in Senior Certificate Geography in 1936. He went on to take 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Civil Service examination. The following year William P.Barbour came 1<sup>st</sup> in Senior Certificate Latin and Greek; he was also awarded a Sizarship and Entrance Exhibition to *Trinity College Dublin* and in 1942 he gained a Senior Moderatorship in Classics, with the *Brooke Prize*. Also in 1937 Edgar McNeilly took a first in Law at *Queen's*, Edgar Haslett won the *Mahon Prize* as the best student in the finals at *Stranmillis Training College* and Norman Handforth took first place in Ireland in the final Chartered Accountants examination. Jack McFeeters and Graham Pyper both took their M.D.s in 1937, Pyper winning the Gold Medal and McFeeters the *Hastings Clinical Prize*, making him the top general practitioner in the United Kingdom. Pyper, along with Norman Hughes and the

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<sup>21</sup> Mr Wilkins explained that an Entrance Exhibition was a test of general excellence in a whole range of subjects (Classics, French, English, Mathematics, History and Geography).

brothers John and James Millen, who gained his M.D. with a Gold Medal in 1943, were all on the medical staff at *Queen's* at the time. At the same time, V.D.Skeeles won the all-Ireland *Fairchild Pharmacy Scholarship*.



The whole School in 1936  
(photograph by W.B.Baxter [1935-43])

Vincent Denard began a distinguished academic career by coming 5<sup>th</sup> in Junior Certificate out of 1361 candidates in 1938; in 1941 he won a Sizarship in Classics and an Entrance Exhibition and he went on to achieve first place in the First Class in Classics at *Trinity College Dublin* in 1945, winning a Gold Medal and the *Brooke Prize*; he was appointed as a Lecturer in Classics at *Sheffield University* in 1946. In 1939, Paul Wilkins, the Headmaster's younger son, followed his brother by winning an Entrance Exhibition to *Trinity* and in 1941 he won the *Francis Spring Prize* in the Engineering Department and the *Edge Prize* in Geology; two years later he came first in his Civil Engineering finals, winning the *David Clark Prize*.

In 1940, W.R.Laurenson came 1<sup>st</sup> in Northern Ireland in Senior Physics and W.G.Godden finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in Art, a tribute to Mr.Leroux and Miss Addy, both of whom had joined the Staff only the previous year. (Mr.Wilkins commented that in the 14 years prior to 1940, the School had gained seventeen 1<sup>st</sup> places in Senior Certificate subjects and seven in Junior.) That year, S.N.Christie finished first in his class in the final LL.B examinations at *Trinity*. In 1944, while serving as a Sub-Lieutenant with the *Fleet Air Arm*, he became the first 'Britisher' to be admitted to the Bar of Trinidad. Also in 1940, J.C.Pedlow won the *McMillen Bursary* at *Assembly's College*, before being ordained as a Presbyterian minister. While Assistant in *First Bangor Presbyterian Church*, he helped with Games at the School and acted as one of the Catechists. R.J.Godden's B.Sc. at *Queen's* was unremarkable except for the fact that it was gained by yet another Godden! Not to be outdone by his four elder brothers, Herbert Godden came 1<sup>st</sup> in Junior out of 2768 candidates, and two years later he came 1<sup>st</sup> in Art Group II in the Senior Certificate. The following year Kenneth Mayne and Alex Moody gained First Class degrees at *Queens'*, in Experimental Physics and Chemistry, respectively. In 1944, Mayne was awarded a *Musgrave Research Studentship* at *Queen's* and J.B.Pyper won a Medal for Anatomy, before qualifying as a doctor the following year. W.N.Gaw came first in the *Bankers' Institute* examination.

In 1945 the School had a number of successes in the Certificate examinations. Miss Addy continued her predecessor's exceptional examination results when N.G.Derby came 1<sup>st</sup> in Junior Certificate Drawing in Northern Ireland, out of 2,783 candidates. Tom Huggins came 1<sup>st</sup> in

Arithmetic, while Eric Mayne won one of the two Horticultural Scholarships to *Reading University*. Jack Roundhill, a former member of the school *Debating Society*, won a silver medal for being the best speaker in the *Theological Society* at *Trinity* and he won a Theological Exhibition the following year. Stanley Good, having won the *Carson Biblical Prize* in 1944, gained first place in First Class Honours in Philosophy, winning the *Hegel Prize* for Philosophy, and the following year went on to win further awards, the *Lambert Prize* for Biblical Greek, a Foundation Scholarship in Mental and Moral Science, the *Warren Church Formularies Prize* and a Theological Exhibition at *Trinity*. At School during these years, dozens of boys gained high places in the Certificate examinations, and at university, degrees in a wide range of subjects were awarded to dozens more.

While there were many outstanding pupils attending the School during these years, it should come as no surprise that there was also a sprinkling of miscreants. Offences were often minor, such as boys trespassing in gardens adjoining the School, '*climbing the Clifton Road gate*' (until spikes were added), or dipping ha'pennies in acid and mercury to pass them off as shillings at the *Tonic* cinema.

Both Paul Wilkins and Teddy Patterson recall the latter's interest in '*chemical nasties*', (which led him to work for *I.C.I.*, before lecturing in Geochemistry at the *University of St. Andrews*), of which Mr. Russell was, apparently, '*unusually tolerant*'. '*On one occasion he made some mercury fulminate and scattered the powder around the Lab. Floor; when walked on this powder detonated with a most satisfactory loud crackle for the rest of the week, or at any rate until Styles washed the floor.*'

Dr. Patterson, writing almost fifty years later, had

*'a horribly clear recollection of making around five grams of nitrogen tri-iodine. The bell rang and I hastily hid it in a folded page of jotter paper, intending to put it in my locker, which was on the landing between 'C' and 'F' Rooms. Unfortunately I dropped it on the top flight of stairs, under the myriad feet of changing classes, and feeling anything but placid, I went on to Miss Small's drawing class in 'K' Room. It took about ten minutes for the NTI to dry out, and then a succession of small explosions began to occur, mostly on the soles of the boys' feet. The explosions had very little power, but were spectacularly noisy, and were each accompanied by a puff of purple vapour. About two minutes passed, and the door of 'K' Room swung open, and A.L. Hawtin, strode in. He ignored Miss Small and went straight to me. "Do you know anything about this, Patterson?" I was marched down to the Lab., where "Oscar", . . . the chief scientific brain in the School, was asked what could be done to stop the seemingly endless succession of bangs; "Nothing", he replied. It was worth the Saturday morning detention that I was awarded.'*<sup>22</sup>

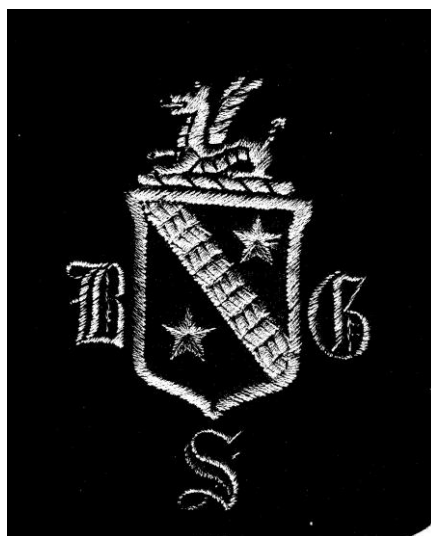
One boy '*disappeared from school after eight months irregular attendance, with no fees paid*' and several boys were expelled, one for '*insolence*' and one for '*stealing books from lockers and trying to sell them in Belfast*'. The Headmaster expelled a third boy for an unspecified offence, which even the boy's father admitted was '*filthy*'! However, the boy was young and had no history of bad behaviour, and so the Governors asked Mr. Wilkins to reconsider the expulsion, '*if consistent with his dignity . . . and, in lieu thereof, substitute a good thrashing*'! Another boy was '*asked not to return*', because he was in trouble with the police. When the Headmaster failed either to contact the parents or to suspend a boy, who had admitted to stealing, the Governors expressed themselves '*greatly dissatisfied*' with his inaction and the boy was suspended.

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<sup>22</sup> A letter from Dr. E. M. Patterson to T. W. Patton, January 1988.

## UNIFORM

Prior to 1938, caps and ties had been the only items of uniform. The author's father said that the wearing of caps was compulsory *'so as to be able to touch the peak as a sign of respect when meeting a master'*. Indeed, not wearing the cap was one of a number of offences punishable by a *'conduct mark'*, three of which resulted in Saturday morning detention. Mr.Haire told the boys, in 1935, that he *'feared the tone of the School was falling'*, and he and Mr.Johnson are credited, by some former pupils, with tightening up both discipline and uniform. A new blue and yellow cap had been introduced in 1932, although junior boys were allowed to wear the old black one, with a blue stripe running across it, *'until they run out'*. In 1937, following a serious breach of discipline, the Board of Governors held a special meeting *'for the purpose of improving the general tone of the School'*, and they accepted the Headmaster's suggestion that *'the pupils should wear a suitable uniform'*, which came into force on 1 January 1938. The blazer was dark blue, with a crest on the breast pocket. (A year later, the Governors objected to one local outfitter calling himself the *'official supplier'*; it was when that supplier was moving premises, from Upper to Lower Main Street, some 30 years ago, that the author obtained his example of the long-discontinued blazer badge).



The Blazer Badge

## ALTERATIONS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING

Around 1928, when the increase in numbers was *'taxing the capacity of the School buildings to the utmost'*, the former boarders' dormitory was turned into an Art room ('K' Room), and the following year, *'the large dining room'* became the Staff Common Room ('X' Room). 'S' Room, which had been the Staffroom, (the name was still visible, under layers of paint, forty years later), was already in use, serving as *'a Sixth Form classroom and clubroom combined'*. 'K' Room, and 'X' Room below it, formed the first extension to the original building, added around the same time that *Crosby House* was built.

John McKibbin (1930-1936) recalled the layout in the early 1930s:

*'On entering the front door of the School, there was a long wide corridor, which eventually turned to the right. Before that happened, there were two entrances to 'A' Room on the left. Between those entrances was a row of boys' lockers. On the right, immediately after entering the corridor, was a cloakroom for caps and coats. [The author's father remembered that there were not enough pegs, so that many caps ended up on the floor and at the end of the day 'it was well-nigh impossible to get your own cap; some boys got someone else's and some got none!'] Beyond the cloakroom, were the stairs to the upper floor. Then, before the right turn, was the School Noticeboard.*

*'After turning right into the continuing corridor, there was, immediately on the right, a small windowless room for cleaning materials and equipment. Next to this was the classroom ['H' Room] used most of the time by Mr.Mansfield, and the rest of the time by Mr.Emery, whose piano was just inside the door. I think the Library may also have been located here. First on the left side was the School Office, [which 'was big enough to contain the secretary, but little else', says Paul Wilkins. 'When my father went in, it was a crowd'.] followed by the exit to the lavatories and the School Field.*

*'At the end of the corridor was Mr.Russell's laboratory ['L' Room], which backed onto the Common Room ['X' Room], where I had lunch. There was no entrance to this via the laboratory; one had to go out of doors via the lavatory exit and walk a few yards to the Common Room entrance. I think the Common Room may well have been the Staff Common Room; I can recall no other.*

*'Back to the stairway. On the first landing there was only the small 'S' Room. My uncertain recollection is that it was used for teaching small classes studying some subject, which was not on the general curriculum. [Paul Wilkins remembered it as 'easily the warmest classroom in the School', with its 'monstrous gas radiator, a cast-iron tube about one foot in diameter and five feet high'].*

*'On reaching the first floor, Mr.Haire's room ['B' Room] was immediately on the left. Next to it was Miss Lewis's ['C' Room]. The landing was lined with more lockers. Turn right, and immediately on the right was Mr.Hawtin's classroom ['F' Room]. Straight on was Miss Dick's, and later Mr.Johnson's room ['G' Room]. This room overlooked both the front and the back of the School, whereas Mr.Hawtin's windows were on the front only. Through Miss Dick's room one entered by a small door into Miss Small's room ['K' Room].'<sup>23</sup>*

In 1943, the Barn, (which had been unused and '*frequented by minor mischief makers*' in the 1930s), was renovated for use as classroom accommodation and 'H' Room was converted into a Physics laboratory. In 1947, when the lack of accommodation was becoming a serious problem, the Chemistry laboratory was improved and extended, by knocking 'L' Room and 'H' Room into one (although, in 1948, the existing fireplace had to be removed, because it was blocking the view into 'H' Room, thus making it impossible to use the whole laboratory for practical work; the chimney breast is still visible in the ceiling). With the conversion of *Crosby House* in 1947 providing a new staffroom, the old Common Room – 'X' Room – was extended into *Crosby House*, thus providing another much needed laboratory.

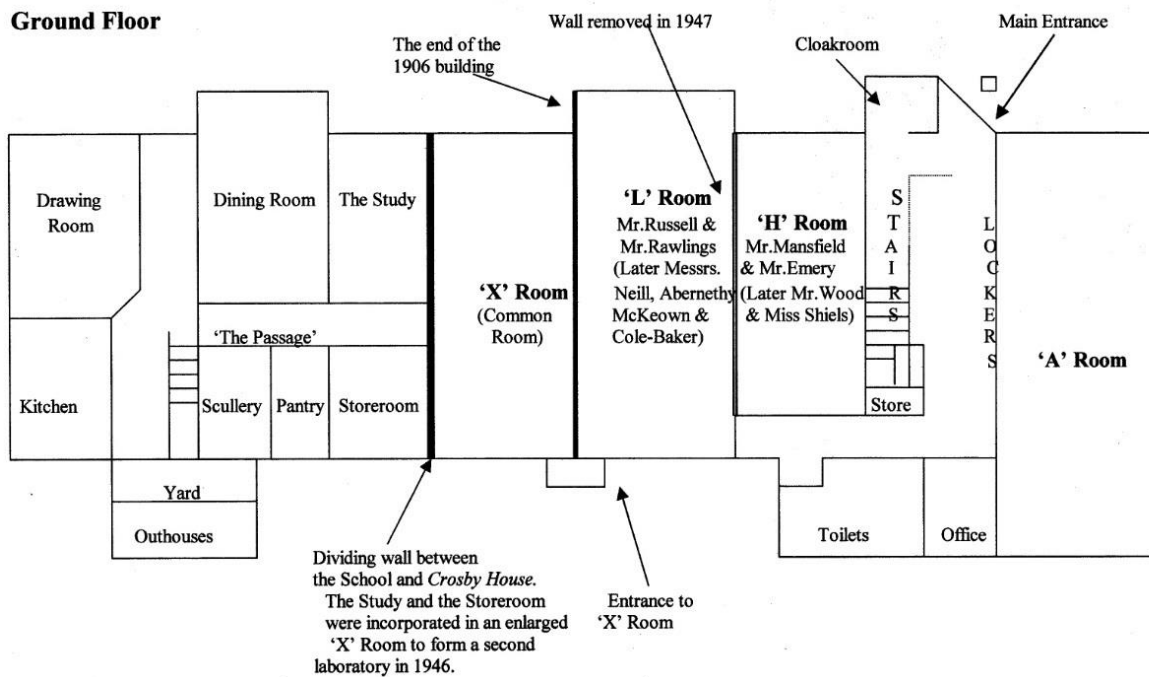


The School Field, a view which barely changed between 1914, when *Crosby House* was built, and 1960 when the first major extension began.  
(Photograph by Dr.E.M.Patterson [1932-38])

<sup>23</sup> John McKibbin, loc.cit.

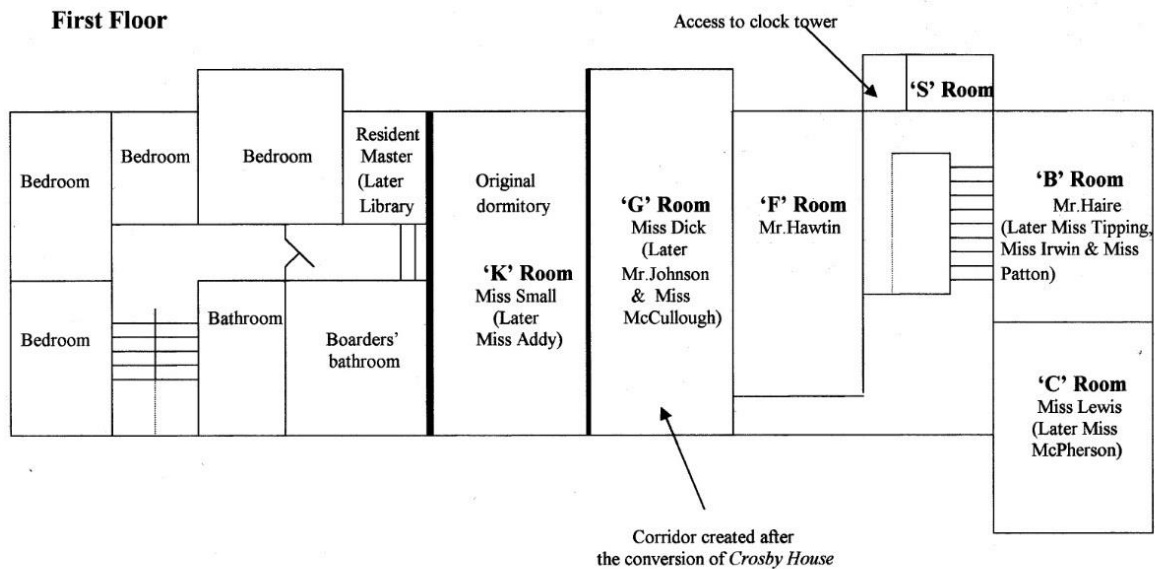
## THE LAYOUT OF THE SCHOOL IN THE 1930s AND 1940s

### Ground Floor



### THE SCHOOL FIELD

### First Floor



## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

While academic success has always been of paramount importance to schools, extra-curricular activities played a large part in the experiences of the boys; these included educational excursions to the theatre, to a Borough Council meeting, to Bangor Abbey and to a newspaper printing works, among others. For a time in the 1930s, ballroom dancing classes were held on a Saturday night in 'A' Room. Miss Phyllis James and Miss Leila Corry *'taught us the intricate steps of the waltz, quick step and tango. We had as partners the girls from Miss Harte's school [Glenlola] and Miss Weir's school [Collegiate]'*. Reference has already been made to Mr.Haire's *Dramatic Society*, but the oldest and most enduring school society is the *Debating Society*.

The first meeting of the school *Debating Society* took place in 'G' Room on the evening of Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February 1927. Mr.A.L.Hawtin, the President, outlined the usual procedures for such societies, after which A.R.Finlay moved that, *'in the opinion of this House, wireless is a blessing to mankind'*. Other speakers were Boyd Crouch, Stanley Millen, Richard McCrudden, Graham Pyper, T.F.Glass, Gordon Moody (who was later to marry Mr.Wilkins' daughter, Patricia), D.S.K.Coulter, Thomas McCrudden, Leonard Sillick, J.A.Boyd and Mr.Hawtin. The motion was carried 22 votes to 12. The following week, it was decided to move the meeting to a Friday evening and, from that point on, debates were held in 'A' Room. At the fourth meeting, on 25<sup>th</sup> February, a certain John Gray (the author's father) spoke against the motion that, *'a system of Prefects would be beneficial to the School'*. He said, almost certainly with tongue in cheek, *'in this School, the small boys are paragons of discipline and the appointment of Prefects would lead to brutal measures against ill-doers'*! (There were no Head Boys or Prefects at this time, although in 1929, Mr.Wilkins did refer to J.Graham Pyper as *'Head of Sixth Form'*. In 1932, prefects, with *'a measure of responsibility and authority'*, were introduced, *'with due caution'*, but two years later, Mr.Wilkins reported that Prefects had become *'an accepted part of our tradition and the tone and discipline of the School, now resting largely upon the goodwill and responsibility of the boys themselves, has reached a higher level than was ever before possible'*).

In 1928, Alex Devon presented a Perpetual Silver Medal for Oratory. Frank Reid and Joseph Sloss, both of whom went on to enjoy highly successful careers as barristers, each won it for three successive years. (Frank Reid had the first Minute Book bound and he presented it to the *Society* at its one hundredth meeting.) A new departure in 1938 was the invitation to the President and two boys to speak at one of the Rotarians luncheons; that year Frank Gault and Cecil Fidler spoke on *'What I think of Life'*, ironic in a way, for life was to be short for Frank Gault. The *Debating Society* returned to the question of Prefects in December 1944, when the motion *'the School Prefect System has not justified itself'* was lost by two votes. Prefects were accused of being incompetent, conceited and tyrannical, but the view that they *'had played no mean part in building up the prestige and reputation of the School'* won the day.

In February 1947, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the *Society* – its 290<sup>th</sup> meeting – a number of distinguished Old Boys took part, including F.Dougall, J.G.Pyper, R.Pyper, Max Reid, and F.A.Reid, who praised the *Debating Society*, saying that it had taught them to speak in public, to speak grammatically, to oppose popular causes and to speak for unpopular ones – skills most useful in the professional life of a lawyer. That year, for the first time, a debate with parents was held; the motion was *'That I am a better man than my father'*<sup>24</sup> The *Debating Society* met 8 or 9 times during both the Autumn and Easter terms, and has continued to do so ever since 1927. Not only does this make it the oldest School society, but also it is surely something of a record that, during the first seventy years of its existence, there were just two Presidents, Mr.A.L.Hawtin and Mr.M.R.McCord.

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<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the *Debating Society*.



The *Debating Society* Officers and Committee 1931-32

M.Wilkins, M.A. (Headmaster), R.E.Russell, B.Sc., James W.Millen, J.E.Haire, B.A., W.T.W.Johnson, B.Sc.  
 Robert L.H.Magrath, R.William Barbour (Hon.Treas.), A.L.Hawtin, M.A. (President),  
 Norman H.Handforth (Hon.Sec.), Frank A.Reid.  
 (Messrs.Magrath, Handforth and Reid were future Governors of the School)

In 1937, Mr.Wilkins reported that a *Camera Club* had been formed and that '*some boys had come to him and hinted darkly at the institution of a School Band*'. He did not indicate what sort of band it was! Ted Patterson was a founder member of the *Camera Club*, and using his miniature camera, he was able to take '*illicit*' photographs, many of which grace these pages.

## Sport

Rugby had been played at the School since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 1920s, the School was fielding a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> XV, as well as a Medallion XV and an Under-13 XV. In 1924, details of matches against *Royal [Belfast] Academical Institution*, *[Belfast] Royal Academy*, *Newtownards Academy*, *Methodist College*, *Clarence R.F.C.*, *Donaghadee* and *Bangor III XV* appeared in the *County Down Spectator*, sometimes calling the School '*Bangor Endowed School*' and sometimes '*Bangor Grammar School*'. Speaking at the *Old Boys' Association's* 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner, the new Chairman, James Barbour M.M. recalled '*the memorable occasion . . . when he and the late Jimmy Rowan (killed in the R.A.F.) had played as two fullbacks against Methody but were still beaten 40 points to 3*'. The School had been using *Bangor Rugby Club's* pitches at Brunswick Road, but from the end of 1924 it had the use of new pitches on Urban Council ground beside Ward Park, which were levelled and drained in 1932 as part of the Council's programme to provide work for the unemployed during the Depression. One of the first matches played there, in December 1924, featured the School versus Bangor IVs; both teams played three men short, and the match was abandoned early in the second half, due to the weather conditions. During the 1927-28 season, the 1<sup>st</sup> XV ventured as far as Dublin, where it defeated a team from the *Masonic School*, and narrowly failed to reach the semi-finals of the Schools' Cup, being defeated in a re-play by '*our old antagonists*', *Ballymena Academy*. That year, however, the Medallion XV did reach the semi-finals of the Shield competition, as they did again two years later. The 1<sup>st</sup> XV's Dublin trip became an annual event in the 1930s; over the years they played a variety of teams, including Mr.Wilkins' old school, *Dublin High School*. In 1945, 'A' and 'B' teams made the trip to Dublin.

P = PENALTY D = DROPPED.  
FIRST XV. FIXTURES

DATE	OPPONENTS.	WHERE	FOR	AGAINST	RESULT
			G. T. Pts	G. T. Pts	
1931					
Oct. 3	Up. Sullivan Sch.	Home	12 3	12 3	WIN
" 10	Portadown C.	Away	12 7	1 5	WIN
" 17	B.R. Academy	Away	11 8	0 0	WIN
" 21	Armagh R.S.	Home	12 9	0 0	WIN
" 31	Larne G.S.	Away	12 11	0 0	WIN
Nov. 7	Regent House S.	Home	0 1	5 5	LOSE
" 14	Methodist C.	Away	0 2	11 11	LOSE
" 21	Ballymena A.	Home	1 3	1 3	DRAW
" 28	Rainey E.S.	Away	2 6	2 6	DRAW
Dec. 5	Coleraine A.I.	Belfast	1 3	2 6	LOSE
" 12	SAND. PK. S.	Home	NOT PLAYED		
" 19	C.I.Y.M.S.	3RD HOME	16 29	0 0	WIN
1932					
Jan. 9	C.I.Y.M.S.	AWAY HOME	15 20	0 0	WIN
" 16	Regent House S.	Away	1 3	0 0	WIN
" 23	Ballymena A.	Away	0 0	0 0	DRAW
2nd R. 28	CAMBRIDGE AC.	HOME	24 27	0 0	WIN
3rd R. 6	COLERAIN A.I.	HOME	0 0	1 3	LOSE
" 13	Sandford Pk. S.	Dublin	NOT PLAYED		
" 20	Up. Sullivan S.	Away	13 14	1 5	WIN
" 27	R.B. LARNE G.S.	Home	22 16	0 0	WIN
" 27	Larne G.S.	Home	22 16	0 0	WIN
Mar. 5	Methodist C.	Home	0 0	NOT PLAYED	
" 12	Rainey E.S.	Home	8 1	3 6	WIN
" 17	Foyle College	Belfast	0 2	8 8	LOSE
" 19	Portadown C.	Away	0 3	1 18	LOSE
" 26	B.R. Academy	Home	OFF		

A page from William Wilson's copy of the 1931-32 Fixture List. It can be seen that the 1<sup>st</sup> XV was playing many of the leading schools in the Province. The booklet also contains lists of 2<sup>nd</sup> XV, Medallion XV and Extra Matches.

Handwritten are the results of House Matches. Each of the three Houses had 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> XV's and the author notes with pleasure that the School House 1<sup>st</sup> XV beat the Crosby House 1<sup>st</sup> XV in the Final. (Fixture list preserved by Mrs. Elma Wilson).

The 1930s were perhaps the first 'golden age' of sport at the School. Finally, at the thirteenth attempt, the Medallion XV won the Shield in 1936, when they defeated *Methodist College* in the final, with Rex Pedlow scoring a try, which Hugh Greer converted. It was only the fourth time in the twenty-seven year history of the competition that the Shield had been won by a provincial school.<sup>25</sup> The *Old Boys' Association* committee entertained both the Medallion XV and the 1<sup>st</sup> XV in *Hotel Pickie*, to mark the occasion, presenting honour badges to the captains of the two teams.<sup>26</sup> (It was subsequently decided that the committee might present further honour badges in the future).



The 1936 Medallion Shield-winning XV

Mr. Rawlings, R. Leslie Redman, L.R. Pedlow, R.D. McConnell, Mr. Wilkins, J.M. Ferguson, Brian Gray, G. Cecil Fidler, Mr. Russell  
J. Close, William P. Barbour, Hugh H. Greer, William N. Gaw, Maurice E. Young, Edgar Parks, W. Bingham  
Samuel Brown, W. Frank Gault  
(Bertie McConnell was to lose his sight during the Second World War, while Frank Gault and Maurice Young lost their lives).

That successful Medallion XV formed the nucleus of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV which reached the semi-finals of the Schools' Cup in both 1938 and 1939, under the captaincy of Hugh Greer, who played for

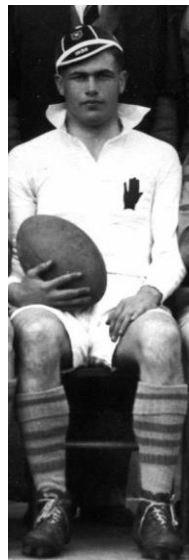
<sup>25</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 28 March 1936.

<sup>26</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 11 April 1936.

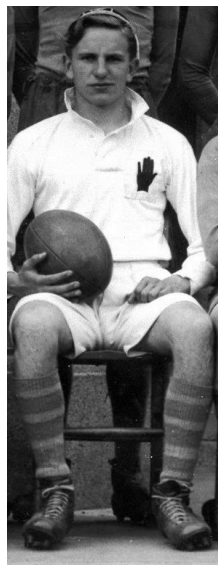
Ulster Schools in both those years. In 1939, the School was seeded as one of the four best school sides and it took a replay against *Methody* and an injury (needing hospital treatment) to William Gaw, the scrumhalf, before Bangor lost 6-0.<sup>27</sup> Hugh Greer went on to play rugby for Ulster, and Ireland. W.Boyd Crouch, Samuel Edgar and Ronnie Boston also represented Ulster Schools in rugby, in 1928-29, 1935-36 and 1945-46 respectively. Back in 1927 Alfred R.Finlay had also been chosen to represent Ulster Schools, but was prevented from playing by appendicitis. At the 1933 Prize Distribution Mr.Wilkins referred to David G.Kinghan and Harry St.G.Gallaher playing for Irish Schoolboys in their victory over English Schoolboys, Kinghan scoring three tries. (‘Buster’ Gallaher, having captained the School 1<sup>st</sup> XV, went on to captain *Bangor Rugby Club* and *London Irish* and to gain caps for both Ulster and Middlesex). These achievements are all the more remarkable in the light of Hugh Greer’s remark that, ‘*We even had difficulty in getting together two sides of fifteen for a practice match*’, in a school of less than 200 pupils.<sup>28</sup>



William B.Crouch  
Captain 1<sup>st</sup> XV 1927-30  
Ulster Schools’ XV  
1928-29



Samuel J.Edgar  
Captain 1<sup>st</sup> XV  
Ulster Schools’ XV  
1935-36  
and Ulster



Hugh H.Greer  
1<sup>st</sup> XV 1935-39  
(Captain 1937-39)  
Ulster Schools’ XV 1937-39  
Ulster and Ireland



Ronnie Boston  
1<sup>st</sup> XV 1943-46  
(Captain (1945-46)  
Ulster Schools’ XV 1944-45



David G.Kinghan  
Irish Schoolboys’ XV 1933



Harry St.G.Gallaher

<sup>27</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 18 March 1939.

<sup>28</sup> Much of the information about rugby comes from B.H.Kelly’s *Bangor Grammar School: Ulster Schools’ Challenge Cup: The Story so far* (1986).

Cricket, too, flourished. The first recorded Captain of Cricket was A.R.Finlay in 1926 and, although the lack of a suitable pitch made it difficult to arrange fixtures - cricket being played on a field belonging to Mr.Kinghan, near Groomsport until the School Field was ready, in 1928 - by the end of the 1920s, three XIs were being fielded and in 1930, Fred McMurray, Captain of the 1<sup>st</sup> XI was 12<sup>th</sup> man on the Ulster Schools' XI. The larger Belfast schools sometimes proved too good for the School XI, however. On their first visit to *Pirrie Park* circa 1933, in reply to *Methody's* 150 for 3 declared, the Bangor boys were all out for 8, including 5 extras and 10 'ducks'; R.Graham scored 3 not out and Morrison, the *Methody* bowler had figures of 7 for 1.<sup>29</sup> Six years later, Hugh Greer got revenge, scoring a century against *Methody*, hitting the ball over the School building in the process. The previous year Rex Pedlow had been the Ulster Schools' wicket keeper and Maurice Young, who lost his life in the War, was 12<sup>th</sup> Man. Inter-Provincial caps were won by William W.Miller in 1941, Norman L.Wright in 1944 and Thomas K.Allen in 1945. In 1946, Wright was 12<sup>th</sup> Man for Ulster Schools. In 1938, Mr.Wilkins had attributed the '*flourishing record of the Bangor Cricket Club . . . in no small measure to the excellent material it draws annually from those who have learned to play the game at the School*'.

#### Capped for the Ulster Schools' Cricket XI



L.R.Pedlow, capped in 1938,  
returned to coach the 1<sup>st</sup> XI in 1944



W.W.Miller (1941)



N.L.Wright (1944)



T.K.Allen (1945)

<sup>29</sup> *The Gryphon*, June 1964.

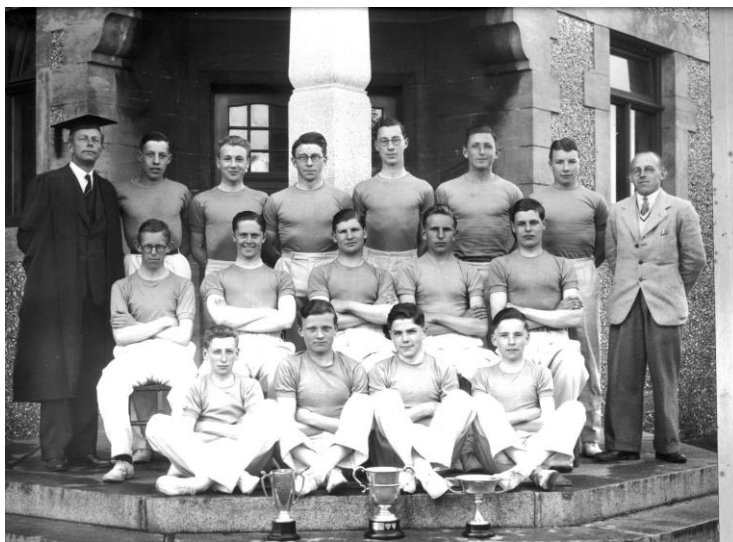


One of the earliest photographs of a cricket team: 1<sup>st</sup> XI 1926

The Headmaster, William B.Crouch, Robert .F.Pollock, H.M.Anderson, D.Gordon .Moody, George E.Hambly, Mr.Bell

Peter A.B.W.Dailey, Richard McCrudden, Alfred R.Finlay (Captain), William G.S.Milliken, James A.Boyd.  
James Taylor George McAvoy

An Athletics team was entered for the *Inter-Schools Athletic Contest* at Cherryvalley in 1924 for the first time. In 1937 the School won the Ulster Schools' Junior Athletics Cup, with Thomas 'Tucker' Mayne winning the *Ulsterville Challenge Cup* for the best individual performance. (He and R.H.Rutherford were presented with Honours blazer badges by the *Old Boys' Association* for 'distinguishing themselves' at that event.) That year for the first time the School entered a team for the *Northern Ireland Amateur Athletic Juvenile Championships*, at which Mayne won the 220 Yards and came second in the 100 Yards. In 1946, the *Hannay Bowl* for the best individual performance at the Ulster Schools' sports was won by Lee Rice.



Athletics Team (Junior and Senior) 1937

Winners of the Ulster Schools' Junior Athletics Cup

The Headmaster, E.Blackburn, J.M.Morrow, R.A.Mayne, E.J.Cairns, J.Kirk, W.M.McDonald, Mr.R.E.Russell  
R.L.Redman, M.E.Young, T.Mayne (Captain), H.H.Greer, R.H.Rutherford  
H.D.G.Hewitt, W.Cameron, W.N.Gaw, R.N.Caswell

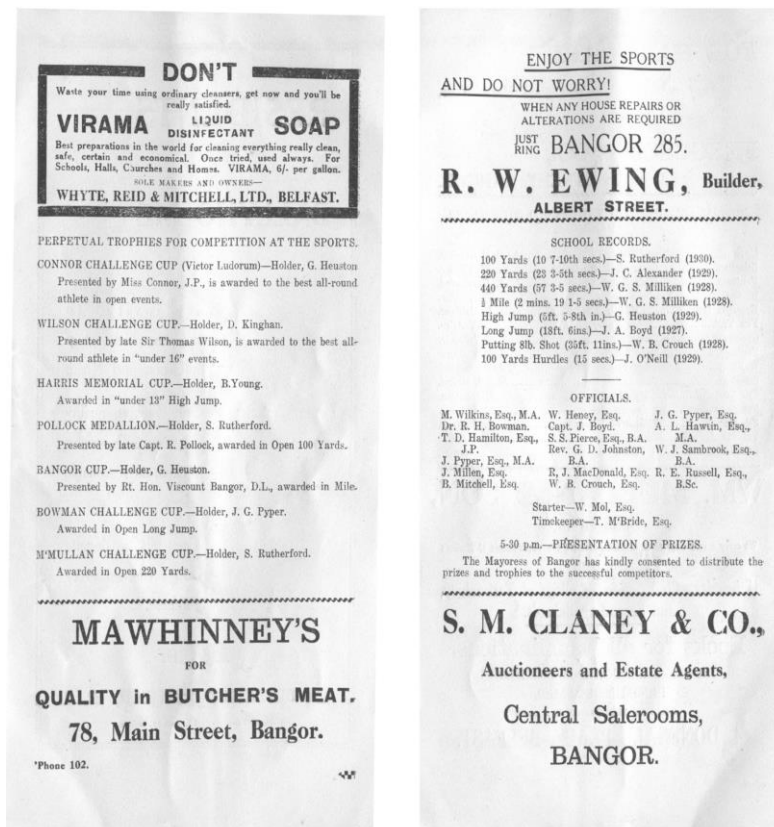
Described as '*the crowning event*' of 1923-24 was '*our own athletic sports held in the School Grounds on the last Saturday in June, the success of which was immensely aided by Miss Connor's generous gift of a beautiful Challenge Cup to be won annually by the School's best all-round athlete. The cup was won by Denis Strain*'.



Guests at the first annual Sports Day in June 1924  
(Photograph from the *County Down Spectator*)

The following year, the *Victor Ludorum* trophy was won by Alan S.Watson. The winner in 1931 was Samuel W.Rutherford, who set new records in no fewer than five events and won the Ulster Schools' 100 and 220 Yards races, breaking both records.

By the beginning of the 1930s, there was also an Old Boys' Race. In 1941, two of the first three places were taken by '*boys*' who had attended the School on the day the new buildings had been used for the first time; Major A.C.Sinclair and George Mansfield had sat on the steps together waiting for the door to be opened. The School was organised into three Houses in 1931 and Inter-House races between *School*, *Crosby* and *Dufferin Houses* became a feature of Sports Day; there was no *Ward House* at that time. By the mid-1940s, other schools were invited to send teams to take part in an Invitation Relay Race. As well as tea on the lawn, Sports Days also featured musical entertainment, often provided by the 55<sup>th</sup> *Old Boys' Silver Band* under the leadership of Mr.J.McFadden.



Pages from the Programme for the 'Annual Athletic Sports'  
in the School Grounds, College Avenue on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 1931 at 2.30 p.m.

The 24-page programmes, 'Printed and supplied free by Stevenson Advertising Service', cost 2 pence and contained 46 advertisements for Belfast and Bangor businesses, including some which still survive, such as Mawhinney (Butchers), S.D.Bell, Belfast Co-operative Society, The Athletic Stores and The Educational Company. The programme listed the 29 events, along with the names of the competitors, and the 'Musical Selections' to be played by the 55<sup>th</sup> Old Boys' Silver Band.

(Programme preserved by the late William Wilson, one of the competitors and later a Governor of the School)

From its inception, the Ministry of Education had been pressing the Governors to make arrangements for teaching Physical Drill; steps were being taken, Mr. Wilkins told his audience in 1925, but 'meantime and all the time we are going to lay our main stress on the cult of team games . . . because of the lessons of unselfishness, endurance and comradeship which they impart, and which a boy can scarcely learn in any other way'. Initially, Mr. Bell took Physical Drill, in the Assembly Room, with chairs and new collapsible desks, which were taken down and stacked against the wall as the first movements in the boys' drill. However, with the rapid increase in numbers, an Old Boy, Norman N. Neely, was appointed to take Physical Drill in 1927 and when he resigned in 1930, his place was taken by Captain J.B. Boyd, a retired 1<sup>st</sup> World War officer.

In 1929, 'Mr. Russell's latest plan' was for a Swimming Club, and in September an 'Aquatic Gala' was held at Pickie Bathing Place. Among the events were a water polo match and an 'Invitation Squadron Race' involving teams from R.B.A.I., B.R.A., Methodist College and St. Malachy's College, Belfast. The prizes were distributed by Sir Thomas Wilson, the first Mayor of the new Borough of Bangor. (Nine years later, Dr. R.M. Bowman became the first Old Boy to serve as Mayor of Bangor.)<sup>30</sup>

There were also Tennis teams from at least the 1930s, a Table Tennis team, and in 1937 a *Boxing Club*, which met on Friday afternoons in the *Borough Gymnasium*, was formed.

<sup>30</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 14 September 1929.



Tennis Team 1940

The Headmaster, Desmond Shaw, William S.Harding, Robert S.Good, Mr.J.E.Haire  
Jack Roundhill, David A.L.McKee, William R.Laurenson (Captain), Harold Calvert, Denis H.L.Reid

Although most of Hugh Greer's sporting achievements have already been mentioned, such was his contribution to that aspect of School life during the late 1930s, that it would seem appropriate to devote a couple of paragraphs to him.

Although he was on the Medallion Shield winning side in 1936, converting the try scored by Gaw, he was also on the 1<sup>st</sup> XV from 1935 to 1939, captaining that team for the two years in which they reached the semi-finals of the Schools' Cup. He represented Ulster Schools at rugby from 1937 to 1939, and went on to play for Ulster and Ireland. When the *Kiwis* rugby team toured the British Isles just after the war, they said that Hugh Greer was the best centre three-quarter against whom they had played.

He became the School's first double inter-provincial in 1938, when he played cricket for Ulster Schools; the following year, he not only scored the School's first century (for which he was presented with a cricket bat), against *Methody*, but he also captained the provincial side. That year, although he had been '*supreme with both bat and ball*', the prizes were awarded to the runners up! He was a member of the Athletics team which won the Ulster Schools' Junior Athletics Cup in 1937, won the Senior Hurdles at the Ulster Schools' Championships in 1939, and in the School Sports that year, he won the Mitchell Cup for the 12lb. Shot competition and the Connor *Victor Ludorum* Cup for the third successive year. For good measure, he also won the School Tennis trophy in 1937

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

According to Frank McKee, speaking at the 1933 Prize Distribution, the *Old Boys' Association* had first been thought of by Richard McCrudden. It had its origins at a dinner following the first rugby match between past and current pupils in January 1928. After the match, which the Old Boys won 18-0, the teams enjoyed a meal in the *Strand Hotel* on Queen's Parade, which was run by Captain Boyd, the Physical Education instructor at the School. Apologising for his inability to attend, Mr.Wilkins wrote:

*'As I understand it, this meeting has been the outcome of a spontaneous desire, on the part of both present senior boys and of certain Old Boys, to establish the tradition of permanent attachment and of service to the School of their boyhood years. I rejoice to think that the progress of the School during many years past has been such as to bring about the widespread stirring of affection and loyalty on the part of the young men and boys of Bangor to this School,*

*which bears and upholds the name of their town. . . . May I venture to express a hope that perhaps an Association of Old Boys, increasing yearly in numbers and strength, may be the outcome of your gathering'*

During the Easter vacation 1929, two former pupils compiled a list of Old Boys and in June an informal dinner was held in the *Royal Hotel* at which it was decided to form an *Old Boys' Association*. A temporary Committee, with Dr.S.Patterson Rea as Chairman, Alan S.Watson as Secretary, James C.Taylor as Treasurer, and a Committee comprising Howard K.Finlay, David S.Alexander, Richard J.G.McCrudden, J.Noel McFeeters, William G.S.Milliken, George P.Carson and Frank McKee was elected to arrange a general meeting and a design for a tie in royal blue, old gold and black was approved. A General Meeting was held on 4 June 1929 and a provisional set of rules was drawn up. The objects of the *Association*, said Rule Two, were '*to perpetuate the spirit of friendship among the members and to promote the interests of the School, as far as lies within its power*'. At the inaugural Annual General Meeting, held in the School on 17 October 1929, Mr.McFeeters was elected Patron, Mr.Wilkins as President and Mr.McBride as Vice-President. (Mr.Wilkins held office - successively President, Vice-President, Honorary Vice-President and Patron - until his death fifty years later). Dr.Rea was elected as the first Chairman of the *Association*. Membership was open to all former pupils, Governors and past and present members of the teaching staff. The annual subscription was 3/6<sup>d</sup> (raised to 5/- in 1934) and two guineas for life membership.

The first Annual Dinner in the *Royal Hotel* in March 1930. Dr.Rea, explained that the aim of the *Association* was '*to help the School and support the School in anything that was for the good of the School*'. The following year, Lord Bangor was elected Patron in place of the late Mr.McFeeters, a position held by Lord Bangor until his death in 1950, and by his son until 1956. Those present at that second A.G.M. recommended that the Committee should '*use their best endeavours to promote social intercourse among the members*', and to that end it was suggested that a dance, a golf competition and a tennis tournament should be held. It was also agreed that a Memorial Tablet should be erected to the memory of Mr.McFeeters. By 1932, when a new Old Boys' tie was designed, there were 84 members, growing to 135 by 1934 and the following year an Old Boys' blazer was introduced.

On account of food rationing during the war, no Annual Dinner was held in 1941 or 1942, but at the Annual General Meeting held in the *Imperial Hotel* in December 1942, the newly elected Chairman, George Matthews, entertained those present to refreshments. The Minutes record that, '*This was greatly appreciated and his health should be very good for some considerable time*'.

At the first Annual Dinner, Mr.Wilkins had remarked that '*it has a certain significance that the founding of the Old Boys' Association has almost exactly coincided with the expansion of the School beyond the limits of the buildings erected in 1906 and 1914. The Old Boys' Association is an omen of hope, a portent of good for the future*'. And so it has proved. From the co-option of Frank McKee to represent the *Association* on the Board of Governors, in 1932, to the present day, the Old Boys have been one of the mainstays of the School, for many years presenting honour caps and a cricket bat, as well as organising social functions, such as an annual golf competition and dances, the first of which was held in the School in April 1934, when Old Boys and their wives and friends danced to the music of *Stendal Todd and the Embassy Boys* and enjoyed a supper prepared by Mrs.Wilkins, in the Common Room. Rugby and Cricket matches, played against the School teams, also became annual events.

In addition, the *Association* made regular financial donations to the School, subsidised *The Gryphon* when its publication began, and contributed to the presentations to retiring staff, including Miss Small, Miss Lewis, Mr. McBride and of course Mr. Wilkins.<sup>31</sup>

Towards the end of the 1938-39 season, *Bangor Rugby Club* was dissolved. The loss of members, who had joined the armed services, led to a certain apathy and made worse an already difficult financial situation. The *Old Boys' Association*, from which the club had drawn much of its strength, felt that the town should not be without a rugby club and so, in July 1939, the *Bangor Grammarians' Rugby Club* was formed. A.R. Finlay was elected Chairman and E.J. Cairns, Secretary. It was agreed that the new club, despite its name, should not restrict its membership to Old Boys, although it was responsible for a considerable increase in the membership of the *Old Boys' Association*. The club was affiliated to the Ulster Branch of the *I.R.F.U.* in August 1939 and was allowed to take over the fixtures of the Bangor Club for the 1939-40 season. Many of its fixtures were against Army and Air Force teams and occasionally 'A. Soldier' featured on the team sheet, disguising the fact that members of the Forces had been asked to play in place of selected players who were unable to turn up for the match. By 1946, three teams were being fielded and that year the 1<sup>st</sup> XV, which included Hugh Greer and Sam Edgar, won the *Towns' Cup*. Eventually, in 1950, the decision was made to delete the word 'Grammarians' from the Club's name, although this did not change its close relationship with the School.<sup>32</sup>

### **THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

A *Parents' Association* was formed in July 1944, under the Chairmanship of J.P. Simms, who was also a member of the Board of Governors. In November, Mr. Wilkins addressed the members on 'The History of the Bangor Grammar School', although he was forced to admit that little was known about the first 30 or 40 years. A month later, Mr. Simms represented the *Association* at the annual *Old Boys' Association* Dinner in the *Imperial Hotel*. He explained that the objects of the new *Association* were threefold: to promote co-operation between Governors, Old Boys, parents and teaching staff; to add to and improve School amenities; and to advance the prestige of the School and help to maintain in Bangor 'a high standard of secondary education in an establishment in which the townspeople could take proper pride'. Already, seventy families had joined the *Association*.

### **FINANCE**

Payment of Ministry of Education 'capitation' grants was dependent on there being 'evidence of a satisfactory general standard of proficiency throughout the School and of regularity and punctuality of attendance' by pupils. In 1927, Mr. Wilkins reported that 90% of the pupils qualified for those grants, but 'let none suppose that we are wallowing in superfluous wealth'. Every penny, he said, went on staffing, equipment and other improvements. In 1927, the capitation grant amounted to £886-9-2. The same year, expenditure came to £74-9-11 more than receipts. As pupil numbers rose, so did the capitation grant, although in 1931, probably due to government spending cuts as a result of the Depression, the grant was cut. Despite that, the School had a credit balance of £8-12-10 for that year, instead of a deficit as had been the case the previous year. Finances were certainly tight; in 1932, when the Ministry of Education authorized the appointment of a ninth full-time teacher, Robert Logan, (Secretary and Treasurer to the Board for 36 years), explained that such an appointment would have to be at the expense of the existing part-time members of staff, and in 1936, with numbers falling, the Board was unable to afford the books recommended by the Ministry's Mathematics Inspector. The following year, no further repairs were authorized because of a bank overdraft. The situation improved immensely in the 1940s, as pupil numbers rose rapidly; in 1942, there was a credit balance of £435-6-11. The Governors were clearly

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<sup>31</sup> Richard O'Fee in *Bangor Grammarians' Annual Report* 1996; *Old Boys' Association Minute Book*, 1929-1953.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Humphreys, David Burns and Alan Logan, *Bangor Rugby Football Club Centenary 1885-1985* (1985), pp 39-49.

relieved to discover that the School would be no worse off when the grants to schools were revised under the 1947 Education Act.

The basic starting salary for teachers changed little during these years. Mr.Pierce was paid £210 p.a. when he was appointed in 1925, as was Mr.Abernethy when he was appointed in 1941. The Governors did, however, make *ex gratia* payments to staff on a fairly regular basis and on a number of occasions teachers approached the Board to ask for a salary increase; sometimes this was granted, and sometimes not! On one such occasion, in 1926, increases were conditional on the staff continuing to supervise Evening Study, and on another, in 1933, when falling rolls over the previous two years had prevented any salary increases, Messrs. Haire, Hawtin, Johnson and Russell brought their grievances to the Governors. It turned out that Mr.Wilkins had *'held out prospects of increased salaries when engaging his staff, without first consulting the Board'*. He was told, in no uncertain terms, that in future, financial matters were to be left to the Board. Mr.Hawtin and Mr.Russell, the two more senior masters, were given increases of £15 p.a., while the others received a letter which told them *'how pleased the Governors were to have had this opportunity of meeting members of the staff and how grateful they were at the prevailing spirit of interest and loyalty in all connected with the School'*! Mr.Wilkins' basic salary in 1924 had also been £210, but with frequent bonuses, it had risen to £500 by 1927 and by the time of his retirement to £1,092, including a £140 above scale payment by the Governors. When it was realized that, on the new scale, his salary would be only £975, the Board agreed to pay an extra £117, so that he would be no worse off.

When the Association of Governing Bodies of Secondary Schools was founded in Belfast in 1945, J.Pyper, former Principal of the *Technical School* became the Board of Governors' representative. As a result of his membership of that body, in 1946 he was appointed to the *Black Committee*, which was looking into the matter of teachers' salaries. Its report resulted in a rise in teachers' salaries, and the Board of Governors decided that it would no longer make above-scale payments, except for Posts of Special Responsibility.

Towards the end of his first year, Mr.Wilkins suggested to the Governors that the 1894 Scholarship Scheme should be amended. At the beginning of the 1924-25 academic year, scholarships were offered, for three years, to the two under-12 applicants, who did best in the entrance examination, and two to the best under-14s. In addition, two *'assisted'* scholarships provided half fees for three years for the next two candidates in each age group.

In 1939, a further major alteration to the scholarship scheme was agreed. In a written submission to the Board, Mr.Wilkins pointed out that, because scholarships were for only three years, boys were often forced to leave the School before their five-year course leading to the Senior Certificate was completed. He had, he said, *'lost two brilliant boys'* the previous year. Similarly, boys who had been awarded Junior County Down Regional Scholarships did not always gain Senior Scholarships, because of the intense competition. In such cases, the Governors had *'granted scholarship terms'* to such boys. He continued,

*'I am well aware . . . of the strain of examination work upon health and spirits at a critical and difficult stage of growth, more especially in cases of boys, whose continuance at school depends upon winning a scholarship. It should surely be the object of educational and school authorities to diminish the causes of nerve-strain and, as far as possible, eliminate the competitive factors in the award of scholarships. It is indisputable that a boy, who is capable of passing well (in nine or 10 subjects) at Junior Certificate, is both fitted and deserves to receive further education, and it is in the public interest that he should be enabled to do so.'*

He also pointed out that those who reached Senior would often benefit from a further year of advanced study. Citing the examples of Edgar McNeilly, Hugh Cameron and James Kirk, who

had passed the Civil Service examinations, Russell Blakely, who had passed the *Ulster Bank* examination and Roderick Wilkins and W.P.Barbour, who had gained Sizarships and Entrance Exhibitions at *Trinity College Dublin*, he advocated a scheme, which would offer scholarships from eleven years of age, for three years, by examination, for two further years, if 60% were attained in the compulsory subjects at Junior Certificate, and a further year after Senior Certificate, if 70% were achieved in the compulsory subjects. This extra year, he said, was becoming widely recognized as necessary for success in university and professional examinations, and would enable the School to establish an '*Upper Sixth*', such as existed in the major Belfast schools, and '*of which we had a nucleus in 1938-39*'. It was morally – and financially – desirable, he said, and it would '*increase numbers, status and athletic prestige*'. The Governors agreed, and the Scheme was implemented, with the addition of a '*means test*'; scholarships would only be awarded if the income of a one-child family was less than £250, a two-child family was less than £300, a three-child family was less than £350, and so on. This continued until 1947, when the means test was abolished. Bertie Styles, one of the last boys to sit the Scholarship examination, which was held over two days, in *Connor House*, remembers that it was Mr.Wilkins who invigilated the examination.

According to the 1924 Prospectus, fees were from £2-5-0 to £2-10-0 per term for under-12s and £3-10-0 per term for over 12s. '*Extras*', per term, were: Games 1/-, Incidental Fee 2/-, Laboratory Expenses 2/-, Drawing Materials 2/6, Laundry 12/6, Pew Rent 2/-, Choral Singing 3/- and Library 6d. In 1927, fees for post-intermediate classes were increased to £4-10-0 and by 1939, 4/- was being charged for games. There must have been further increases in fees, but the next reference to an increase occurs in 1945, when Senior and Intermediate fees were raised by £1 to £15, Higher Preparatory fees, by £2 to £12, and Lower Preparatory fees by £2 to £11, and in 1947 to £20, £16 and £14 respectively, as a result of '*heavy expenditure on accommodation and equipment*'.

In 1930, the Governors had to write off £48-12-0 in unpaid fees, all attempts to collect them having failed. They continued to experience difficulty collecting fees throughout the 1930s, perhaps as a result of the Depression. The situation became so acute that, from 1934, '*the worst defaulters*' were sent solicitor's letters; again and again, accounts were handed for collection to Frank McKee, solicitor and Governor. This step usually had the desired effect, although he sometimes experienced '*a good deal of difficulty*', and several debts had to be written off as '*hopeless*', including one of £51-9-10. In some cases, fees were owed for boys '*who left several years ago*'. All sorts of measures were used to lessen the problem; parents were allowed to pay in instalments; those continually overdue were in future to pay in advance; in some cases boys were sent home – as soon as their capitation grants had been earned! In obvious frustration, in 1939, the Governors decreed that fees were to be paid direct to the *Belfast Bank* within seven days of receipt of the account.

Please send this account with remittance to the Secretary within **ONE** week from receipt of the account

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**TUITION FEES (Annual)**

I. Preparatory School, Form I. ...	£11 0 0
I. Preparatory School, Form II. ...	£12 0 0
II. Intermediate School (under 12) ...	£12 0 0
III. Intermediate & Post Intermediate School ...	£15 0 0

*A reduction of 10 per cent. is made in School Fees in the case of two brothers, of 15 per cent. in case of three brothers.*

**EXTRAS**

Annual Fee for Manual Instruction in Woodwork (inclusive of materials) ...	£1 10 0
Terminal Subscription to Games ...	4 0
" Charge for Geography Materials ...	2 0
" Laboratory Charge (I'mediate) ...	3 0
"         "         " (Post-Intermediate) ...	5 0
" Charge for Drawing Materials ...	2 0
" Fee for Choral Singing ...	3 0
" Fee for Lending Library ...	0 6

*(The Games and Lending Library Charges are universal and compulsory for all Pupils)*

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**BANGOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

*Fees Account*

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£ : :

Date paid.....

A List of Tuition Fees, preserved by B.J.Mairs [1943-1950].  
The fees stated would indicate that this document dates from 1945 or 1946.

Despite these difficulties, the Governors often made reductions in fees. A reduction of 10% was made in the case of two or more brothers. In 1932, the son of a disabled ex-serviceman was granted a 25% reduction, and in 1936, two boys were granted a 50% reduction '*owing to the mother's financial position*'. Fees for Mr. Wilkins two children were remitted, although extras were still charged, while the children of teachers, in any school, paid half fees. In 1946, the sons of members of staff were granted free tuition; only '*extras*' were to be charged. There were further examples of generosity on the part of the Board, such as the occasion in 1936 when it was agreed to pay three guineas for dental work to a boy, whose tooth had been broken while playing cricket, '*owing to the poverty of the parents*'. Similarly, the boy whose father had been killed in the railway disaster of January 1945 was granted a free place for the remainder of the year.

As might be expected with the increase in numbers and changes in the curriculum, Mr. Wilkins' time as Headmaster saw the purchase of a great deal of additional teaching resources: *Enclopædia Britannica*, *National Geographic*, wall atlases, Physics equipment, such as microscopes and camera lenses, a duplicator, a motor lawnmower for the cricket pitch, a Union Jack and Flagpole for George V's Jubilee in 1935 and Coronation mugs, which were presented to the boys in 1937! The list is endless.

## A COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

Possibly to raise additional income, the Board of Governors granted the use of the School premises to a variety of organizations during these years. In 1929, *Glenlola* was given permission to use the grounds for basket ball and for their Sports' Day; each year from 1931, the *Children's' Special Service Mission (C.S.S.M.)* rented the residence and grounds for three weeks in July; the *Sea Scouts* and *6<sup>th</sup> Bangor Scouts* used the Barn; *Bangor Cricket Club* used the School Field; the *Technical School* used the laboratory one night a week; the *Workers' Education Association* held classes in Sociology; the *Girls' Training Corps* drilled in the School Field;

Sandymount *Boy Scouts* camped in the grounds; and *Bangor Operatic Society* used the School for rehearsals.

## AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEME

The original Scheme of Management of 1893 had not been amended since 1898, so by the 1930s it was considered to be seriously out of date. In 1935 Frank McKee was asked to draw up a draft of a new Scheme, with the help of Mr.S.M.Claney and Dr.S.P.Rea. In 1937 their suggestions were accepted by the Board and a copy was sent to the Ministry of Education. In May 1939 the amended Scheme was adopted.<sup>33</sup> The amendments dealt principally with the constitution of the Governing Body. Lord Bangor and the proprietor of the Ward Estate remained as Governors, as did their nominees. In addition, the Incumbent of Bangor Parish and the Minister of *First Bangor Presbyterian Church* were to be *ex officio* Governors. 'Six or more' Governors were to be elected by Subscribers, with three retiring each year. Three could be elected provided there were at least 18 Subscribers present at the annual Meeting; if not, the Governors were to have the power to co-opt. Control of the School was effectively placed in the hands of former pupils by Clause 8 of the Amended Scheme, which laid down the criteria for 'qualified Subscribers', who would be entitled to vote annually for three of the nine Representative Governors. Clause 8(d) stated that, among the Qualified Subscribers were:

*'All past pupils of the School who have been in attendance therein for not less than three academical years and being Life Members or Subscribing Members of any Association of Past Pupils of the School and having attained the age of twenty-one years shall after the date of this Scheme subscribe not less than five shillings in one sum to the funds of the School.'*

Meetings of Subscribers had been held in the past, but not for 'a great many years', indeed, probably not since 1927. From 1940, annual meetings have been held, at which an Annual Report is submitted by the Board, and Representative Governors elected - provided there is a quorum, that is; on at least one occasion, 1943, only S.M.Claney, a Governor, turned up! The list of Qualified Subscribers, dated 1946, contained fifty-six names.

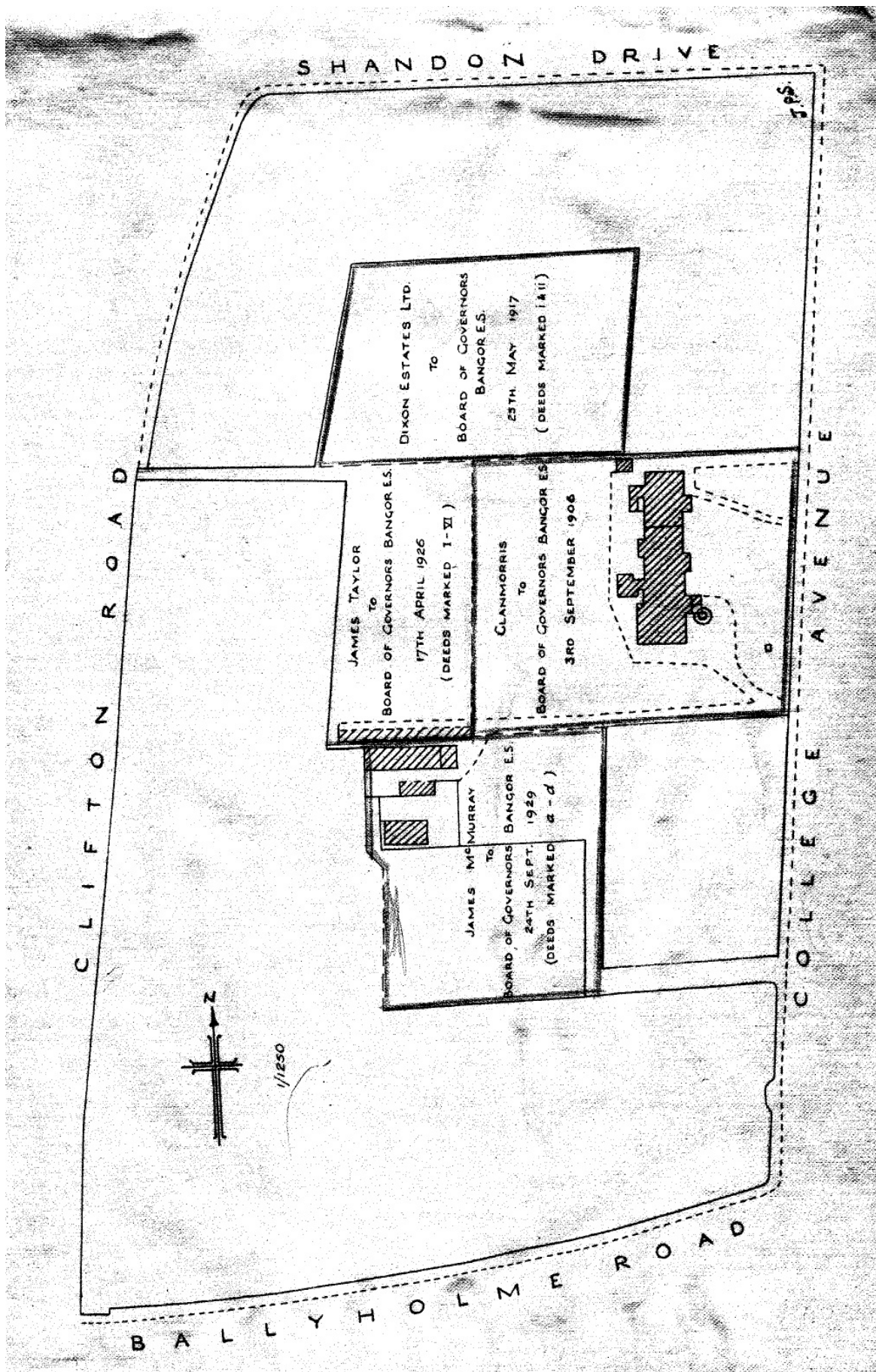
In 1944, however, certain ambiguities were discovered in the Amended Scheme of 1938. It was decided that there were only five legitimate governors, as the election of some had been 'irregular', while the membership of others had lapsed. Since a quorum was five, it was necessary to take steps to rectify the situation at once. At a special meeting of the Board, chaired by Lord Bangor, two were declared to have been co-opted for 1942, three for 1943 and another three for 1944. Furthermore, the 1938 Amended Scheme referred to 'the proprietors of the Ward Estate', which had been Bangor Borough Council since December 1941, when it had bought Bangor Castle and its 155 acre estate from Lord Clanmorris for £65,000. The Council was sent a copy of the Scheme and was asked to appoint a representative and a nominee. At first, they declined to do so and so, at a meeting in May 1945, at which Lord Bangor again occupied the Chair, the Governors proposed omitting all reference to 'the proprietors of the Ward Estate'. It was also proposed that, since Lord Bangor, the hereditary Chairman of the Board, was rarely in attendance, the Board should have the power to elect a Vice-Chairman, and that 'the name of the School be amended to Bangor Grammar School'. However, the Ministry of Finance thought it inadvisable to delete references to 'the proprietors of the Ward Estate' and, following a change of heart by the Borough Council, Councillor R.T.Gray was welcomed to the Board as the representative of the Ward Estate.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHOOL PROPERTY

Land to the northeast of the School had been bought from the Dixon Estate in 1917 and in the late 1920s, the School grounds were extended by the purchase of two additional pieces of land.

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<sup>33</sup> P.R.O.N.I., T1841.



An undated map in the possession of the School

In 1926, £200 was paid for land belonging to James Taylor, situated to the west of the School. It measured 105 feet in the north, 217.5 feet in the east, 132 feet in the south and 228.5 feet in the west and included a right of way to Clifton Road. Three years later, after some negotiation, James McMurray sold to the School, *'grounds and the shed thereon'*, (the infamous *'Barn'*), for £400. This piece of land, measuring 191 feet in the north, 209 feet in the east, 176.5 feet in the south and 210 feet in the west, included a right of way to College Avenue.<sup>34</sup> Apart from the laying of tarmac round the School in 1926 and the building of bicycle sheds in 1927 and 1939, the School property remained largely unchanged for the next 30 years, apart from some alterations and improvements, including the laying of modern terrazzo flooring in the Entrance Hall, doors being fitted on the lavatory cubicles and the fitting of wire frames to the back windows after Hugh Greer broke one with a cricket ball. The installation of central heating was discussed in February 1947, but it was almost fifteen years before that took place.

A telephone had been installed in the Summer of 1924 – Bangor 368 – and although the 'phone bill in May 1925 was a staggering £2-8-7, a telephone was put into the School Office in 1929. Although electricity had come to Bangor in the Spring of 1930, it was not until late 1938 that the Governors explored the possibility of having it installed in the School. It was installed over the Summer vacation of 1939, at a cost of £153, and the gas light disconnected. As was explained to Subscribers six months later, it made available *'the wireless programmes which are broadcast to schools'*, and permitted *'more advanced physics'* to be taught. (A battery wireless set had, in fact, been installed early in 1938, at the request of Mr. Johnson).

### THE IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

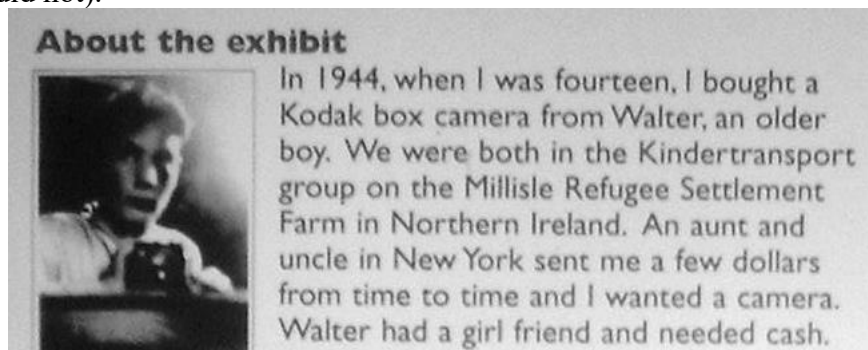
War with Germany was declared on 3 September 1939 and almost immediately the School began to feel the effects. Before the end of the month the Governors were informed of the *'large numbers in the School, partly due to evacuation'*, although most of the evacuees from England returned home during the Winter of 1940, when the expected air raids did not materialize. *'Double Summer Time'*, introduced to prolong the working day, meant that it was barely light when the boys were arriving at School on Summer mornings. By 1942, there were 180 on the rolls, in 1947, 260 and in 1948, 310. The already stretched accommodation was put under even more pressure, such pressure, in fact, that in 1943 *'a derelict building in the grounds had been completely transformed and now there were two magnificent classrooms there, electrically heated, with concrete staircase and generally it served its purpose admirably'*, Mr. Hawtin told the Old Boys. *'The Barn'* continued to be used until its demolition over 25 years later, despite it having been described as *'unsuitable'* for classroom accommodation as early as 1947.



One of the few surviving photographs of 'The Barn', with the Bicycle Shed.  
(Photograph by Dr.E.M.Patterson [1932-38])

<sup>34</sup> Indentures detailing these transactions are held by the Registry of Deeds for Northern Ireland.

Even before the outbreak of war, the Governors were approached, in January 1939, by the *Belfast Committee for German Refugees*, about the case of 13 year old Helmuth Werner, who had been expelled from his school in Hamburg 'on the sole ground of his Jewish parentage'; he was being looked after by Professor Montrose in Crawfordsburn. The Governors granted him a free place. Three other Jewish refugees attended the School during the War: Harry Borgenicht from Vienna was admitted in September 1942 and by the time he left, in June 1947, he had passed the Junior Certificate, (with 6<sup>th</sup> place in German!), and *Queen's University* matriculation examinations. He subsequently became a successful businessman in Columbia. Heinz Robert Sugar, also from Vienna attended during the same period, gaining both Junior and Senior certificates. H.R.Sugar played on the 1<sup>st</sup> XV, won the Art Prize for three successive years and beat Harry Borgenicht by coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in Northern Ireland in Junior Certificate German. He recalls one occasion when a group of boys cycled from Bangor, through Antrim, over the Sperrins into Londonderry and from there to Buncrana in Donegal. In 2004, he appeared in a television programme, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*, which told the story of German and Austrian child refugees, whom the Nazis allowed to come to the United Kingdom. Robert Sugar emigrated from Ireland to New York where he worked as a graphic designer and writer. He co-founded the *Kindertransport Association* and in 2004 he devised a visual travelling exhibition called *The Kindertransport Journey*. Max Ehrenwerth arrived in September 1945, when the war in Europe was already over, and he left in April 1947. Those three boys had come to the School from the *Refugee Settlement Farm* in Millisle. (Robert's parents survived the war, although his grandmother was 'murdered in Minsk'. Max Ehrenwerth's parents also survived in hiding in Berlin, but Harry Borgenicht's did not).<sup>35</sup>



Part of Robert Sugar's exhibition  
(Photograph by the author, January 2005)

Quite a number of evacuees from all over the United Kingdom attended the School during these years; they came from Croydon, Colchester, Eastbourne, Liverpool, Romford, Warrington, West Kirby and Yorkshire, among other places. Peter Francis Walter Downes, a scholarship holder from Dorset, came in September 1941, and when County Down Regional Education Committee said that it was not possible for it to accept the transfer of his scholarship, the Board of Governors offered Downes free education. Nor was the Regional Committee prepared to take over the Scholarship of a boy, Gerald Parker, from Birmingham. Boys also came from schools

<sup>35</sup> Robert Sugar's classmate, Dermot Knox, saw the television programme and contacted him through the publisher of the book which accompanied the programme. He also put this author in contact with Robert, who provided much of this information. After the pogrom of 9<sup>th</sup> November 1938, The Jews of Britain organised the *Kindertransport*. In nine months, 10,000 children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland had arrived in Britain. The Belfast Jewish community leased the abandoned *Gorman's Farm* to serve as both a refuge and a training farm. A total of 80 people, including 30 *Kindertransport* children made up what was to become a fully-fledged farming community, which became known as *The Refugee Settlement Farm, Millisle*. It was abandoned in 1948, but a house and a byre built by the community still stands. Robert Sugar revisited the site in 1989, and part of his exhibition was on display in the *Waterside Theatre*, Londonderry to mark *National Holocaust Memorial Day* in January 2005.

in Belfast, and as a goodwill gesture, the Governors returned their fees for the Summer term of 1941 to their schools, which had 'suffered owing to enemy action'. *R.B.A.I* and *B.R.A.* wrote to express their appreciation.

During the Summer of 1940, the School lost the first of the 39 Old Boys who were to 'make the supreme sacrifice' on active service. Sergeant-Pilot C.Julius Holland was killed while serving with the *Royal Air Force*. His photograph was framed and displayed in the School, as were those of later casualties, Fred McMurray, Lyle Glass and Frank Gault, presented by their families. While the loss of each life was a tragedy, some stand out as being particularly poignant. William M.Mahaffy was the younger son of W.Irwin Mahaffy, a Governor of the School for forty years until his death in 1940; Irwin Mahaffy had lost his elder son, Harry, in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Although his father did not live to hear the news, his mother did. Cyril C.Cameron, who was killed in 1944 when an incendiary bomb exploded while he was attempting to render it safe, was only 19 and little more than a year earlier, he had been Captain of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV and a Prefect, and in his final year he had won Lord Bangor's Prize for Best All-Round Boy and the *Connor Cup*. He had also been the first *A.T.C.* Cadet in Northern Ireland to gain his 'wings' as a glider pilot. David Henderson was even younger - just 18½ when he was killed in 1941. In 1942, Mr.Wilkins reported that eleven boys had joined the forces straight from school, but the youngest to join up was Lee Pentz; in April 1941 he left Bangor for *Wesley College* but ran away from school to join the *Royal Ulster Rifles* at the age of 16; he was returned to school, joined the Éire army and eventually the U.S Army, having been born in Cambridge Massachusetts in November 1925.

In 1943 the parents of Herbert Hannay donated £5 for a memorial and the family of Lowry Andrews, who had been died of wounds in Libya in 1942, presented prizes for Excellence in English and French, in his memory. Miss Addy designed a bookplate embodying the crest and motto of the *Royal Artillery*, the School arms and the Dove of Peace.

Mr.Wilkins, who in August 1944, broadcast a brief radio message in the Bangor 'Home Flash', to Old Boys serving in the forces, announced the loss of Old Boys in Assembly 'as if he had suffered a family bereavement'<sup>36</sup> and he wrote moving tributes to 'his' boys who had given their lives. (The names of those who gave their lives are listed in the Appendices). A non-combatant, George H.Baird lost his life on his way home from British Guiana, when his ship was sunk; there were no survivors.

By the end of the War, 244 Old Boys and four members of staff had played their part, gaining ten decorations for gallantry, including D.S.C.s for Lt.Comdr.Fred W.Bramwell, who had already been Mentioned in Despatches, and Lt.Comdr.Brian J.P.Kelly, a D.S.M. for Sgt.John M.Morrow, a George Medal for Lt.Harold McKee, an M.B.E. for Acting-Major J.Morris McKee and for T.F.Glass, *Royal Artillery*, who was also twice Mentioned in Despatches, a D.S.O. for Major Desmond Whyte, *R.A.M.C.*, a M.M. for Sgt.J.E.Barbour and D.F.C.s for Pilot-Officer James B.Stark and Flying-Officer Billy Miller, who had won Viscount Bangor's Prize for the Best All-Round Boy in 1941 and was later killed in action. Captain Lionel F.McWilliams, *R.A.M.C.* not only won an M.C., he was also Mentioned in Despatches. Other Old Boys were also Mentioned in Despatches for Valour and Distinguished Service including Squadron Leader Ian Alderdice, of the *R.A.F.* Dental Branch, Graham Pyper, *R.A.M.C.*, Sergeant-Pilot Herbert Hannay, who was later killed in action and Major Harry St.G.Gallaher, (who must have transferred from the *R.A.F.* to the *London Irish Rifles* at some point), who was wounded in the Italian Campaign. Jack Hamilton was killed in an air raid on Belfast. One boy, Norman Hanna, had a lucky escape when he was rescued from the torpedoed *Athenia* in mid-Atlantic, on his way to a new life in Canada; he returned to the School and finished 4<sup>th</sup> in Senior Certificate Art.

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<sup>36</sup> Reminiscences of Brian Mairs, September 2002.

A number of Old Boys, (including F.Alex Reid, who had worked on the construction of the Burma railway, Jesse Bissell, Ian Malcolm, Bertie Smith, G.A.W.Neill, James Graham, R.W.Cheyne and Rev.Cecil McCutcheon), and one teacher had been prisoners of war and one boy, R.D.McConnell, was permanently blinded. J.H.Montgomery, who had attended the School under Mr.Rainey, spent almost four years in a Japanese internment camp, following his capture in Hong Kong, where he was Superintendent of the Matilda Hospital.<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey A.Bowman, who was interned in Portugal after his four-man bomber made a forced landing off the coast, was later killed in action, having made his way home. Viscount Bangor, speaking at the 1946 Prize Distribution, expressed the conviction that the war record of the School had not been surpassed by any school in the British Isles.

Mr.Denis W.Leroux, appointed to the Staff only the previous January to replace Mr.Russell, offered his services to the Government as a physicist on the outbreak of war. The Governors promised to keep his post open for him. In fact, in the Spring of 1941, Mr.Leroux and Mr.Haire both joined the *Royal Air Force*. Mr.Haire rose to the rank of Squadron Leader. In the Summer of 1940, Mr.Johnson had offered his services to the Army through the *Officers' Emergency Reserve*. The Governors agreed to supplement his Army pay and to keep open his post. In the meantime, the School formed a unit of the *Air Training Corps (A.T.C.)*, with 'Flying-Officer' Johnson as Commanding Officer and 'Pilot-Officer' Rawlings as Adjutant. In 1941 the unit joined with the *Technical School* to form a Bangor unit - No.825 Squadron - which made use of 'The Barn' until 1942, when it moved to new quarters in *Villa Lebas*, 45 Ballyholme Road. During the *Luftwaffe* attacks of Spring 1941, the Johnson home in Ashley Gardens was almost hit by a bomb; luckily it had been fitted with a delayed action fuse and so it exploded deep in the wet sandy soil. Mr.Johnson was eventually called up on active service at the end of 1941, when he relinquished his command of the *A.T.C.*, to be replaced by Mr.Rawlings and subsequently by Flying-Officer J.H.Craig. Mr.Rawlings, it is said, had also wanted to join the Forces, but was persuaded to 'remain on duty at the School'. These members of Staff were replaced by 'Temporary Wartime Teachers', Miss Maude Tipping, B.A. (a teacher with some eleven years experience) for Mr.Haire, Miss Isabel Irwin, B.A. (who had thirty years experience) for Mr.Johnson, and for Mr.Leroux, J.H.Abernethy, M.Sc., a physicist, who himself took up a research appointment in 'a specialized branch of radio' with the Air Ministry in 1943. He too was promised that his post at the School would be kept for him 'if the numbers justified it'. Miss Tipping's 'temporary' appointment lasted for twenty-two years, until she left to take up a senior position in *Strabane Grammar School* in 1963. On her last day, with tears in her eyes, she shook hands with all the boys as they left the Assembly Hall.<sup>38</sup> Even the Caretaker, Fred Conway played his part, joining the *Royal Navy* in the Summer of 1943. During his absence, W.J.Finlay, himself an ex-serviceman, acted as Caretaker. Finlay often went into the town to procure sausage rolls and such like for the boys, who were not allowed to leave the School grounds.

The large increase in the school population necessitated the appointment of several additional members of staff, among them Miss Elsie Patton, who came from *Ballymena Academy*. In 1950, she was to write the words of the School Song. She retired in 1953. Several teachers who served on the staff for only a few years during the 1940s are remembered for a variety of reasons: pupils in Denis Neill's science classes learnt how to make crystal sets and fireworks; was it one of those 'squibs', which led to Saturday detention after it had been dropped through a hole in the floor of 'G' Room into Mr.Rawlings' class below? Marion McCullagh, 'a very timorous woman', who taught French and Geography, was in 'G' Room at the time; 'such was her lack of control, little or no work was attempted and she was tormented by our unruliness, teasing and juvenile humour from the start of every period. On one occasion - the last period of the day - she could

<sup>37</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 2 February 1946.

<sup>38</sup> Personal recollection.

*stand it no more and fled weeping. We too abandoned the classroom - in the old Barn – and followed on our bicycles, jeering mercilessly all the way to the station’*; on another, she chased boys round ‘G’ Room with her umbrella when she caught them smoking round the fire; Mr.Hawtin came to her rescue - or was it to the rescue of the miscreants? Helen McPherson, who replaced Miss Lewis in 1945, is remembered as *‘quite the cracker’* and *‘the one touch of glamour’* in the School, as she explained the complexities of French irregular verbs while perched on the edge of her desk!<sup>39</sup> Both Temporary Wartime Teachers and permanent Staff were paid a War Bonus.



Miss Elsie R. Patton, M.A.(1943-1953)



Miss Maude Tipping, B.A.(Hons.)(1941-1963)  
in 1947, when she was in charge of Tennis

With the *‘blackout’* in force, parents were consulted about after-school activities such as Evening Study and the *Debating Society*. The result was that these activities continued in the Common Room and, like the Governors, the *Debating Society* decided to hold its meetings earlier than usual. The War provided many new topics for debate and the numbers attending actually increased, with more of the younger pupils taking part. The *Dramatic Society*, which had ceased to meet, was revived in 1944, under the direction of Miss Patton assisted by Miss Alexis Jones; its first production, in March 1945, was *The Annoying Mr.Clitterhouse*. During the War, sports fixtures too were curtailed, although matches were played against military teams, including a table tennis match against a team of convalescent soldiers.

In 1940, the Ministry of Agriculture established the *Harvest Agricultural Service* and asked for a list of boys who would be willing to volunteer to assist farmers *‘secure the harvest’* during the Summer Vacation. Although the boys were keen and the Governors expected *‘that every boy will do all he can to serve the cause of Our Country during the leisure period of the holiday season’*, there was a poor response from the farmers initially, but in 1942 over a thousand days farm work was done over the Summer, in 1943 there was considerable demand at threshing time and over Christmas 1944 boys helped to lift the *‘late potatoes’*. On the few occasions that boys were released from class there was no shortage of volunteers. The boys were paid the princely sum of 6d an hour. In addition, 19 boys volunteered as A.R.P. messengers, others as firewatchers and naval messengers; 20 boys joined the newly formed corps of *Sea Cadets* in 1942, and some thirty boys, under Mr.Rawlings’ supervision, cultivated allotments in the School grounds. A *War Savings Group* was set up in the School in the Summer of 1940. It was run by Mr.Hawtin, with the help of Miss Lewis and Miss Addy. By the end of the War, £11,177.15.0 had been saved.

In the event of an air raid, 3 fire extinguishers and buckets for sand and water were purchased, as well as a stirrup pump, 4 long-handled shovels, 2 rakes, candles and candlesticks. A large

<sup>39</sup> Reminiscences of Brian Mairs and Brian Sheil, September 2002, and of Tom Boal in *D-Day 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration: Reminiscence Project* (North Down Borough Council, 2004).

amount of 'A.R.P. work' was also carried out, including the 'strapping' of windows and in November 1940 'full code protection' for 'A' Room, satisfying the requirements of an air raid shelter. The Ministry of Education agreed to pay half of the cost; 'at last', in the Autumn of 1942, the Governors received £450 on account. Following the 'Blitz' on Belfast at Easter 1941, the School was also insured against war damage and in December, plans were drawn up for the building of air raid shelters, which were to be open to the public after school hours - when they were built, that is. Almost six months later, the school architect, Stephen A.Orr, refused to pass the bricks until tests were made on them. It was not until early 1943 that the Ministry of Finance's Technical Officers declared them complete – except for drinking water containers and blankets. In 1943, the school gates and railings were removed as 'war scrap'. Three years after the end of the War, the Ministry of Finance gave the Governors £25 compensation.



Allen M.Foye, winner of the Intermediate Long Jump and High Jump (with a record of 4'8½")  
at Sports Day, 22 June 1946. The Air Raid Shelter can be clearly seen.  
(Photograph supplied by A.M.Foye)

While the effects of evacuation, the blackout and the threat of air raids are clear from reading the Board of Governors' Minutes, the effect of rationing is not. The only items in short supply were, apparently, gym shoes and chairs; the School bought 60 pairs of shoes and charged for their use, while chairs were borrowed from the *Good Templar Hall*.

Prize Day could no longer be held in the Dufferin Hall, which had been 'commandeered by the military', and so the function took place in the *Central School* hall in 1940, and in the Assembly Room in subsequent years. The *Borough Gymnasium* was also unavailable and Captain Boyd, having first sought the use of the *Tonic* cinema's ballroom, was finally granted the use of the Ward Park pavilion for Physical Training classes, at a cost to the School of £10 a year. Since there were no washing facilities there, the boys were offered the use of the *Gas Cleansing Station* on Castle Street 'for warm shower-baths', at 25/- a day, 'provided the Ministry of Public Security did not object'.

The School and its grounds were made use of by the Authorities. At the request of the Town Clerk, R.M.Moore, 100 palliasses and 200 blankets were stored in the School, and 'a cupboard was erected, in which crockery and foodstuff would be kept, and a temporary cookhouse built outside as a Rest and Feeding Centre for the temporary accommodation of persons likely to be rendered homeless in the event of an enemy attack'. In 1942, the Army Blood Transfusion Service asked for permission to use the Common Room in the afternoons and during the holidays.

The Borough Council was granted the use of the ground behind *Glenlola* for allotments, which continued to be used until 1946, and following an appeal from the Mayor, W.M.McMillen, the Ministry of Education was asked whether the Governors might give £10-0-0 to the Y.M.C.A. Canteens. The boys gave £5 of their Sports Prize Money, the Staff donated £2-10-0, £2 was raised by the sale of textbooks and the Governors made the total up to £10 by contributing 10/-.

## **THE ARMY CADET FORCE**

The *Army Cadet Force* was the most recent manifestation of the British cadet movement, which had originated during the Crimean War just at the time *Bangor Endowed School* was founded. A detachment of the *A.C.F.* had been formed in Bangor in 1943 as part of the *County Down Battalion*, and a number of boys had enrolled, but after Col.W.D.Gibbon, D.S.O. addressed the boys, in the Assembly Room in March 1945, about the aims of the *A.C.F.*, Mr.Wilkins authorised the formation of a platoon in School, known as a '*closed unit*', as it was not open to boys outside the School. Captain T.A.Armstrong was the first Commanding Officer. Shortly afterwards he left the School and when Mr.Johnson returned from the War, having served as a Flight-Lieutenant in Burma, he took over command. A hut was erected in 1946 as a G.H.Q. and Club House and electricity was provided via a trench from '*The Barn*'. A cupboard in 'S' Room was used for additional *A.C.F.* equipment. Richard Dowdall, who was a corporal in the platoon, went on to graduate from Sandhurst and he rose to the rank of Brigadier-General.<sup>40</sup>

## **THE CANTEEN**

At the beginning of the 1943-44 school year, the Ministry of Education suggested that a midday meal should be provided to pupils. Prior to that, most went home for lunch and, since there were no longer boarders for Mrs.Wilkins to look after, those who lived too far away had lunch at Mrs.Pollock's bed and breakfast on Hamilton Road. It was not until four years later that huts were purchased for £400 from the Air Ministry for use as a canteen. However, their erection proved to be too expensive and so it was decided to erect one of them as a kitchen, adjoining the *A.C.F.* hut, which would be used as a canteen. In the meantime 30 boys received their lunches from the *Glenlola* canteen. Finally, a licence for a temporary kitchen was granted, a cook, Mrs.Boyd, was appointed and on 18 May 1948 the serving of the midday meal began – 1067 being served in the first fortnight! Meanwhile, following consultation with parents, in November 1945 *Dobson's Dairies* had begun to supply milk to the school, under the Government's milk scheme. Since not all the boys wanted their one-third-of-a-pint bottles of milk, some of the seniors drank three or four bottles a day; on occasions they had to be thawed out in front of the classroom fireplace.

Even before *V.E.Day* in May 1945, plans were in hand to remove all tangible signs of the war. In April 1945, the Governors asked that the air raid shelters and blast walls be demolished as soon as possible, and the Borough Council was to remove the static water tank, which had been installed in case of fire caused by incendiary bombs.<sup>41</sup>

The question of a Memorial Tablet to mark the service of Old Boys during the War was first raised in the Spring of 1946 and a fund was opened at the end of the year, to raise the £205 required. The names of those who served in the Merchant Navy were to be included and an advertisement was placed in the *Spectator* in an effort to ensure that all names were included. A letter to parents, members of the *Old Boys' Association* and Subscribers resulted in contributions totalling £181-7-9. When the War Memorial Tablet arrived from *Purdy and Millard, Belfast*, in August 1948, there were a number of mistakes in the names. On 9 May 1949, Rev.Canon W.H.Good, M.A. conducted a short service and The Very Rev.W.J.Currie, B.A., B.D. performed the Act of Dedication of the Memorial, which was unveiled by Mr.Wilkins. Although belonging to the era of his successor, it seems appropriate to include here extracts from Mr.Wilkins' Address on that occasion:

*'We have met in the Assembly Hall of Bangor Grammar School to place on record the names of those who were once boys at school here and who, in an hour when a vast peril overshadowed the world, freely made a choice – the greatest and finest choice that men can make – the offer of*

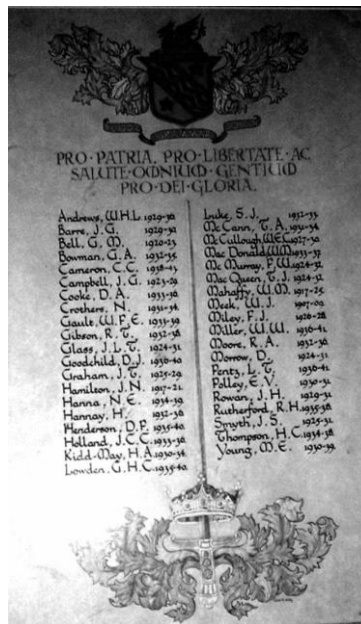
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<sup>40</sup> I am indebted to Barry Greenaway for his advice on this section.

<sup>41</sup> Reminiscences of Brian Sheil, September 2002 and David A.Kerr, November 2004.

*their lives in defence of things they held dear and principles they felt to be right. Twenty-five years earlier a previous generation made the same choice and took the same road of suffering and glory. . . . The cost indeed was high. I ask in wonder, has any school in these islands twice over paid as heavy a price in lives as this. . . . Of that older band about one in five, of the younger nearly one in six, did not come back. . . . Here before us now is the panel inscribed with its long roll of names, that roll over whose preparation I spent many an hour; names which, as I study them, stir memories and emotions impossible to describe in words. The great majority of these – and of the 39 who fell, all but three – were my boys, given once into my charge to lead and train and guide. . . . Out of so many that died, may I mention two – probably the eldest and the youngest of them all? One was a sailor, the only man whose name is twice inscribed – recorded on both memorials; as a merchant captain he was lost with his ship in the second war [W.J.Meek]. The other, discharged from the British Army as too young to serve at 16 years of age, was discharged too from the Irish Army; he then established claim to United States citizenship and fell fighting in the American army on the Western Front. [Lee Pentz] Such was the spirit of the boys who joined from Bangor Grammar School'.<sup>42</sup>*

In addition to the war memorial, which matched the First World War memorial, and was placed in 'A' Room, Miss Addy produced an illuminated scroll, bearing the names of those who had perished.



Miss Addy's Memorial Scroll

Mr.Abernethy returned to the School in October 1945, as did Mr.Johnson three months later. Mr.Leroux, perhaps as a result of his wartime service, was released from the R.A.F. suffering from tuberculosis, with a 100% disability pension, on 6 months sick leave, followed by 6 months on half pay. If unable to return to teaching, he was to be retired on a pension for his 10 years teaching service. Fred Conway took up his duties as caretaker again in the Spring of 1946.

### CONNOR HOUSE

Without doubt the greatest change to take place during the war years was the move of the Preparatory Department to a new home. The Barn was clearly not a satisfactory long-term solution to the problem of congestion and in July 1944, the *Parents' Association* asked that the Governors find temporary accommodation for the Preparatory School 'in a private dwelling house'. In August, the Quartering Commandant replied to a query from the Governors to say that Aubrey

<sup>42</sup> Reprinted in *The Gryphon*, December 1949.

*House* would not be free for the start of the school year, but could be available from the beginning of November, at a rent of £90 a year, plus taxes. And so, after 'a period of occupancy of the A.T.C. Headquarters in Ballyholme Road' and, following an inspection by Mr. Wilkins and the Prep. Department staff, the decision was taken to rent the building for 5 years, with options up to 1955, and steps were immediately taken to provide the necessary equipment: a telephone extension, *Rediffusion*, a piano, a bicycle stand, a hand bell (still being used sixty years later), a resident caretaker (Mrs. Davidson, later replaced by her husband) – and urinals! *Aubrey House* was a private Preparatory School, opened by Miss E. Milne, M.A. in 1933, which had been situated on the Donaghadee Road until it moved to what had been *Bangor Golf Club's* clubhouse in 1936.

The school seems to have ceased to function in 1939. The foundation stone of the Clubhouse had been laid by Miss Connor in 1904, but it was probably more as an acknowledgement of Miss Connor's interest in, and contribution to, the School, that the decision was taken, in March 1945, to re-name the building *Connor House*, the name by which the Preparatory Department continues to be known in its new premises, over 30 years after the demolition of the original *Connor House*. Having held its own Sports Day in 1944, the Preparatory Department held its own separate Prize Distribution for the first time in 1945. By then '100 of the youngest pupils were planted out' in *The Barn* and *Connor House*.



*Connor House, when still Bangor Golf Club clubhouse*  
(Reprinted from the *Lawrence Collection* by kind permission of the *National Library of Ireland*)<sup>43</sup>

In 1944, Miss Mary D. Pollock was appointed as an additional Preparatory Department teacher. Although she resigned in 1948, she continued to teach Religious Education on a part-time basis. The author is surely not alone in recalling her 'flannelgraph'-illustrated story of *Mary Jones' Bible*. Miss Alexis Jones taught in *Connor House* for seven years between 1945 and 1952, and she assisted Mr. Rawlings with a number of plays, including the School's first post-war production, *Charley's Aunt* in 1946. When Mr. Rawlings was appointed to take charge of the Preparatory

<sup>43</sup> *Lawrence Collection, Royal Series*, number 9529.

Department in 1948, it was already necessary to turn the Secretary's office into an additional classroom and to take over one of the caretaker's bedrooms as an office. Physical Training classes were held in the *Borough Gymnasium*.

### A NEW SCHOOL?

A new home for the Preparatory Department became a reality, but throughout the war years, there was serious discussion about the possibility of finding a new site for the entire School.

In March 1941, the Governors set up a sub-committee *'to consider the question of the school buildings'* and just over a year later, there was talk of *'plans for a new school site and buildings after the war'*. After the death of Lady Clanmorris in February 1941, Bangor Borough Council had purchased Bangor Castle and the demesne; late in 1942, a letter from the Town Clerk, presumably in response to an enquiry from the Governors, asked about *'the extent of ground in the Castle Demesne which would be required for a school and playing fields, so as to enable the Council to come to a decision regarding the layout of the Estate'*. The Governors had considered leasing a 6-acre site in the Demesne, as playing fields, as early as 1926. The sub-committee was instructed to *'explore all possibilities of building and maintaining a boarding school in Bangor'*. A meeting was held with Mr. Brownell, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education, and in February 1943, the sub-committee, in a lengthy written submission to the Board of Governors, reported that its members were unanimous that:

- '1. The present School premises are inadequate to our present and growing needs,*
- 2. The position as regards the playing fields and facilities for dressing and for entertaining visiting teams is unsatisfactory.*
- 3. The Committee cannot find any suitable land, either for new premises or for playing fields, if the opportunity of acquiring a portion of the Castle Grounds is missed.*
- 4. Assuming that a suitable site can be obtained, the Committee recommends the erection of school building with playing fields adjoining [sic] in preference to any extension of the present building, with playing fields away from the School.'*

The report continued by advising the Governors to seek the guidance of Mr. Brownell before proceeding any further, *'in view of the importance of secondary education in the post-war policy of the country'*. Such guidance was sought, and Mr. Brownell, while expressing *'pleasure at the suggested provision of a new secondary school for boys for the Borough'*, cautioned the Governors against committing themselves to more than taking an option on the site, when *'the whole question of secondary education was under consideration'*. He did, however, favour the School being continued by the Governors *'in its present form'*, believing that, *'a school not hampered by government regulations is able to assist deserving and promising pupils to a much greater extent than one controlled by a regional committee'*. When the question was raised, of the present building being bought for use as an elementary school, Mr. Brownell said that that would be a matter for the Regional Committee.

Whether these discussions were common knowledge is not clear, but in early 1944 Mr. Hawtin and Mr. Rawlings expressed their concerns about *'safeguarding the future of the Grammar School'* and suggested that a committee made up of Staff, Parents, Old Boys and other interested parties should be formed. No such committee was formed, the Governors feeling, presumably, that it was a matter for themselves alone, but discussions continued, with the town Planning Officer working on a draft plan for a school, which was to include provision for boarders. Sam Claney expressed the opinion that they needed *'100 per cent more accommodation and they could not do that in College Avenue'*!

At the end of 1944, the Governors were expressing an interest in a site of 20 acres in the Castle grounds, but nothing definite had been done, to the obvious frustration of the *Parents' Association*, whose Secretary wrote expressing anxiety about the future accommodation of the School.

Perhaps the Governors, too, were becoming impatient, for in May 1946, Messrs. Johnson, Rawlings and Abercrombie were asked to look at *'the Hollow Field'* on Mr. Moore's farm on Bloomfield Road, to see whether it would be suitable for playing fields, although the Board considered this to be only a temporary solution, believing that it would have to *'consider seriously the acquisition of permanent playing fields'*. In September, the Governors again approached the Borough Council about a 30-acre site in *'Castle Park'* and over a year later the sub-committee was still discussing the possibility of having premises and playing fields there.

Finally, in March 1948, seven years after the sub-committee had been set up, the school architect, Mr. Orr, reported that the proposed site in Castle Park *'contained many lumps of rock . . . [and] it would be a very costly site to develop'*. He advised against its acquisition! The Headmaster, along with two of the Governors, was asked to bring a report and plan for an extension of the existing building to accommodate 500, and to enquire of the Ministry of Finance whether there were any wooden huts available.

How committed the Governors had ever been to the idea of a new school in Castle Park must be open to question, considering the amount of work which had already been done in the four or five years prior to 1948. In the Summer of 1943, the Barn had been renovated for use as classroom accommodation and 'H' Room had been converted into a Physics laboratory, (although three years later Mr. Hawtin told the Governors that they should visit the Science accommodation to see the problem for themselves!), *Connor House* had been acquired in 1944, *Crosby House* had been redeveloped and there had even been discussion of the possibility of installing central heating.

### THE CONVERSION OF CROSBY HOUSE

In the Summer of 1946, with Mr. Wilkins within a year of retirement, the architect was asked to look at the Headmaster's residence, *'with a view to adapting it for school use'*; it would, it was felt, provide a Canteen, a Staff *'Rest Room'*, a Headmaster's Study, an Office and some classroom accommodation. He was also to look at the enlargement of the Science Laboratory and to make suggestions as to how the School could be made suitable to accommodate 500. Within a year, plans for *Crosby House* were submitted to the Ministry of Finance, the conversion of the residence began. The Editor of *The Gryphon* explained:

*'At long last the corridor has been continued through 'G' and 'K' rooms, and the stairs into Crosby House moved to the end of that corridor, so connecting the whole building upstairs. Four bedrooms have been converted into two quite pleasant classrooms ('D' and 'E' rooms), though some occupants persist in the tendency to put them to their original use. Upstairs can also be found a small library, and cloakroom accommodation for the staff. Downstairs there are a Headmaster's study (here one can now be on the carpet – a real one), secretary's office and staff Common Room. The old Common-Room has now become a physics laboratory, with a connecting door to the chemistry laboratory next door.'*<sup>44</sup>

Governors' meetings, which had been held in *Connor House* for several years, now moved to *Crosby House*.

### MR. WILKINS' RETIREMENT

The issue of Mr. Wilkins' retirement was first discussed in February 1946. The Governors wanted him to retire at the end of the school year, feeling that,

*'the present is the opportune time in which to make a change in the Headmastership of the School, in view of the changes which will take place in secondary education'*.

Mr. Wilkins was reluctant to go and there was even discussion of the possibility of *'taking action against him under Section 27 of the Scheme'*, which gave the Governors the power to *'remove'* the

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<sup>44</sup> *The Gryphon*, December 1947.

Headmaster. At a special meeting of the Board with, unusually, Viscount Bangor in the Chair, reference was made to *'the circumstances that compelled the Governors to ask for the Headmaster's resignation'*. However, following consultation with Mr. Wilkins, his offer to resign on 31 July 1947 was accepted. He expressed his thanks to the Governors that *'an amicable solution had been found to a difficult and unpleasant situation'*, and the Governors recorded their *'deep appreciation . . . of Mr. Wilkins' long and fruitful service as Headmaster of the School from 1923'*. What the *'circumstances'* were may never be known, but it was thought that the contents of a mysterious sealed envelope in the possession of the School might relate to this *'difficult and unpleasant situation'*. On the front of the envelope, in Randall Clarke's handwriting, were the words: *'Confidential. Documents relating to Mr Wilkins' Headmastership of Bangor Grammar School 1925 - 1946 [sic]. Not to be opened except by the authority of the Headmaster or the Chairman of the Board of Governors. Signed Randall Clarke, Headmaster, 15.10.65.'* The envelope was eventually opened during the Summer of 2006. Inside was a folder entitled *"For the Headmaster: Confidential Circulars addressed to the Governors and relevant correspondence (1925-1946). To be treated confidentially. With compliments, M. Wilkins, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1947"*.

In a twelve page letter to his successor, Lt.-Col. Ricketts, Mr. Wilkins described the documents as *"a kind of history of the School's progress from the point of view of my relations with the Board"*. He continued:

*"I regard it as most important for your guidance that you should read through them (in chronological order) and taken in conjunction with the Inspectors' Reports you will then have the internal history of the development of B.G.S.; and you cannot understand the present without some understanding of the past!"*

The letter also gives some interesting insights to Mr. Wilkins' relationship with his Staff. Of his female colleagues, he says:

*"the ladies are sensitive in regard to matters of general policy and rightly feel they should be consulted equally with the men. (I have found their opinions peculiarly valuable in regard to selection of prefects; they often had a shrewder idea of a boy's manners and character and viewed it from a different angle!) . . . [A.L.H. [Mr. Hawtin] takes the line that women teachers are suo genere inevitably deficient in public spirit and the wider vision: personally I strongly disagree with him, but I regard it as important that he should be given no excuse to hold or disseminate that view!]*

And of the 72 year old Thomas McBride, whom he was keen to continue employing on a part-time basis in 1934, Mr. Wilkins told the Ministry of Education, *"Mr. McBride's teaching is still vigorous, thorough and inspiring, and his long traditional association with the School is a valuable asset."*

He has harsh things to say about the local community in Bangor.

*"I was dismayed to find no local patriotism in Bangor or civic loyalty to the School. . . . On the contrary there prevailed a contempt for the 'Endowed School' in Bangor and a cynical disbelief in the value of secondary education. The business community in Bangor believe in the P.E. [Public Elementary] school as providing all that was required - aptitude for spelling, handwriting and money sums! Those who wanted something more sent their boys to Inst., M.C.B. and Campbell College. I had to contend with an odious form of snobbery*

The circulars are, in themselves, unexceptional in that they deal with issues such as Mr. Wilkins' belief in *"the need for playing-fields, accommodation and amenities"*. However, his requests seem to have fallen on deaf ears as far as the Board was concerned: *"When something worthwhile was secured, it was generally due to the public spirit of the Urban Council (as it was then) rather than to the Governors"*, and he mentions the draining and levelling of the School Field, the provision of a Cycle Shelter in 1926 and the provision of a Rugby Pitch in Ward Park as cases in point. He was clearly proud of the School, writing in 1926 that, *"The School is growing steadily in importance and*

*in numbers, and has evidently a great future before it”, but by the mid-1930s, Mr. Wilkins was so ashamed of the interior of the School building that he told the Governors: “I do my best to interview parents in Crosby House and not allow them to see more of the School than I can help.”*

The remaining six pages of the letter are devoted to his relationship with his Board of Governors. When Mr. Wilkins took up his post, there was a Board of nine members, but the business was “*practically in the hands of one incompetent and unscrupulous person*”. He clearly had high hopes of the Old Boys’ Association, set up in 1929. “*When it got on its feet, the moribund Subscribers’ Scheme was resuscitated with a view to getting Old Boys on the Board. However, “The result proved mainly a bitter disappointment, as the wrong people were getting on the Board, and as year followed year a policy of sheer wrecking and obstruction became intensified.”* One example which he gives was “*the attack on Johnson*” in 1932.

One Governor in particular seems to have been determined to secure the dismissal of Mr. W.T.W. Johnson, less than a year after his appointment, on the grounds that his Durham University Geology degree did not qualify him to teach Geography. This was despite the fact that his Professor had testified he had taken a post-graduate course in Geography which equipped him to teach the subject, and despite the Ministry of Education having given Mr. Johnson permission to teach Geography “*to all standards*”. Mr. Wilkins described Mr. Johnson as “*a highly competent, loyal and satisfactory teacher, a thorough disciplinarian, a good organiser, and a keen Games Master*”. He continued,

*“But Mr. Logan . . . for reasons of his own or no reason at all, is prepared to drive a brilliant teacher out of the School. . . . If Mr. Logan, in the name of the Governors, is allowed to dismiss Mr. Johnson or to drive him in disgust out of the School, then I for my part, abandon my cherished hopes for a great future for the School”.*

In the end, because Mr. Wilkins was:

*“able to show up the unscrupulous ineptitude of that (and other lesser attempts to throw spanners into my organisation), the novel policy was adopted of excluding me totally from Board Meetings over a space of nearly four years (except when I was fetched in for some cross-examination or virtual reprimand). This culminated in the ‘stab-in-the-back’ letter of February 1937 threatening me with dismissal without the slightest attempt to specify grounds of dissatisfaction (and after I had furnished a comprehensive Special Report to the Board a few months previously - of which no notice was taken and no acknowledgement made). The infamous letter of February 1937 was an egregious piece of bad tactics, for within a month I was due to publish to the world one of the most brilliant Reports (Speech Day) in the School’s history (including the first sizarship at T.C.D. ever gained and the winning of the Medallion Shield). I circularised my Statement to the Governors individually, which brought Lord Bangor in on my side and secured my return to attendance at Board Meetings.”*

How embarrassing for the 75 year old Thomas McBride, by now Assistant Secretary to the Board of Governors, that it was he who had to write the “*infamous letter of February 1937*”. He wrote:

*“I have been instructed by the Board of Governors to write to you regarding a resolution passed at a Special Meeting of the Board on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1937. I think I cannot do better than furnish you with a copy of the resolution. ‘After discussion, it was proposed and seconded that . . . the Governors were not satisfied with the general state of affairs in the School and, if there was not some improvement on the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1937, they would have to ask for his resignation”.*

Mr. Wilkins responded by sending each Governor a copy of his Speech Day report and the printed Honours List for 1936-37. He also asserted that,

*“the period under consideration has been, in every department of School life, one of the most brilliant and successful in the history of the School, worthily maintaining former standards, and showing evidence of progress in new directions”.*

Mr. Wilkins also pointed out that Ministry of Education Inspectors' Reports in 1926, 1930 and 1934 had expressed satisfaction with the organisation and work of the School. Furthermore, he requested a "definition in exact terms of what is meant by 'not satisfied with the general state of affairs' and, having reminded the Governors that he had been Headmaster for nearly fourteen years, asked; "If I have all the time been really incompetent, how has it taken thirteen years to find it out?" Nothing more seems to have been heard of the matter.

After the outbreak of War Mr. Wilkins found things improved, for, according to his letter, the Board "depended on me to keep the School on an even keel and to obtain new Staff to replace men who had joined up, and to cope with expansion". However,

*"As soon as V.E. Day passed and I was known to have reached pensionable age, the old vicious campaign of abuse and lies and innuendo, misrepresentation and wrecking (failures in examinations trumpeted, successes simply ignored) was recommenced with the apparent object of driving me out, culminating in the renewed 'stab-in-the-back' demand for my resignation (to take effect in July 1946), the same secret conclaves and refusal to face me in open debate. On all these occasions the small gang of my enemies never produced any charges against me, never alleged definite instances of neglect, incompetence, failure in duty or character: they never once came out in the open, never faced me as men - though I was a solitary man against a crowd of them. Well, in February 1946, when the mendacious ultimatum was conveyed to me by the Board, was unanimous for my resignation at the end of July, . . . I went to the Ministry, where I found the chief officials aware of the state of things and prepared to support me. . . . My inclination was strong to refuse any compromise . . . and to dare the Board to pronounce my dismissal and face public opinion and an official appeal to the Ministry. Yes, I should have loved to do that! . . . I yielded to the compromise suggested by my active allies on the Board [Lord Bangor, Lord Clanmorris, Canon Good, Rev. Dr. Currie and my faithful old pupil and friend James C. Taylor] . . . that I should agree to terminate my headmastership one year later - in July 1947! . . . Lord Bangor, 80 years old this year, has always been a good friend. . . . Apart from the five Governors I have named and the late J. Pyper, I had and still have the greatest contempt for all the rest of them."*

Even after his decision to retire, Mr. Wilkins still felt that the Governors were against him.

*"I understood perfectly why - in January 1947 - I was invited to act as the distinguished visitor and distribute prizes on Speech Day! To put me under a compliment and prevent my dragging skeletons out of old cupboards! But directly after you were safely 'in the bag', . . . a Resolution was carried, as usual declared unanimous, to override my arrangement for the Meeting [Speech Day] to be held in the afternoon. I bided my time for a couple of days till I had Lord Bangor's reply to my invitation to him to preside, as I was anxious at all costs to have him there. When he agreed to come at 2.30 p.m. according to my invitation. I wrote to Simms [the Secretary] and told him I could not agree - for good reasons - to an evening fixture and that I had the unanimous support of my Staff for the earlier hour. Well the Vice-Chairman was very angry. . . and for the sake of a settlement, I agreed to ring Lord Bangor up and confirm that, as an old man, he preferred afternoon meetings and not to have to drive back late to Downpatrick. The V-C had his revenge by apologising in his speech for an afternoon meeting - so inconvenient! - and then by calling for the National Anthem before either Lord Bangor or I had a chance to reply. As soon as I got home, two prefects waited upon me to ask me to deliver my prepared speech in School next day and get it published in the County Down Spectator, as though delivered at the Meeting. They understood!"*

In a postscript, Mr. Wilkins continued:

*"My predecessor was subject to some extent to the same mean parsimony and bullying. . . . His sons told me how badly he was supported and how difficult it was to get repairs etc. done and paid for; again and again the poor man paid out of his own pocket to save trouble - in the end he suffered a complete mental breakdown. . . . A few days ago, in recalling old times with Mansfield, I said 'We are up against the foulest Board of Governors in the country!' and he*

*replied, 'Those are the very words I have heard McFeeters use!' . . . Put your proposals on paper for the Board. He who sups with the Devil needs a Long Spoon!"*

It seems strange that the two men who had presided over the unprecedented growth in the population and reputation of the School should have enjoyed so little support from the Board, but such is the volume of evidence amassed by Mr. Wilkins that it would seem irrefutable that he had not enjoyed a happy relationship with his Board of Governors. Perhaps it should be remembered that Mr. Wilkins had not been the unanimous choice of the Board when he was appointed in 1923, for he ends his letter to Col. Ricketts: "*Your destiny should be brighter - yours was a unanimous appointment and the Governors are now pretty well ashamed of their own past!*"

These documents were presumably passed on to Randall Clarke by Col. Ricketts, but the question remains: why were they sealed (with sealing wax) over 18 years after Col. Ricketts had received them? One possible explanation is that, in October 1965, the outgoing Chairman of the Board was one of only two survivors of Maurice Wilkin's Board - and Mr. Wilkins had named neither as a supporter! Could it be that Norman Handforth did not want his successor, contemporary, fellow Old Boy and lifelong friend, Bob Magrath, who had joined the Board only in 1951, to see Mr. Wilkins' letter!

During his last few months in office, Mr. Wilkins appointed two further teachers, both of whom were to serve the School for thirty years. Joseph C. McKeown, a former Head Boy of *Belfast Royal Academy*, where he had captained the 1<sup>st</sup> XV, played on the 1<sup>st</sup> XI and boxed for the School, came from *Lisburn Technical School* in February 1947, with nine years' teaching experience, to become Head of Science, with a Post of Special Responsibility worth £50 and in that capacity he was largely responsible for planning and equipping the five new laboratories which were built in the mid-1960s. Although affectionately known merely as 'Joe' for many years, his earlier nickname was, apparently, 'Curly', for obvious reasons! He had an outstanding command of the English language as well as a clear understanding of the intricacies of Teachers' Pensions. A brilliant organiser, he was the School timetabler for many years, but even he could not convince Maud Tipping that it was impossible for her to have her Sixth Form History class six periods a week without having them twice on one day! He was promoted to the newly created post of Senior Master in 1966 and by the time of his retirement in 1978, he was Second Vice-Principal. Often a man of few words, it is recalled that, when asked by Dr. Rogers to comment on the quality of the new intake, he merely said, '*They're human*'; on another occasion, having assisted the Headmaster in interviewing a prospective new member of staff, his comment as he left the room was simply, '*He'll do*'. Writing in *The Gryphon* in 1978, Bertie Styles, who, man and boy, had known Joe McKeown for thirty years recalled the wide range of his knowledge, from astrology to the control of cholesterol, and the phrases, such as '*Up to the board, boy*', with which he could strike terror into an inattentive pupil. One former colleague recalls the occasion when Mr. McKeown was warned by the astrological signs to be '*very careful in transport for the next few days. During these days he walked to school and would not even ride his bike*'. In retirement he completed a Computer Studies course at the North Down Institute when almost ninety years of age.<sup>45</sup>

George A. Heuston, a former pupil and a graduate of *Queen's University*, left *B.R.A.* and came to Bangor as an English teacher, having previously taught in *Bandon Grammar School* and *Portora Royal School Enniskillen*. Although appointed by Mr. Wilkins, he did not take up his post until September, by which time Mr. Wilkins had retired. 'Tipp' Heuston later became Head of English and a Senior Master, and for many years he edited *The Gryphon*. An excellent Tennis and Badminton player, he was also Master in Charge of Athletics, a sport at which he had excelled

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<sup>45</sup> *The Gryphon*, 1978; Desmond Cole-Baker, in a letter to the author, December 2002; Irwin Bonar in a letter to the author, April 2004; Peter Moore and Chris Harte, in conversation with the author, August 2004.

both at school and at university. Something of 'a character', he arrived at School for many years on his motor cycle, and his colleagues enjoyed his stories of hunting, fishing and dealing with poachers on his island in Strangford Lough. When Guest of Honour at the *Old Boys' Association* Dinner in 1977 shortly after his retirement, he delivered his speech, as might be expected of an English teacher, in verse! That 'ode', *Pedagogical Ponderings*, is in itself a 'History' of the School from the early 1930s, and as such it deserves to be included here. It can be found in the Appendices. George Heuston died in February 1994 aged 82.<sup>46</sup>



J.C. McKeown, B.Sc.(Hons)  
(1946-1978) in 1947



G.A. Heuston, B.A.(Hons). H.Dip.Ed.  
(1947-1977) in 1948

Just weeks after Mr. Wilkins' decision to resign, Mr. Hawtin, who had been described as 'second in command' some four years earlier, was appointed Vice-Principal and over the next 20 years he played an increasingly prominent role, frequently attending Governors' meetings, organizing Prize Day, reorganizing the Library and editing the new School Magazine, *The Gryphon*, which was first published (at a loss) in 1947. His plans to start a magazine some years earlier had been stymied by wartime controls on the use of paper. There had been earlier Form Magazines – *The Phoenix*, *The Query*, *The Rip-Snorter*, *The Smudge* and *The Bluebird* to name but a few – but they had all died natural deaths.

In the second issue of *The Gryphon*, Maurice Wilkins wrote an emotional message, *Retrospect and Forecast*. He noted that, over his twenty-four years as Headmaster, he had charge of 'about 1,200' boys - the population of the School at any one time today. He recalled his predecessor, Mr. McFeeters, 'a man of fine scholarship and noble character'.

*'I remember standing at his side by the window on the stairs of Crosby House, as he watched for the last time with deep emotion his boys playing in the School field below. Then he commended them and his assistant staff of five . . . to my hands with his prophetic blessing. It was a sacred moment of a trust given to me, to which I have tried, according to my lights, to be faithful.'*

*'And now it is my turn to hand on my torch, to entrust my boys of today and an assistant staff whom I have been proud to lead to a successor. I ask you to be faithful to him, to the greater glory of this School in the years to come. I know he will not fail you. And may the Divine Blessing rest upon you all, in your studies and labours, during your lives at school and in the hereafter.'*<sup>47</sup>

On 26 June 1947, representatives of the Board of Governors, the *Old Boys' Association* and the *Parents' Association*, together with the staff and present pupils, met to pay honour to Mr. Wilkins on his retirement. Mr. S.M. Claney, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors praised 'the great work Mr. Wilkins had done for the School' and Mr. Hawtin, speaking on behalf of the staff and pupils, said that 'he wondered if the boys realised how lucky they had been in having Mr. Wilkins as their

<sup>46</sup> *The Gryphon*, 1977; *Bangor Grammarians' Annual Report* 1995.

<sup>47</sup> *The Gryphon*, June 1947.

*Headmaster. . . . No man could have been readier than he to uphold the rights of the boys'. In reply, Mr.Wilkins listed the qualities he believed were necessary to be a successful Headmaster – the strength of a buffalo, skin as thick as a rhinoceros, the cunning of a serpent, the courage of a lion, the persuasive eloquence of a Demosthenes, as well as the skills of the diplomat, the civil servant, the physician and the priest and father confessor; 'you must have a strong will; you must have at the same time a sensitive spirit and conscience, and last of all you must have a heart full of love for your fellow creatures, whether they are clever or whether they are stupid'. He was then presented with a gold watch and a cheque, while Mrs.Wilkins received an electric lamp.<sup>48</sup>*

*The Gryphon*, in December 1947, paid tribute to Mr.Wilkins:

*'As a scholar, Mr.Wilkins has few equals: he was widely read in the Classics and in English Literature, and would often surprise us by his knowledge even of the more obscure poets, both Latin and English. He had in this respect what might be called an encyclopaedic mind, and would readily recognise a passage he may have read once many years ago.*

*'That same mental attribute showed itself in his dealings with the boys. He never forgot one of the hundreds of boys who passed through his hands. Towards the staff he took up a very wise attitude, never attempting to interfere with other teachers' methods, but doing his best to encourage their plans, realising that they had the interests of the boys at heart.'*

And finally: of all the matters dealt with by the Board of Governors during Mr.Wilkins' busy 24 years, one sticks in the mind. In January 1947, the case of *'Batley's lost coat'* was placed in the hands of the solicitors.

## POST-RETIREMENT

Mr.and Mrs.Wilkins retired to County Wicklow, but in 1950 he was invited to become Vice-President of the *Old Boys' Association* for life and during his long retirement, he revisited the School, which owed him so much, on many occasions; in 1952, he visited *Connor House*, where he met the sons of many of his Old Boys - his grandchildren, he called them -and he frequently travelled from his retirement home south of Dublin to attend the *Old Boys' Association* Annual Dinner.

Not that *'retirement'* was a word that Maurice Wilkins took literally; he acquired a house with a garden, which Mr.Hawtin likened to a market garden, he served as *pro tem* Headmaster of *Sandford Park School* in Dublin for two terms, seven years after his so-called retirement, and in 1958 he published *Sonnets of Love and Friendship*, followed two years later by *The Seeker*, volumes of *'awful poetry'* his son Roddy called them. (In 1958, Elsie Patton also published a book of poetry – *Salome Speaks and Other Poems*).<sup>49</sup>

Mr.Wilkins' second anthology included *'Little Friend'*, which reveals *'how conscientiously and courageously Maurice Wilkins carried the burden of Headmastership'*:

*'I am older than you and carry a burden of countless lives,  
The heavy load of the many souls that are in my trust.  
I march, though the road of life be of thorns and knives,  
With heart of courage and head held high, because I must.'*<sup>50</sup>

Maurice Wilkins died in 1979 aged 94, but his memory was perpetuated when, in 1988, the new Design Centre was named in his memory. Its official opening in 1989 was attended by his son, Roderick.

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<sup>48</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 28 June 1947.

<sup>49</sup> *The Gryphon*, June 1958.

<sup>50</sup> *The Gryphon*, June 1961.