

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Thomas W.Patton M.A., 1979-1998¹

I. The 1980s: A Decade of Change



T.W.Patton, M.A., Dip.Ed. (1979-1998)

MR.PATTON'S APPOINTMENT

Thomas W.Patton was appointed Headmaster in May 1979, in succession to Dr.Rodgers. The Board of Governors' Minutes do not record the names of any other candidates. Mr.Patton was educated at *Cabin Hill* and *Campbell College*, where Randall Clarke had been his Housemaster, and he had been awarded an Open Entrance Exhibition to *Trinity College Dublin* in 1958. He had graduated in Classics four years later and was admitted to the degree of M.A. in 1974. Having briefly considered entering the church, he instead embarked on a career in teaching and, prior to coming to Bangor, had spent his entire career at his old school, where he had coached both the 2nd XV and the 2nd Cricket XI. A keen sportsman, he had played hooker in the 1958 Schools' Cup final, when Annadale emerged victorious by 5 points to 3. He was also a member of the Ulster Rugby Referees' panel and had been Manager and Coach of the Ulster Squash Team that won the first Under-19 Inter-provincial. By the time he left *Campbell College* for Bangor, he was the Senior Master in charge of day boys, a Housemaster and Head of Classics. He had lived in Bangor for a number of years following his marriage and '*counted among his qualifications that he was once a Connor House parent*'. Interviewed by Q.Reford, M.Mawhinney and R.Maxwell, for *The Gryphon*, he expressed his support for school uniform (although he later adjudged airforce-blue duffle coats to be acceptable) and the Prefect system, his desire to see the establishment of a well-equipped Sixth Form Centre and to foster the happy relationship between the School and *Gransha Boys' High School*. He also, like his predecessors, believed that '*we should cater for the whole man*' by providing a wide choice of sports, but unlike some of his predecessors, he declared that he had no liking for corporal punishment, while admitting that on some occasions it could serve as a deterrent or as a last warning. At heart, however, he was a traditionalist, who viewed some of the educational initiatives of the time as retrograde steps. At the same time, he was capable of taking a courageous stand on issues he believed in, and many of his Staff found him supportive during difficult times.²

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the information contained in this chapter has been taken from the Minutes of the Board of Governors. From 1979 onwards, *The Gryphon* includes comprehensive coverage of Speech Day and Sports' Day. The dates of *County Down Spectator* reports of these events have therefore not been given here.

² *County Down Spectator*, 18 May and 1 June 1979; *The Gryphon*, 1979; reflections of various members of Staff.

FROM 'THE EVIL EMPIRE' TO 'GLASNOST'

While Mr. Patton was guiding the School to ever greater success, the world continued to experience conflict and violence: Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, leading to a boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games, U.S. troops invaded Grenada, Israel invaded Lebanon, which was consumed by civil war and the so-called '*Beirut hostages*' were seized, Iran and Iraq went to war, further fuelling the rise in oil prices, while the United Kingdom dispatched a taskforce to recover the Falkland Islands from the Argentinian invaders. In Spain, an attempted coup led by Civil Guard Col. Tejero was thwarted, while President Reagan and Pope John Paul II both survived assassination attempts. Natural disasters included earthquakes in Mexico and Turkey, and famine in Ethiopia, which prompted the *Live Aid* concerts.

In the U.S.A., Ronald Reagan's election as President heightened the Cold War - temporarily - as he announced his '*Star Wars*' programme and the building of the '*invisible*' *Stealth* bombers. The arrival of *Cruise* missiles in England caused protests at Greenham Common, intensified by the nuclear accident at Chernobyl. At the start of the decade a free trade union, *Solidarity*, was set up in Poland and as the 1980s drew to a close, President Gorbachev launched policies of '*glasnost*' and '*perestroika*', the *Iron Curtain* began to open, Presidents Bush and Gorbachev declared the end of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall came down, Germany was reunited and Communist governments throughout eastern Europe began to collapse. There was no such openness in China, however, where troops fired on protesters in Tiananmen Square, killing 2,000.

In the United Kingdom, as unemployment reached the 3 million mark, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government had to deal with a miners' strike and riots by those angered by the new '*poll tax*'. Sir Anthony Blunt was unmasked as '*the fourth man*' in the Burgess-Maclean-Philby spy ring, the S.A.S. spectacularly ended the Iranian Embassy siege, Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, the '*Yorkshire Ripper*' Peter Sutcliffe was arrested, and Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer. The country had its share of disasters too, as the *Herald of Free Enterprise* ferry capsized, a *Pan Am* jet exploded over Lockerbie, 47 people died in the Kegworth plane crash, the stock market suffered '*Black Monday*', and the south of England endured the '*Great Storm*'. Had any of this been presaged by the appearance of *Halley's Comet*?

Not even Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland could end the conflict here. Ten I.R.A. hunger strikers died, I.R.A. terrorists were killed at Loughgall and Gibraltar and, while the '*Guildford Four*' were cleared of a 1975 bombing, further bomb outrages were carried out at Ballykelly, Brighton, Knightsbridge and Enniskillen, among other places, and among the prominent people killed by terrorists were Robert Bradford, M.P. and Sir Norman Stronge. Ian Paisley launched his '*Third Force*', and the Hillsborough Agreement, giving the Dublin government a consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland, led to the resignation of all the Unionist M.P.s, all except Enoch Powell being re-elected. At least the gloom was lifted on two occasions when the Irish rugby team won the *Triple Crown*.

The 1980s also saw the launch of the *Turner Prize* for Painting, the Saatchi Collection, CD players, *Pacman*, the space shuttle (one of which, *Challenger*, exploded) and the *Mir* space station. It was also the decade of compulsory seatbelts, the Data Protection Act, the televising of the House of Commons, the recognition of *AIDS* by the U.S. Center for Disease Control, G.C.S.E., the National Curriculum and the teachers' *bête noire*, '*Baker Days*'.

In sport, the first London Marathon took place, *Shergar* won the Derby (only to be kidnapped 18 months later), Ian Botham won *The Ashes* almost single-handedly, Daley Thompson set a new record in the Decathlon, Torvill and Dean dominated ice-dance, Carl Lewis won 4 Olympic gold medals, Dennis Taylor took the Snooker World Championship on the final '*black*', Boris Becker became Wimbledon's youngest winner, and fellow German Steffi Graff won the tennis '*Grand Slam*'.

What were to become long-running musicals appeared on stage for the first time in the 1980s with the production of *Les Miserables*, *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*, while audiences queued to see Brian Friel's *Translations* and Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*. Cinemas were screening *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Chariots of Fire*, *ET*, *Terminator*, *Back to the Future*, *Fatal Attraction*, *Diehard*, and *Rainman*. New to television were *Dynasty*, *Hill Street Blues* and *Cheers* from across the Atlantic, and home-produced comedies such as *Yes Minister*, *Only Fools and Horses*, *Blackadder* and *Spitting Image*, as well as *EastEnders* and *Inspector Morse*. The arrival of *Breakfast TV* and *Sky TV* widened the viewers' choice immensely. Pop music acts proliferated: *Wham*, *Duran Duran*, *UB40*, Phil Collins, *Human League*, *Police*, *Culture Club*, *Madness* and *Madonna* were among those to have 'chart' successes, while thousands flocked to 'acid-house' rave parties. John le Carre's *Smiley's People*, William Golding's *Rights of Passage*, Thomas Keneally's *Shindler's Ark*, Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* were among the decade's bestsellers - though in the case of Professor Hawking's book, not necessarily the most widely read.

The 1980s witnessed the passing of many world leaders. Britain mourned the loss of Harold Macmillan, but not that of Rudolf Hess, Emperor Hirohito, the Ayatollah Khomeini or Zia ul-Haq. In the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko left the scene in quick succession, while the death of Marshal Tito was to usher in a decade of violence in the Balkans. It was violence, too, that ended the lives of Anwar Sadat, Indira Ghandi, Olof Palme and Nicolae Ceausescu.

Showbusiness and the Arts were the poorer as a result of the deaths of James Cagney, Bette Davis, David Niven, Richard Burton, Peter Sellers, Grace Kelly, Steve McQueen, Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Lawrence Olivier, composer William Walton, sculptor Henry Moore, artist Andy Warhol, authors George Simenon and Samuel Beckett, Poet Laureate John Betjeman and ex-Beatle John Lennon. Golliwogs also met an undignified end at the hand of 'political correctness'.³

THE DEVELOPMENT APPEAL

Before any major developments took place at the School, some alterations to its buildings were made. At the suggestion of Bill Langtry the old cloakroom area converted into a fully equipped audio-visual lecture theatre seating 120; it was designed by Barry Greenaway and much of the work was carried out by the School's maintenance staff. The removal of a wall in the Library doubled its size, but in 1981, with an enrolment of 930, which was too high for the existing accommodation and facilities, the Board of Governors set up a Development Committee 'with fairly wide terms of reference' under the chairmanship of Alastair Macafee. There was a strong feeling that planning, even for the long term, was a matter of urgency. Proposals were drawn up for a Sports Hall and a C.D.T. Centre, along with other alterations to the existing buildings to provide improved library and Sixth Form accommodation and to convert the Assembly Hall into an auditorium, which together it was estimated would cost around £700,000. The Department of Education said that, due to a moratorium on capital spending, it would be unable to grant-aid any project other than the C.D.T. Centre for at least 6 years, so to raise the necessary £450,000, it was decided to set up an Appeal Fund. *Craigmyle and Company* were engaged as professional fund-raisers.

Steps were also taken to purchase two further houses on Clifton Road, which had been done by the Spring of 1984. Two months later an Appeal Committee, consisting of representatives of the Board of Governors, the Teaching Staff, the *Old Boys' Association* and the *Parents' Association*, was set up under the Chairmanship of Alan Hewitt, with Derek McVitty, O.B.E. as Appeal Director. A glossy brochure, outlining the history of the School, listing some of its recent achievements and explaining the need for development, was designed and in January 1985 the Development Appeal was launched. Meetings of old boys were arranged at centres

³ Information gleaned from J.E.Doherty & D.J.Hickey, *A Chronology of Irish History since 1500* (1989) and P.Waller & J.Rowett, *Chronology of the 20th Century* (1995).

throughout Northern Ireland as well as Edinburgh, Bristol, Manchester and London - from which grew the *Old Boys' Association's* annual London Dinner. Within a month over £92,000 had been promised and by April, when the Appeal was publicly launched, the figure had reached £220,000. By October, 641 contributors had pledged £362,000. The Appeal Fund also benefited from a *Gala Night* by *Bangor Operatic Society*, which yielded over £3,500. (The production of *Half a Sixpence* went ahead despite the threat of a power cut because of a Loyalist strike in protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement.)⁴ A new Trust Deed was prepared, to put an obstacle in the way of the Department of Education, should a change in government policy occur and the Department wished to take over the administration of the School; all capital monies would be lodged in the Trust Fund, which would then make an interest-free loan to the Board of Governors.

'KING OPENS NEW SCHOOL HALL'

Phase 1 of the development was initially planned to include the conversion of the Assembly Hall and the building of a £330,000 Sports Hall on the Clifton Road site. In the middle of 1986, when D.R.Martin and Sons Ltd. were appointed as main contractors, the Appeal had exceeded its target, having reached £460,000. The builders' first task was the demolition of numbers 22 and 24 Clifton Road, which they duly did (to the considerable regret of this writer who had spent his formative years living at number 22).



Number 22 Clifton Road
(Numbers 16, 18, 20 and 24 were of similar design)



The Clarke Hall under construction, November 1986

⁴ *County Down Spectator*, 6 March 1986.

At the suggestion of Jimmy Stark, the Sports Hall and the planned C.D.T. Centre were to be named after Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Clarke. On being asked his preference, Mr. Clarke, already in failing health, perhaps not surprisingly chose the Sports Hall. The building of the Sports Hall took little over a year - despite the contractor having gone into voluntary liquidation towards the end of the work - and by November 1987, the *Clarke Hall* was in operation. It immediately proved to be a valuable asset, not only for pupils, but for the Staff Badminton Club, the *Old Boys' Association* Sports Club, the *Parents' Association* Ladies Keep Fit and *Bangor Hockey Club*, who between them used the Hall almost every weeknight.

Although Randall Clarke had been able to visit the hall named after him, by the time the building was officially opened by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Tom King (‘a notable Guest of Honour’ as he had been anonymously described in advance) in October 1988, Mr. Clarke had died. The Chairman of the Board, Dennis Dunlop, reminded the audience, which included the Mayor of North Down, Donald Hayes (a former teacher at *Connor House*), and Michael Clarke, one of Mr. Clarke's sons, that, with the exception of the original school building and the *Clarke Hall*, every other building on the campus had been built or acquired under the stewardship of Mr. Clarke and he said that it was fitting that the first new building to be completed since his retirement should bear his name. He also pointed out that the hall had been built without any form of government grant. For his part, Mr. King devoted much of his speech to the White Paper, *Education in Northern Ireland: Proposals for Reform* launched several months earlier by the Under-Secretary of State, Dr. Brian Mawhinney.⁵

THE WILKINS CENTRE

At the beginning of 1983, when the Department of Education intimated that it would grant-aid the building of the C.D.T. Centre - although ‘not in the foreseeable future’ - the Board of Governors decided to enlarge it to include Art and related subjects. This Design Centre was initially expected to cost around £342,000, although eventually it cost almost £200,000 more than that. The question arose of how to raise additional cash, for although an 85% grant would be given towards the cost, the School would have to find the rest. Ideas such as commercial sponsorship, an annual bazaar, asking for a voluntary contribution from parents, and raising the capital fee were all considered, but in the end it was decided to continue the development appeal, partly because the parents of boys in P.1, P.2, Form 1 and Form 2 had not had an opportunity to contribute earlier. The new target was £150,000.

At first the Department of the Environment planners objected to a three-storey building, but in the end the plans went out to tender at the end of 1987 and Alan Dunlop Ltd. began work in July 1988. The decision to include Art accommodation opened the way for developments elsewhere: the existing Art rooms on the ground floor were converted into a Library, and the Library on the second floor was adapted to become a Music Suite, complete with recording studio, work which alone was expected to cost £25,000. Due to the large borrowing commitment of over £300,000, it was decided not to proceed with the conversion of the Assembly Hall. When completed in September 1989 - on the site of the bicycle sheds at the south-east corner of the campus - the *Wilkins Centre* provided facilities for art, woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, computer-aided design, technology, photography, pottery and work in plastics. It was officially opened by Dr. Mawhinney on 16 November, by which time the Appeal had reached £110,000. The ceremony was relayed by closed circuit television to the *Clarke Hall*, where Speech Day was then held.

⁵ *County Down Spectator*, 13 October 1988.



The Wilkins Centre viewed from the back garden of No.4 College Avenue

In the midst of all this development, the Board discussed its ambitions for the future: squash courts, tennis courts at the north end of what was becoming known as *'the outer quad'*, *Astroturf* pitches, an organ and *'an endeavour to address the spiritual aspect of School life with a church building, so that seated accommodation for regular daily attendance in an act of worship, with music, could be provided'*. (Plans to consecrate the Assembly Hall did not come to fruition). The Music Department did eventually acquire an organ, but the only other developments during this period were the conversion of the Geography rooms to a Sixth Form Centre (for which a £5 per annum fee was introduced in 1989), the conversion of the old changing rooms into a Vice-Principal's study and an office for the Bursar, the relocation of the bicycle sheds (initially behind the *Connor House* hall), and a fire-escape at the rear of the old building, to meet new Health and Safety regulations.

BANGOR IN THE 1980s

While for the School the 1980s were years of building, for the town they were years of demolition, and not all, like the bomb damage on lower Main Street, was at the hands of terrorists: the North Pier, W.G.Lyttle's *Mount Herald*, Caproni's *Palais de Danse*, Barry's *Amusements*, the *Tonic* cinema, the gasworks – all landmarks for half a century or more – disappeared, while the *Savoy Hotel*, *Robinson and Cleaver* and the *Stewart Memorial School* run by the *Cripples' Institute*, closed their doors. Clandeboye Shopping Centre, the old *Queen's* cinema and the *Queen's Court Hotel* were all gutted by fire, the last houses in Market Square were demolished and Bangor Hospital lost its maternity beds. *Crystals Arena* both opened and closed! On a more positive note, Bridge Street was saved from the developers, the Long Hole did not, after protests from nearby residents, become a car park, *Seacliffe Cottages* - among the oldest houses in the town - were reprieved, the Leisure Centre and the Heritage Centre opened, the North Breakwater was built (and won an award from the *Concrete Society*), a start was made on the long-promised marina, a new fire station and what was to become the Flagship Centre were planned, as was the Bloomfield Centre, 'pay and display' car parking was introduced, a one-way town centre was proposed, wheelie bins arrived in the town, there was an epidemic of *'mini-roundabouts'* and Bangor was *'twinned'* with Bregenz in Austria. In education, there was considerable debate as to whether to build a new co-educational, integrated, comprehensive school at Ballykillaire or to move *Glenlola Collegiate* to that site. In the end it was decided not to proceed with a new school and to move *Glenlola Collegiate* to new premises, to be built on the site of the former Forsythe's nursery, and to use the old *Glenlola Collegiate* building for the *Girls' High School* – exactly the desired option expressed by the Board of Governors when consulted by the *S.E.E.L.B.* It was not felt to be in the School's interests to have a new co-educational school in the Bangor West area.⁶

⁶ Information gleaned from the files of the *County Down Spectator*.

THE ASTIN REPORT ON SCHOOL MANAGEMENT



The Board of Governors in 1979

Back Row: M.Rea, N.H.Handforth, F.C.A., Canon G.A.Mitchell, M.A., R.Wolsey, B.Com.Sc.,
Rev.S.Wilson, B.A., B.D., M.Th., W.R.T. Dowdall, A.H.Hewitt

Second Row: A.L.Macafee, M.D., F.R.C.S., J.P.Simms, B.Sc., A.R.C.Sc.(Ir.), I.S.O., R.L.H.Magrath, F.C.A.,
W.J.L.Cairns, Major R.A.Ablett, W.Wilson (Asst.Hon.Treasurer)

Front Row: D.B.Johnston, M.A., LL.B. (Hon.Secretary), J.E.Barbour, M.M. (Vice-Chairman),
T.W.Patton, M.A. (Headmaster), H.S.Blair, M.Sc., F.S.D.C. (Chairman), Miss I.E.Comyns (Secretary),
M.R.Butler, LL.B. (Vice-Chairman), R.E.McNeilly, LL.B.

Insets: His Honour Judge J.F.B.Russell, Q.C., J.B.Stark, D.F.C., B.A.Thompson, F.C.A. (Hon.Treasurer)

When Brian Thompson replaced Maurice Butler as Chairman of the Board in 1984, he restructured the way in which the Governors worked and in a way foreshadowed later developments: he held only five full Board meetings each year, interspersed with more regular meetings of the Sports and Grounds, Buildings, *Connor House*, Development, and Education Committees.

The *Astin Committee's* proposals were given statutory effect by the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. This necessitated amendments to the School's Scheme of Management - the seventh such amendment since the original Scheme had been framed in 1893. Henceforth the Board of Governors was to consist of 18 members - two Teacher Governors, two Parent Governors, four nominated by the Department of Education and ten elected by the Subscribers, in addition to the Headmaster. (A full list of Governors can be found in the Appendices). Clerical representation ceased, but under the amended Scheme, the Rector of *Bangor Parish* and the Minister of *First Bangor Presbyterian Church* were to become Honorary Chaplains to the School; Canon McCreery and Rev.S.Wilson accepted the invitation. Another major change was that two new Standing Committees were to be elected by the Board - Executive, and Finance and General Purposes - making a total of seven.

THE BENN REPORT ON THE FINANCING OF VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS

The report of the *Benn Committee* was also accepted by the Government and its proposals had far-reaching consequences for school finances. The School was to receive a monthly '*block grant*' and any shortfall in day-to-day running expenses was to be met by the School through fund-raising, out of capital or by increased fees for fee-payers. The Board of Governors expressed the view that it should be borne by all pupils, but to no avail. The new system was implemented in August 1984. School budgets were cut by 1.5%, but since teaching costs were outside the control of individual schools, the Bursar estimated that this in fact meant a cut of 5.1% on other expenditure, which was to necessitate careful financial management in the future. The Department did, however, agree to pay off the £18,000 deficit that existed at

the end of July. One result of the new arrangements was unpopular with the teaching staff: it was necessary to end the practice of paying both June and July salaries at the end of June.

A new system of allocating promotion allowances, introduced in 1988, also affected the Staff, for it left the School with a cash sum £8,000 less than the existing allowances; this meant that even when a promoted teacher left the School, he could not be replaced by someone on the same salary, and of course there could be no additional promotions, until a balance had been restored,

FEES

Due to a combination of factors - cutbacks in education funding, teachers' pay rises, a large bank overdraft, and the introduction of the '*block grant*' system - fees rose dramatically during the 1980s. Secondary department fees, which had been £348 per annum in 1979, often rose twice a year reaching £1620 per annum ten years later. Indeed in 1987, it was decided to quote fees '*per term*' in an effort to make them seem less expensive. In effect, since by the mid-1980s there were very few (36 in 1985) fee payers, an increase in fees did not make a great difference to the School's financial situation. At the same time the Capital Fee charged to all pupils rose from £15 to £50 and the stationery charge from £3 to £33. Over the same period *Connor House* fees also rose by over 300% to £633 a year for the junior classes and to £681 for the senior classes.

FAITHFUL SERVANTS

It seems that the School suffered heavily in terms of loss of personnel during these years. Of the Teaching Staff, Jim Driscoll, Harry Eadie and Gordon Thompson retired after a lifetime in the profession, while Raphael Sutter, Allen Abraham, Bruce Greenfield, Jimmy Johnston, Michael Foley, Jack Dalzell and Derek Mohan took early retirement. Ivan Wilson and Bob McIlroy became Senior Masters, replacing Messrs. Johnston and Eadie. Maurice Wilkins and Randall Clarke, who between them had guided the School for almost half a century, both died, as did Henry Rea after only a short retirement, and Jack Murphy, Head of English and Editor of *The Gryphon*, at the age of 45. (Donald Cairnduff took over as Editor of *The Gryphon*, to be succeeded by Robert Stevenson in 1993). Percy Simms, Norman Handforth, James Barbour and Willie Wilson retired from the Board of Governors, and Edgar McNeilly, Jack Cairns, Major Ronald Ablett and Bob McGrath died; between them they had served for over 200 years. Betty Nash and Ivy Comyns from the Administrative Staff took early retirement within months of each other and Willie Evans, who had stayed on as Groundsman in a part-time capacity after his retirement in 1979, finally laid down his tools in 1982. Mrs. Nash was succeeded as Headmaster's Secretary by Mrs. Dorothy Brooker, who in turn was replaced five years later by Margaret Hamilton, who had already worked for 16 years in the General Office. On Miss Comyns' retirement, the Governors decided to appoint a Bursar, who would also be Secretary to the Board; John Hunter, an Old Boy, was the successful candidate.



D.J. Hunter, LL.B, F.C.A.: Man and Boy
(Pupil 1961-1967; Bursar 1983-present)

STAFF

Many of the Staff appointed during the 1980s were still teaching at the School at the time of writing (2005): David Napier, Mike Andrews, John Culbert, Dr.Sam Stevenson, Dr.Margaret Faulkner, Dr.Noel Riddell, (Alexander) Eric Cardwell (*'The Honey Monster'* or *'Yeti'*), Mrs.Carol Hewitt, Myles Christy, Willie Cree, Donald Cairnduff, Mrs.Pru Bates, Jeffrey Shields (*'Chuckle Vision'*), Mark McDonald, and Miss Rosie Hill (Mrs McKee), who arrived, left and returned.

Two members of staff deserve special mention: Rodney Jones and Barry Smyth were given special leave of absence in the Summer of 1986, having won a trip to Mexico for the football World Cup finals. Former pupils recall various nicknames: *Dinky Dog*, *Gnome*, *Rocky*, *Slug*, and *Voodoo*; they also remember that Denis Bradley had considerable success in competitions of all kinds.⁷

Fred Neill succeeded Alec Lightbody as Caretaker, and he merits a mention because his tenure of that post has been described as *'brief but merry'*. The proud owner of a large American estate car, complete with leopard skin fur upholstery, a television and curtains, he took up residence in the Caretaker's Store, after his wife and he had a difference of opinion. There he installed a bed, cooker and sink; it was only when he took steps to add a toilet that his *'alterations'* were discovered.⁸

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The 1980s witnessed considerable unrest within the teaching profession because of dissatisfaction with salary levels; it was claimed that in 10 years, salaries had dropped by one third in real value. Industrial action by members of the *N.A.S./U.W.T.* in 1982 was undermined when Mr.Patton brought in substitute teachers *'to safeguard the well-being and good discipline of the boys'*, and so members continued to refuse to do lunchtime supervision. When the industrial action ended, the status quo was restored, although the two sides maintained different views as to whether such duties were voluntary or contractual. In 1984 it was found necessary to close the School due to two half-day strikes and there were further stoppages the following year. The cricket tour and *C.C.F.* camp had been unaffected in 1984, and the following year, when neither *N.A.S./U.W.T.* nor *A.M.M.A.* members would attend an evening Speech Day, it went ahead without them. However, there was no musical concert either year. As the pay dispute dragged on, the Board of Governors commented on *'so little evidence of musical functions over the last two or three years'* and took the step of writing to the Secretary of State to express concern at the delay, but in late 1986, it proved necessary to send home two forms, while the Headmaster supervised others in the Assembly Hall. As with the situation over a decade earlier, there were those on the Staff adamantly opposed to any form of industrial action; as a result the *Professional Association of Teachers* gained its first Bangor Grammar School member.

In the end, new conditions of service were introduced in return for improved pay; teachers were expected to work 1265 hours a year, excluding time spent on preparation and marking. In practice, this meant little change, as Mr.Patton explained:

'We had to assess in detail what was being done in School. The results were predictable and caused me no surprise. We discovered that many of our teachers spend many more hours in their involvement, not only in their teaching role, but in the extra-curricular life of the School.'

Another new condition of service did bring change - and unpopular change at that; named after the then Secretary of State for Education, five *'Baker Days'* were to be worked by teachers outside normal term time.

⁷ *FriendsReunited* website.

⁸ Recalled by Barry Greenaway.

PUPIL SUCCESSES

Oxbridge entrance became an annual event, although few entrants could match J.G.McCann's 13 'O' Levels and 5 'A' Levels.⁹ While still at school, Chris Peel won a scholarship to study for a term in Germany, R.S.Moore won a Royal Naval Sixth Form Scholarship, and A.F.Dobie and R.W.Perrott won Royal Air Force Sixth Form Scholarships. Other award-winners of note included Headboy John Fitzgerald, winner of the *Queen's University Frost-Smith Memorial Trophy* for his Science Lecture on '*Electricity and Communication*', O.J.Garrett and R.W.Perrott, winners of the *Aer Lingus Young Scientist Exhibition*, for which they received the *Callen Medal* awarded by the Irish Branch of the *Institute of Electrical Engineers*, S.K.A.Pentland, who took part in the *International Youth Science Fortnight*, R.T.Kelly, who was adjudged *Northern Ireland Young Film Critic of the Year*, K.G.Moffat, who won a *National Design Competition* for Christmas Cards, A.J.Gildea, who received the *Northern Ireland Schools' Design Prize* and Rory Wilson, who gained his Licentiate from the *Royal School of Music*. Simon Bride received an award for 14 years unbroken attendance. He had left School by December 1988, when a quarter of the pupils - almost 300 - were off with 'flu.

In public examinations, Roger Brown was awarded a *Hans Sloane Certificate* for coming second in Northern Ireland in joint Physics, Chemistry and Biology at 'A' Level, A.M.Law came 1st in 'A' Level Ancient History, R.D.G.Malcomson did likewise in 'A' Level Musical Appreciation, Stephen Pentland and Alan Currie came Joint-first in 'O' Level Technical Design and Graphic Communication and Peter Monteith in Classical Studies.

In rugby, three former pupils were '*capped*' for Ireland: Davy Morrow (3 in 1986), Don Whittle (1 in 1988) and Kenny Hooks (6 between 1981 and 1991), and Ian Patterson, Garth Maxwell, Mark McCall, Stephen McKinty and Terry McMaster for Ulster, the latter also playing for the Irish Touring XV in Japan. (Mark McCall and Stephen McKinty went on to captain Ulster). John Elder added to his Irish Cricket '*caps*', David W.Gray became an Olympic oarsman at the Moscow games, Stephen Martin, Captain of the Irish Hockey Team, won a bronze medal playing for Great Britain in Los Angeles four years later, and gold at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, where classmate Bill O'Hara and Conrad Simpson represented Ireland in the sailing. Conrad Simpson also competed in 1992 and Bill O'Hara in 1996. David Feherty, a contemporary of Martin and O'Hara, became the youngest winner of the Irish Professional Golf Championships. Garth McGimpsey also represented the British Isles in the *Eisenhower Trophy* in Venezuela. Michael Rea played cricket for Irish and British universities, was Vice-Captain of the Irish Under-23 team and gained a full Irish '*cap*', while Bertie McConnell received the Freedom of North Down and Brian Cummings, a former Governor of the School and Private Secretary to James Chichester-Clark when he was Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, was appointed Chief Executive of the Falkland Islands.

Sadly, several pupils died before they had the chance to fulfil their potential: Stephen Coulter was drowned at Whitepark Bay, Andrew Patterson, whose brother had died only a short time before, died tragically, and David McMurray of Form 2 died of cancer. Former pupil David Hanson, a constable in the *R.U.C.* was killed by a terrorist bomb in Crossmaglen, and John Geary, who had gone up to *Oxford* in 1973, was drowned. Harry Gaw who had been a pupil at *Connor House* and the Senior School from 1969-1983 also died aged only 19.

NEW PRIZES

The contribution of a number of people to the life of the School was commemorated in a variety of ways. Charles Milligan marked the golden jubilee of the *Old Boys' Association* by presenting the *Dr.W.G.Connolly [sic] Cup 'for outstanding academic achievement'*, and the contribution of another former Headmaster, James McFeeters, was also marked when his son, Jack, presented a Cup, also for outstanding academic achievement. Mrs.Ablett, widow of Major Ablett, a Governor for many years, presented a Cup for an outstanding contribution to the Arts, and Mrs.Anne McNeilly presented the *Edgar McNeilly Prize for History* and gave

⁹ A list of those awarded scholarships can be found in the Appendices.

£1,000 to the Library for the purchase of reference and history books, including the *Cambridge History* series, which became known as the *Edgar McNeilly Collection*; Edgar McNeilly's collection of local history materials was deposited in the School Archives. The Library also benefited from the presentation, by his brother, of the late Karl Smyth's collection of books. David McMurray's memory was honoured by the presentation, by his parents, of a cup to be awarded to someone who made an outstanding contribution to the junior school. A Prize for Senior Art was endowed by the gift of £100 by Mr. Billy Gaw in memory of his son Harry. Mrs. G.H. McNeill presented £200 to found a prize in memory of her brother Second Lieutenant Jack Hamilton, a pupil at the School between 1917 and 1921, who had been killed in an air raid on Belfast in 1941; the prize was to be awarded to a boy 'who has brought honour to his School by his personal contribution in the field of sport'. Even the school architect's contribution was commemorated when his widow, Professor Ingrid Allen, presented the *Alan Barnes Design Trophy*. The *Lowry Andrews Prizes*, first presented in 1943, were perpetuated by the School following the gift of £500 by his sister, Mrs. Ogden-Swift, following the death of her mother, who had financed the prizes annually; the £500 was lodged in the Development Appeal Fund.

THE CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS

Although the Conservative government had shelved its predecessor's planned educational reforms, Mr. Patton warned:

'Those who drafted the proposals, those who produced the various reports, have not melted mysteriously away; nor have their reports. They still lurk there, casting their baleful shadow over us, threatening our very existence. We must remain mobilized, alert, ready to resist any move made against our voluntary principle. We must plan ahead, consider new developments, the effect of the silicone chip, the best use of microprocessors . . . '

However, the School had been given a breathing space, and the Governors planned to use it to try to put the School in a position where it could survive any future re-organisation.

Although education re-organisation did not take place, the 1980s brought a radical restructuring of the curriculum and examinations, something which Mr. Patton had perhaps anticipated when he said in 1981: *'The question must be asked: will the present constraints of the three 'A' Levels system supply men and women adequately equipped for the changing needs of a changing society'*.

The 1980s saw schools enter the computer age; in 1981 the Department of Industry supplied the School with its first computer - a 380Z - and a 48K *Apple* computer was bought from Bazaar funds. Initially a Physics store was converted to accommodate them, but then a room in the *Orlit* block was turned into a fully equipped Computer Room. A fire in that room at the beginning of term in September 1987 destroyed a lot of computer hardware and it was decided to replace the destroyed *B.B.C.* computers with *Nimbus* computers, which would make possible the teaching of 'A' Level Computing. One First Form boy recalled, years later: *'Our first day was marred by the tragic news that the newly fitted out computer centre had been gutted by a towering inferno just the day before. As a result, our computer studies lessons for the next six months or so [an exaggeration!] consisted of [the teacher] dictating to us verbatim from a textbook, in a classroom devoid of any computers'*.¹⁰

Mr. Wilson, who was appointed Director of Studies in 1982, greatly expanded the work of the Careers Department and that year he was praised by the Headmaster for his work: *'The transformation of this area has been most opportune in the current difficult employment situation'*. The following year a Careers Convention was held for Lower VI and representatives of the Scottish Universities made their first visit to the School. A two-day *'Challenge of Industry'* conference, organised by the *Industrial Society* in 1983, became an annual event, as did a week's work experience for Lower VI. In 1988 *Jig-cal*, a computer-based system to assist

¹⁰ *FriendsReunited* website.

with career choice, was introduced at Form 3 level. The History department also received praise, with 50% of the 'A' Level candidates gaining a Grade 'A' in 1983 and achieving 'outstanding' results again in 1985.

Despite widespread calls for a delay, a new examination at 16+ - the *General Certificate of Secondary Education (G.C.S.E.)* - was introduced to replace the dual-system of G.C.E. 'O' Level and C.S.E. Teaching of the new syllabi, which placed greater emphasis on practical, communicative skills, began in September 1986 and although schools were allowed a number of 'exceptional closure' days for staff training, Mr. Patton said that *'misgivings will remain until we have had the opportunity to assess in more detail some of the implications of the new examination'*.

Meanwhile the Transfer Procedure from primary to secondary school had undergone frequent changes. At the start of the decade, parents were to list their chosen secondary schools in order of preference and schools were allocated a quota of pupils, something to which the Board of Governors was opposed. The School's quota was set at 130 in 1980, but was raised to 136 the following year when all the grammar schools in the area were oversubscribed. P.7 pupils were being graded 'A', 'M' and 'G' and that year, while 11 boys graded 'G' were admitted from *Connor House*, not a single boy from a Bangor primary school graded 'M' gained place at any of the local grammar schools. In 1983, the School was told that only 10% of its capacity could be filled by 'M's and 'G's, who had put the School as first preference, and even then only after it had admitted all the Grade 'A's who had applied. If continued, this could clearly have had an affect on *Connor House*. Four years later, when quotas were abolished and post-primary schools were thrown into direct competition with each other, Open Evenings and Open Days were held in the hope of attracting pupils.

When a new 'National Curriculum' was proposed for England and Wales in 1987, it was inevitable that Northern Ireland would follow suit. Mr. Patton was not enthusiastic:

'We have a system of grammar school education whose excellence is known and whose results speak for themselves. There is a real danger that the future imposition of a National Curriculum here, far from having the effect of raising standards, could provide not a framework as suggested but that very straitjacket which it professes it wishes to avoid. There has always been the need in academic affairs for freedom and flexibility.'

Dr. Mawhinney's White Paper *Education Reform in Northern Ireland – The Way Forward*, contained significant differences from his earlier proposals and gave greater flexibility; 'Areas of Study', such as 'environment and society' and 'creative and expressive', replaced the Foundation Subjects of the English model. It was given statutory force by the Education Reform Order (Northern Ireland) 1989, which laid down the framework for a common curriculum and stipulated the minimum amount of time to be devoted to each subject. The order also established a number of cross-curricular themes including Information Technology, Careers, Health Education, Education for Mutual Understanding, and Cultural Heritage. (Although it was felt that *'the School already has an excellent natural approach to integration'*, at Dr. Mawhinney's behest, the Board appointed Jim Claney as the Governor responsible for overseeing good community relations). The Order also introduced full grants for integrated schools, and all post-primary schools could admit pupils up to their physical capacity, which was inevitably detrimental to the secondary schools. There was also to be testing at 8, 11, 14 and 16, and pupils were to have a *Record of Achievement* completed at the end of P.7 and when leaving school. The test at 11 would embrace a wider range of learning than the old 'verbal reasoning' tests. Dr. Mawhinney used his visit to the School for Speech Day in November 1989 to announce how these education reforms would be implemented. *Programmes of Study* were being drawn up for each subject and they would be introduced over the following three years.¹¹

¹¹ *County Down Spectator*, 23 November 1989.

On the proposal that each school's results were to be published, Mr.Patton said:

'It is a risky business to publish raw results. Inevitably the public will tend to take figures at face value, while, for instance, sometimes a relatively modest performance in grades or marks can actually represent a quite remarkable achievement in teaching and raising pupils of a low standard to a satisfactory grade.'

It was little wonder that Mr.Patton complained that *'life is one long round of educational initiatives'*.

'THE SPOTLIGHT OF UNWELCOME PUBLICITY'

In the Summer of 1982, 16 boys were disqualified from one or more G.C.E. 'O' Level subjects, when it was discovered that they had had access to some of the papers prior to sitting the examination. At first only one packet of papers appeared to be missing and it was thought that there had been an error in the original checking process, but when it was found that a further 14 packets, covering 13 subjects, the matter was reported to the Secretary of the Northern Ireland Schools Examination Council, S.W.W.Mercer (a former teacher at the School). N.I.S.E.C. immediately suspended the results of all candidates from the School, pending an investigation. It was discovered that a faulty lock on the door of the room in which the papers were stored had allowed a number of Form V boys to gain access. Fortunately dissemination of the papers was limited and the G.C.E. Board had *'no criticism to make of the School's arrangements and congratulated the School on the thoroughness and speed of its investigation'*. At the end of July Mr.Patton was able to write to the parents of all the other candidates notifying them that their results would be issued in the usual way. The parents of ten of the boys, who had been most seriously involved, or whose past disciplinary record was poor, were asked to *'give serious consideration as to whether their son's future really lay in this School'*. Three of the boys returned *'under written warning from the Headmaster that, should they be guilty of any further breach of discipline, even one which, for another boy, would entail more lenient treatment, for him it would involve automatic expulsion'*. *'Appropriate'* disciplinary action was taken against the other six culprits. In his Speech Day address several months later, Mr.Patton referred to *'the shameful actions of a small number of boys'* and to the *'distress and anxiety'* they had caused to the other candidates. One outcome of the incident was the purchase of a safe for the storage of examination papers in the future.¹² The following year proposed legislation to outlaw corporal punishment in schools limited the sanctions available to Mr.Patton - and would surely have horrified Mr.Clarke.

Several years later an even more unpleasant incident gained front-page headlines when *'at least one boy was expelled and several suspended after a 15-year-old boy was attacked'* in Strickland's Glen; in fact two were expelled and five suspended. *'Bangor's image, shiny and bright with plans for the seafront'* was said by local people to be deteriorating to the point that many would not walk around the town at night or at holiday times.¹³

Sixth Formers generally behaved well in the days prior to going on study leave, apart from the *'decoration'* of the School, which usually involved the festooning of the trees with toilet paper. However, on one occasion *'goods and services'* were ordered and were delivered to the School, as an ill-thought-out joke.

SPORT¹⁴

Despite the need to spend even more on drainage at Ballymacormick and on the pavilion – although the renting of Mrs.Gelston's riding stables in 1985 provided a store for the tractor

¹² *County Down Spectator*, 9 July and 30 July 1982; *The Gryphon* 1982.

¹³ *County Down Spectator*, 12 May 1988.

¹⁴ A full list of individual and team successes, and of representative honours can be found in the Appendices. Some of the rugby details were gleaned from Dougie Rea's speech at the *Grammarians'* dinner in November 2005.

and made possible the provision of two additional changing rooms - the 1980s could perhaps be described as a 'golden age' as far as the School's sporting record is concerned.

In rugby, School teams won the *Hospitals' Cup* for Medallion 'Sevens' in 1983, the *Medallion Shield* in 1985 and appeared in five *Schools' Cup* finals - four in successive years - winning three of them, in 1985 beating *Omagh Academy* 12-3, in 1986 beating *R.B.A.I.* 17-4 and in 1988 beating *Coleraine Inst.* 13-4. By the time Dougie Rea decided that after seven years coaching the 1st XV, it was 'time for a rest' following the 1988 win, the team had been beaten only once in 19 cup games. The *Spectator* announced that 'a new coach, Jim Welch, would be joining the squad'! (In fact Mr. Welch had just been enjoying a break, having been replaced by Mr. Rea; in 1981, the Headmaster had commented that 'Since 1959 the standard of rugby in this School has been transformed by Jim Welch's guiding hand' and he and Mr. Macpherson guided a team to victory in the 'Sevens' in 1989). In 1986 the boys defeated an Ulster Schools XV as part of *Bangor R.F.C.*'s centenary celebrations. The captain of the 1985 team, Michael Webb, went on to qualify as a doctor and medical officer with the Irish rugby team during their tour to Japan in 2005. Gavin Ellis (who played in three successive *Schools' Cup* finals and who, according to Dougie Rea, was the only player he had coached, who could catch the ball in one hand, while combing his hair with the other) along with Derek Larmour went to Australia with the Irish Schools' team, the Board of Governors contributing £150 towards their expenses; they were among the eight boys to represent their country. A further 13 represented Ulster Schools'. Mark McCall captained both Ulster and Irish Schools. S.C. McKenna and Sean Crowther toured Zimbabwe, the Governors again contributing to their expenses. Sean shares with Dick Milliken the distinction of having captained both *Medallion Shield* and *Schools' Cup*-winning teams.



Winners of the Medallion 'Sevens' 1983

Mr. Macpherson Headmaster Mr. Napier
 C.J. Jackson, B.J. Wickens, G. Ellis, I. Thompson
 R.J. Blackmore, S. Skelly, C.M. McCall, K.W. Woods, J.R. Bennett



Winners of the *Ulster Schools' Cup* 1985

Mr. Macpherson	Headmaster	Mr. Rea
G. Lindsay, C. D. Mawhinney, E. A. Backler, N. Johnston, S. J. McKinty, J. S. Dunlop, B. J. Wickens, I. R. Boal		
W. D. Johnston, G. Ellis, K. W. Woods, C. M. McCall, M. J. Webb, N. D. Hughes, D. P. Monteith, R. J. Blackmore, C. J. Jackson		
I. Thompson, M. Trimble		J. Bennett, D. R. N. Flanagan



Winners of the *Medallion Shield* 1985

Mr. Welch	Headmaster	Mr. Napier
N. Young, M. Ellesmere, P. McCleary, R. Baker, R. Wilson, S. Andrews, D. Corry, A. Williamson		
J. Bennett, A. Armstrong, S. Carroll, J. Mawhinney, S. M. Crowther, S. C. McKenna, R. Sexton, N. Taylor, J. Ross		
M. Freedman, G. McCandless		J. Dunne, S. Caughey



Winners of the *Ulster Schools' Cup* 1986

Mr. Macpherson	Headmaster	Mr. Rea
J. M. Davis, J. R. Mawhinney, D. Cooke, R. A. Brown, K. A. Esdale, S. M. Crowther, J. R. Bennett, S. C. McGookin		
G. Ellis, D. R. N. Flanagan, B. J. Wicken, K. W. Woods, C. M. McCall, D. G. Lindsay, R. J. Blackmore, W. Johnston, C. J. Jackson		
S. C. McKenna, B. M. Hawkins		J. D. Bennett, I. H. Thompson



Winners of the *Ulster Schools' Cup* 1988

Mr. Macpherson Headmaster Mr. Rea
 G. Anderson, G.C. Beatie, N.M. Young, C.G. Drennan, R.J. Wilson, J.A. Hanna, R.P. Sexton, M.J. Ellesmere,
 N.S. Taylor, C.J. Kerr, S.L. Mann, S.C. McKenna, S.M. Crowther, J.R. Mawhinney, R.G. Scott, I.R. Cooke,
 P.A. McCleery, S.J. Andrews, F.D. Erwin, M.W. Gordon, M.A. Coyle

Following its convincing 13-4 victory over *Coleraine Inst* in the final, this team was accorded the accolade '*the outstanding rugby team in the United Kingdom in March 1988*' in *Rugby World* magazine.



Winners of the Ulster Schools' '*Sevens*' Trophy 1989

Mr. Macpherson, M. McCord, J. Parks, K. McDaw, M. Gordon, Mr. Welch
 M. Robinson, G. Anderson, S. Mann, J. Hanna, G. Beattie

In terms of silverware and representative honours, cricket, under the direction of Mr. Harte from 1983, following Harry Eadie's retirement, was even more successful. The 1st XI won the *McCullough Cup* on five occasions, as well as several other trophies, and other teams also enjoyed success. There were several outstanding cricketers playing for the School during the 1980s, Michael Rea and Brian Millar going on to win full Irish '*caps*'. In 1980, John Lyon, the former Lancashire wicketkeeper and Professional with Bangor Cricket Club, coached 3 or 4 afternoons a week.



The Headmaster, Mr.Eadie, Mr.Smyth, Mr.McIlroy and Mr.Harte with the 1st XI, winners of the *McCullough Cup* and Joint Winners of *A.I.B. Schools' League* 1982
I.McClatchey, N.Johnston, N.McAlister, M.Thompson, A.Sargaison
I.Boal, D.McCusker, P.McCall, A.Shaw, M.Rea, B.Millar, J.Erskine



The 1st XI which won the *McCullough Cup* in 1983
I.R.Boal, W.C.Irwin, N.S.McAlister, N.E.Johnston, D.S.McCusker, Mr.Harte, A.Sargaison
C.D.Mawhinney, R.B.Millar, P.H.J.McCall, M.P.Rea, I.J.McClatchey, J.D.Erskine, C.M.McCall,



Winners of the *McCullough Cup* 1984
The Headmaster, Mr.Harte, S.McGookin, M.McIvor, C.Mawhinney, K.McNinch, N.Sinclair, S.Dunlop, Mr.Wilson
M.McCall, D.McCusker, B.Millar, M.P.Rea, P.McCall, I.Boal, N.Johnston

The team which won the *McCullough Cup* in 1987 was: M.W.R.McCord, S.R.McIlroy, I.R.Cooke, R.G.Scott, S.J.Thompson, A.P.Williamson, S.L.Mann, N.S.Taylor, C.C.Yeates, S.C.McKenna, D.J.J.Waugh, S.J.Cummings and D.B.Curran; the 1989 team consisted of M.Orr, S.Sexton, A.Irwin, P.English, G.McKillen, C.Escott, P.Skelly, I.Cooke, P.McIlwaine, R.Scott, J.Cunningham, S.Mann, M.Baillie and M.McCord. Unfortunately the photographs of these teams are missing from the School albums.

Hockey, as it celebrated its 21st anniversary in 1987, enjoyed its most successful era to date. In 1983, the 1st XI won both the *Burney Cup* and the *McCullough Cup* and the 2nd XI, the Under-14s and the Under-15s also won trophies. Seven boys won international 'caps'.



Winners of hockey's *Burney Cup* and *McCullough Cup* 1983

The Headmaster, I.Campton, G.Stranex, A.Brennan, N.McAlister, A.Sterritt, K.Ward, Mr.Smyth
P.Reid, L.Rainey, K.McAlister, I.Dornan, A.Chambers, S.Mitchell, C.McConkey

Badminton enjoyed its first major success when the senior team won the Irish Schools' Championships in 1980, while tennis had its individual stars in Peter Minnis, who played for the Ulster Senior team and won the Irish Under-18 title in 1980, the year in which Alan Ringland played for the Ulster Junior team. In the final year of the decade, the Under-14 and the Under-12 teams both won the Schools' Cups for their age-group. Alan Robson played for the Ulster Cadet table tennis team.



Irish Schools' Senior Badminton Champions 1980

P.S.Robinson, E.G.Magowan, A.L.Ringland, P.R.Minnis
with the Headmaster and Mr.Welch

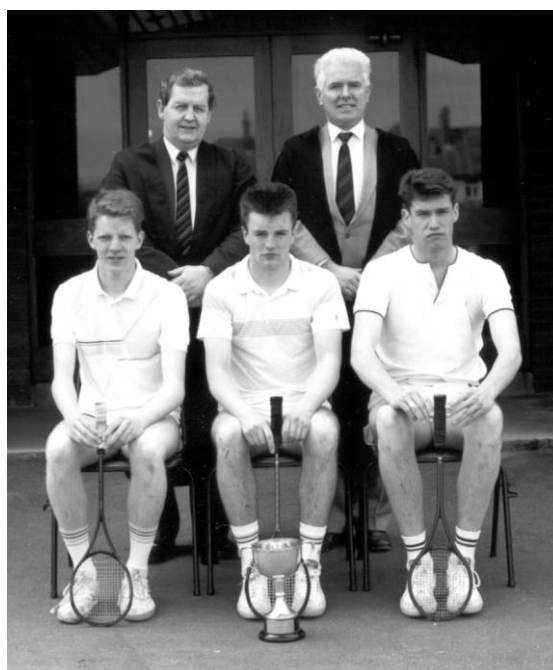
But among the racquet sports, it was squash which enjoyed the greatest success, built largely on the brilliance of Jeffrey Hearst, who was selected for the Ulster and the Irish Senior Teams while still at School, and in the second half of the decade on the efforts of the McCabe brothers, Colin, Graham and Michael, each of whom also gained representative honours. The School won the *Ulster Schools' League* every year between 1980 and 1988 except for 1986, the *Ulster Schools' Cup* in 1982 (wresting it from *Campbell College* for the first time ever), 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988 and 1989, and the *Irish Schools' Cup* in 1982 (having been undefeated all season) and 1984.



The Headmaster and Mr. Bonar with
I. Eldridge, J. Hearst, S. Fulton
Winners of the *Ulster Schools' Squash League* 1981 and the
Ulster Schools' League, Cup and Irish Schools' Cup 1982



A.P. Morrison, J. Hearst, C. McCabe
Winners of the *Ulster Schools' League* 1983



Winners of the *Ulster Schools' Squash Cup* 1989
Michael McCabe, Philip Campbell, Nicky Young

A number of Squash Team photographs are also missing from the School Albums. In 1984, with K. Walker in place of Morrison, the team won the *Ulster Schools' League and Cup* and the *Irish Schools' Cup*, and a year later Walker and C. McCabe were joined by J. McCabe when the School retained the *Ulster Schools' League and Cup*. G. McCabe and N. Young were members of the team which won both the *Ulster Schools' League and Cup*, in 1987 with D. Rothwell, and in 1988 with M. McCabe.

Probably the School's most outstanding athlete of the late 1980s was R.P.Sexton who represented Ulster and Irish Schools in both 1985 and 1986, was a Northern Ireland Senior in 1987 and a Great Britain Junior in 1988; in both those years he won the Ulster Schools' 100 and 200 metres.

Golf too had its successes, teams winning the *Ulster Schools' League* in 1982 and becoming *Ulster Schools' Champions* in 1989. At the start of the decade, P.T.C.Brunton was on the Irish Boys' team, having won the *Leinster Boys' Championship* in 1980.



The Headmaster and Mr.Steele with the
Winners of the *Ulster Schools' League* 1982
M.Blundell, I.Baxter
J.Packham, S.Henderson, G.Bingham



Ulster Schools' Golf Champions 1989
J.McNaught, M.Livingston
J.McBurney, A.Baxter, D.Shepherd

During these years produced a number of Swimming champions, including M.J.Ellesmere, A.S.Officer Ulster and R.M.Cummings, who set a new record when winning the Ulster Junior 400 metre Freestyle title in 1988 and became Ulster Schools' Intermediate Butterfly and Individual Medley Champion in 1989. That year he represented Ulster and Ireland Juniors and A.S.Officer represented Ulster. In sailing, G.T.McAnlis and W.S.Killiner were National Cadet Champions in 1987 and 1988.

The School also took pride in Robert Orr's selection for the Irish Cycling team for the *Tour of Luxemburg* in 1983 and Colin McGivern's selection for the *Northern Ireland Cycling Federation's* Under-16 international team.

SCHOOL TRIPS

Rugby, Hockey and Cricket teams went on annuals tours to Dublin, Scotland and various parts of England, the 1st XV venturing as far as France for the first time in 1983. Ski Trips began in 1980 and took boys to Italy and Switzerland, the Geography department held field trips to Cumbria and the History Society took parties of boys to France, Italy, Germany and Austria. One Easter 150 boys and 17 staff were involved in these extra-curricular activities.

Individual pupils went even further afield: Simon Templeton, David McShane and Anil Tandon spent a year in the United States under the auspices of the *American Field Service* scheme; Luis Rodriguez from Mexico and Satoru Kobayashi from Japan came to the School under a similar scheme.

For local journeys involving small numbers of pupils, the School acquired two minibuses. They were not always used in the conventional way. One former pupil recalled the occasion when, at the Ward Park hockey pitches two boys,

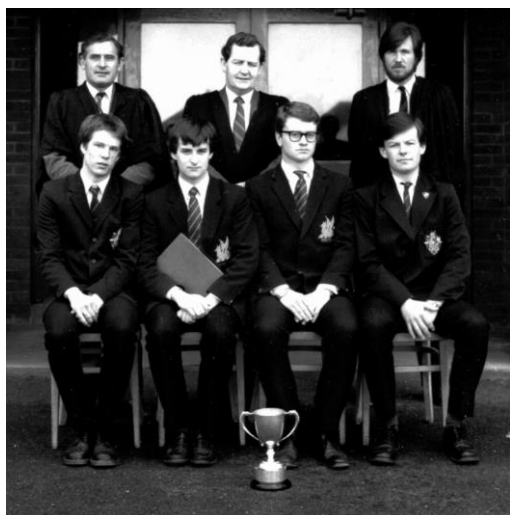
'saw Mr.Welch heading towards the blue minibus and thought it'd be cool to hitch a lift on the back step back to School rather than walk. Unbeknown to them, Mr.Welch was in fact planning to go to Ballymac and he was pulled over by the Police, with them both hanging onto the back for their lives'.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Friends Reunited* website.

OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Although the *Model Railway Club*, the *Natural History Society* and the *Junior School Club* ceased to function, and the *Literary Society*, which brought local writers including Paul Muldoon, Padric Fiacca, Michael Longley, Graham Reid and Martin Lynch to the School, survived for only a few years, more than a dozen clubs and societies continued to flourish.

The Debating Team won the *Belfast Junior Chamber of Commerce Cup* on three occasions – 1983, 1984 and 1986.



Mr.McCord, The Headmaster, Mr.Jones with the
Winners of the *Belfast Junior Chamber of Commerce Debating Cup* 1983 and 1984
M.Anderson, D.Campbell, R.Napier, C.Benson J.Huggins, W.Mayne, C.Benson, M.Anderson



Winners of *Belfast Junior Chamber of Commerce Debating Cup* 1986
The Headmaster, S.Harper, Mr.McCord
J.S.Lowry, D.J.B.McKee, H.R.Beckett

In 1983, after nine years of Shakespeare productions, Peter Lagrue broke new territory with his production of *My Fair Lady*. There followed plays by O'Casey and Synge, as well Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* and the less well known *The Roses of Eyam*, before he returned to Shakespeare with *The Tempest* in 1989. The decade ended with a *Junior Drama Society* production of *Bugsy Malone*, on which Miss Hughes had worked during August, with the boys, girls from *Glenlola Collegiate* and senior pupils from *Grange Primary School*.

The School produced several outstanding chess players in the 1980s. C.M.Smyth continued his successful career, winning the Ulster Under-18 Championships and playing for Irish Schoolboys' in 1980. Four years later W.B.Dennison played for the Ulster Schools' Senior team and H.R.Beckett for the Junior Team. Beckett went on to represent Ulster at Under-19

level the following year and Ulster and Irish Schools' in both 1986 and 1987. In 1986 D.H.V.Franklin and B.T.Tenner played for the Northern Ireland Under-25 bridge team.

As well as the usual performances by the Schools' musicians, the 1980s witnessed a number of outstanding performances by visiting musicians including *Canticle*, the *Ulster Orchestra*, *King's Scholars*, and *Camarata* under the direction of Ian Hunter. Such was the popularity of the traditional Spring Concert and Carol Service that they were two performances of each for most of the decade. From 1982, those musical old boys, who had joined the choir and orchestra at the evening carol service, enjoyed a post-service Christmas dinner. The School's Brass Ensemble also played at Choral Evensong in *St.Anne's Cathedral*.

The *Community Service Group* continued its work locally, in particular visiting *Clifton Special Care School* on a weekly basis, playing with the children and helping the teachers. During the Summer of 1980, Mr.Wilson, Mr.Hamilton and 9 boys went to Kenya, where they helped to build a youth centre. In recognition of their work Mr.Hamilton and David Connery met Prince Charles at *Buckingham Palace* the following year.¹⁶ In 1984 the senior School raised £1200 for the *Ethiopia Famine Appeal*.

C.C.F.

Towards the end of 1979 Captain Ray Mowat relinquished command of the *C.C.F.* contingent, to be replaced by Captain Barry Greenaway, who was promoted to Major. The following year the officer strength increased when John Culbert was commissioned a Second Lieutenant and Alan Mackie was appointed Sub Lieutenant in the R.N. Section. In 1981, the Contingent, by now operating from its accommodation in *Crosby House*, was selected, from over seventy *C.C.F.* applicants in the United Kingdom, to be one of the four to take part in the Nijmegen Marches in Holland, in which perhaps 10,000 troops march 40 kilometres each day for four days. Originating as a fitness exercise in 1917, they are now seen by the Dutch as a celebration of their liberation from German occupation in 1945. The team, led by Lieutenant Cromie, and with Major Greenaway as 'cycle orderly' and Duncan Macpherson as cameraman, raised £500 for *Clifton Special Care School*. The *Contingent* was selected again in 1987, when the team was led by Captain Culbert. That year a team also took part in the television programme 'Now Get Out of That', the first school from Northern Ireland to do so. Annual camp venues ranged from the Isle of Man, through Cultybraggan, Nottingham and Marchwood, to Berlin. In 1983, the Headmaster ordered the boys home from an expedition in the Mourne because of a deterioration in the security situation following the bombing of the *Grand Hotel* in Brighton. By 1984, when Major Greenaway was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, eight members of Staff were serving as officers with the *Contingent*. The following year, Donald Crosbie represented Northern Ireland Cadets of the *C.C.F.* Naval Sections at the *VE Day* service in Westminster Abbey. Some members of the *Contingent* went on to pursue military careers, including Brian Service, who became a Lieutenant Commander, piloting *Sea-king* helicopters for the *Royal Navy*, Ian Dornan, a *Tornado* pilot in the *R.A.F.*, and Richard West a Major in the *Royal Military Police* and a veteran of the Gulf War.¹⁷

THE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

The *Old Boys' Association* celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1979, with J.C.Taylor, its first Treasurer, being installed as Chairman. Charles F.Milligan, one of the oldest former pupils, presented a cup in memory of his Headmaster, Dr.Conolly, to mark the occasion and the Association organised competitions in which the *Chess*, *Bridge* and *Photographic Clubs* and the *Historical Society* had taken part. The following year, when Maurice Wilkins died, Mr.Milligan was asked to become Patron of the *Association*. Two Honorary Vice-Presidents and former members of staff, R.E.Russell and W.T.W.Johnson, died within months of each other and, when Mr.Milligan died in 1983, Randall Clarke was installed as Patron and following Mr.Clarke's death, Dr.Rodgers was asked to fill that post.

¹⁶ *County Down Spectator*, 6 March 1981.

¹⁷ I am indebted, as ever, to Barry Greenaway for the information contained in this section.

In 1979, because of the risk of injury to the boys, it was decided that only the 1st XV should play an Old Boys' team on Boxing Day, and in 1983, when the Rugby Union withdrew its support from such matches, the '*School versus the Old Boys*' rugby fixture ended, being replaced by a match between teams of 'old' and 'young' former pupils or '*home-based*' versus '*exiles*'. The other sporting activities continued and in 1985 were extended to include squash. The Golf competition was also played on an almost annual basis, with a new *Visitors' Cup* being presented by Brian Kissock.

The opening of the *Clarke Hall* enabled the *Association* to set up a sports section, enthusiastically promoted by Raymond Parker. A table tennis team organised by Peter Barry entered the Belfast League and badminton, weights and 5-a-side football were among the activities. Membership was never large however, and in 1989 the Sports' Association made a loss of over £100.

The annual membership fee was increased to £2 and parents were given the opportunity to make planned payments towards life membership of the *Association* for their sons. By the end of the decade there were over 600 members. With the increasing cost of *The Gryphon*, it proved necessary to stop supplying it free to members, which raised the question of how to keep members informed of association activities. A Spring Bulletin was introduced, expanded in 1985 into a broader based newssheet, edited for several years by Roger Lightbody, and eventually financed by advertisements.

The *Association* made regular presentations to the School; a new Chairmen's Board was commissioned to replace the old one, which was full; inscribed plaques were presented to members of the 1st XV each year they reached the final of the *Schools' Cup*; £1,000 was given to the Development Appeal; and cash donations of several hundred pounds whenever funds allowed.

The Annual Dinner continued, for some years held at *Bangor Golf Club*, and in an effort to increase membership, involvement by existing members and hence contributions to the School, other social events took place, including Ladies' Nights, a '*Spring Function*' - although that was discontinued on the grounds that it was only supported by the committee - and, a spin off from the Development Appeal, the inaugural London Dinner in 1986, organised for many years by Desmond Robinson and enjoying distinguished guest speakers such as former pupils Paul McDowell of the *B.B.C.* and David Montgomery, then editor of *Today*.¹⁸

THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

At the beginning of 1980, the Board of Governors, at the behest of the *Parents' Association*, gave approval for another Bazaar. A planning committee was set up with Irwin Bonar as Chairman and Mrs. Daphne Hamill as Secretary. Over £4,000 was raised. Encouraged by this success, the venture was repeated in 1986, when Alan Mackie chaired the organising committee. The £5,000 raised on that occasion was supplemented by the sale of firewood obtained from the felled chestnut tree in the garden of 22 Clifton Road!

The *Association* made regular cash donations to the School, sometimes earmarked for a special purpose such as table tennis tables, stage curtains or a computer for *Connor House*. Funds were raised in a variety of ways - dances, musical evenings, wine and cheese parties and car boot sales (although on one occasion there were plenty of prospective purchasers, but no cars!). In 1985 a watercolour of the old building by local artist Phyllis Arnold was commissioned. Prints were made from it and the *Association* did its own framing, with the whole committee involved in a production line in School.¹⁹ The proceeds went to the Development Appeal.

¹⁸ Minutes of the *Old Boys' Association*.

¹⁹ The framing of the print was recalled in an email from Jim Claney as '*an absolute hoot*'.

Another valuable service provided by the *Parents' Association* was the organising of talks on issues of concern to parents, such as careers, drugs, computers, and in 1987 on the new G.C.S.E. examination by Dr.Alastair Walker, a former pupil working for the *Northern Ireland Schools' Examination Council*.

CONNOR HOUSE

Gordon Thomson retired as Head of *Connor House* in 1981 after 25 years. At his final Prize Distribution he proudly announced that the number of his P.7 pupils who had gained a Grade 'A' in the Transfer Procedure was two-and-a-half times the provincial average - and that '*the newest . . . examination came and went accompanied by the usual cries from everybody but the children*'. He also urged parents to put their sons' names down for admission as soon as possible, telling them that the youngest applicant he had ever had was twenty minutes old. Former pupils were invited to contribute to Mr.Thomson's presentation and the Board of Governors gave him an inscribed silver salver. One of his last acts was to request secretarial help for the Preparatory Department and Mrs.Gertie Baxter was appointed in a part-time capacity. A portrait photograph of Mr.Thomson was presented anonymously and it now hangs in the entrance hall. He returned in 1985 as Guest of Honour at the Prize Distribution.

Mr.Thomson's successor was Roy Topping, Vice-Principal of *Fullerton House*.



R.Topping, B.A.
Head of Connor House 1981-1990

Within months of his appointment, he asked the Board of Governors for a part-time Physical Education teacher, resulting in the appointment of Mrs.J.English. Throughout the decade, the boys participated in mini-rugby, mini-hockey, football, cricket, swimming, athletics, gymnastics and sailing. In 1982, a *Connor House* team won a mini-rugby tournament and the School also won the *Ulster Primary Schools' Hockey Cup*. P.4 and P.5 boys also began to make use of the town's Leisure Centre. Three years later, teams reached the final of both the hockey and the mini-rugby competitions and in 1989 the boys reached the final of the *North Down Indoor Cricket Competition* for the fifth consecutive year. In 1984, Paul Rankin of P.7 played for the Bangor and District Football team and was selected for the international training squad, two years later the swimming relay team took part in the All-Ireland Gala at Blackrock, Dublin, and in 1988 Bryn Cunningham (later to play rugby for Ulster) won the *Crunch Bunch* Short Tennis tournament in Belfast and competed in the U.K. finals. All this was achieved by a school whose total enrolment was less than the P.6 and P.7 classes of most other competing schools.



Ulster Primary Schools' Hockey Champions 1982
Mr.Topping, J.Birch, J.Macafee, Mr.Patton, G.Keys, G.Strahan, Mr.Mairs
S.Mann, R.Agnew, J.Hanna, R.Simms, A.Baxter

Mr.Topping also requested musical instruments for his department and within a short time several *Connor House* boys were playing in the junior orchestra. Drama also played an important role in the life of the boys. Each Spring they put on a play - *Carrots*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Tom Sawyer* and *Treasure Island* being among the productions.

New equipment, much of it provided by the *Mums' Committee*, included a video recorder and a second piano. The Board of Governors provided a new library/resource area and in 1987 had the old Sports Hall converted into a multi-purpose hall (for which the *Mums' Committee* provided a sound system) exclusively for the use of *Connor House*, at a cost of around £32,000, which proved to be a most valuable asset for games and drama. While the Department of Industry provided the School with the first of its computers, social events such as a May Balls, treasure hunts and barbeques raised money for additional computers, library books and other equipment.

Having held the summer camp at Heswall for a number of years, in 1982 Mr.Topping took the boys to the Isle of Man, where they enjoyed abseiling, pony trekking and water sports. The following year P.7 went to Holland and in 1985 and 1986 to Austria where some of the boys went skiing. On the 6 June 1987 P.6 and P.7 boys had the experience of meeting Second World War veterans on the Normandy beaches on the anniversary of *D-Day*. Other trips nearer home took the boys to the Titanic Exhibition at the *Ulster Folk and Transport Museum* at Cultra, the Armada Exhibition at the *Ulster Museum*, *Greenmount Agricultural College* and *Streamvale Open Farm* among other places.

Nor were the less fortunate forgotten: impressive amounts were raised for *Dr.Barnardo's*, *Clifton Special Care School*, *Muscular Dystrophy*, the *R.N.L.I.* and other charitable causes, perhaps the most impressive being the £885 which was raised for the *Ethiopia Famine Appeal* in 1985.

From the outset, the Board of Governors was at pains to point out to Mr.Topping that, for a complement of seven full-time teachers to be maintained, it was important that at least 199 pupils were enrolled at *Connor House*. He inherited a school with 205 pupils, however, despite excellent 11+ results, numbers fell - to 162 by the end of the decade - and the Board of Governors expressed '*grave concern*', saying that the loss of a teacher and even possible closure could not be ruled out. Various measures were proposed to improve the status of the department and to halt the decline: additional clubs were planned, a new prospectus drawn up, there was closer liaison with nursery schools, teams were entered in all the major sporting events and the possibility of an '*open day*' and of offering scholarships was explored. The idea of admitting girls - something that Gordon Thomson had thought of years earlier - was even considered.

Even before programmes of study were introduced, a scheme of science work was introduced for senior boys and use was made of the grammar school's glasshouse and scientific equipment. Mr. Topping was critical of the proposals to test children at the age of seven or eight, saying that he did not want a failure label attached to a child at that age and that a boy's school performance should be between himself, his teacher and his parents. He also believed that other school activities such as drama and educational visits might be jeopardised.²⁰

A REVIEW OF THE 1980s

1989 would seem to be an appropriate moment to pause and take stock. Tom Patton had been at the helm for a decade and that decade had witnessed a number of landmarks in the history of the School. Both Maurice Wilkins and Randall Clarke had died, and their memory had been immortalised in the new *Wilkins Centre* and *Clarke Hall*, financed in part by the £580,000 that had been raised by a very successful Development Appeal. More pupils than ever before were gaining places and *Oxbridge* colleges and school teams had brought back the rugby *Schools' Cup* three times, cricket's *McCullough Cup* on five occasions and the *Burney* and *McCullough Cups* for Hockey, while the School had simply dominated Ulster Schools' squash with six Ulster and two Irish Cups and no fewer than eight Under-19 League titles. All this had been achieved at a time when the teaching staff were successfully coping with the introduction of G.C.S.E. and the National Curriculum.

As Mr. Patton said:

*'We do well to remember that all the successes . . . have been achieved against a backdrop of continued educational change. The changes, introduced at too quick a pace, tax the stamina and resourcefulness of our teachers, who manage to remain remarkably cheerful under the pressure. And there are of course more changes to come'.*²¹

The 1980s were going to be a hard act to follow.

²⁰ *County Down Spectator*, 29 May 1981, 4 and 11 June 1982, 1 July 1983, 5 July 1984, 4 July 1985, 10 July and 6 November 1986, 2 July 1987, 30 June 1988 and 29 June 1989.

²¹ *Old Boys' Association Annual Report* 1990.