

From the Headmaster

Headmasters' articles in School magazines are not primarily intended to give a free puff to people engaged in other commercial activities. However exceptions come along from time to time, one of them being that most excellent assurance society, the Equitable Life, which has recently widened its scope by producing a guide to Independent Schools. This is certainly not the first of the few neither is it likely to be the last of the many but it does differ from other guides in one or two respects in that it makes certain unusual statements about the character and style of Schools. Also it gives lists of their famous old alumni, a number of whom, not surprisingly, are senior Conservative politicians whose shelf-life has been terminated rather abruptly at some time since 1979. Information is in addition given about the expenditure which senior schools have put into their plant. One such School in North London has spent £10 million in the last seven years and knowing the School in question quite well I can say with confidence that every penny of this was necessary to prevent the whole ancient apparatus from sliding off its hilltop perch into the valley below.

Does the expenditure of £10 million make a better School? A hypothetical question as far as Brocksford, or indeed any other prep school, is concerned. I have always argued the case for the best possible equipment and facilities but there is a danger in assuming that spending money is the only thing that determines quality. Those of us old enough to have had a wartime education remember that facilities consisted of boring food, dim light bulbs, infrequent central heating and, for 5 star prep schools only, a tin shed in the winter time in which to kick a football around. It would surprise those of you brought up in the swinging sixties to know that while there were undoubted dumps, we, on the whole, believed our schools to be first-class - and they were. They were led with compassion, vigour, vision and strong Christian faith. They exemplified, in an admirable way, the English quality, perhaps now lost, of making the best of difficult circumstances. We did not yawn over videos but the Saturday night thrill was to watch crackly black and whites where the sound track, if it worked at all, was totally divorced from the action.

This is not nostalgia nor is it to claim that the old days were better. In some respects, yes but on the whole no. It is however an argument for simplicity. We want to teach our children and inspire them to be the best people they are capable of being and for this equipment is partly irrelevant and personal possessions totally so. We must teach them to resist all the hidden persuaders of the 'buy, buy, buy' variety as well as those which are out in the open. People who are cluttered up with the paraphernalia of life easily end up by thinking too much about the things they own and then by talking about them - other than babbling about one's ailments or one's children this is the quickest way of boring one's neighbour known to man. Good old Mr. and Mrs. Average-Briton may work up anxiety-neuroses about Salmonella, Aids and Mad Cow Disease but conspicuous consumption is a far more wide-ranging infection and its symptoms too, at any rate for the outside observer, are fairly unpleasant. One can of course be a Luddite, turn one's back on machinery and drink carrot juice but this is hardly helpful. Computers, Fax machines and the like are with us to stay for as long as it takes to invent something to supersede them. Children must be conversant with technology but to hear some educationalists talk one might gain the impression that this is all that England expects of her young. A balance has to be struck between the technical and the moral - between what humans need and what God wants. If technology were all we might just as well switch to breeding robots and relieve parents of parenthood. Where joy would then be found is another question.

On Radio 4 this morning Sir Claus Moser was scathing about English education - soon, he believes, to be the worst in Northern Europe. He also maintains that we are looking through the wrong end of the telescope and that we will only build a happier country by deciding on our ideals for society in years to come and then framing educational policies to fit our children for this society, enabling them to help build it when their time comes. Heaven knows this will be difficult enough and if two-thirds of young people continue to leave school at sixteen, it may take half a lifetime. We all know that some children, better suited to vocational training, would not benefit from staying until eighteen. Yet there are thousands every year who leave under-extended and unchallenged, for whom no light has ever been lit. Unless they later in their careers make a massive effort they are

stuck for ever with the penalty of travelling in life's second-class compartments. Much bad teaching has been done in the name of equality, and much more will be done. Ironically this aim of equality, admirable in conception, absurd in execution, has meant that those who were unequal before are now more unequal than ever. It is certainly possible to hold our usual scapegoat, the Prime Minister, responsible for all this. The English have always preferred blaming someone else - that is why the Australians coined the phrase Whingeing Poms. It might however be more honest to lay the blame at the door of lumpen, stodgy teaching - the uninspiring leading the uninspired. Certainly many schools are exceptions and certainly too it is unfortunate home circumstances, not schools, which are often to blame for disaffected children. However this obscures the main point which is that most schools don't work hard enough - hours are too short and objectives are too low. One does not need to be a cynic to believe that so long as school buses are loaded with adolescents ready to go home on the dot at half-past three there is no chance that the G.N.P. of this country will ever catch up with that of Germany or Japan.

Once, when asked about the thousands in Calcutta for whom she had neither time nor money Mother Theresa replied 'All I can do is all I can do'. The great issues in education may sadden us but there is not much we can do about them. The small issue which we can do something about is called Brocksford Hall and though small it is very important. How we prepare children for the future is a contentious issue but in this neck of Derbyshire we shall continue to put Common Entrance Maths above Diplomas in Life Skills, a balanced diet which they don't always like above the junk foods which they usually do and self-discipline above self-indulgence. Out of self-discipline comes self-realisation. To learn to do without sometimes - heresy to suggest it in a consumer society - does all of us fat-cats a power of good and it will do the same for our children. In the old days, when grammar rated prominently in French teaching I used to ask my classes why the first irregular verb they learned was être and the second avoir. The answer was - because 'to be' is much more important than 'to have' - something for children to remember both here and here-after.



Prize Giving 1990

A cold, damp June was followed by a few dismal days in July but by Prize Giving sun and warmth had returned. There was a good turnout of parents and friends to welcome Mr. Darrell Farrant and his wife from Abbotsholme.

The Chairman of Governors gave his customary speech of greeting, thanking parents and most especially, the Friends of Brocksford, for the support they had given to the School in the past year.

In his speech reviewing the year the Headmaster drew attention to the tremendous scope of Brocksfordian achievement during the previous twelve months - academic, musical, artistic, dramatic and athletic. He laid stress on the devotion of the staff and on the importance of having people of such calibre in providing the vitality and high moral standards which make children happy and secure. Particular thanks were given to all

those ancillary staff who play an inconspicuous but vital role in the well being of the School.

Mention was made of the progress achieved in the physical rehabilitation of the School, especially the virtual completion of plans for the modernising of the teaching rooms.

In a witty and original speech the Headmaster of Abbotsholme warned us of the dangers inherent in trying to trade in pedestrian and time-expired headmasters for something better. Often it didn't work. He emphasised the importance of prep school/senior school links and spoke convincingly of his beliefs as to what our educational aims should be.

At the conclusion of his speech Mr. Farrant presented the Prizes and Cups. The usual farewells, both happy and sad, were said to the leavers and within an hour children had dispersed and the academic year 1989-90 had been laid to rest - apart from the inevitable small rearguard of those creeping shame-facedly back for a forgotten suitcase, tennis racket or gerbil.

Prizes and Cup Winners 1990

PRIZES

PRE-PREP

Form Prize

Emma Hollis

Industry Prize

Lauren Whitaker

PREP

Junior Form

Form

Industry

Form II

Nicola Quarterman

Amber Ryder/Katie Owen

Form III

Gavin Young

Simon Mackay

Christopher Toakill/

Emma Hollingsworth

Catherine Laine

Form IVb

Mathew Quarterman

Ben Smith/Roseanne Cook

Industry Points

Mathew Quarterman

Form IVa

Ashish Ghadiali

Nicholas Brodie/Christopher Fryer

Specially Commended: Kevin Martin/

Rupert Woolley

Form VI/V

James Partington

Helen Bartlett/Abigail Ball



Jackson English Prize

Benz French Prize

Allott History Prize

Siddons Science Prize

Robinson Maths Prize

John Roberts Geography Prize

Sloley Natural History Prize

Simon Curwen

James Partington

Helen Bartlett

Catherine Laine

James Partington

Charles Ashworth

Ruth Crawford.

Specially Commended: Roseanne Cook/

Rachel Brandon

Ruth Crawford

Simon Curwen

2nd Rupert Crawford.

3rd- Richard Croft/James Pickering

Helen Bartlett

Louise Brown

Pottery Prize

History Project

Churchill Spoken English

Marshall Riding Improvement Prize



CUPS

Music Cup

Rosalind Kent

Wollaston Senior Art Cup

Rosalind Kent

Specially Commended:

Roseanne Cook

Waddingham Progress Cup

Thomas Goodall

(Progress over the Year)

Beech Lodge Trophy

(Junior Sportswoman)

Cricketers Cup

Louise Brown

Nicholas Brodie

Harry Sheppard

Lawrence Computer Cup

Steven Trivett

Beech Lodge Encouragement Cup

Sara Lang

Harris Young Sportswoman's Trophy

Nicholas Brodie

Tennis Cup

Ashish Ghadiali

Tim Ball Singing Cup

Thomas Goodall

Small Young All-Rounder (Games)

Single Wicket Competition

Joseph Henry

Hadcock Good Fellowship Cup

Richard Croft

Headmaster's Fielding Prize

Timothy Warr

Inter House Rounders

Helmfield

Inter House Cricket Cup

Ashford

Inter House Industry Cup

Helmfield



House Captains

HOLMFIELD	Abigail Ball
HASSOP	Charles Ashworth
ASHFORD	Rupert Crawford
DOVERIDGE	Simon Curwen James Partington
HEAD BOY	Simon Curwen
CAPTAIN OF FOOTBALL	James Pickering
CAPTAIN OF NETBALL	Rosalind Kent
CAPTAIN OF RUGGER	Simon Curwen
CAPTAIN OF HOCKEY	James Pickering
CAPTAIN OF GIRLS' HOCKEY	Abigail Ball
CAPTAIN OF CRICKET	Timothy Warr
CAPTAIN OF ROUNDERS	Sara Lang

Valete

Charles Ashworth and James Partington to Abbotsholme. Simon Curwen to Oakham. Abigail Ball to Howell's. Sara Lang to Malvern. Christopher Wilcox to Repton. Lois Ashcroft to Stockport G.S. Emma Deaville to Howell's. Rupert Crawford and Ruth Crawford to Queen Elizabeth's, Ashbourne. Alun Hathaway. Neil Churchward. Adam Jackson. Amber Ryder.



Salvete

Christian Standage, Charles Dodes. Simon Mackay, Peter Roberts, Gavin Young, Craig Hicklin, David Kent, Michael Wilcox, Nicola Quarterman, Matthew Kay, Benjamin Smith.

From the Pre-prep. Simon Bartlett, Jamie Chell, Caroline Murray, Amber Ryder, Lucinda Noakes, Katrine Owen.

Prize Winners throughout the Year

Young Footballer	Christian Standage
Young Rugby Player	Steven Trivett
Young Hockey Player	Nicholas Brodie
Badminton	Timothy Warr
Acting Cup	Simon Curwen, Christopher Wilcox
Back Stage	Rupert Crawford
Young Girl Hockey Player	Louise Brown
Snooker	Ishtiaq Hussain
Chess	James Pickering
Crafts Cup	Donna Adams

