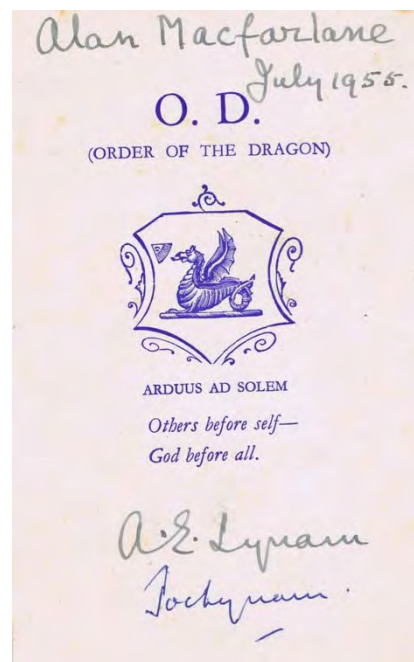
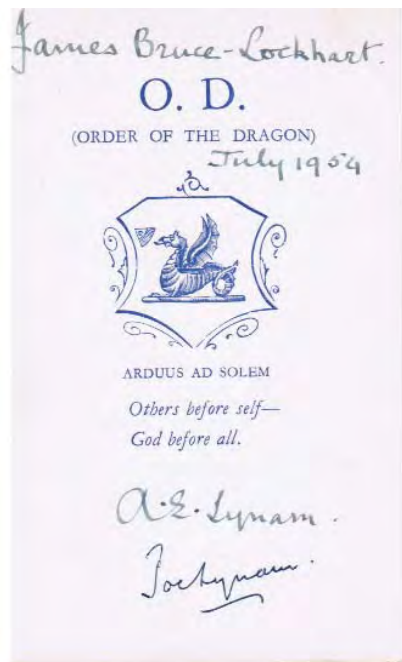


DRAGON DAYS



JAMIE BRUCE LOCKHART

&

ALAN MACFARLANE

**The Village
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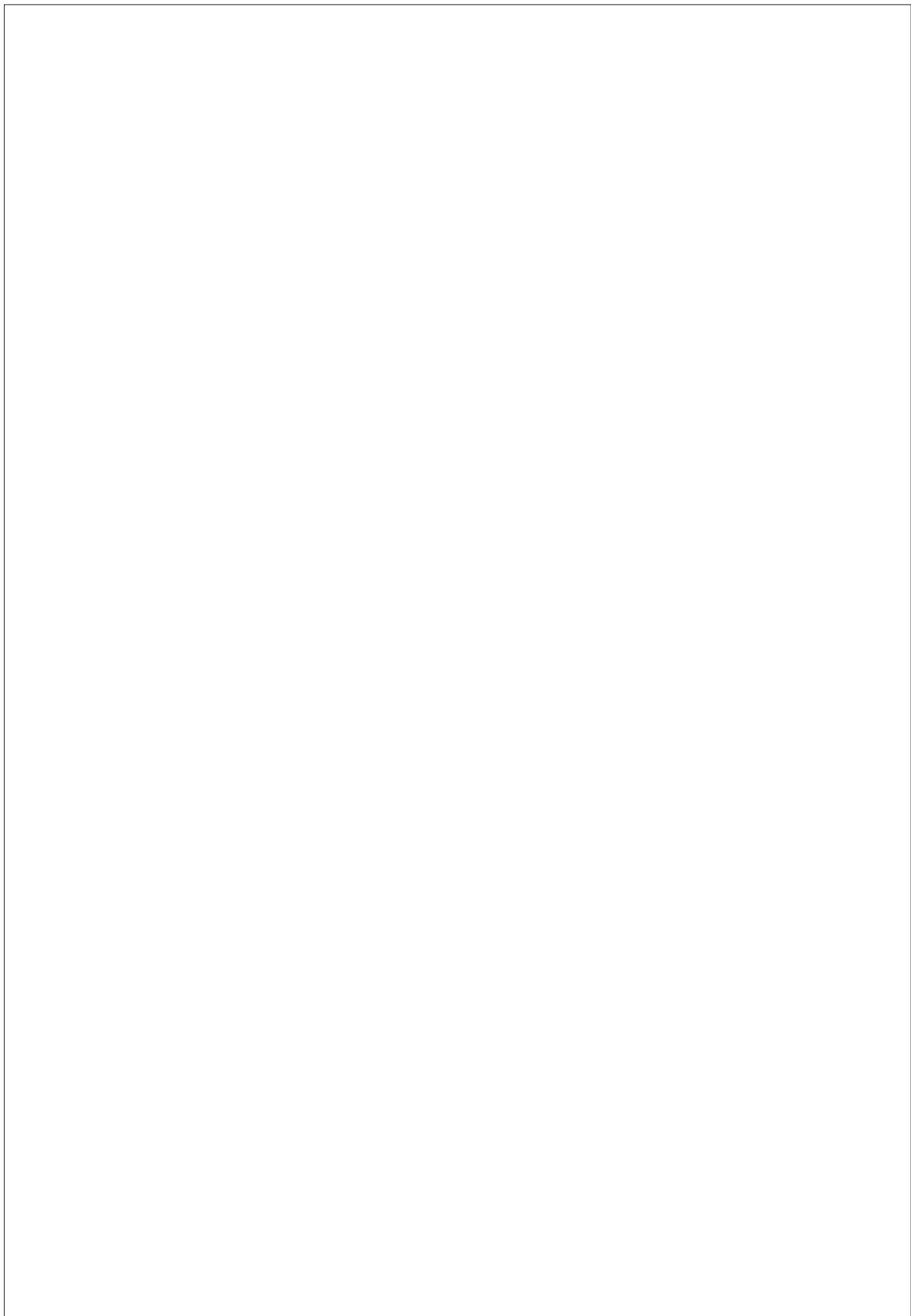
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In Memoriam

Sandy Bruce Lockhart
1942-2008



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Frequently cited books

Vyvyen Brendon, *Prep School Children; A Class Apart Over Two Centuries* (2009)
 C.H. Jacques, *A Dragon Century 1877-1977* (1977)
 George Orwell, *Essays* (Penguin 2000 reprint)
The Skipper (Dragon School, 1940)
 Gerd Sommerhoff, *In and Out of Consciousness* (1996)
 Paul Watkins, *Stand Before Your God* (1993)

PREFACE: HOW WE WROTE THE BOOK

This book is an experiment undertaken fifty-seven years on by Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Alan Macfarlane to try to recall and analyse their life at an English boarding school (Dragon School, Oxford) between 1949 and 1955. It is inevitably a collaborative project and we would like to thank those who have helped. Sarah Harrison, Inge Harrison and Jake Mermagen read all or parts of the full text and made numerous useful comments. Various Dragon friends, including Anna Biddle, Christopher Penn, Stephen Grieve, Tom Stanier and Patrick Lepper made helpful observations. Gay Sturt, archivist at the Dragon, supplied much advice and material. We also thank the headmaster of the Dragon School for kind permission to publish materials from the school archive.

For Alan the project started when he was asked in December 2008 to write an article for a collection on 'Remembered Childhood', the memories of a number of social anthropologists. I decided to write a piece about my days at the Dragon entitled 'Of Dragons, Hobbits, and Anthropologists', which was published in 2010.¹ This set me thinking about my childhood so that in April 2009, as I approached retirement from teaching at the University of Cambridge, I decided to go into the whole Dragon experience more thoroughly. I started to jot down the memories of my early years up to the age of thirteen. By the end of a month I had written all that he thought I could remember – some fifty pages, with a few sketches.

Sporadically over the summer and autumn I began to analyze the documents I had saved for this period and wove them into a longer text. The photographs, letters, old 'Draconian' magazines and other materials acted as triggers to activate memory. By the end of the year I had a roughly 250 pages on the Dragon and a similar amount on my home life ('Dorset Days').

*

Though a number of authors have used a scattering of letters and diaries of preparatory school children, these are usually used illustratively and from a wide variety of different children, different schools and different periods in order to create a collage. This is useful, but it is different from this account.

In searching through my papers I have found over a hundred letters I wrote from the Dragon to my parents and grandparents. We were required to write each week, so there should have been at least 150 letters. To still have perhaps two thirds of those I wrote (there are only five for my first year, but thereafter they are fairly complete) is encouraging. These are supplemented by another source which have seldom been integrated into a systematic study of letters from a boarding school. These are the letters from parents and grandparents to the child. These letters, written mainly by my mother between 1950 and 1955, are complemented by her detailed and observant letters to my father when they were apart (he was a tea planter in Assam) about her visits to me and my progress.

My mother's letters and other sources also allow me to reconstruct the context of home life while I was at the Dragon. I realized that we cannot understand a child in their boarding context without also understanding their family and home life, as well as their earlier childhood. My life in the period between six and thirteen in the periods when I was not at the Dragon dovetailed with the school experience. It is described in a companion volume to this, which shows how much my experience and imagination bridged the two parallel worlds, as well as my parents life in India.

¹ *Remembered Childhood; Essays in Honour of André Béteille*, eds. Malvika Karleka and Rudrangshu Mukherjee (O.U.P. India), 2010.

These letters allow us to begin to enter the mind of the growing children, filtered of course by convention, reticence, assumptions about the interests of the receivers of the letters, yet nevertheless recording much of the daily life of childhood in a detail which it would be impossible to remember. They allow us to examine what struck the child at the time, what was significant, the biases and assumptions of childhood.

The contemporary letters in two directions are supplemented by several other contemporary sources which give depth to the analysis. School reports are occasionally referred to in the literature on preparatory schools, but I know of no systematic analysis of an almost complete series relating to a child. The Dragon school took reports seriously. I have the full termly reports for all but one of the fifteen terms I was at the school and also several dozen of the less detailed, but revealing, fortnightly reports which we sent home.

A further source of relevant background is the unusually detailed accounts published in the termly school magazine, 'The Draconian'. In particular, the 'Term Notes' by C.H. Jacques, which he later used as the basis for his 'Centenary History of the Dragon', are insightful and amusing. They constitute a diary of the school while I was there. The 'Term Notes' are complemented by much else in the 'Draconian'. For example there are accounts of debates, sermons, visits, plays, films, games, many of them extremely detailed, although they are of course written by and reflect the perceptions of the staff and not the Dragons. The magazine also contains some photographs, which complement some early picture postcards of the school as it was in my time. For the first two years of my time there, there are also our weights, and throughout there is a complete inventory of all the boys and their classes, sets and even home addresses.

*

This was as far as I could go and it was limited. Even with one set of contemporary letters and other materials, a reader may well wonder what biases are created by seeing the past through one pair of eyes. How far are the impressions and memories the result of a particular personality and how far they correspond to a wider reality? The second lies in my own personality and memory. I do not remember much with great clarity and in particular I do not have a strong visual memory. These two defects have been partially corrected by an accident.

In March 2010 I hosted a re-union of Old Sedberghians at King's College, Cambridge. I received apologies from Jamie Bruce Lockhart and contacted him. Jamie had been one year ahead of me at the Dragon, and his younger brother Sandy was one of my closest friends at the school. Both Jamie and Sandy had shared with me the experience of being at the Dragon and then going on to Sedbergh.

It turned out that Jamie had been jotting down for his family some of his own memories of his early life and agreed to see whether he and Alan (Sandy had died in August 2008) could pool their memories and efforts. Thus began the collaboration on which this book is based.

Jamie first wrote all that he could remember of the Dragon - again a fairly short essay - before looking at the headings of the sections under which Alan had been writing. These headings acted as triggers to many further memories. Jamie's memory is both stronger, and more visual (as a painter) and the account was in some aspects richer than Alan's original.

Jamie then started to read Alan's full version and responded to it in detail. For a while Jamie was convinced that the letters he and Sandy had written from the Dragon to his parents had been lost. Perhaps this was behind his feeling that it was dangerous to tinker with memory by using external historical documents which would overlay the memories.

Then on Sunday 4th July 2010, shortly after we had met again for the first time in over fifty years, Jamie signalled by e-mail that he had discovered by chance an as yet unexamined suitcase of his later mother's in his attic. The suitcase was crammed full with letters and documents his mother had collected and kept safe between 1940s and the 1980s. Among them were, *packages, half tied up with broken rubber bands, containing letters in envelopes from Sandy and me with dates from 1951 to 1963. That is to say they seem to cover at least in some manner Dragons, Sedbergh, gap year in Canada and Cambridge. I can't believe it - and hurry to share the news with you.*

Unfortunately there were no letters from Jamie's parents or his grandparents to him or Sandy, but the quality of the letters sent home by the two Dragons, as we shall see below, was unusual. The discovery meant that we now had over three hundred letters, from three little boys, plus a number from one parent to Alan.

*

With this mass of data the next question was how to collaborate on the large and delicate task of mixing memory with documents. The work was done over the following year, during which time we both continued writing about our parallel lives at home. The details of how we worked are recorded in an extensive email correspondence on all aspects of Dragon Life and reflect a rare intellectual collaboration in revival of memories and joint analysis of schoolboy years.

We have tried to indicate whose voice is being heard. We have tried colour coding, different fonts and other techniques, but they tend to distract the eye. It is hoped that the reader will not be bothered by questions of authorship. The main clue is that once introduced as 'Jamie remembers' or 'Alan comments', the author remains that person until the other is re-introduced.

Another agreement we made was that where (which happened surprisingly seldom) we remember differently, or disagree on interpretation, we do not try to come to a consensus. We give both memories and both interpretations, and if Sandy's letters reflect a different slant, we give that too. The reader will thus get a sense of looking at a period and place through different lenses.

*

Most studies of memory show how disjointed and sporadic our memories are until our early teens. George Orwell and others who write about their school days, even Paul Watkins who seems to have had a very good memory and wrote less than twenty years after his time at the Dragon, tend to remember only particular events, often the more dramatic, painful and unusual events. Yet, as Orwell writes, this is really our main source for reconstructing that early period.

As for letters written from school by young boys, there are, of course, many distortions and omissions in such a source. Rather than discuss this here, we have included a chapter (4D) which mainly consists of a detailed analysis of his and Sandy's letters by Jamie to show what they seem to show in terms of silence and revelation and how a boarder's approach to writing letters home appears to evolve through a prep school career.

*

How far our thoughts will resound in the minds of those who have not experienced any of our background we do not know. Nor do we know how far it will be possible for others to use the unusually full documentation, the primary materials we quote, to go beyond our interpretations and to discover new connections and insights for themselves. Naturally we hope they can, for in a sense we are constructing an exhibition or display, acting as curators of a slice of the past. We provide the objects, the partial interpretative labels, an exhibition guide. Yet each visitor or reader brings their own

experiences and ideas to the exhibition and will see the objects in different ways and will encourage them to tell different stories.

One particular difficulty is that of re-interpreting the contemporary materials with the use of hindsight and hence distorting the meaning. It is easy to be wise after the event and to allocate praise or blame, to smooth out contradictions or to find premonitions of later events. We have tried as far as possible to refrain from retrospective speculations. And we have also tried to refrain from the anachronistic practice of judging past times by the values of the present. It would be easy to condemn casual snobbery or racism expressed at times, or just smugness and complacency. This is unhelpful and often unfair unless we fully think ourselves back into a different age with its special pressures and assumptions.

Yet the text needs some framework of interpretation, some hypotheses to lift it above the level of merely a narrative of loosely connected pieces of information. We have tried to do this within the context of the two major over-arching changes of those years. One is the huge societal shift of the 1950s as the effects of the Second World War diminished. Our infancies were lived in the war and our life at the Dragon was still under the shadow of that war. The second is the rapid dismemberment of the British Empire begun in the decade after 1947. The largest empire in history was set free in an amazingly short time. This also altered the type of schooling we were starting to receive.

*

The book we have written is a period piece and also an account of a rather special school. This has both advantages and disadvantages. It means that the school cannot be held to be representative of preparatory boarding establishments of that time. On the other hand, the Dragon appears to us to be interesting both in the way it was run and in the kind of pupils it recruited and what it made of them.

The school was founded on concepts which went against much of the educational philosophy of late Victorian imperial education, even if it also retained much of an earlier Edwardian tradition of boarding schools in which our teachers had been reared. Unlike St. Cyprian's of the early twentieth century as described by some of its old boys including Cyril Connolly and George Orwell, the school tried to overcome some of the traumas of this kind of socialization. It forms a bridge between the muscular Christian, imperialist, attitudes of the aftermath of Thomas Arnold through to our modern, post-imperial, world.

It is also an interesting school because of the later distinction of a considerable number of its former pupils. In a wide variety of fields The Dragon has helped to shape our national life and it is now helping to educate new rulers who are sending their children to it from China, Japan, India and elsewhere.

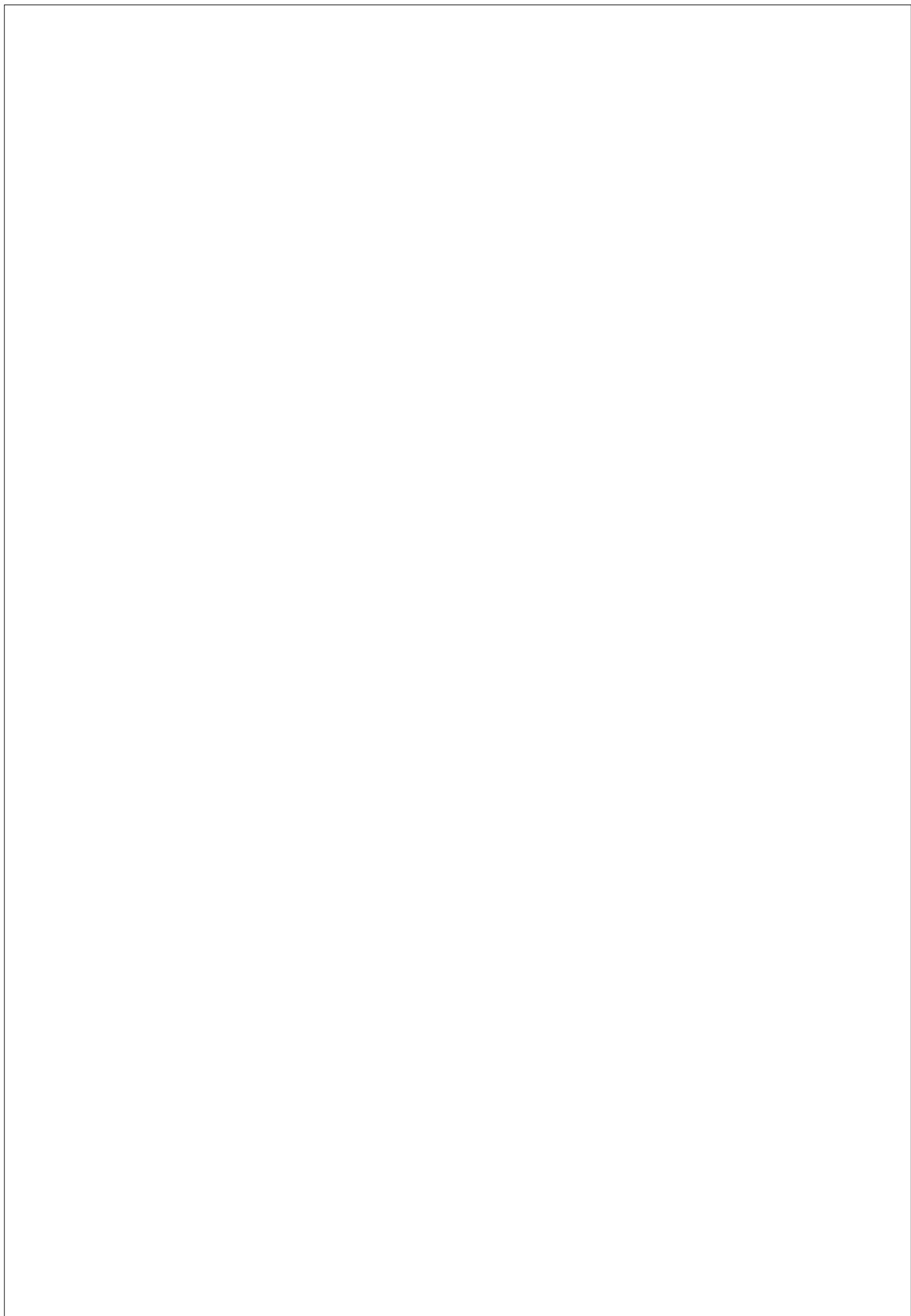
This remarkable effect, and the atmosphere it has created, leads some who have the experience which qualifies them to make a judgement on its relative merits as a school. One such view is the appraisal of Sir Eric Anderson, an important and widely experienced teacher. He taught at Fettes and Shrewsbury schools, was a most distinguished headmaster of Abingdon School and of Eton, was later Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford and Provost of Eton. The schools he was involved with received a number of Dragons, and his children and grand-children went to the school.

'First, they're not a type; they're all individuals. The Dragon does not mould boys; it encourages them to become more interesting and lively people but still to be basically themselves... Secondly, Dragons are very good with adults; easy, talkative, direct and frank. They treat you from the first meeting as an intelligent equal. I put that down to the exceptional relationship between masters and boys at the Dragon School, that

unique easy familiarity which somehow, despite the nicknames, co-exists with mutual respect. Thirdly, they expect to do well and expect to have fun while doing it. Again that is inculcated by the spirit of the school. You worry that at some of the schools to which they go on life cannot possibly be quite as good. In my view the Dragon School is quite simply the best preparatory school in the world.¹

Is Anderson right? We hope that our memories and letters will give the reader some of the material to decide for her or himself.

¹ Quoted in Bev MacInnes, *An Independent School* (2005), 50



WHENCE WE CAME



On the eve of the Dragon

Grandmother & Alan

Jamie, Amber and Sandy

WHENCE ALAN CAME

Iris Macfarlane arrived back from India in October 1950. She went to visit her son Alan towards the end of his first term at the Dragon School in North Oxford. In a somewhat damaged and incomplete letter to her husband Mac she described the encounter with the little boy whom she had left two years earlier when he was six and three-quarters.

December. Linton Lodge, Oxford

As you see I have given in and come to see Alan - chiefly because it'll be difficult to get away at the end of term as Fiona's dancing class are having their "ballet" then - so he'll be coming back on his own and I couldn't wait until the holidays could I?! Anyway her I am holed up in a very comfortable, warm room and feeling confused and a little sad but mostly relieved. I arrived after lunch and after an uneventful journey and was feeling pretty scared when I walked up to the front door of 6, Bardwell Road as you can imagine. Alan finally emerged from a room on my left and greeted me with a scared glance and a mumble that he had lost his shoe and disappeared into a pile of mackintoshes. I had been steeling myself for something of the sort and anyway hadn't time to burst into tears as matrons and housemasters wives appeared on all sides and had to be coped with. We got away in a few minutes. My heart sank rather at the completely silent little boy at my side - he has changed even more than Fiona and is no longer the "heart throb" of the family. Actually I didn't think he was looking very well, his face is much thinner and he has deep black lines under his eyes again and frowned a lot, however I hasten to add that he seems very happy at school and I expect after this first term (which is bound to be a strain) will probably lose that anxious expression. It must have been an ordeal meeting me again and he told me later he didn't recognise me.

We had lunch here and he thawed a lot, and afterwards he taught me "knock-out Whist" a whizzo game that is the rage at school now. I had to be careful not to win too much and after we had evened the score satisfactorily we set off for the shops, where he was to choose himself a present. Oxford seems fuller than ever, we had to let several buses go and were finally disgorged into a seething mass of humanity that became perfectly impenetrable outside "Marks and Spencers" - Alan finally had the bright idea of following the queue in at one side of the door and then skipping across the shop and following the outgoing queue into the street again. If we hadn't done this I think we'd have been wedged there yet! We tramped round for a solid hour trying to find that chemist's shop with toys downstairs that we used to go to, but couldn't track it down. However found a shop with "FROG" model aeroplanes and bought one of those. Then we had a nice tea and caught a bus back quite easily and had a couple more games of cards before it was time to take him home. His house is a most friendly place, and a small girl in a dressing gown was sliding down the banisters when we got in, the housemasters daughter, announcing that she was going to.... [the rest is missing]

[Extract from the damaged letter. I have supplied one or two likely words in gaps.]

*

What I did not really realize until I started this study was that I was a tiny fragment in an ancient drama, in which my family was a microcosm within the

British Empire over the last four hundred years.

My ancestors seem to have been at the outward edge of many of the waves of predatory expansion of the British Empire. My eleventh generation James ancestors were among the first to settle in Jamaica and Colonel Richard James was apparently the first English child to be born there in 1655. The James family prospered on Jamaica and still owned an estate there until the 1920's. My own fourth generation great grandfather was a Chancery lawyer in Jamaica. He finally left for England in 1838, two years before the manumission of slaves, and his children were sent home to be educated in England.

He invested in huge estates in the newly opened south of Australia and one of his grandsons went to India, where my grandfather, William Rhodes James, was born in 1886 in Coonor amidst the Nilgiri coffee estates. After school in England and Sandhurst, my grandfather was commissioned into the Indian Army. By the time he met my grandmother Violet Swinhoe he was working as an Intelligence Officer on the Burma-China frontier.

The Swinhoe branch was reputedly descended from Viking raiders into Northumbria, where there is a village of that name. We have traced them back to the eighteenth century when they were lawyers in Calcutta. I have visited their impressive graves in the Old Park Street graveyard in Calcutta and seen the street named after them in that city. One distant cousin went to China in the middle of the nineteenth century and a Chinese pheasant is named after him. In the later nineteenth century Rodway Swinhoe discovered a potentially lucrative niche in a new frontier of Empire, upper Burma, where he practised as a lawyer in Mandalay for over thirty years. It was in upper Burma that my grandmother was born in 1896.

Much of British life over the eighteenth to twentieth centuries was essentially a system of what anthropologists might call cyclical nomadic predation. This depended on two poles. England (and Scotland and Ireland) was the base, the emotional, social and political core, and the family home. Here the children were sent to school and perhaps on to university or at least some kind of finishing and training institution. Here those from the colonies would retire and become grandparents and carers for the young sent home from abroad. Going abroad was a stage. Some 'stayed on' in remote hill stations and elsewhere, but the great majority came back to what they considered to be their real home.

In such a cyclical movement, the boarding school became an essential mechanism. Such schools were part of as an internal system for encouraging social mobility by converting money into status and training the middle classes for professions within Britain. They were also a mechanism for indoctrinating, disciplining and training those who would become the colonizers to make their fortunes around the world. My family participated in this pattern from the eighteenth century onwards, various branches sending their children home to school and to learn how to be English. My appearance at the Dragon School and the reunion with my mother was one of the last instances of this many-generational pattern.

*

I was born in Shillong, Assam in December 1941. My first five years were spent in India as the Second World War rolled to the edges of Assam and I ended my time in India for a few brief months on a tea estate. In an autobiographical essay written at the age of eighteen I commented that 'My first recollections are of a slightly unhappy childhood. My parents were in India, my father in the army, and so we did not live a settled life. There always seemed to be something wrong with my

tummy (later I learnt it was acidosis) and once I broke my arm. At the age of five I came home to England, and then I did not remember much, except that I was seasick most of the way home, and that my youngest sister was given a little stove for her birthday.' My mother later told me that I formed a strong friendship with the sweeper's son but the Urdu and ability to swim were to vanish almost immediately I returned to England with my father, mother and my two younger sisters, Fiona and Anne, in April 1947.

The warmth, physical and emotional, and the brilliance of the landscape and the freedom which I think I remember from those first five years made the shock of coming home to North Oxford at the end of the coldest winter of the twentieth century, with wartime rationing and very limited coal supplies, all the greater. My mother stayed in England for eighteen months and then left me and my elder sister Fiona at home when I was aged six and three quarters.

I remember that parting vaguely as one of those Kiplingesque moments - the delight I felt as I woke the morning after she had kissed me to sleep and discovered a small present at the foot of the bed quickly evaporating into a desperate feeling of loneliness and separation which has remained with me ever since. The incident is described in a letter written shortly after my parent's departure, with the soothing initial words of my grandmother contradicted by her description of my reaction to a phone call and letter. *My darling Iris - You must not be hurt when I tell you that neither of the children have shed a tear - it was a brilliant notion of yours to leave the presents and Alan has lived as a conductor ever since. He turned white after hearing you on the telephone and again when your letter came this morning as we waited for the postman before he went to school...*

*

My progress at kindergarten in the two and a half years before I went to the Dragon is described in the companion volume, *Dorset Days*, based largely on termly reports and my mother's letters. The over-all impression from the reports is that I enjoyed my school, tried hard, was generally liked, was enthusiastic and not too miserable. 'Alan has worked well. He is a shy but very pleasant little boy.' 'Alan has made considerable progress this term, he is a very able and a very attractive little boy.' There is no talk of any problems or sadness, some cheerfulness and helpfulness and popularity. It is a different picture to that of my mother who found me very difficult, if endearing at times. For example, in the July before I went to the Dragon she wrote: 'Alan is my chief headache, noisy rude and disobedient, bullying Fiona incessantly and yet the fear of parting from him is haunting me. He is so frightfully sensitive and is going to suffer so at school.'

It is clear is that in the two years of preparation for the Dragon I was covering quite a wide range of the subjects I would then go on to study. What were missing were languages, particularly Latin and French. That was the largest change academically in content. It is also clear that I was just about average. The reports were moderately good, but I was always at least half a year older than the average age, and seem to have stayed in transition - with a brief move up. Early sign of mathematical ability which my mother hopefully noted were not borne out in later reports. My best subjects were geography and nature study. My worst were, as my mother had noted, that I was very slow in reading and writing.



Summer 1951, at the end of my first year at the Dragon. Starting top left: Uncle Robert, Uncle Richard, Father. Grand-father, Grand-mother, Uncle Billy, Sister Anne, Mother. Fiona, Alan.

These photograph include all the people who strongly affected my life before I went to the Dragon. The distance between them of less than ten years encapsulates the transformation of our world. The first was taken in India during war and show the martial family - with my father, serving in the Assam Rifles - away at the front. The second shows us as the world picked up from the after-effects of that war, in our Dorset home. It also shows the continuity - my grand-parents and uncles were a continuous presence, providing the shelter while my parents left me for India, over the time I was at the Dragon. Let me sketch in very briefly the main actors here.

My grandparents, with whom I spent the major part of my time in England before coming to the Dragon, and the majority of my school holidays while there, were neither of them formally academically inclined. Yet they had a number of qualities and experiences which meant that they could support me well. My grandfather, William Rhodes-James had been a distinguished army officer in Burma and India and had won a Military Cross and an O.B.E. He was an excellent linguist, a lover of poetry, an avid reader and a lovely gentleman who encouraged me in every way.

My grandmother Violet was a force of nature. She was highly intelligent, strong willed, perennially optimistic, warm and imaginative, an excellent artist (one of the youngest ever students at the Academy Schools) and a very good actress and singer. They had themselves both been away in boarding schools when young and had supported my three uncles through boarding preparatory schools and then public schools. So they knew that world well. They looked after me excellently, playing with me, encouraging me in every way, and gave me much love and support, and I owe an enormous deal to them. I never remember that they were ever cruel, unjust or unpleasant to me.

My parents were very different from each other but equally supportive. My father Donald Macfarlane was born in El Paso, Texas, in 1916. He had been sent back to boarding school at Dollar in Scotland at the age of 12 and had been miserably

homesick for his first two years. He never took to the school, despite being a first-rate athlete and rigger player, and left without any 'Highers' to be apprenticed to the engineering firm of John Brown on the Clyde. At the age of about twenty he was sent out to be an engineer on a Tea Plantation in Assam. During the war he joined the Assam Rifles and raised troops to fight against the Japanese. He met my mother when he was twenty-four and very soon married her.

My father was a good role model - tall, very handsome, an excellent games player, a keen fisherman, very strong but also gentle and kind. He adored my mother and was excellent with children as I noted in later years. He was not academic, but quite a keen reader and a good painter.

My mother complemented him. She had been born in Quetta, now in Pakistan, in 1922 and sent home very young. She was small, with a polio-damaged leg, good-looking and highly gifted. She was sent to six or seven schools before the age of sixteen. She won an open scholarship to Oxford when she was in her last school but was not allowed to take it up and was sent out to India. There, at the age of eighteen she met and soon married my father. She was an excellent poet, novelist, philosopher and a reasonable painter. She wrote me wonderful letters and short stories and gave me enormous encouragement and love. I never doubted her love despite the fact that she kept being forced to leave me and much of what I am stemmed from learning from her.

My three uncles, my mother's brothers, were the other major force in my life. The oldest, Billy, I did not see much as he was in the army. But the middle one, Richard, spent part of several holidays with us. He is a gentle, thoughtful, devout Christian, a housemaster at Haileybury and a brave soldier in the war in Burma about which he wrote a book. He was always kind and encouraging to me and his car and presence enlivened my holidays.

His younger brother Robert Rhodes James was only eight years older than me and still at Sedbergh during these years. So he was at home for school holidays with me and my sister Fiona. He became a distinguished academic and politician, a Fellow of All Souls, a Member of Parliament for Cambridge, and the author of many books. When young he was keen on sports and before I went to the Dragon taught me how to play football, cricket and other skills which made a huge difference when I went to the school. He taught me how to lose at games, how to try my hardest, how to sing musicals. He was highly imaginative and had a wide range of toys which he generously shared with me. He never bullied or put pressure on me, despite the fact that I and my sister took away much of his mother and father's time and energy. He was a constant inspiration and having a much older but non-threatening 'brother' was an enormous benefit for me. He made holidays wonderful and helped me to cope with boarding through his example.

I was also lucky in my siblings. Fiona was with me for the time when my mother was first away and then for her leave, so until I was ten. She is a remarkable person; highly intelligent, a very gifted artist, a great reader and a remorseless thinker. She was great fun, enormously plucky and determined, and a real friend throughout my life. Of course we quarrelled and my mother notes that I bullied her in a mild way. But she stood up to me and I was always aware, as was my mother, that she was more mature and intellectually gifted than I am. So I had a good younger sparring partner from whom, with my grandmother and mother I learnt to appreciate in a non-threatening way the virtues of able women. My younger sister Anne was four years younger than me and I saw much less of her at this time, really only for the year in 1951 when my mother brought her back on leave, and again for my last year at the Dragon. She was less academic than Fiona, but a keen sports person and

close to my father. I seem to have got on with her fine.

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A few features of our life away from school are particularly relevant to my time at the Dragon. Firstly, there was our class background. The family were basically upper middle class, my grandmother's father had been a lawyer in upper Burma, my grandfather was a Lt. Colonel in the Indian army, my uncles were schoolmasters, army officers and one became an MP. Further back the family had been professionals - lawyers, doctors, military officers, missionaries and before that adventurers and slave-owners in Jamaica.

My father, on the other hand, though coming from a family of Scottish clergyman, followed his own father and father-in-law in being trained as an engineer. He then became Manager of various tea plantations. Taken as a whole, though struggling, my parents, grandparents and uncles had social connections and expectations which were well in line with the kind of boys who went to the Dragon. What we talked about at home, the films we went to, the interests in sports and art, were complementary to the kind of things I learnt in school. Yet there was something slightly different to many Dragon boys because our family had much of their past outside England. I think this contributed to a slight feeling of being an outsider when I went to the school.

Another problem was our financial position. In my account of 'Dorset Days' and the preceding volume on 'Indian Infancy' I have uncovered the fact that like many middle class families after the war we were very short of money. The kind of upper middle class life my grandparents and parents would like to have aspired to - a pony, a car, reasonable holidays on the Continent, even a television set - were beyond us. My parents on their pay, and grandparents on an insufficient pension, were constantly worrying about money. This combined with post-war austerity made our life a something of a physical struggle. Perhaps, however, this was not a bad background for going to the Dragon since the kind of material life in terms of food, heating, clothing and other things I experienced at the Dragon was not much different from that at home, though my grandmother in particular ensured that we were pretty well fed.

Two particular features of our family are worth noting. One is the Scottish connection. My father was proud of his Scottish ancestry and nostalgic about parts of his upbringing. We spent summer holidays, and I spent one Christmas, in Scotland and was equally proud of my Scottish roots. This again gave me a sense of self-confidence and despite other incapacities, being small and not particularly gifted in academic work, arts and other things, I was at least a descendant of the great Macfarlane clan.

Another was the connection to Assam. Children live in many parallel worlds simultaneously. They may be shut away in the intense atmosphere of a boarding school, but this does not mean that they cannot remember or draw sustenance from other worlds. I drew much strength from the vibrant world of my grandparents' home in Dorset, the games, fun, hobbies, expeditions, animals and gardening. I also drew support from the world of India which I had known until I was five and which remained alive through my mother's vivid letters, the relics of India around me at home, and my visit at the age of eleven for a Christmas holidays. I knew that however cold and grey and hard the world at school might sometimes seem, there was another world of colour, exotic smells, strange animals and wonderful fish-filled rivers which existed for my parents and my sisters and which, one day, I might visit.

This is important since for me, like many at British boarding schools, the

experience was one which was meant to make us British, but not designed to crush our desire, one day, to follow our many ancestors and even our parents back to foreign lands. So we were encouraged to learn about the places where we might well end us as missionaries, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, district commissioners or even tea planters. For me the constant allusions to India through artefacts, paintings, food, words, letters and my memories of infancy and a re-visit, meant that the Dragon experience was part of a far greater experience where space and time were stretched out over the whole planet and Oxford was only a tiny speck, along with Dorset and Scotland, in a greater adventure.

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Finally, it is worth emphasizing something which is often overlooked in accounts of boarding schools. This is that almost everything, except for formal lessons, was inter-connected between school and home. We played with similar toys in both, we played similar games, we went to similar films and visited similar displays and museums. We faced similar problems of a practical and ethical kind in these two worlds and our happiness was interwoven between the two. That my home life, despite my deep sadness at my parents' recurrent disappearance to India at the end of each leave period, was mainly positive and cheerful, helped me a great deal at the Dragon. And the fact that the school was, given the constraints of boarding, such a good and unusual one in many ways, led me to become less of a monster at home.

Fundamentally, the goals of child rearing at home and what the Dragon was trying to teach us was the same. There was a unity of outlook about the values which my grandfather as an English gentleman, my uncle as an aspiring future writer and politician, my mother as a gifted but frustrated philosopher and author, and the whole philosophy of the Dragon was meant to inculcate. We were learning the manners, the social skills, the psychological motivations, the ambitions, the ethics for our adult life in both.

The two were interwoven in time. Between the age of six and thirteen I was learning at home to become an English gentleman, a potentially successful actor in whatever sphere I ended up after passing on through public school and University. I was learning the same thing at the Dragon, though there my teachers were other boys and the staff. The message was the same, even if the medium was rather different.

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I left my Dorset home with my grandmother to travel to Oxford in September 1950 for my first term at the Dragon. The moment is caught in a photograph. Dressed in school uniform, with my coat, shiny shoes and suitcase, I seem prepared on the outside for the new adventure. Yet I was soon to learn how unprepared I was in many other ways. It was a great shock to be thrust into dormitories, to find myself alongside so many self-confident and bright boys, many of whose roots in English culture were much more secure than mine.

What happened was far richer, more complicated and intense than anything I could have anticipated. I have remembered it as a jumble of misery and elation. Yet as I lived it and also observed it, I did not realize that this was my first anthropological fieldwork in a strange land, the world of the British boarding school. No subsequent experience in Nepal, Japan or India, or even in my boarding school in Yorkshire, has been as intense. The following account is through the eyes of a wary semi-participant who was striving hard to learn the cultural rules and to become truly English.

WHENCE JAMIE CAME

The eight year old at the door of Stradlings was on the small side of medium in size, light in build and weight, freckled and smiling. He was ready to start at preparatory school, well prepared for it by parents and other relatives and at primary schools. In fact, by the strange circumstances of a disrupted upbringing (but perhaps not untypical of the post war period) and various influences at work in his early life the boy was more than ready for boarding prep when he paraded at Yatto's front door in September 1949.

My character was already well formed. I was a conformist and terribly keen to join in; eager to learn, biddable and anxious to please. I was interested in everything around me; I liked people and above all just messing about - that special, utterly aimless and particularly agreeable expression of youthful companionship (which my brother Sandy and I enjoyed at home). Games, formal and informal, were a pleasure; I was nimble with my and quick on my feet. But I was somewhat sensitive and did not like crowds, roughness and too much noise. I was a natural tribal being, with a strong sense of loyalty and I was also accustomed to discipline - under the firm hands at different times of an experienced nanny, a single mother embarking on her own career and a father who was a strong personality but whom I had hardly met until I was seven. School life had already suited me well, and I was ready to become a Dragon.

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We are all influenced directly and indirectly by our forbears (and not only through the genes). These influences extend back in my view about four generations; in other words to the grandparents and great aunts and great uncles of your parents. They are the people whose names and achievements, affairs, successes and failures you hear about, directly or indirectly in your youth. What the forbears taught and stressed to their children (your grandparents) was then passed on down to you through your parents (with or without your knowing it). We got to know them at second hand, and accounts of their doings were presented as models or warnings. A family's own folklore, re-emphasized by each generation anew, thus carries weight - and in some families more than others. On both sides of my family these inter-generational linkages were very strong.

In short, I was the product of an upbringing and several influences which were supremely Dragon. I had been taught to value duty, patriotism, participation, application and practice, and teamwork laced with some mildly liberal feelings and artistic sensitivities. The Bruce Lockhart family were schoolmasters, imperial soldiers and diplomats, they taught, directed and administered; and they played games in their spare time; muscular Christianity was their thing. The Hones on the other hand were distinguished in the church, medicine and law; they were scientists and thinkers, who read widely and collected paintings in their spare time. My grandfather Bishop Campbell Hone was an acknowledged expert on St John's gospel which he read in Greek and admired for its mystical qualities. There was something typically North Oxford about them.

Put together, these influences add up to what was on offer in 1950 at the Dragon. Indeed all the Bruce Lockharts had known the Lynams well from Rugby days onwards - and Joc Lynam had been taught cricket by my Bruce Lockhart grandfather. The values and outlook absorbed in my early upbringing at home and through my Dragon experience were thus strongly mutually reinforcing.

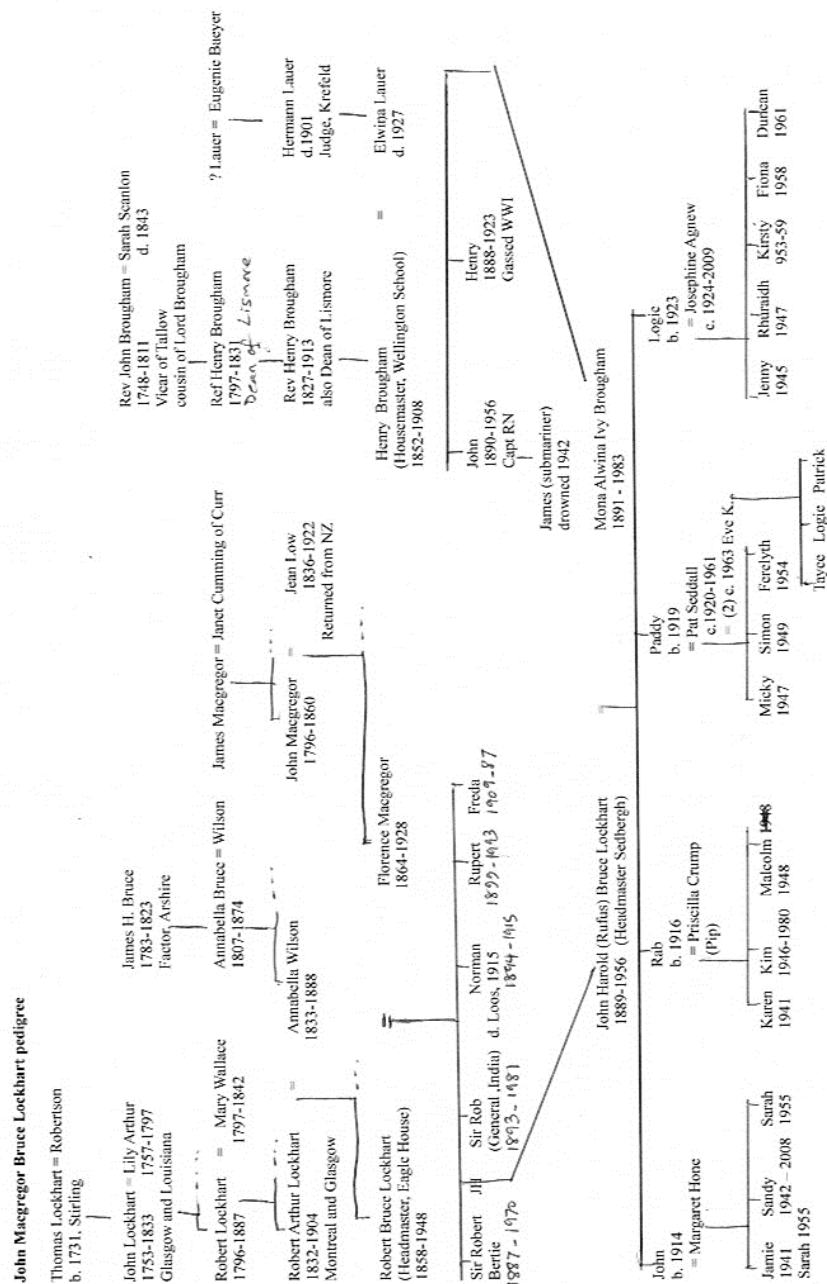


Fig. 2. Paternal family

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In 1949, when I first went to the Dragon my father, John Bruce Lockhart (b. 1914), was head of a large civilian unit in post-war occupied Germany after a wartime career in intelligence. Before the war he had been a schoolmaster, as had been his father and grandfather before him. Born at Rugby School, where his father was a housemaster, he had gone to prep school at Eagle House (where his grandfather was headmaster) and then to School House, Rugby School under W.W. Vaughan. After four years' studies at St Andrew's in French and German, and some outstanding sporting achievements, my father returned to Rugby as a master

and house tutor. There he joined the Territorial Army and was called up early in the war.

His father, John Harold Bruce Lockhart, known as 'Rufus', was born in 1889. In 1949 he was headmaster of Sedbergh School, and simultaneously housemaster of School House, in 1949, having been headmaster of Cargilfield prep school in Edinburgh in the early 1930s. In 1912 he had married Mona Brougham, (b. 1891) the daughter of a housemaster at Wellington School. It was a very happy marriage - and another schoolmaster dynasty. Mona had two brothers. Henry, another great games player, had been one of my grandfather's close friends, but died after being gassed in WWI; and John was a captain in the Royal Navy. Mona's grandfather and forbears had been Anglican priests in southern Ireland. My grandfather's brothers were distinguished in several walks of life: Bertie (Sir Robert) was a journalist and writer in London after a career as a diplomat, Rob (General Sir Rob) had just retired as Commander in Chief of the Indian Army at Independence. Norman had fallen at Loos in September 1915; the younger children were Rupert an opera singer and teacher, and Freda a film critic both working in London; but these barely figured in my Dragon life. School House Sedbergh became a holiday home while my parents were abroad from 1951 to 1953. There we saw a lot of my father's brothers.

My father was one of four brothers who were very close. After war service, two became schoolmasters, Rab and Logie while the other, Paddy, became a medical man. They were all gifted sportsmen. Rab married Pip Crump (Lake District girl and a top class women's cricket and tennis player). They had three children. Karen figures in my infancy, but they went to Canada in 1948, and then to New Zealand. Logie married Jo Agnew; and they and their older children (Jenny and Rhu, four and six years younger than me) were also regular holiday visitors to Sedbergh in the early 1950s. Paddy and his wife Pat were present at Sedbergh during the Christmas holidays until they emigrated to Canada in 1953, and Micky and Simon (five and seven years younger than me), were part of the cousinly gang.

My father and my mother, Margaret Hone, had met at St Andrew's; and they were married by her father, The Rt Rev. Campbell Hone, Bishop of Wakefield, on 14 September 1939, ten days after the outbreak of war. My mother (born 1916) was brought up in Whitby and Wakefield, and sent to boarding schools at Duncombe Park and Benenden. She studied natural sciences at St Andrew's and in Oxford after the war; when my father was still abroad she had embarked on a research career in biochemistry at the Department of Nuclear Medicine at the Radcliffe. In 1949 she was hoping to revert to it before long. She was one of three children; her sister Katherine (older by three years, and known as 'K') was a hospital almoner. She had married Bill Mills who in 1949 was a consultant surgeon at Bournemouth Hospital. K. had three children, the older ones figuring in my life both before (in Oxford) and during my Dragon career (on holidays). They were Janet (one year older than me) and Patrick four years younger. My mother was very close to her brother Robin, born 1923, a scholar at Winchester and New College and just starting out on a career as a schoolmaster at Clifton. Robin remained a bachelor for some years to come.

My grandfather Campbell Hone (b. 1873) had been a classical scholar at Wadham, Oxford and then followed a career in the church almost entirely in Yorkshire. His father had been Rector of Esher, and his grandfather Hone had been Archdeacon of Worcester. On his mother's side the Monros were London doctors and lawyers, members of the Drapers' guild and other charitable institutions going back some generations. To compensate for a northern bias in his life Campbell Hone had sent his three children to board in the south, my mother and

sister going to Benenden School. At the beginning of 1946 he and his wife Maude retired to a house she had bought in Belbroughton Road, in north Oxford. The Hones acted as guardians while Sandy and I were at the Dragon and although they were already in their seventies, they were wonderful guardians and their home became our second home.

Maude Hone, née Weaver, (b. 1881) came from an old Cheshire family and her father, Frederick Weaver represented the fifth generation of Weavers to be physicians at Chester Hospital. Frederick Weaver had married the daughter of a Lancashire cotton mill owner, Edward Wright, who had inherited a very considerable fortune. Maude was one of four sisters who had been disbarred by their father from a university life and professional career. The brothers became doctors but the sisters devoted themselves to good works, except one, Harriet Shaw Weaver, who became an important figure in the literary world and gave her share of the Wright fortune to supporting James Joyce, 'The Egoist' journal and other modernist literary endeavours and feminist causes.

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A number of circumstances and influences made prep school an absolutely natural continuation of my upbringing at home. My childhood was a disjointed one in several respects, though perhaps not atypical of a war baby. My parents were married in Wakefield ten days after the outbreak of war, and went to live near Aldershot. I was born in 1941, and my father went off to the Middle East when I was aged one, leaving my mother and me at his parents' home in remote Sedbergh – with a stern, Presbyterian father in law and a kindly but domineering mother in law. My father returned on leave only two or three times in the next six years, and never for more than a couple of weeks.

My mother was a highly intelligent, personable, rather racey, and strikingly beautiful 25-year old. War time School House, Sedbergh, also a base for the wives of two other Bruce Lockhart sons between and before military postings, was not her natural habitat. She was depressed by household chores and wanted a fulfilling occupation which went beyond looking after me. She declined a suggestion of teaching at Casterton and settled at first for working as a land girl on a local farm.

But fate intervened and brought Ada. Soon after my birth I was diagnosed with a pyloric stenosis and had to be operated on aged six weeks and weighing in at 4 lbs (I have since caught up a bit). Ada, a former nanny in Rugby to my two younger Bruce Lockhart uncles, was sent for by my Bruce Lockhart grandparents to help out again. She remained with my mother for the next six years, permitting my mother the freedom she desperately needed.

My father went abroad in early 1942, and second baby Sandy was born at the Hone grandparents' house in Wakefield in May of that year. My mother returned to Sedbergh, safely distant from any German bombing, for another year, with us boys and Ada before deciding to move to Oxford, where her parents planned to retire after the war. In September 1943 we joined my mother's sister Katherine Mills and her two children in a two-storey flat at 14 Museum Road, where we remained for two years.

The most important influence in my young life was my mother. She was a scientist and also a pronounced enthusiast for English and European literature. She was a natural rebel, with a discerning, questioning and sharp mind. She did not suffer fools gladly; she saw through hypocrisy, cant and the second rate. She managed extremely well in bringing up two children effectively as a single mother. She gave us playtime, she could foster the development of our imaginations, and she

made us think for ourselves (a good counterbalance to Bruce Lockhart influences)

In Oxford my mother started out on a career as a biochemist under Professor Leslie Witts. Family circumstances changed, however, when my father got entangled with a girl he had first met in Cairo in 1942. He and my mother effectively split up at the beginning of 1946 when the girl followed him to Paris where they lived together. An attempt at reconciliation was begun in the summer of 1947, over a joint holiday at Le Val André in Normandy, and agreement reached later that year to try to get together again. As a result my mother accompanied him to his new job in Germany, with us two boys, on an experimental basis,. [The reconciliation process was complex, with two strong characters involved, and not completed until their return from the USA in 1953-54.]

Thus at the turn of 1946, with her marriage on the rocks, my mother bought her own house in Beechcroft Road, North Oxford, round the corner from Belbroughton Road where her parents had just bought a house for retirement from Wakefield and close to the Greycotes schools on the Banbury Road. I was thus essentially brought up by my mother and Ada together. Ada was a strong, warm personality, large in every sense, from a Warwickshire country village background. She stood no nonsense from her charges and at the same time looked after us caringly. My Hone grandparents duly arrived from the north and family life in Oxford continued until the summer of 1948. It was frugal and rather enclosed and when the family came together for the first time in Germany, life in a richer atmosphere was certainly very different

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My brother Sandy was the most important person in my young life after my mother. We were one year and six weeks apart in age, and as far back as I can remember did everything together, and got on with each other immensely well. If Ada, Sam and Sandy were neutral influences and the Bruce Lockhart grandparents and uncles at Sedbergh were strong interventionists, the Hones different. At Belbroughton Road my Hone grandparents allowed us much freer rein - and we liked them for that. They were always serious and sensible, ready to help and assist, when asked, but they did not instruct and direct, although they expected high standards and frowned if we let them down. My mother had inherited the dispassionate outlook and enquiring mind of the Hones who wanted to learn and to understand. A different atmosphere from that in the Bruce Lockhart camp.

My mother's brother Robin came to Oxford to finish his degree after the war, a quiet, sensitive, scholarly man like his father. He and my mother shared intellectual interests and a love of hills, coast and cliffs, walking and bird watching; and his circle of friends at New College and Magdalen were bright company for our mother and us. The same was true of my mother's circle of cheerful young colleagues at the Radcliffe. One was Dr (later Professor) Sheila Callender who spoilt Sandy and me with exotic presents brought back from the USA (I remember a kaleidoscope and 3-D viewers with coloured photographs of Yosemite Park). Sandy and I joined these and other medical friends on river picnics and outings to the countryside or at lunch parties in the winter in small North Oxford gardens with games for us, sing-songs and much classical and traditional English music in the background (one colleague, Laszlo Lajtha, was the son of the famous Hungarian composer of the same name) on gramophones in their digs.

The North Oxford element in my upbringing was reinforced by my Hone grandparents. Bishop Hone was an Oxford figure: he was honorary fellow of Wadham, a chaplain and tutor at St Hugh's and wrote a biography of Dr John

Radcliffe published by Faber in 1950. He was a keen and experienced educationalist (his main work in his time in the House of Lords in 1943-45 was on an education bill) and had been on the board of governors or directed local, church and charitable schools and new ventures for the education of women and the unemployed in the work places and mines of Yorkshire's West Riding. He had perhaps a wider perspective than that of the Bruce Lockhart schoolmasters grounded in the Victorian muscular public school tradition.

One relative and neighbour whom we saw often was my remarkable Aunt Hat, Harriet Shaw Weaver. She was my mother's favourite aunt – just as my mother was her favourite niece. They were both rebels. And Aunt Hat's legendary literary interests and achievements were clear in a small way to us as boys. Visits to her flat in Rawlinson Road, where she produced many wonderful children's books as well as excellent teas, were an enjoyable part of my early youth – and a vital introduction to the world of books and imagination.

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My father was one of life's natural head prefects – and a good one. For the first 25 years of his life, as described above, he had never been out of sight of school playing fields. He and his brothers needed little outside company and their young lives were almost entirely devoted to playing or practising games under the stern eye of their even more gifted father, my grandfather Bruce Lockhart. Two of my father's brothers became headmasters and my father was on the same path until war brought changes. It was hardly surprising therefore that when Sandy and I appeared in Germany in 1948, his approach to bringing up seven year-olds was didactic, doctrinaire and dogmatic. There was no room for doubt in the Bruce Lockhart creed of muscular Christian education.

We received some instruction in French and arithmetic and coaching (rather brief) at as many sports and games as possible. Reading was considered a means to rest, recommended for the first few days of each holiday, not an end in itself and his recommended diet was P.G. Wodehouse, gentle thrillers and bound volumes of Punch from 1890 – 1939. He treated Sandy and me in a magisterial way until we reached our late teens. In his wartime letters he had always referred to us as 'infants'; he evidently found it difficult to say the word 'babies'. He never ragged with us (on the lawn, in the woods, or in snow), nor went for walks with us. We played with my mother a certain amount but mostly with the five staff, principally Sam, my father's ever cheerful and willing Maltese batman, our constant companion who in a sense took over Ada's role.

We saw little of my father except in holidays at one of the senior officers' rest houses (Neviges) or excellent summer (Winterberg hills) and winter (Bad Harzburg or Ehrwald near Garmisch) sports centres. At home they were both out most evenings in a post war life in the British occupation world which involved an immense amount of socialising. One sharp memory of my mother at that period is of her coming to say goodnight on the way out to dinner, dressed to the nines and waving her hands to make her nail polish dry. Sam, Erika (living in maid) or Helena (housekeeper/cook) looked in to say good night later.

Sandy and I were sent to the local British Forces Education Service school. I remember a quite modern building and lots of glass, rather grey classrooms and the walk to school accompanied by one of the staff and our Boxer dog (as a guard, since we lived on the edge of the woods). Mostly I recall the Wolf Cub outings, camping in the woods, playing games, learning skills and winning badges, singing round a camp fire and all the fun of a youthful scouting environment.

In the summer of 1949 I was sent for eight weeks to my Bruce Lockhart grandparents at School House, Sedbergh, for an indoctrination into Bruce Lockhart family traditions and Scottish heritage as well as some kind of preparation for the Dragon. Here I was in deep school-mastering territory. The Bruce Lockharts and Broughams were schoolmasters and both were close friends of W.W. Vaughan, distinguished headmaster and keeper of the Thomas Arnold traditions at first Wellington, then Rugby School. I was taught to dance Scottish dances, sing and play Scottish airs, and was introduced to fishing and sketching. I was taught to ride a bicycle on the school playing fields - very useful - and made to count and lay out socks and shirts in the School House laundry - an early familiarisation with fagging duties to come. I was coached in various games by my grandfather and given further training in reading, writing and French by my grandmother. My Bruce Lockhart grandmother was half Irish, half German; she had a lovely, whimsical imagination and a deep interest in late romantic and pastoralist German literature (she read German fluently).

I was now well on the road towards a classic English middle class prep-public boarding school education. Reports from my pre-prep schools in Oxford and Bad Salzuflen had been good - and were all very similar. Teachers considered me a keen participant, of above average intelligence, well behaved, enthusiastic but somewhat lacking confidence.

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'Family' was a frequently mentioned concept in Bruce Lockhart homes - usually combined with an assumption, not merely humorous, that what Bruce Lockharts do is right, and that Bruce Lockharts will win. This was known as 'BLG' - or Bruce Lockhart genius. The Hones also had a strong sense of family but one characterised by irony and fun as well as respect. There was a Hone way of thinking, and a Hone humour.

In brief, my grandfather's father, Robert Bruce Lockhart, was a stern schoolmaster, very Scottish, very Presbyterian; a good academic and mad about rugby, cricket and most sports. He had been headmaster of four different prep schools, the last being Eagle House. In his home no games or amusements, not even whistling, were permitted on Sundays - a day he spent reading the Bible. My grandfather's mother, Florence née Macgregor was a gentle, correct person who became increasingly withdrawn following the death of Norman (her fourth son) at Loos. Her mother, however, 'Granny Macgregor' was the matriarch: a famously formidable member of the Edinburgh Stock exchange, rubber magnate and distillery owner - and a source of funds for my grandfather's generation. She had many brothers, including a couple of black sheep who had gambled and drunk away fortunes. Another was great Uncle Jim, the manager of Balmenach distillery, who is said to have regularly polished off two bottles of whisky a day and read nothing but Zane Grey westerns; he died aged 90 in 1944. The Bruce Lockharts and Macgregors all stayed there for a few weeks every summer in the inter-war years, the young generations running free on the Heughs of Cromdale, fishing the Spey and guddling trout in the burns, while the grown-ups played cards and drank whisky.

My grandfather's (distinguished) brothers, mentioned above, were very much talked about, and thus an indirect influence on Sandy's and my young lives but rarely appeared in those days. Similarly the family of our grandmother Mona née Brougham, known as 'Dear', was much spoken of - but in this case few had survived. Her father Henry, a housemaster at Wellington, was known as Idle Paddy, a charming character who rode to hounds twice a week. But Dear spoke to us more

about life and holidays with her grandfather, the Very Rev Henry Brougham, Dean of Lismore in County Waterford, who had looked after his flock, as had his father and grandfather before him in the same post, by attending them in their pursuits of hunting, fishing and shooting. He was the original 'Dear Man', so named by his family and community, a tradition which was subsequently re-applied to my Bruce Lockhart grandparents two generations later. The Dean had also owned a cottage on the dunes beside the golf course at Glenbeigh on the coast of Kerry, where the Broughams spent many a holiday. They rode in a donkey and cart and communed with peasants, mermaids and fairies in peat-smoke-filled cottages. My grandmother's mother, known as 'Guggie', was the daughter of a German judge, a sweet personality, brought up in a high bourgeois *Kinder-Kirche-Küche* (children-church-kitchen) tradition.

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If the Bruce Lockharts and Broughams were Celts and conservative, the Hones and Weavers were essentially English, and more liberal. The drinking habits of the two families, curiously, reflected their differences. When young persons were staying with the Bruce Lockhart grandparents after the war, the men would be offered a whisky before dinner and the women (rather reluctantly) allowed to pour themselves a sherry if they wanted something. But gin was not allowed in the house and was considered the Devil. With the Hones, however, a silver salver would be put out with sherry for the grandparents themselves along with gin, Italian and French Vermouth (Sweet or Dry) and orange so that the young people could make themselves a cocktail. Whisky, however, was not allowed in the house - and was considered the Devil.

My Hone grandfather spoke little of his parents, both deceased, but his many siblings and cousins were present by reference and portraits of Hone Irish ancestors lined the corridors at Belbroughton Road - clergymen, artists and administrators from Dublin. Best known was his brother Percy who died in 1940 and who had won a remarkable three DSOs and three MCs in the First World War. Others occasionally appeared at Oxford but were all rather indistinguishable to us boys - three spinster sisters, his closest brother a clergyman in the north, another was a doctor and two other sisters married respectively to a clergyman and a solicitor.

We also heard much about Bishop Hone's mother's family of distinguished and well to do London doctors and lawyers, patrons of the arts, officers of city Guilds, founders of charitable institutions, for many generations. Most famous was Dr Thomas Monro, chief physician at London's first Bethlehem Hospital, at whose studio Girtin and Turner made copies of Monro's large collection of paintings for a meal and pocket money. My mother was a particular friend of Lionel Monro, city solicitor and trusted adviser.

My grandmother Maude née Weaver was the youngest of eight. She often spoke affectionately of her father, Frederick. He was very old fashioned even for the late Victorian period, and was famous for avoiding taking sides in family argument by saying to anyone who appealed to him to confirm an opinion, 'It may well be so' he would say, without even lifting his eyes from his book. References to his wife's family, the Wrights of Oldham, were chiefly to their carefully tended fortune which was passed down to the children and grandchildren and my mother came into a small share.

My grandmother's spinster sisters, apart from Aunt Hat, were Mary and Anne, providers of generous presents for great nephews. One was a lady in waiting to Queen Mary, and both devoted their lives and share of the Wright fortunes to

charitable good works. My grandmother's closest and favourite brother Harold had died young, as had a doctor brother, Kearsley. Various cousins of my mother's figured in our world, such as Rosamund who was a midwife at the Radcliffe and her husband Sebastian Snow, who discovered the source of the Amazon. Also much spoken of, especially in 1953, was my grandmother's cousin Sandy Irving who climbed (or not) Mount Everest with George Mallory in the 1924 expedition - a family hero. Another regular visitor at Belbroughton Road in pre prep and Dragon days was my grandfather's cousin Evelyn Hone, later Governor of Rhodesia, a typical Hone - quiet, intelligent, dispassionate, quizzical.

*

In sum, with such an upbringing the Dragon was an almost automatic next step in my life and schooling, one for which I was psychologically prepared in most ways. The exceptions were how to deal with the sheer numbers, the noise and the competitiveness - and of course the boarding aspect itself. Being away from home with close relatives is one thing, but being left in a dormitory with half a dozen unknown boys is quite another.

There was also a disadvantage. A smooth entry into the Dragon boarding world probably made me less inclined than others to find my own way, content merely to follow where and when I was told. I started learning in class by comfortable osmosis but perhaps with a certain lack of purpose and direction. (It was harder for Sandy who at that stage was somewhat behindhand in learning, frail and sensitive; and as a result he may well have benefited more than I did). I get a general impression from my letters that I was too happily engaged with the school's offering of sports and games, reading, hobbies and outings, mucking about, tuck and entertainment (cheerful films), to strike out on my own in to less traditional areas (debating club, science club, for instance).

Family influences had inclined me to be a conservative and a traditionalist, accepting prescribed values and more inclined to follow than to question. My enjoyment of drill, for example, even at the Greycotes it seems, was perhaps contained in the comfort of fitting in with the crowd; and it was an activity where my good physical coordination and lightness of foot made it easy. If I was a natural joiner, however, I did not always jump in without circumspection. Like both grandfathers I was, underneath, earnest and determined but rather quiet about it.

I had some gifts which got me off to a good start. I was intelligent, attentive and keen, but I think it had already been shown at my pre-prep schools that keenness unfortunately too often led to carelessness. I enjoyed learning and was eager to move on, but I was slapdash. I was outgoing and cheerful, had a sense of humour and wanted to fit in and please others. I was therefore not very assertive. I was sensitive and had some imagination - for literature and poetry. I was already reasonably good with written words but not good at speaking out loud or in public or projecting my personality. I liked music but was not greatly musical.

At a more inward personal level, I think I already liked to shine (who doesn't?), reacted well to praise and retreated in front of criticism. I was essentially ready to conform, please and compromise. I could be retiring and shy, and a certain early self confidence and extrovert manner may have been a bit of a pose, and a defence mechanism to cope with difficulties of youth. I generally preferred to take the initiative, and was less confident of being able to react and respond. Having often had charge of Sandy, I was accustomed to responsibility and making decisions for others, and not outwardly troubled by having to establish relations with new outsiders quickly. But there was perhaps an inner strain involved - which was why

the trusty toy dog Towser had to be fetched to join me at Stradlings the next day, as we shall see later.

*

I wonder sometimes now after reading all my letters home, and reports, how much the Dragon changed me - if at all. It complemented my home upbringing and added some important new elements and experience: a broader and more liberal outlook than the Bruce Lockhart clannishness and more modern and probing perhaps than the calm objectivity of the Hone tribe. Apart from confronting me with all the challenges as well as the fun of community life, as described in depth in 'Dragon Days', the most remarkable add-on was probably the immense range of choice - in everything, from lessons to hobbies, from entertainments to sports and games. No small prep school could even afford to consider opportunities on this scale. More important, the School probably helped me absorb more than I had done at home about how to make those choices - including moral choices, and choices relating to interface with my companions. Such freedom of choice was new and exciting but not always easy. When I arrived at Stradlings the roads down which I was to travel through my life were probably for the most part mapped out. What the Dragon School did was help me progress down them better - learning how to avoid the pitfalls, to protect myself from my weak suits and exploit my strong ones.

2. MATERIAL LIFE

The Old Hall, where we assembled each day for prayers. It was also the scene of many of the concerts, games and other activities. Some of the classrooms opened off to the right and left. It is now a library.



LANDSCAPES

‘There was one evening in the hall of late golden light and the unmistakable noise of the marbles ringing and rolling on the wood floor, hundreds of them, and the voices of my school mates, all in a state of pleasure and purposeful activity, and I was running round, not even, I think, playing He, just swinging up onto the platform off the parallel bars. I looked down the hall and I thought in a flash, I will remember this all my life. It came to me as a certainty on one running foot before the other touched the ground, and then I was off again. But it was true.’¹

The distinguished writer Naomi Mitchison, who went to the Dragon school aged five, remembered this moment seventy years later, as we do a number of such moments at the same school. It was an extraordinary environment which has shaped our lives. How to capture what was special about it?

Let us start with a little history. The Dragon School is an English preparatory school situated in North Oxford. The school was founded in 1877. At that time there were many thousands of preparatory boarding schools in the country. Half a century earlier, in 1830, there were said to be over 10,000 such schools.² What was special about the Dragon school was that it was specifically set up for a particular group, the children of Oxford (and Cambridge) dons who had recently been allowed to marry and were producing children.

It started as a small school with a few boarders and dayboys but quite quickly rented a larger area of playing fields and potential school premises at the bottom of Bardwell Road, on the edge of the Cherwell. The first headmaster was Mr Clarke who died within ten years and then C.C. Lynam (the Skipper), who was already teaching at the school, bought the school from Mrs Clarke.³ Numbers grew fairly rapidly. By 1891 there were 62 pupils, by 1893 some 76 and by August 1905 the numbers had exceeded 100. By the time I went to the school in the 1950’s there were well over 400.

The Skipper’s direct influence lasted for eighty years. He was Headmaster from 1887 to 1921 and lived on with an active involvement until 1938. He was succeeded by his younger brother A.E. Lynam (‘Hum’) who was sole headmaster from 1921 to 1942. Hum then became Senior Headmaster with his own son J.H.R. Lynam, known as ‘Joc’, from 1942. Joc continued as headmaster from 1942 to 1965. So two generations (three individuals) of the family were Headmasters from 1887 to 1965.

*

Jamie describes the school when we both went to it in the 1950s. In that post-war period there was very little of today’s constant obsession with property, design and materials of buildings or suitability for purpose. The question was simply, would it function? Second, as children we were not specially bothered. I do not know the dates of the buildings but in my mind I see a hotch-potch of late Victorian main buildings, a principle boarding house and new Hall built between the wars, Edwardian small houses up and down neighbouring roads, some wooden huts and round the back of School House tin-roofed bicycle sheds and music huts of pre-fabricated panels? But it worked. No buildings were objectionable, nor were any particularly likeable. I think I preferred the older buildings. Warm pipes in winter, a little breeze in summer; a great deal of light in south facing School House, are some

¹ Naomi Mitchison, *Small Talk: Memoirs of an Edwardian Childhood* (1973), 63-4

² Vyvyan Brendon, *Prep School Children: A Class Apart Over two Centuries* (2009), 29

³ *The Skipper*, 11

of the things that come to mind, but my and Sandy's letters home have few direct references to such physical conditions.

This account will be written from rather different perspectives. I (Alan) relies mainly on photographs and two re-visits to picture the physical landscape. Jamie as an artist has a much stronger visual memory, which, in his view, possibly connects to having a marked feeling of place.

*

Jamie recalls several favourite spots in the Dragons grounds. One was a small area between the Science Room (at the back of New Hall) and the back of the Museum. Here was a thick hawthorn hedge (it seemed almost a spinney) which was an excellent source of ammo for peashooters. This area was our favourite patch for playing with our searchlights and heavy-duty torches. If we were not allowed on the fields when it was too wet, one could stand there away from lights on the edge of the darkness, and shine torches into a foggy sky, or seek out movement on the other side of the playing fields by the river. In dry weather, that was one base for cops-and-robbers or cowboy and Indian games, the other base being on the riverside. Such games (generally known, according to a letter home, as *Shooter games*) depended on the season. They could be played with any suitable equipment, peashooters and haws for ammo, or torches, and could be played on bicycles as well as on foot.

The playing fields of course served a great multitude of purposes and were an important part of our lives and source of pleasure in all seasons except extreme wet when we were not allowed on them. I have particularly vivid memories of the area around the cricket pavilion. The 'pavy' itself had a warm wooden smell in summer. If you were scoring, you looked out from deep shade onto bright sunlit pitch. Beside it was the war memorial, scene of Remembrance Day services, and the barge down the grassy Cherwell bank beside the swimming area, dark in winter but welcoming in summer behind its screen of trees. The 'Cher' was an important part of our lives - from the early morning bathing through to evening swimming, as Sandy put it in July 1955, ... *We have had wonderful weather sun [,) sun on end. It has been boiling. The river is absolutely sonic. I have been swimming a terrific lot.*

And the river was very much part of the school landscape too. By the school, the river was dark in winter, but welcoming in summer behind its screens of trees. Upstream it led to the mysterious infinities of Marston Ferry (with the chain hauled ferry) and beyond with its willows and reeds, fields and cows, no habitation and ever fewer people - Lady of Shalott country. Downstream the river led to grown-ups' Oxford, the Parks and bridges, manicured banks and paths and ever more people and boats (and the wooden screens of Parsons' Pleasure).

Compared with other prep schools we visited (and some I have known since) neatly housed in grand country mansions in spreading parkland, the Dragons was a very higgledy-piggledy affair. It had buildings ancient and modern everywhere, classroom huts of timber, further huts, shacks and sheds round the back of buildings. School House was somewhat lost in the trees of Bardwell Road at the side and boys also lived in countless small houses up and down neighbouring roads. With hindsight, there was no heart to the school. There were two meeting halls for example, one (Old Hall) for school mornings, one (New Hall) for events and occasions. There was no chapel. And yet there was a feeling of privacy about the school - set in its own private and exciting corner of North Oxford, safe behind lines of tall chestnut trees. And all these things served to make the atmosphere more fun and relaxed. You could explore your way through and round, and you met your pals, or masters, on the way.

One other nice thing about the lay out as I recall it was the feeling of ever increasing space as you approached the playing fields, say from the playground. You emerged by the Lurky shrubbery and Covered Rink, and then you could look out onto an open greensward. The land opened to the left, past the gardens, curling round as it followed Bardwell Road north to the lane to Timms' boatyard, and stretched out across the playing fields, with all the promise of games and fun ahead, away to the Memorial and the Cherwell.

And the close surroundings of North Oxford seemed part of the school too. I already knew the area and walking to Belbroughton Road and back on Sundays was a familiar and very pleasant undertaking. There was a choice of routes. You could go past Linton Lodge (run by the Dragon master 'Ratty') and St Andrew's church, or to the end of Charlbury and then left up Belbroughton. And I recall the smell of hot tarred fences in summer, and rattling a stick or some implement along them as you walked by and kicking up leaves in autumn. And then of course springtime, summoned up for ever in Betjeman's 'Belbroughton Road is bonny' and the wonderful cherry blossom - but the forsythia I never particularly liked.

Alan concludes on all this that of course it is the emotions and feelings in this landscape that are most important rather than the stage, but the stage, that of a rather unusually spacious and well-equipped boy's school for its time, is part of it all. I never felt it was a prison, for we could wander, and of course there were many expeditions - to the Parks for cricket, to Port Meadow for skating, up the river in canoes and boats for picnics, and down the river to the edge of the mysteriously named nude bathing places, 'Dames Delight' and 'Parson's Pleasure'.

*

Our social, intellectual and cultural lives are all influenced by our material world. Alan sees this as an area which is particularly interesting for several reasons. One is that it is something which is remembered best. I have completely forgotten most of my teacher's faces (until I see their portraits), or my friends at that age except for their names. But the shape of the playing fields and School Hall, some of the highs and lows of food, the illnesses and the cold, these we remember. It is not surprising that almost all of Roald Dahl's early memories in 'Boy', and perhaps his most celebrated book 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' are about food - and also illness.

A second reason for pursuing this is the particular period of my childhood, the ten years after the war. This was the really low period after the War, the age of austerity. It is very difficult for younger people to know how bleak those days were - perhaps as bleak as the war itself, but without any excitement. England was in a grim period and there was full rationing until almost the end of my schooling at the Dragon.

The frigid classrooms, the thin diet and importance of tuck, the struggle to find clothes and shoes, the constant minor illnesses, all are part of the background. My sense of moving from Purgatory to Paradise at the Dragon may, in part at least, be a reflection of the material improvements which, even in the five years at the Dragon between 1950 and 1955 had occurred. Rationing was ending, television was arriving, and things were not as tight.

The story of the material world is thus complementary to other descriptions of this period and helps to explain how the toughness and hard work which were inculcated into us in sports and elsewhere were not so much at odds with our material world. Re-visiting the Dragon, makes me realize how much improved everything is in material terms. The pupils and their parents would be horrified at

the relatively thin, diseased, shivering, little things which we were in those days and it is worth showing how even in one of the best boarding schools in the country life was hard.

This material deprivation has also entered into my soul. Unlike modern children I find it difficult to throw away useful things, deplore parts of our wasteful consumer society, and find a grim satisfaction in the return to austerity which looks likely as global warming threatens us.

*

Jamie remembers that food and drink was central to our young lives, and much remarked upon in letters to our parents – although the division was quite as simple as home food (wonderful!) and school food (ugh!). We youngsters learn to discern, to pick and choose, and become connoisseurs in our own way; and where food was concerned some less obvious elements came into the equation, food for comfort, for a break and escape or for companionship or a social occasion. I suspect that we generally had access to as good a diet as was available in England at that period in an urban setting and at a time of rationing, thanks to parents and schoolmasters who cared. Our experiences and some further thoughts are described in Chapter 2B.

We comment elsewhere in Chapter 3 on the sometimes difficult physical conditions of dormitories and life in boarding houses, and we also suffered our share of uncomfortable illnesses major and minor. Sandy suffered in particular was prey to a number of minor but debilitating illnesses throughout his first years at the Dragon. Other memories, however, such as of running across the playing fields for an early morning swim, and a few photographs are not of sickly weaklings – but of glowing youth.

Equally, I am not really sure that we suffered from cold or heat at school, or from sleep deprivation. On the other hand, I think that the long, foggy and dank, cold and dreary winters of the Thames plain at Oxford were quite debilitating. It was not a healthy or congenial climate if, for instance, you had a tendency to chest, ears, nose and throat or pulmonary weaknesses. Sandy certainly suffered from prolonged illnesses of this kind, and I suspect that the focus of my memories on bright autumn sunshine, crisp snowy winter days or long and luscious summers may be a conscious process of eradicating memories of Oxford's uncomfortable long winter. It rained a great deal, a miserable cold rain, and was pretty much dark outside school hours from October to April.

I am not sure how strong was the correlation between the material aspects of the Dragon School in the early 1950s and toughness with respect to schoolwork or games (organised or informal). The latter was a matter of traditions affecting attitude, not material surroundings. Such toughness was in the first place a strong traditional, or tribal, thing in a school such as the Dragons, established on principles tried and tested in many an English Victorian public school even if leavened by Skipper and Hum. It may also have been heightened by the nearness of two world wars in the previous thirty-five years (say, an extended generation) and particular post-war factors still prevalent (as revealed in experiences of austerity and reluctance to throw away things). Furthermore, a similar ethic, to my knowledge, thrived in the 1950s even in schools modelled on English public schools located in more gentle and warmer surroundings in South Africa, the Gold Coast, New Zealand and the Fiji Islands.

In sum, my attitude to my material life was probably on the positive side of neutral, and, as in many others aspects of prep school life, I was ready to accept whatever the tribe served up. Perhaps it was not quite as simple as that, but my and

Sandy's letters home show that life was by no means a horror story.

*

My first house, Plummer's, at 6 Bardwell Road, is near the start of the road. My mother describes it as having a yard and a locker room. I just remember it vaguely as similar to other North Oxford houses. I remember the dining room where I sat long hours over unfinished food and that is really all. I was in this house, which must have had about twenty to thirty boys I suppose, for two years.

Jamie and Sandy, on the other hand, spent their first two years on Charlbury Road, first at Stradlings, which was house-mastered by Ronnie St J Yates and known as 'Strads' or 'Yatto's', and then at C.H. Jacques' house, Charlbury, usually known as 'Jacko's'. Jamie's memories of Stradlings, our first year reception house, are rather similar to Alan's memories of Plummer's.

I do not recall, Jamie writes, that there was a yard or garden for play. The dormitories, with four to six beds with iron post frames, were not a hostile place, but nevertheless connected in my mind still to the sinking feelings of homesickness after lights out. We said our bedtime prayers kneeling beside the beds; we played with soft toy animals - throwing them around the room, and we lay on the beds, in full daylight and sunshine which seemed rather improbable, for a half-hour's rest after lunch, when we were supposed to be quiet and read books. I recall breakfast porridge in what seemed a large dining room (to the left of the entrance hall) and evening meals there with the bright evening sunshine pouring into the west-facing large (Edwardian) bow windows. And there on Sundays (?) I wrestled with grey, dry, stringy roast meats which I could neither chew nor swallow.

A memory sharply etched on my mind is of winter evenings after supper, lying around the floor of Yatto's drawing room, one of us hugging his lovable and patient Old English Sheepdog, Tilly (all Old English Sheepdogs I have seen since have been Tillies to me); and there Yatto read us bedtime stories - such as the Doctor Doolittle stories, 'The Wind on the Moon' (a great favourite of mine), 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'.

Jacko's was nominally an out-house of School House. This was an important distinction for boys to whom such things matter - and I had to warn my parents that my address for mail was School House, not Jacko's. It was similar in build and shape to Yatto's, but I have no particular memories of life there in what seems to have been a transition period in my Dragon life.

*

From Plummer's, Alan then went to School House opposite the main school for a year. On the corner near it was the pillar-box where I awaited my mother's return in 1954, and it was approached by a sweeping drive round a lawn where in the summer we played tennis and in the winter skated. There was a lane between 'Gunga Din', where I spent my fourth year (a lane which the 'Draconian' describes as being dug up for two of the five years I was at the Dragon). Here were conker trees - now I find there is only one - and the lane led on by way of several of the quintessentially north Oxford roads and past a ladies College to the Parks.

I remember the dormitories vaguely, but particularly sitting swinging my legs in one of the locker rooms or 'boy's rooms' in the evenings where we sang folk songs together. I also remember that a road led off to Linton Lodge where my mother took me when she came to visit. Across the road from School House was the main school which consisted of a number of buildings and a large expanse of playing fields down to the river Cherwell.

I started in a class on the ground floor of the New Hall. Recently I met Nick

Bullock who confirmed this, and said that he remembered sitting next to me in our first lesson in the school. I remember the room was crowded with chairs and there seemed to be shutters or windows on the right which could be fully opened in the summer. A lady teacher taught us and she tried to teach me Latin. Later I moved to a much bigger classroom in the Old Hall. I ended up in one of the classrooms in the huts on the right - behind which there were bicycle sheds. In the middle of the yard was the old Museum from which marbles were hurled, underneath which was the woodworking classroom.

The Old Hall was where we had school assemblies and end of term concerts took place and we played our torch games at night. An old postcard of the interior of the Hall suddenly brought it back to my mind. Another vivid memory was of the far end of the New Hall (much associated with ballroom dancing, film shows, plays etc) where there was the School Library which I remember for chess, books and my first sex education talk, and beyond it the science block and Gerd Sommerhoff.

A number of photographs which I and others have taken bring this large expanse back to my mind. It all seemed huge to me as a small boy, leading down to the river and places where we played many of our games had our firework displays.

*

Jamie recalls that life in the main boarding house, School House, was spent in four ground floor rooms. The building had (to me) a modern, clean and efficient air to it compared with some other school buildings, e.g. the Old Hall and the classroom huts. As you came in and turned right into the central corridor, ahead of you was a notice board, with vital notices, lists and messages, including the Joc notes - the tenor of which could be guessed according to his signature - 'J H R Lynam' or 'JHRL' was stern and could be dangerous; 'JL' indicated a school business matter, probably routine, and 'Joc' would be a friendly communication. On the right off the notice board was the dining room, with its long tables and a smaller table at the far end which was important because this is where birthdays were celebrated with your chosen guests, eight or ten. We mucked about in the first place in the Locker room which was just behind the entrance to the left (i.e. SW corner of house). This was where we were given, from long tables in the middle of the room, cocoa and buns at elevenses and a bedtime drink; and where Radio B and other malts were dished out to us from giant pots on a host of metallic spoons after breakfast. I think the walls were lined with small cubby lockers, where we kept our things, school books, papers, letters and a few personal possessions including, I think, tuck. I don't remember tuck boxes - unless they were perhaps kept in a cellar and stored away during term. The locker room was a central meeting place, and generally in a hubbub of chatter. It was where comics, news and gossip would be exchanged, but I do not remember it being used for any special activities, although group singing apparently took place there some evenings.

Past the dining room to the East was the Lynam's private side where Joc and Hum lived, and which we hardly knew. I am not sure if we could enter it at all from the boys' side, but rather had to go round outside on those rare occasions such as a Joc breakfast, or when parents were present, or if called by Hum, still formally Headmaster. It was mysterious and different, and I recall light rooms and a chintz décor.

The left hand corridor led to some important areas. First on the left behind the locker room was a kind of Quiet Room or Library. This was where we read our own books or comics, and where chess, draughts and fox and geese, battleships and other games on board and paper could be played. Some boys had travelling chess

sets, rather admired, but normally we played on the supplied boards with very traditional pale yellow white and black wooden chessmen. It was necessary to find boys of the same level, because some were very good indeed. At these tables we also played five stones, pick a stick and such games and tested other paraphernalia relating to crazes.

Down the corridor on the right was the boot room and main ground floor lavatories. Our outdoor coats and shoes, in green cloth shoebags with string drawers, were hung there. The window ledges were where we grew mustard cress in dampened blotting paper in little boxes. On the same ledges were a couple of cracked white china mugs for drinking cold water - or orange squash sometimes? The water had a particularly nice taste.

And then on the right (as I remember it - but maybe quite erroneously) was the prefect's room, a kind of narrow cubby hole with a few high stools or similar seats - where we squeezed in for our no doubt superior chat, and had some rather superior games, in particular, rolling a marble around a slippery maze with holes in it (name forgotten). At the end was a games room, I think - Was it called the shelter? - with a billiards table. I think there were also books, or maybe large bound illustrated magazines such as the Boys Own Paper there too.

Outside the windows to the left of this (western) corridor were the music huts and bike sheds. Right hand windows (Joe's study and the bootroom) gave on to a back working, bins and store area for the kitchen, etc. The prefects' room had no window.

The Plunge was of course in School House too - apparently on the first floor, though I had forgotten that. I think I quite liked it, and leaping across which required a certain skill before you could jump through and out without getting head or even shoulders wet. Evidently Sandy liked it: *I am now in school house in a dorm called Emu with M. Evers, M. Morgom and A Steadman... School house is good for expeshally the morning plunges.*

And the dormitories of different sizes were above, with the sick room over the western corridor rooms. My memory is of airy rooms, with tall windows and full of light in summer, and references in letters home to dormitories, after the first two years, seem to be generally cheerful ones.

A different experience, however, was 'boarding out' as I did in my last term, staying (with one other boarder, Chris Waddilove) at the nearby house of the Richard Thompson's family (his mother, Penelope neé Stradling, was an Old Dragon (OD), his father a University professor of chemistry). Life there had several attractions: the feeling of a home and homeliness, lively, friendly company in a family setting - combined with good food. *Thompson's house is jolly good fun. We have jolly d. breakfast there. last week I also had lunch there.* [2 May 1954]

As to school buildings, The Old Hall itself (with a masters' lodge opposite by the road) at the corner of Bardwell Road was in a sense the main entrance to the school and the principle assembly space. It had a dusty brown-grey feeling to it, faintly smelling of chalk; a large space with entrance doors was at the back, at the East end and on each side of the assembly space were three (of four?) classrooms of slightly different proportions. The floors were of parquet wood, well polished by use. The dais was at the West end where masters stood (I think) at Assembly, and from where morning prayers were directed. Everything felt old including the desks, and the masters' desks of course too. None of your linoleum and plastic surfaces here. I have nothing but happy memories of my last year spent here in R.I Kitson or Kitkat's class, U2A. It was first on the left from the back, rather long and thin with high windows against which particles of dust danced on sunny mornings.

The old Hall was of course the happy venue for those congenial amusements and concerts, magic shows, sing songs at the end of terms or at half term and for other indoor communal activities such as the progressive game competitions. It was also where Gym was practised, a favourite sport of Sandy's in his later years, as described in Chapter 9.

I can remember two other classrooms I was in. The first memory (maybe not the first class) is of lessons in a row of huts to the south of the playground; low, lots of timber (dark green or brown painted windows and gutters or am I imagining that?) I think of early first steps in Latin, French grammar and Maths in those rooms; not much light, a long blackboard across much of one wall. The huts were old and in constant need of repairs, as Sandy reported, *The pipes in the huts bust so we had to have our lessons in Mr Yates house for 3 days. Now they have mended them and put in new ones.*

The second class room I particularly remember was in my penultimate year, namely the first floor room above Gerd's laboratory reached by way of an outside stair. This room had a door at the back leading into the New Hall, with steps down to the level of the dais or stage and was thus used as the green room for the plays produced there. It was wonderfully light and airy with views over the playing fields - to many favourite spots, the hard courts end, where we played tennis and hard-court hockey, and the hawthorn tree lined hedge down the middle of the playing fields. I remember staying in that classroom to read, write and create things on paper, cartoons, a class magazine, 'gloats' and charts of class performance in swimming relays. Again, this was a happy space - and the hawthorns provided a special crop, as I reported in February 1953, *We had a battle against MIBI our next door form, garters as catapults and Hawthorn berries for Ammo.*

The New Hall was the principle space in the main block, quite different in atmosphere from the old Hall, a sort of cream colour and light brown wood coloured everywhere with modern lightweight chairs. This hall was used for activities such as concerts, orchestra practice, evening cinema, the television set, dancing lessons and of course the famous Dragon Shakespeare and Gilbert and Sullivan plays.

Also clear in my memory is the museum block with its grey-blue painted steps and little platform from which 'Ernie' (?) took morning drill. Above was the museum with its glass jars of strange, pale and unrecognisable objects and curious objects deposited by generations of boys and parents. I think I see in my mind's eye butterflies pinned on cork boards too. And it became home for a giant caterpillar (some 8" long) Sandy and I found in Virginia on our summer holiday of 1952, and correctly pickled (I forget how) and presented to the Museum. And Sandy was involved in another experience there in November 1952.

On Thursday we did some ditecture [= detection] work ~ we went on a case of people taken [= taking] things out of the meusum ~ we new [= knew] that people were taking them out so we got a friend to find out who they were and tell them to put it back in there ~ he found out [,] told Hugo and me ~ we found him then taking the glass lid off a case with a pen knife and puling that back ~ we found out 6 people doing it so we got a parent in the meusum comity to tell Joc who he wanted to tell them ~ it was good fun doing it.

Below was the carpentry shop (the Barsonry) with its wonderful smells of wood, wood shavings and glue, and its ancient wooden planes, hardy files, vices and turning machines.

And then there was the Science room, Gerd Summerhoff's lair, with its high work benches and particular smells and paraphernalia, bunsen burners, glass cauldrons and electrical equipment - and the home of radio controlled model aeroplanes and boats built by Gerd and boy assistants more expert and neat with their hands than I was.

But perhaps my sharpest memories of the school and its surrounds relate to play and pastimes. First comes the covered rink with its very particular hard composite floor and wire-netting sides which let in rain in a driving wind. The rink was of course also the home of the tuck shop (than which there was nothing more important and exciting) and stores from which various school paraphernalia (exercise books?) were issued.

In the rink we played when it was raining all kinds of sports and games, roller skating, indoor hockey with battered sticks, touch rigger, soccer and many more as described in Chapter 10. This whole area was a central point in our life of play. Immediately outside the rink were two important outdoor play areas, the best pitch for games such as Lurky, Tig and Rescue. The key here was the shrubbery of dark evergreen bushes, with their curled and gnarled stems and roots. This provided hiding places near the pitch or could hide you when slipping to other hiding places on the edge of the playing field, or in the scruffy area, half garden, half wasteland, around the side of the Old Hall. The rink was situated just near the satisfactorily high and flat East wall of the Old Hall building. This wall was much used for tennis ball games, such as Bad Eggs, or merely to bounce and catch a ball for fun.

Quite separate was the main playground, which was used for early morning PT and drill exercises, and of course for marbles, conkers and similar games played in breaks in dry weather and for ice-slides in the hard winters (constructed on the best slope which fell from the high North-west corner of the playground down to about the middle of the New Hall.)

Jamie takes the general view that a boarder's reactions to his material life and physical surroundings at prep school are fundamental to the formation of his self-identity and character. His inter-relationship with his peers and his view of himself are developed in a series of preferences, choices and decisions about some of the aspects of his material life which we have treated above. Of course, other aspects of school life also play a large part in all this, such as formal games, informal play, reading, entertainment and leisure pursuits, but the most important elements of a boy's being probably emerge from how he deals with such basic issues as dormitory life, health (major and minor) and school food.

These material surroundings challenge a boarder in different ways from other aspects of school life in learning how to cope and, equally important, how to come to terms with himself. The outcome makes the man. And a boarder differs from a dayboy here in that essentially he forms these decisions by himself or in the light of decisions of his peers or both, but not alongside and guided by close family. The structures of care, affection and discipline in which a boarder lives are quite different. Boarding school environment provides a heightened, hothouse atmosphere in which in which to form these very basic choices.

A child can choose to put up with, accept, try to control, overcome or give in to circumstances - in coping with, say, major health problems, repeated minor health problems, the conditions of lavatories, the objectionableness of communal bathing or sleeping, the cold at night or insufficient or poor quality food. In sum, he has to decide, what sort of a chap he is? He also has to learn how to create his own space, how to relax, where to find comfort, how to make a break from the incessant hurly burly of playroom and dorm life and re-energize himself. Companionship was

heightened and good friendships emerged from unplanned experiences relating to the boarder's material and physical surroundings as much as from sharing in special group activities - the end of term fun, watching from the windows fireworks or the building of the ice rink, pleasant surprises in the dining room (pancakes) and in those other elements of tribal ornament, such as 'Joc eggs' at Easter, running from the dorms for the early morning swims, and indeed the Plunge. Such things sealed the deal on choices made.

There comes of course a further series of choices: those relating to group behaviour. Do I want to join in or withdraw, lead, barge in, try to help or follow; might I try to lead some of the time (when I think it matters); do I want to be a keen member of the tribe, rebel against it or stay aloof? This is all very obvious, but for a young boy to make up his mind on these things in relation to how, say, his dormitory companions are making up their minds is a very complex affair. I suspect (guessing here) that I was as much affected by the actions of boys I liked, admired or respected as by the wishes, advice and urgings of staff.

MATERIAL LIFE

It is perhaps not surprising that many school memoirs concentrate on memories of the physical experience of school. It is the food, drink, clothing, heating and periods of pain that it seems are most indelibly fixed in our memories. Again the combined accounts of Jamie and Sandy are far richer than Alan's, so in each section we shall start with their account.

*

In 1949 food was just coming off rationing: meat was a rarity and when it came I could not chew or swallow it and went in mortal fear of being told to remain at the table until I had finished. At home from the age of four to seven and a half, I was accustomed to a diet of simple post-war fare, bread and milk, porridge, and junket, official issue orange concentrate (very yellow) and powdered eggs; indeed, when I was first presented with a real egg, I could not abide it.

At the Dragon I liked, in the first place, all soft foods and nearly all puddings - as I still do. One of my great favourites was junket. I liked semolina, but not tapioca; and I was very fond of porridge which in School House was quite often eaten cold for supper. The porridge could be cut into wedges, or drilled to make pools for a carefully placed spoonful of Lyon's Golden Syrup, and it floated like rafts on the milk. Any eggs I liked, even if they were hard-boiled and old. I think we may have started off with dried egg powder for watery scrambled eggs at Stradlings. But I did not like chewy meat, chewy vegetables like cabbage, horrible stringy stuff, and I have never much liked fish (except expensive fish!) and I don't suppose I did then either. Herrings and kippers had bones which got caught in the throat.

I do not recall comfort eating because I was homesick, unhappy or sorry for myself; I do not recall extreme pangs of hunger. I think we were well looked after on a reasonable and modest diet. And it is probably the case that children ate less and were more content with less in those days because of post war frugality. We were used to eating little and being grateful for what we had - and not complaining.

We drank water, plenty; primitive orange squash or some sort of flavoured mixing drink, and later on we turned to 'fizzy pop' - a great favourite, obtainable in North Parade (known as 'NP') despite not specially nice tastes (e.g. Dandelion and Burdock), and horrible pink, yellow and red colours. It came in a tall bottle, of pint size or more. Some drinks such as ginger beer were bottled with those wonderful

sprung metal tops with rubber seals (and were returnable). Tizer was the big thing. And I remember spending scarce pocket money on a small bottle of Lucozade every now and then. I quite liked it; and it was also supposed to give you strength! I think milk was produced in the junior houses in jugs but later in bottles on the tables at schoolhouse; and the big thing was whether one liked or actively disliked the cream on top. I liked it, especially on my porridge. Sandy came to like it, as he said in March 1952, Larst *night I drank 2 bottles of milk. I like coco now*

I suspect the essence of my ready acceptance of most such meals was a simple, and probably sensible, pleasure in moundy food. Less sensible but a stronger by far was my weakness for all sweets and chocolate. Sweets came off rationing in early February 1953, *On Wed (I think) sweets came off ration. Everyone was trooping down to N.P.* - and I have hardly stopped buying since.

Birthdays were celebrated at School House a 'birthday party' at teatime where a birthday cake, iced of course, but nothing too fancy, and other rare sweet foods might be produced. The cake (with candles) might be made by kitchen staff, provided by parents or perhaps bought in and charged on the term bill. You sat at a special table with your chosen guests - and there may have been some other fare different from what the rest of the house was given. You chose some eight or ten friends to join you. Their selection could be an invidious business. For example, in March 1952 I had a *birthday cake with icing* and for his birthday in May Sandy had '*a lovely cake, with wicket and cricket ball on it*'. Ours, I think, were provided by my grandparents at Belbroughton Road.

In February 1953 Sandy did well at a friend's party, *another birthday party ~ I got two slices of iced cake, two of ginger cake and a piece of mince and a flap jack*. And in May 1955 Sandy sent thanks home to the nanny helping to look after our baby sister. He had had an *extremely good birthday tea, the cake was just the right size and delicious [sic] ~ it went round 12 chaps and some over. Do tell Mrs Skilton it was delicious and wizard*. It must have been a good sized cake.

Through the day we drank water in the bootroom for thirst. As to hot drinks I think of Cocoa (not Ovaltine, which I did not terribly like then); and some tea possibly, but certainly never coffee. We had elevenses in the Locker Room, cocoa and a bun or similar, and Sandy writes in April 1952 of enjoying *rose hip syrup for elevenses*. For elevenses, I remember Swiss buns with a bit of icing over the top; and possibly jam tarts (or was that at home?) I don't think we had doughnuts or other more intricate sorts of buns and cakes.

From the Tuck shop I remember getting small bars of Cadbury's Milk Tray with six flavours, my favourite being the Turkish Delight, Mars Bars I think and some bars of Terry's chocolate. Sweets I think of as coming more from NP than the tuck Shop; sherbet fountains, liquorice All Sorts, gob stoppers, various kinds of barley sugar and boiled sweets. I don't think I went much for toffees. And a great favourite, produced at Belbroughton Road (late Dragon stage I would say), was Frigor Swiss chocolate, a large thin chocolate block with a praline filling, in a bright red wrapper with white writing. The last word in luxury.

There is no evidence in my or Sandy's letters of unmanageable food, or refusals to eat. There are occasional criticisms of food - '*barely worth eating*' and the appropriateness of the gastronomy one breakfast was queried by Sandy in late October 1952, *On Wendsday for breakfast we had actually mixed together on the same plate backed [= baked] appel and fried backen [= bacon] which was very nice but looked awffull. I have never had it before [,] have you;* but there are but no signs of refusals to eat the fare on offer.

About this period (and the lifting of rationing restrictions I suppose) some more

appreciated food began to arrive in School House. In June 1952 there was a popular surprise. *we had some ice cream for supper.* That November Sandy was proud to report success at a lunch outing with Hugo and Mrs Rowbotham when '*Having lunch at Linton Lodge a maid came up to Hugo and me and gave us 2 ice creams each.*' Ice cream became a great favourite and much sought after in our young lives.

There could be special treats at school, for instance when Easter fell early in 1951 Sandy wrote that all boys received *choc easter eggs - Joc eggs.* And credit was given when it was due (but note Sandy's irony in September 1954), *For the first time for about 75 years we had a supper worth eating [,] sosages and chips.* I enjoyed the *lovely pancakes* which appeared on Shrove Tuesday in 1952 and Sandy in February 1956 gives the detail *wonderful pancakes [,] all of school house ~ 120 people had them ~ they were beautifully cooked and all our table got 4 helpings*

We were equally discerning in the matter of taste with respect to food outside school. Sandy felt let down on an expedition to London in June 1955 when they left school, after *a mangy foul Breakfast. Then at about 12.30 we had two very mangy sandwiches and a 'penguin'.* So bad was the situation that that afternoon, *some went to the Natural History Museum but me and 3 other chaps felt jolly hungry so we went and had egg and chips at the Corner Cafe (1/3d)*

In November 1954 Sandy's party had *lunch at the Churchouse Restaeraunt by the Houses of Parliament. disgusting celery soup[,] the[n] roast meat and spuds and peas, Jelly.*

A meal in Bath the following November, however, was more than up to scratch, *we had a bang-on lunch[,] absoloutley wizard. Tomatoe soup (rolls), Roast Pork, Green Peas, Cabbage, Roast spuds, Mashed spuds, Mint sauce, Fruit and Ice Cream, Orange aid. We had all of that and a jolly big helping of everything.*

The meals on Sandy's outing to the Severn Wild Fowl Trust in February 1954 were quite something to write home about. On the way out they stopped for a road side halt, presumably in the Cotswolds, and *had two bananas and a bottle of lemonaid by a stream... Then we went on two [= to] Gloucter [= Gloucester] and had a spifficating lunch. We had two slices of pork which each nearly covered the plate, roast spuds stuffing and brussel sprots ~ then we had ice cream and we drank sider [= cider].*

Then there was party food which often merited a mention in letters home. The usual bill of fare included 'jellies and ice cream'. For instance, at the half term party in my very first term (November 1949), *there was delishos food to eat such as jellies, cakes and ice-creams and rolls.* And a football match I played in February 1953 was followed by *a wizard match tea. All sorts of cake and Ice cream.* And at the Coronation Fete of June 1953, there was a smashing *supper of jellies, ices and cakes.*

Better yet for Sandy was a party-dance in March 1956 (complete with 12 girls from Wychwood School) where there were *'tons of grub, 190 sandwiches, cakes, chocolate and sweet biscuits, sasage rolls, etc and orange, fizzy and still, and cider and lemon & cider cup. It was absoloutly wizard.*

In addition quality of teas presented at some away matches was notable. At Winton Hall, near Rugby in October 1953, we were treated to a *wizard tea, Sausages and mash then glorious creamy cake.* Later that month we were at Dean Close. I was impressed by their facilities, *a wizard tea; went to their 'shop' - everything from pins to bikes and lots of tuck. It was run by Selfridges.* And at Bloxham school in March 1954 we were given *a smashing tea of eggs and chips and gooey creamy cakes.* Sandy, however, was not so impressed by arrangements at Winton Hall in October 1955, *They were a pretty sopy [= sippy] lot of chaps. We*

won 27-3. They had 2 italian waiters which was going a bit too far for a prep school

Food played a part in our lives elsewhere too. My mother offered Sandy and me a special celebratory lunch for our first arrival in our new family home in Surrey in late 1953. My request seems rather sophisticated (unless I was showing off to my parents in my letter), viz, a *...celebration lunch request for curry. Very warming and very tasty. If you have any blackberries bottled I like blackberry tart also ~ Tapioca is good. Suet pud (with lots of treacle).*

And food for all seasons got reported. Apparently I was well treated as an inmate at the Radcliffe in January 1954, with *spifin lunches, trifles jelly, caramel pud, mmm lovely*. On a visit by my father in 1952 we were taken down town where we ate *beans on toast and marshmallows at Ellistons*. And in January 1953 we returned to school by train after a holiday at Sedbergh, *on Tuesday morning, well filled up with poached egg and fish (I looked it up in my food diary)... We had a terrific lunch of sandwiches, marshmallows (F.D.) and orangeade*. It seems that I kept a food diary. Maybe I had been given two diaries at Christmas and decided to devote one for food; it rings a bell.

All through the years letters contain small references to food, thanks for *delicious sweets sent* or for *good packed lunches* for journeys. And my love of chocolates was confirmed again by my envy, or hope for a picking, when there was a splendid present of *a 4lb box of chocs for one boy who showed parents round the school*. We were connoisseurs: a 1lb box was pretty good, but a 4lb-er...!

There is no doubt about it, food was constantly on my mind.

*

As far as food goes at the Dragon, Alan hardly remember anything. I vaguely remember being forced to eat things which I still hate - tapioca pudding ('frogspawn'), beetroot, prunes ('the prunes are revolting!'), porridge, and lumps of fat or gristle. We were forced I think, in normal fashion, to sit over the cold food until we had finished it - or it would come back at the next meal. There were no doubt things I really liked, for instance Kraft dairy slices of cheese, and Marmite and of course sweets. I don't recall that the food rationing which covered almost all of this period at school had much obvious effect on us. Somehow the school coped and only the butter ration was once mentioned in the 'Term Notes'.

There is a great deal in most schoolboy reminiscences of this period about the 'Tuck Box' and the 'Tuck Shop' and the importance of extra food. I don't remember having a tuck box at the Dragon (though I did have one at Sedbergh) and certainly when I am pictured setting off on my first trip to school there is no tuck box. The arrangement seems to have been that we were given some pocket money to spend on 'tuck' (i.e. mainly sweets) and also sent what seem to have been more or less weekly parcels. Given the cost of postage and the difficulties of collecting and packing weekly parcels, this seems strange, but the little evidence I have from letters suggests that this was the case. The Tuck Shop itself was 'housed in the cubby-hole on the left of the entrance to the rink...'¹

It also seems that at some point the head master either accumulated all the sweets sent back with the boys, or else was given the ration books and bought the sweets. Something like this occurred, for in the 'Term Notes' for Easter 1952 there is reference to the Headmaster's Study having 'a solid wall of cartons containing the term's sweet ration'. A later arrangement in the 1970's is described by Watkins 'Along with the tuck shop, there was a padlocked tuck cupboard back at the

¹ C.H. Jaques, *A Dragon Century 1877-1977*,(1977), 64

dormitory. Boys arrived at school each term with boxes of chocolate which were stored in the tuck cupboard. The cupboard was opened each day after lunch...¹

At the end of my time at the Dragon, my mother wrote to my father about the expenses of school on 6th February 1955. She mentions the cost of ‘socks, hankies, gloves, tuck and pocket-money for school, and rail fares of course’. My only references to tuck during the whole of my correspondence at the Dragon came in the following few weeks. On about 20th February I wrote *Dear Mummy, Thank you for your letter. The tuck didn't come last week. I added P.P.S. Don't forget the tuck.* A couple of weeks later, in an undated letter, I mentioned that *I am not spending any money on the tuck shop and so I am nearly out of tuck (just dropping a hint).* Dayboys, no doubt, also brought in tuck and, as described under marbles, within the internal economy of the Dragon one could exchange chocolate for other things. I certainly didn't develop an obsession with sweets, though I did collect chocolate covers. Looking through them brings back the sudden taste of Swiss chocolate to the mouth.

There are scattered references to sweets in the letters. In a letter to Father Xmas on 25 November 1949, shortly before my eighth birthday, I asked for an ambitious list of things, including ‘sum sweets’. I wrote in a letter from school in early March 1951 *Thank you very much for the lovely sweets you sent me.* This looks like a special present. My mother, however, was economising on such things and in outlining her expenses in a letter to my father on 15th May of that year she mentions *Sweets. One ration book (I never use all three).* Yet we seem to have managed. For example there is mention of the large amounts of chocolate we ate when we went to the pantomime on 11th January 1951 even when rationing was still present: *We got home eventually over-tired, over-excited and stuffed with chocolate in the time-honoured fashion.*

The rationing of sweets continued until 1953, for I wrote somewhat wistfully on 22nd February to my parents *I suppose you know sweets are off ration but that will not make any difference to you as they were off all the time.* A few years later when my mother came to visit me at the Dragon to see *Iolanthe* she described on 14th November 1954; *Then set out to buy Alan some sweets and was met with the usual ghastly Saturday afternoon crowds, went to Woolworths and was nearly suffocated, eventually fought my way out and when I got to the door flung the entire contents of my purse onto the pavement.* I returned the kindness apparently, for my mother describes how that Christmas (in a letter written two days after the event) *Alan gave me an enormous box of chocolates which must have cost the earth!*

It does not seem to have been rationing which was the primary drive between the importance of sweets. Roald Dahl's obsession with the subject in his *Boy* was before the Second World War. Paul Watkins is writing about the 1970's, long after rationing, when he wrote ‘For us, the only things worth eating were sweets. Sweets were as good as money at the Dragon School. In a way, they were better than money, and the way you showed that you were friends with someone was to share your chocolate with them. You could buy chocolates at the tuck shop. It was a brown hut with a tar-paper roof in the middle of the playground.’² ‘Sharing chocolate’ with a friend could also be instrumental, as well as expressive. One memory I have is encouraging a friend who I felt physically attracted to give me a kiss in return for a piece of chocolate.

¹ Paul Watkins, *Stand, Before Your God* (1993), 46

² Watkins, *Stand*, 46

What I don't remember is ever being seriously hungry at the Dragon - I remember being much more hungry later at Sedbergh. Somehow the school seem to have fed us reasonably, given rationing, and my very slow physical growth at the school cannot have been due to under-feeding, especially as I made up for any deficiency in the holidays.

I don't remember what we drank at the Dragon. Was there a milk ration? Talking to friends recently they are sure that we all received a third of a pint of milk a day at all schools in this period. I suppose that we mainly drank water, perhaps with squash of some kind on special occasions such as the Leaver's Picnic. Whether we had hot drinks, certainly not coffee, but perhaps a little tea, ovaltine, Bovril and such drinks, I am not sure.

*

Most of the Dragon's top competitor schools had very elaborate uniforms - if they were in the queue to get their boys into Eton this would often be based on Eton collars. Again the Dragon school was different - the uniform was practical, relatively cheap, and unostentatious. Thus Peter Snow describes it as 'famously and scruffily successful', and notes that 'Attitudes towards dress are relaxed'.¹

This started in the early days, though others later began to follow. 'In the 1920s, the Dragon's open-necked shirts worn over dark blue shorts were considered cranky. Yet by the mid-thirties its smart Oxford rival, Summer Fields, had replaced its Eton suits with jerseys and plus-fours for everyday wear.'² Even here, however, there is a strong difference - most young boys wore shorts at this period, only a select few wore plus-fours.

Even the teachers were relaxed and sometimes eccentric in their clothes. I remember that Bruno always seemed to be in an aertex shirt, and Joc wore scarlet braces. A hint of this is given in the 'Term Notes' when they described the Sports Day in 1954 where 'any masters who are visible at, or near, this function are probably wearing trousers of roughly the same material as their jackets, which is quite enough to draw from any Dragon an admiring "Coo! Spiv!"

I certainly don't remember much dissonance between what I wore at home and at school. Furthermore, my parents, who were short of money and frequently lamenting costs, do not make much of the costs of my school uniforms until near the end when my mother tried to make a saving by not buying me two of everything.

*

Jamie comments that his mother's letters to her mother, my grandmother in Oxford, acting as guardian are full of references to uniform and clothing for school and worries about sizes, cost and suitability. The letters reveal just how complex, and no doubt wearing, a business the provision of clothing at long distance could be for all concerned.

References to the Dragon in my mother's letters to the Hones seem to have been more about clothes than about us two boys. She was always having to ask politely for help and explain carefully to make sure the right things were purchased or produced. I remember be taken to clothes shops in both Oxford and Kendal on holidays to get kitted out with the needful. The Hones I suppose attended to mending and repair, and in Sedbergh our grandmother Bruce Lockhart was always knitting, sewing and making; and their clothes were handed down all the time to upcoming siblings and cousins.

¹ Peter Snow, Oxford, *Observed: Town and Gown* (1991), 167

² Brendon, *Preparatory*, 94

The starting points for this exercise were the tidy, printed lists issued each term by the school matron of clothes with which we had to be supplied the following term. In addition my mother sent to patient grandparents lists of clothes which might be needed on holidays elsewhere, such as at Sedbergh. or to be kept handy at Belbroughton Road, our Oxford home base.

So far as I can remember I liked uniform, or at least had nothing against it. I liked conforming and uniform was comfortable to wear, and easy to put on quickly! There were no issues of style or fashion involved and I don't think I had any pretensions to dandyism. I had forgotten, however, about Boiler Suits, which I enjoyed wearing, although apparently my mother did not like them; and games shorts with elastic waists, that got so used, they became nearly worn through. I have a feeling that the boiler suits were only worn in our first couple of years? I do not recall any particular likes and dislikes with respect to other clothing, nor was I conscious of being smart or unsmart. On the other hand, wearing favourite clothes helps boost self-confidence and gives a feeling of security.

As I remember things, formal uniform at the Dragon was limited to a school blazer, shorts and stockings. I can still sense the feeling of the cloth, slightly stiff till nicely worn in, and of side pockets full to bursting with the usual toys, conkers, strings, hankies, pencils, sweet papers etc., so I suppose we wore them a lot of the time perhaps after casting off boiler suits. But I also think we spent a lot of time in rough, clothes, shorts and jerseys suitable for messing about in. Maybe boarders changed after school hours? And I assume that there were some restrictions on choice of shirts and pullovers etc., but maybe raincoats, overcoats or over-jackets were less restricted.

Shoes were hung up in the Bootroom in shoe bags - a green cotton thing with your name in capital letters written on it in indelible ink. And I suppose we cleaned our own shoes - even if they got very muddy? Looking at team photos, smart old-fashioned blazers and ties were available for la crème de la crème, perhaps worn on away matches? - but I do not recall cricketing caps or other sports caps (with tassels?). Plimsolls were worn for gym and some sports and then football boots with studs that kept coming out. Who put in new studs? Did we hand them in to someone in that little cubby hole-cum-stores by the door of the covered rink? And I think of cricket boots being blanco'd with a kind of white powder paint in a tube with a bit of sponge at the end, or was that at Sedbergh? For winter games there were shorts with elastic waists, and sweaters (which were scratchy when new) and long stockings.

All these clothes could be obtained at Ellistons and Cavell's down town. I think of nice open neck short-sleeved shirts in summer, possibly sunhats (or was that only at home?), grey long stockings and black elastic garters sewn to size (regularly used as catapults). I think we wore ties sometimes (dark blue with gold bands across them)? And swimming trunks were made of wool, all soggy and clammy and droopy. Horrible things till you were well immersed in the water. And for dirty clothes I think I see in my mind's eye large wicker laundry baskets near the door in a big dorm?

As to clothes worn by masters, I have no precise recollections. I think of them mostly wearing tweeds, flannels or corduroy - in old, loose fitting jackets with leather patches on the elbows and cuffs - with blazers or a rather worn suit for tidier occasions and maybe jumpers and scarves for the more arty. The odd bow tie and a bit of colour to show off, but nothing too exotic or camp. I think of Joc in a dark (blue) suit, and perhaps one or two others in faded, striped suits.

There are very few references to the distaff in Sandy's and my letters home - just

some minimum reports to headquarters. At Sedbergh in January 1952 I reported, *We had a hair cut this morning* and I imagine it was also cut regularly at school (not down town), but there are no mentions of it in letters home. That same holiday, Sandy was bought a *lovely new pair of slippers*, and I was bought a *new pair of gym shoes- saves having to hire them*. I imagine the objection to the cost of hiring came from Grandmother Bruce Lockhart. And when Sandy bought a new pair of slippers down town in July 1954 he felt obliged to report the fact, *This won't interest you but you better know that I got some knew [=new] slippers on Friday down town*

A number of letters similarly mentioned arrangements for travel home, including reference to school trunks (and bicycles) sent in advance (March 1954), *Matron is packing my trunk and sending it off R.GA as soon as possible - I hope that's all right*. This was an area of duty reporting, but I remember the whole business of school trunks well, with their large brass locks and three bands of strengtheners, and helping to pack them up at the end of the holidays and the rather exciting white PLA labels.

On these matters as to clothing, I guess my attitudes were typical of most other boarders. They were administrative matters of no great import. We were all accustomed to simple clothing from days of rationing through our childhood right into the 1950s. But did we, I wonder, like children today, intentionally wear our shirt-tails outside? Did we turn up a collar, allow stockings to fall or affect some similar gestures to show style and superiority?

*

Jamie recalls some cold but not extreme cold at the Dragon. I suppose radiators generally worked well and so far as I remember classrooms, halls, and dormitories were perfectly comfortable all year round. Outside, of course it could be very cold, although Oxford was wet and dank, 'parky' rather than cold, But as I recall it we did not have to go out much in really nasty wet and cold weather so we rarely got chilled through to the marrow. We played and enjoyed other activities indoors instead. I do not recall having to go out to run around to keep warm; but I do remember getting freezing cold standing around as a spectator on Portmeadow when I was not allowed to skate for medical reasons.

We had raincoats, and gumboots I think, and some kind of overcoats or overjackets, and were warm and happy enough outside in most conditions with all of that. In our dorms at night we had woollen dressing gowns and slippers and extra blankets from home. I do not remember eiderdowns - certainly not in School House where I think they might have been regarded as rather sissy. (And I had never heard of duvets at that age.)

In our first year or two I wore a boiler suit, which could provide an extra layer in winter. The question I suppose is what we wore underneath them. Pullovers were important at home, and good ones were to me always friendly and comforting things. I imagine, but am not sure, that we wore them at school. I cannot recall any uniform pullover but it seems that we piled on layer after layer of 'jumpers' or 'sweaters', long and short sleeved, thick or thin, when cold was extreme. At home, and perhaps at school too, Sandy and I also wore a very warm all-enveloping Parker of lightweight quilt material brought or sent home from USA.

And then in summer we changed to very comfortable and cool aertex shirts and sandals, and shady trees and river swimming helped us through the heatwaves.

Sandy's and my letters home contain numerous references to weather conditions. In the first place, the subject was an obvious space-filler; and second, parents and relatives and so forth were known instinctively to be keen on the subject. But, more

telling, weather conditions had important consequences for games and sports, or even work. I think that weather was as intriguing a phenomenon and enriching part of life's pageant for us then as it was in adult years (and of course much easier to cope with as a schoolboy safe in his own school grounds, than as long-suffering drivers of transport and keepers of appointments).

The letters thus form a nice running account of the effects of the seasons on Dragon life. In March 1951, in his second term, for instance Sandy wrote of hockey in the rain, *I like playing hockey. We plad [= played] in the rean [= rain]. It was good fun but very coded [=cold] ~ our clothe [els were very wet;* and the following January there was football in the snow, *Yesterday we had snew 1½ inches deep and played football in it and it was very cold.*

My first weather notes, complete with an offer of dialogue on the subject, came in a letter of November 1950, *How is your weather been lately? We had a lot of frost yesterday. the temperature was 31 ½ ~ today is 31° ~ it looks like snow ~ it was very foggy yesterday;* and in February 1952 the fog was bad, *On Wednesday we had a most frightful fog. You could hardly see 6 Yds ahead ~ it lifted about one o'clock.* And in November 1953, Oxford lay in damp fog again, *Every day here has started with a dense fog visibility about 30x until after breakfast when the boys breath [sic] it away. But later it becomes quite warm and sunny.* I have particularly enjoyable memories of fog in boyhood days, perhaps there was some magic about usual views disappearing, yet you knew where you are?

Heavy rains, followed by floods, were common in the Thames valley. In March 1952 *thefrej has been a lote of snow and it is very cold and a big wind,* and the Parks were flooded. In early March 1953 Sandy reported that there was *no hockey ~ too much rain.* There were storms in December 1954, *with floods everywhere and trees blown down.*

On the other hand the summer of 1952 apparently produced quite a prolonged heatwave. I first reported it in a letter from Sedbergh at the end of the Easter holidays, *the weather here is steaming hot* and on it went into mid-May, *This last week we have had some very hot weather ~ swimming will soon be starting.* Later that month Grandmother Hone came to a dress rehearsal performance of the Shakespeare play, *It was very hot in the hall. But as the lamp towers over 60 feet [= are over 16 feet?] it ought to have been cooler ~ the water temp had risen terrifically 61, 64, 65, 63, 68 ½, 70 ½, 73 and it is usually nice in now. There have been voluntary games but I have not played ~ it has been really too hot in the sun 81° in a place where the sun never sees the thermometer*

And Sandy was already swimming a lot in May, *I am very glad that I did my tenths and river cloths test and diving so I can go down the river bank and on to the bofajrds because it is so nice when it is hot and you can sit on the diving bords;* and in June *It is realy hot here and the water is boiling.* The heat on an expedition that summer did not bother Sandy, *On Monday I went to Whipsand [sic] and it was very hot but that did not matter;* but on it went through June into July, affecting cricket and athletics too.

The temp [June 11] that afternoon was 78 in the shade and 84 in the sun. We started at 9.30 ...and played [till] 6.30 when I had supper ~ [at] 7.30 I was very thirsty the sun blazing hot and I had not sat down since lunch, for there were no chairs.... Friday was 72 in the shade and I now only wear a shirt (aertex) sandals, and trousers. No nasty blazer[, jumpers or socks... In Maths we had a general knowledge test because the master said it was two [= too] hot to work. And on 20 July I wrote, the weather is very hot and it's not very nice running up and down

lanes [running lanes on sports field] and sailing in to Long Jump pits.

It also started to get cold early in 1952. By mid October, *it was really cold and I point below freezing point and just as cold today. I think that it is going to be a very cold winter. I am glad because then we can wear [= wear] our big coats.* When newly bought, these quilted parkers brought from the USA were too big for us - which helped keep the backside warm. And by November, Sandy could report that *all this week there has been games day and now the earth is hard as iron but it was the forest [frost] [word illeg.] and we could catch cold.*

And with respect to clothing, one remark in a letter home in October 1952 intrigues me now, *We very rarely wear ties now it is getting colder.* I suppose that the more pullovers we wore, the more a shirt open at the neck was hidden; but was this a practice adopted by boys unilaterally or an amnesty approved by staff or matron?

With snow and ice came snowballing battles on the playing fields, which could be a very cold business, as in early December 1952, when battle raged all afternoon until *The Bell went so we went back to change. Sandy was too cold and went away early.*

The New Year got off to an icy start and Sandy was suffering by the end of January, *It has been snowing quiet a lot here and it has been 1000 times colder than the top floor at Sedburgh. I am wearing 3 big long sleeve sweaters most of the time.* In February it was not much better, *This week it is not so cold only as cold as the top floor at Sedburgh;* and then the cold weather returned in earnest with *12-13 degrees of frost, snowy.*

I was 'off-ex' [debarred from exercise on medical grounds] that February when there was a *snowfall on Thursday and on that day the school stopped work at 11.30. We went down to Portmeadow where boys skated (chizz-boo I'm not allowed to) ~ practically froze to death walking around down there but I had good fun watching and helping people...*

It was not often that I complained of cold during games, but a game at Bloxham School in March 1954 was an exception. The Dragon hockey team, *changed in the coldest dormitory I've ever seen (or felt). However when we came to the field we found it absolutely horrid. There was a driving wind and it was jolly cold.*

May saw the weather swinging from one extreme to the other, first dry, then wet, *Bicycling has started already, terribly early. I have not had mine mended yet.... Today it is simply pouring, jolly good show, at last. Until today the sun was as hot as ever and the pitches and everything bone dry.* In mid May, the weather was terrible and the rain poured down for 3 days. *Now the pitches are hardning [sic] up and it is getting very hot. I felt absolutely [illeg. = whacked] after bowling 6 overs yesterday.* In June, I wrote, *we started bathing. The water was pretty cold though I did enjoy the bathe;* but then in July I noted that, *This year we aren't having swimming relays as the water is really pretty cold still.*

The following year saw another cold February, with Sandy writing of no *games because of snow;* but May turned nice, with 5th May, the day after his birthday, being the *first summer day,* and by late June it was hot again. When Sandy played in an away match against Cothill, *It was a boiling day and we were on the field of play without refreshments or an Interval from 2 o'clock to 6 o'clock.* Sandy then turns his attention to more serious matters, sending news in the same letter of Common Entrance week, *The Common E was last week and I had a good time for quite a few chaps were taking it and the sets and forms and games joined up and all difrent masters took us. One guy just passed to Sedbergh called Macfarllen.*

*

That 'one guy... Macfarllen' recalls the cold. Perhaps this was exacerbated in my case by the contrast with my infancy in Assam. But it has to be set within the context of a world before the central heating revolution of the 1960's. Much of the time between October and March seemed to revolve around trying to move from one small pool of heat to another. There were just coal fires, gas fires perhaps, and apparently rather inefficient radiators (at school). The nearest a western affluent person can now get to the situation is perhaps to go to an old church or cathedral where the huge coke-fired heaters are still kept operating.

Yet the cold was so much an accepted part of life that I only mentioned it once in one of my letters, and that a rather particular event, describing on 2nd February 1954 that *we have had freezing weather. And I have not played any games (except ice hockey). We have had a wizard time except for the cold as I have lost my gloves.*

The bedrooms (and school dormitories) were perhaps the worst, often with little or no heating. That awful moment of getting out of bed and into one's clothes, or the reverse of entering an icy bed, is an indelible memory and my pleasure in hot water bottles and central heating has never diminished. There were no hot water bottles at school, as I recall.

I imagine that we all wore as many layers as possible, but cold and huddling round radiators at the Dragon was usual. When it was particularly cold it was permitted to wear extra clothes at night, as was reported in the 'Term Notes' for Easter 1954. It was a time of blankets and sheets and of course the wonders of the duvet had not been imported, though the covering or 'eiderdown' was probably present - at least at home.

*

As to bodily functions, it is Alan who can start the story, since his memories are rather vivid and life-influencing. According to a now outdated kind of psychology, our characters are partly determined by our bodily functions - hence the fact that I have hoarded my past so carefully is a sign of my anal-retentive streak. The theory, unfortunately, looks quite plausible.

Whether it was the various tummy problems I had in India, or my mother's apprehensions about potty training, I seem to remember that even in the time we moved aged six to Dorset, I was having difficulty in controlling my bowels - a mixture of constipation and leaking. I seem to remember my grandmother giving me advice and instruction then, and my sitting for hours in the loo in the hope that something would come. I found peeing was fine and probably at this time first encountered the joy of peeing in the water when swimming in the sea, and peeing in the wild wood in our garden.

Certainly the problem of bowel control was a major nightmare at the Dragon. While a number of my friends, as well as literary accounts, attest to the widespread problem of bed-wetting, which was clearly partly psychological, my problem was 'biggies' as I think they were then called. I still remember the agony of soiled and caked underpants, which had to be secretly buried down in the communal laundry basket to evade shameful discovery. But I think matrons did occasionally notice and not unkindly ask what the problem was. I still don't know what it was, but it continued through Sedbergh, where the system of having toilets with no doors aggravated the problem. Even to this day, if I go away from home it disturbs my rhythms seriously.

All this is strange and significant no doubt, whether mainly physical or psychological. But it is clear that some anxiety about the way my body turns food

into evil-smelling matter is a shock I remember consciously recognising when I was about eight – and has affected me considerably.

As far as I recall the toilets at the Dragon were adequate. For example, I am pretty sure that the toilets had doors to them. This contrasted with other elite boarding schools. For example Summer Fields in the 1930's the lavatories had no doors.¹ When George Orwell was at St Cyprian's he describes 'the row of filthy, dilapidated lavatories, which had not fastenings of any kind on the doors, so that whenever you were sitting there someone was sure to come crashing in.'² Partly as a consequence of this 'It was common to remain constipated for days together. Indeed, one was hardly encouraged to keep one's bowels open, since the only aperients tolerated were castor oil or another almost equally horrible drink called liquorice powder.'³ The 'Compulsory Constipation' which John Betjeman noted in his poetic autobiography is referred to in relation to his public school rather than the Dragon.⁴

Things may have changed, of course at the Dragon from before the War. Certainly the central toilet near the old Hall, now an office, but still the same building with the weather vane, must have had doors since wandering visitors would easily encounter it. This is rather delightfully described in the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1954: Visitors asked 'what is that interesting-looking building with the weather-vane? – a question to which there are only two possible answers, a sudden attack of deafness or the truth.'

*

Jamie does not remember very much about baths or bathrooms. No doubt baths were taken a couple of times a week! (Sandy and I, as teenagers, always used to joke at home that 'too much bathing will weaken you!'). I see in my mind's eye a brightly lit, (high light bulbs) yellowish-white bathroom in School House with two or three baths in it? I suppose matronly staff and junior masters on duty kept an eye on us, the first to see that we washed, the second to see that we did not wallow and spill all the water out onto the floor.

I remember dark, green painted lavatories on the ground floor of the West wing of schoolhouse in or alongside the boot room. I can also recall lavatories somewhere under or at the back of the Old Hall, very dark and not very pleasant affairs. Perhaps there were some newer, brighter and better ones somewhere in New Hall? I think I had a preference was for house lavatories, more friendly and private than school ones. I don't think I was frightened of them and their atmosphere (apart from questions of dirt), as I have been of urban public lavatories here and there! Nor, on the other hand, do I think they were comfortable refuges. Perhaps eleven year olds don't think very much about them at all! But I'm guessing.

There was of course the plunge, which was more for health and character, and was not so lovely, although it had a certain attraction. Dark green, with slimy water, it was perhaps some four feet deep? It had a tiled parapet walkway around it. You stepped gingerly out and crept round this ledge and then leapt across to catch the other side and heaved yourself out as fast as you could to try to avoid getting head and shoulders wet.

I do recall some discomforts and disagreeable unhappy moments, perhaps in the

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 106

² George Orwell, *Essays*, (2000), 432

³ Orwell, *Essays*, 433

⁴ John Betjeman, *Summoned by Bells; A Verse Autobiography* (1960), 66

earlier years. I think that bed-wetting had gone before Dragon age, but accidents occurred both big and small for whatever reason, half asleep, in a rush, too late or runny tummy illnesses, etc. In which circumstances a reddish-brown rubber under sheet might be produced – which had a particular smell as well as a nasty feeling and squeaky sound. These were horrifically embarrassing incidents even if two brothers very close in age were already accustomed to smells, upsets, accidents, open doors and distant, impatient yells of ‘Finished!’ from a young age onwards.

In sum, the uncomfortable and un-private conditions for lavatories and ablutions in general at the Dragon may have caused me occasional social constipation, but I do not remember prolonged miseries.

*

It is finally worth considering the growth of my body during this period. When I first went to the Dragon, the weight of each boy was given in the 'Draconian'. When I arrived at the age of eight and three quarters I was 4 stone and two ounces. The following term I had dropped to four stone. There is no measurement in Summer 1951 but by the Christmas report 1951 I was four stone seven pounds. In a year I had just managed to put on seven pounds – which does not seem much. By the following Easter term I had lost weight again and was only four stone, four pounds and four ounces. By the end of the Summer term I was back to four stone six ounces. Thus in two years I had managed to put on only four ounces.

If the earlier figures are correct (for the 'Draconian' in Easter 1952 mentioned that the weighing machine was inaccurate and had been replaced) then I was indeed very small, and according to modern theories, my failure to put on weight at this point may be an outward indication of my psychological distress.

My mother noted my small size when I was near the end of my time at the Dragon, writing to my father on 3rd April 1955 that *Fiona now weighs 5 st 12 lbs and Anne not much less. Alan doesn't seem to alter at all!* In fact, from the measurements which were taken when I had been a term at Sedbergh Fiona and I were probably roughly the same weight, even though she was over two years younger than me and certainly the photograph of that time shows her to be, if anything, slightly taller than me.

There are no further measurements until I go to Sedbergh. My measurements are given at the start of my first term, when I was thirteen and three quarters, three months after leaving the Dragon. By then I weighed six stone seven pounds and two ounces. So I had put on two stone in my last three years at the Dragon. I was still small, though, measuring four feet ten and three quarter inches. My girth was 32 inches.

My small size is shown in the photographs I have of me at the end of my time at the Dragon alongside other boys in the team photos in all four of the organized games. I am always the smallest in the team (perhaps alongside Jake Mermagen my cousin). And my small size is noted in comments on my rucker playing described elsewhere but also worth noting here. In the 'Draconian' account of the rucker season for 1954 where it is stated: ‘Nor was the size of our full-back much of a deterrent to the opposition. He was, in fact, smaller and lighter than any three-quarter ...’

The only other aspect of my physical development worth noting at this point is puberty. I had my first ejaculation in the summer of 1954, but this was a one-off event and did not happen again for another fifteen months or so. But I was obviously sexually mature from the age of about twelve and a half.

My mother's account of re-encountering me after an absence of two years gives

another insight into my physical growth. When she left I was six and three quarters, when she came to visit me at the Dragon I was nearly nine. She was shocked at the change, as described more fully elsewhere. 'This pinched face with the dark rings under the eyes and brown unbrushed hair bore little real resemblance to the golden-haired six year old she had left two years ago. Only his eyes above the blue smudges were recognisable... His large teeth were buttercup yellow. He hadn't lost his baby teeth when she had left him.'

The school holidays seem to have transformed me back into something closer to my mother's hopes. On 29th April 1951 she wrote *Anne is her blooming self again. Neither she nor Alan has Fiona's really lovely skin, but they all look very brown and freckled.* Then on 6th May 1951 my mother wrote *He was looking so well when he left, fat rosy cheeks and his hair bright and curly. When I take him out from school he has dark lines under his eyes and the little hair they leave him is plastered to his head and he looks awful.*

*

Physically (Jamie writes) I was of small to middling size and light in build and weight until almost my last year. At Sedbergh on 5 April 1952, *On our first day we were weighed and measured. I was 5. 0. 4oz. and 4'9 1/8 ". I was last measured just before my passport was made. I was then 4' 3". That was in 1949 May.* Photographs show that I was small, and a little tubby when aged five or six, with Sandy almost equal in size. Then I started to grow in height but without corresponding growth in girth and weight and only began to put on weight as I came into teenage years proper. I do not remember having any complexes about size, although I lacked speed and strength for rugger or for chucking my weight around as is useful in close quarters play, say, in hockey, as the report on my last term of rugger says, *I' XV; after being tried at fly half made himself into a useful full back. Speed seems to be his handicap - perhaps he will end up in the pack.* On the other hand, by the age of twelve, I had reached a perfectly adequate general physique and level of fitness for bowling at cricket, or playing tennis or other court games; and at just thirteen I was sexually mature, if puzzled.

Sandy, on the other hand, was small, slight in build, almost frail, and prone to illness and sickness of various kinds until his last year at the Dragons. It was a cause of worry to my parents, as was reflected in a question from my father in Washington to my mother staying in Oxford in May 1953, *Do you have the impression that Sandy is permanently unhappy, or was that merely a temporary combination of liver and cold weather on his part?* A fortnight later, he followed up, *I'm so glad about Sandy. I quite agree it's a good thing for them to x-ray him regularly.* His frail health was certainly one reason why Sandy stayed on at the Dragons until Easter 1956, when he was 13.11.

PAIN

Here we will revert to the order of giving Alan's comments first and then Jamie and Sandy. Alan writes that our memories seem to be inhabited by moments of excess - either of happiness, or, more often, of pain. Many of the schoolboy reminiscences I have read particularly dwell on the pain - the loneliness, the bullying, the beating and the sickness. Although I do not remember the one beating my mother gave to me, or any beatings or other painful punishments of a physical kind at the Dragon, there is a great deal both in my memory and in the letters about pain and sickness.

The diseases overlapped between home and school, so it is only possible to make a rough distinction between them. Here I shall deal with those illnesses which were ones I mainly remember in relation to school. The holiday illnesses - particularly dentistry, ear treatments, tonsillitis and certain other diseases I shall deal with under home life.

This pattern of illness seems to be one of the greatest differences between the post-War years and now. Looking back, we lived in a world where the new miracle drugs and improved dentistry and hospitals were just coming in. It was exactly on a mid-point between the high insecurities and levels of perennial pain that I have examined as a historian of illness in Japan and England, or as an anthropologist in a mountain village in Nepal, and the world I inhabit in a privileged part of the west now. It was not as bad as the pre-industrial and pre-Koch and Pasteur world, but it was far more difficult than now.

In my account of formal schooling I noted the number of days when I missed school, almost always from illness, and this gives a preliminary statistical picture of the incidence of disease in one boy's life. The tally of days missed was as follows. [NA = not available]

	1950-1951	1951-2	1952-3	1953-4	1954-5
Winter	0	0	0	0	0
Spring	13	7	1	0	3
Summer	NA	0	0	0	1

Two observations may be made. Clearly the Spring term, which accounts for 24 of the total of 25 days of absence recorded for the Dragon, was the sickly term. Secondly, as I had the diseases, or built up resistance, the absences dramatically decreased. Twenty out of twenty-five occurred in the first two years.

*

There is a certain amount in the letters about the diseases which spread particularly quickly in schools at this time - influenza, measles, mumps and chicken pox - and disrupted lives and schedules, though they were no longer, on the whole, mortal threats. We were also vaccinated against that deadly disease of childhood, smallpox and also, I suspect, against polio which my mother had suffered from as a child.

Schools were, of course, a breeding ground for epidemic diseases and the first one which I caught was measles, but this was before I went to the Dragon so I deal with it under Home Life. Because of this early experience, I could be quite blasé about it at the Dragon.

The 'Term Notes' for Easter 1953 mentioned the arrival of the first measles cases. Though the victims were comparatively few in number, the sickrooms began to fill up. I wrote on 2nd February to my parents that *Auk and Bearmoth our dorm and another have been evacuated and I have moved into dodo wich is a big dorm and has about 14 people instead of auks 6.* Having had the disease early on, I could write quite calmly from the Dragon on 18th February 1953 *There are about 35 out of 80 in school house who are in the sick room and there are a few cases of measles.* I don't seem to have succumbed, however, as I was only absent for one day in the term.

The first epidemic disease I caught at the Dragon was chicken pox, which I got in my second term. My grandfather's diary on 22nd March 1951 mentioned 'Alan has chicken pox' and on 28th that Alan arrives with chicken pox. On that same day my

mother wrote to my father that

Alan has complicated our plans somewhat by getting chicken pox. He got it about 8 days ago but after a rather hectic correspondence the school have sent him back to-day and Mummy has taken him back with her for the night until I can get him to our doctor to be vetted. He's only had a mild attack, but still has "pox" on his face, otherwise he looks alright after the journey. I don't want to throw the girls into quarantine so shall leave him with Mummy until he's free I think. All rather bothering.'

I dimly remember the unpleasantness of finding one's face temporarily pock marked and coming home a little early from school.

One curious episode to do with this which I do not remember now, but I suspect I may have told my parents, is recounted in my mother's autobiographical 'Daughters of the Empire' (p. 134) She describes of me 'When he got chickenpox and was sick his housemaster made him eat it as a punishment for making a mess. This of course, we only learnt later.' I seem to remember either I or other boys were made to eat their own sick for some offence, but can't remember what.

This outbreak of chicken pox was briefly mentioned in the 'Term Notes', where it was stated that when 'the flu began to weaken, the torch was flung from failing hands to a chicken-pox germ, which had been maturing quietly in the background and which now moved purposefully through the ranks of the vulnerable...'

The fact that I had chicken pox then meant that when there was another outbreak in my last spring term, I was able to write back with some reassurance in March 1955 that *At the moment there is a slight epidemic of chicken pox and about (blank) people are ill.* Interestingly the disease seems to have either lost its virulence or been seen as less of a threat, or both, for the 'Term Notes' for Easter 1955 mentions a chicken-pox germ, but 'as a major scourge, for the plain fact is that he is no longer taken very seriously. A day or two in the sick-room, and his victims are back at their desks, spots and all.'

In my first summer term, 1951, the 'Term Notes' stated that 'the School had Mumps'. My mother to my father wrote on 25th June 1951 *Have just heard Alan's school has mumps - I suppose he'll get it just at the last moment and dish our Scottish holiday - but at least you'll be here to make decisions.* Unfortunately this is the one term where I have no school report so do not know if I missed school. I seem to remember the odd and unpleasant feeling of one's neck swelling up with mumps, but this may be a false memory. Some boys stayed on with the illness, but there is no record in my family papers that I caught mumps. There were a case of two of mumps at the start of my last summer term in 1955, according to the 'Term Notes', but I do not mention this.

The most serious of epidemics during my time at the Dragon was influenza. The first outbreak occurred in Britain after Christmas in 1951 and was a serious world pandemic (A.H1N1), which caused a considerable number of deaths according to contemporary reports. This hit our family at home, where all of them caught it and there are graphic descriptions of this elsewhere. It also raced through the Dragon.

The 'Term Notes' for Easter 1951 describe this particular epidemic visitation in more detail than any other illness during my time at the Dragon. The tone is vaguely facetious, but nevertheless shows the gravity of the situation.

'The Authorities were frankly defeatist from the start. The pre-term circular, including flu in the list of diseases that you didn't return if you had been in contact with, was followed by an announcement on the Common Room board that we

would all shortly have flu, that no one who felt ill must go near anyone who felt well, and vice versa, in fact that nobody must go near anybody, and that victims on the Staff must inform the Headmaster, or (sinister touch) his deputy, then mark a cross on the bedroom doors and wait for the end. It was almost a relief when, about the ninth day, the epidemic got going.' The epidemic, 'followed its usual course. Sickroom territory expanded along the top landing, took over Dodo and nosed into Phoenix.'

At the end of my second term, in March 1951 when I was 9 years three months, the termly report showed that I had been quite ill, absent for 13 days, by far the largest number of any term at the Dragon. On 1st February my mother wrote to my father, *Alan has been in the sick-room at school but is out again now, it's a dreadfully unhealthy year.* On 19th February she wrote again to my father. *I'm going to see Alan next week-end before or after my visit to London, did I tell you he had had flu and spent another week in bed poor little scrap, I hope he won't be looking too run down when I see him next week...* In the same letter she mentions that *I'm still streaming, and coughing and have been since my flu but everyone tells me it's the worst winter they ever remember and its certainly the wettest for over eighty years.*

The following Easter 1952 the 'Term Notes' took a jaunty attitude to the disease. 'Flu and rumours of flu were ignored, quarantine-breaking connived at, and health certificates thrown away unopened...' The plan apparently worked well and there was only a little illness, unspecified, in the seventh week. Again the following Easter term 1953 there was only 'a solitary flu germ'.

The other major outbreak of flu at the Dragon occurred in my last winter term. The 'Term Notes' for the Christmas Term mention that the Press was full of news of a 'flu epidemic sweeping through schools, but it was hoped to avoid it'. In the last few days of term people started to get temperatures. This was confirmed as 'flu, but the Headmaster was torn between warning parents, and wanting to finish the term properly, so 'in the end he compromised with a pink notice to parents sanctioning evasive action but listing all the end-of-term entertainments that a fugitive would miss.' We are told that 'As the week ended, sick rooms began to encroach on dormitories' and that the end of term dance was sparsely attended.

On 10th December 1954 my mother wrote

I had a letter from the Dragon this morning to say they have 'flu at the school, so wired them to put Alan on the train to-morrow, he's not due back till Tuesday and will probably be livid at missing end-of-term activities but if he gets 'flu at the last moment it'll mean endless complications. He'll probably give it to us all here instead, but we'll have to meet that when it comes.

I did return home and on 15th December my mother wrote

Alan came back on Saturday, as I think I told you, in good form and very chatty, but yesterday morning (Tuesday) he started feeling low, and to-day has been in bed with 'flu - so I'm relieved I got him back in time to nurse him here. It's a childish variety, so I trust we shan't all succumb - he is running a temp. of 100.8 which is nothing much and has read two detective novels to-day and listened to the wireless without a pause and is no trouble.

There is no evidence that any of the rest of the family caught this variant of flu, but the 'Term Notes' were right that 'For a good many Dragons the Christmas holiday

seemed to have carried on where the term left off, with 'flu and rumours of 'flu'.

*

Jamie would like to begin with Sandy's arrival at the Dragons. His first letter home opens thus *We had a horobel crossing ~ I were sike [= sick] 11 Times ~ I am in midly [= middle] Five in Foumes [= forms] ~ in games I am in 9 ~ we play a lots of marbles ...*

There are three points to be made here. First, travel itself between school and home could be traumatic. Second, a boarder's experience of health problems or lack of them must of course relate to their natural constitution, strength and physical well-being. Third, boys are resilient and can recover their strength quite quickly. Marbles must have helped.

Sandy was rather small and slight at Dragon age and prone to illness and diseases of all sorts; my mother was exercised by that as well as by his sensitivity. In later years Sandy (forty years a farmer) was enormously strong and fit. In his first seven years building up a dairy herd, he never missed one single milking session. No minor illnesses held him back then. But at the Dragons it was different. I bounced along better, though I was not large or especially robust.

I think it is true that as war-children we had been deprived of what today would be considered a good balanced diet in the first five or six years of our life. I have suffered from teeth problems since the age of eight in Germany (whereas my children's teeth are near perfect). I was born on the chubby side; and from teenage onwards was a little overweight for my height - perhaps from a taste for moundy food when choice was limited when we very young, followed by an addiction to sweet things when they suddenly appeared when I was about eleven.

There was a sick room, expandable into a sanatorium in dormitory form in times of epidemics, at the back of School House somewhere. I remember quite a light room, but maybe there were more than one. One could find oneself there in solitary confinement. Which had its ups and downs. For a short while it was pleasant, calm and refreshing; and then it became very boring. I imagine it depended on the illness. You could enjoy cool sheets and kindly attention if you were alone or one of only a few inmates; or suffered hot, crumpled sheets and general discomfort, with nasty white enamel bowls beside the bed, when the sick room was full at the time of epidemics of contagious illnesses.

Someone must have acted as Sister in School House (perhaps Miss Kay, the Matron?) and there was a school doctor, Dr Cameron, and presumably he had a locum as needed. I did not suffer too badly, no adenoids or appendix or similar excavations, but a minor inguinal hernia in the last year got me into the Radcliffe for a few days operation, bribed to be brave and behave reasonably with a present of the latest Tintin book and a pile of comics.

The Sedbergh sanatorium I think of as a friendlier place; but perhaps that is because illness is easier to understand and cope with as you get older. A prep school boy down with flu is most likely mystified, upset and worried, wants to be at home and turns in on himself. Let us review some evidence.

There was a nasty flu epidemic in January-February 1951, Sandy's first winter. I wrote home that *Sandy's in sick room in School House ~ there are 42 boys in sick room some with flu and other things.*

Sandy himself reported in January that *In strads [= Stradlings House] there are 11 pepel in sick room ~ in school house they are 30 pepel.* And in February he was still 'off-ex', *I am dowing [= doing] lessons agin but I am off wirk and games for four days and not allowed to play in the play ground as well. The fleu [= flu] is dying off.*

The [=there] is only one person who has not hade flew or a cold so he will get 2/6 if he does not go into sick room

And in March came a bout of chicken pox. I knew our parents would be anxious about Sandy and reported that, *Sandy's quiet [= quite] well but there are 14 boys with chicken pox and 12 been in and come out again.* At the end of March I added that *One boy has had chicken Pox for his 3^d time!* And Sandy told our parents that, *They [= there] are only 2 pepel in our dorm now ~ they are ment [=meant] to be five*

A year later, a repeat epidemic was expected, Sandy went down, briefly this time, at the end of January, but *I came out of sick room on Thursday the 5th [February] and I am still off] games.* In mid-February school staff were evidently less worried, *We have finished having temps [= temperature taken?] every evening now.*

No sooner than the flu had gone than poor Sandy went down with a septic leg, as he reported in March, *Larst Wensday I went to the sick room because of a septic leg ~ it was horable but I played cards and for super on Friday in sick room we had peches. I went out of sick room on Friday night.*

The following term there were renewed concerns about possible epidemics and on 4 May I reported that, *Every evening we have our temps taken.* But in October I wrote home of worries of a different sort, *There was an epidemic for [= of] polio in oxford.*

Sandy's illness the following winter has a heartfelt description in February 1953,

I have been in sick room since last Tuesday early morning so I have not mutch to tell you ~ It is very dull ~ all we do is tak horribal medicons and play cards but that gets a bit monotous [sic]. I read my Gilbet and Sulavan books but that gets borring because I have read all the plays over and over again ~ I read wonder books but I get to know what 's on every page ~ and all together it is horrible, Lots and lots and millons and thousands and hundreds of love from Sandy

In mid October of that year he was in the sickroom again, probably among the first victims of a new round of winter flu,

I am in sick room. Yesterday morning I felt ill and sick and had a headache. Yesterday was a simply horrid horrid miserable day ~ I had to lie in bed not reading or doing enything exept [sic] lying down ~ I had one more person with me but we could not talk because we were too sick ~ just steyed there ~ I keep on thinging [= thinking] about you and Jeb and wondering what you are doing at Sedburgh ~ I am having an awfully miserable time here ~ it is awfull but to day is better ~ I have just had news from sister that Michael Evers that very nice deliteful boy that you like is coming in to our sick room whitch is a good thing.

By December another epidemic was raging and school was about to break up early, as I noted from sick-room,

*Good news - because of this disgusting epidemic of 'flu, term stops on Sunday (tomorrow). I'm really much better and feeling quite well and getting up soon *. I probably won't return on Monday as most people are doing but I will tell you later. My temperature chart is really peculiar (roughly) [sketch showing three peaks of 103 and 101.5 twice] I am having penicillin injections (250,000 units a day (does that help you, not me). Matron is packing my trunk and sending it off*

P.L.A. As soon as possible - I hope that's all right.

**I dress and stay up from 4 to 8 this evening - promising I should get out on Monday and travel then or Tues I think and hope*

Sandy confirmed the news on 12 December, *Lots of people are leaving and have left already because of the Flew appidemic [sic].*

I remember mumps, uncomfortable, annoying and quite painful, but don't recall chicken pox, which I think I caught if only because of the letter reference to everyone in the dorm having had it. I don't know if I had measles, or any other serious fevers. The 1953 flu I recall too as being very nasty - hot, sweating, burning, and you could never lie still (which was horrible), could hardly breathe, sore face, sore eyes, sore throat and you longed for it all to go away. Unhappy episodes.

No doubt there were occasions when we were unwell at home or bedridden but I cannot remember any. At home there was plenty of personal attention and affection, but left alone in a sickroom at school there was little but dark thoughts at the best of times: injections!; the prospect of missing classes and falling behind; wondering what one's friends were doing, missing special outings, favourite games, team matches, birthday tea or whatever. [By Sedbergh stage, on the other hand, I rather think I was less anxious in the sickroom or sanatorium and accepted illness as a necessary evil and incarceration as justified; and enjoyed the rest cure when I could.]

After all this flu, Sandy in January 1956, his last term, was determined not to fall victim again, *I think a great amount of people will be in sickroom soon but [I] won't go this term because I have decided not to and I am on topping form.*

*

Alan has his mother's letters describing home life in detail, there is a good deal about endemic pain, the whole horrendous saga of ear, nose, throat and teeth which deeply affected us but which I have dealt with elsewhere under home life. It is well to remember, however, that in school holidays and even before I went to the Dragon I had been subjected to levels of pain which are now unfamiliar to many children in Britain and had learnt something about how to face suffering with fortitude. All this tends to have been forgotten in the improvements since that distant period.

Likewise, the constant background of minor pain from various forms of skin disease or irritation is easy to overlook. It is too trivial for me to note in letters and descriptions, though it constantly lowered the quality of my life. I tended to accept it and only really notice its absence when it stopped - as it did for me from my late teens'. Since I mainly associate this kind of minor pain with boarding school rather than home life, I shall deal with it here.

One sign of the inter-action between sub-optimum feeding, perhaps defective hygiene, and the absence of central heating and hence the seeking of warmth near radiators, as well as the primitive state of medicines, was the widespread affliction of minor debilitating sores. It is difficult now to recall how much minor suffering we had as children, especially, as I recall at the Dragon, from various forms of skin irritation. There were the chaps which fired great sore patches behind the knees and on the hands, rubbing red and painful and sometimes bleeding. There were the chilblains often erupting and bursting on our fingers and toes.

There were also that disgusting, strange, sponge-like disintegration of the end of one's fingers called 'Impetigo' for which as I recall Gentian violet (or dipping one's hands in vinegar?) was a sovereign remedy. Putting cold wet hands on radiators was, no doubt, behind much of this, but it all seemed to diminish when we moved to the

Lakes and to be far less prevalent, though there was some of this, at Sedbergh where different kinds of coldness were present. There were also things that had to be cut out - like verukas. We also had some really horrible boils - I still bare the scars of two of them on my legs and these sometimes had to be lanced (though not in such an unpleasant way without any anaesthetic as described by Dahl in *Boy*).

In fact the only mention I have found in letters of these types of ailment are of my mother's chilblains. On 19th July 1954 'I have fearful chilblains believe it or not!' Indeed odd in the middle of the summer. More understandable was when she wrote on 17th January 1955 'Yesterday wasn't so nice as a blizzard was blowing and it was bitter, I went to church and got snow inside my boots on the way there and sat with my toes in an icy puddle all through the service. The chilblains are fearful as you can imagine and I had to thaw them out with warm olive oil when I got back.'

Colds must have been very frequent, though again they are seldom mentioned. An exception is when on 11th January 1951 I wrote to my parents *I have not had to go into bed yet though I have had a cold*. But the following month on 25th February I apologised *I am sorry that this letter is such a short one I have been in bed just about a week So I have not much to say we started hocky on Saturday but I was in bed*.

There must also have been frequent minor injuries. Yet they tend not to be noted. There are a few of these in the letters, though the most serious for me, the breaking of my arm and a painful re-breaking without anaesthetic, occurred in India before this period starts.

On 3rd February 1951 I wrote from the Dragon, Dear *Granny and Grandpa*, *I had a game of hokey in wich I hurt my ne but I scored a goal and it was a very nice game*. The next injury I record is over two years later on 18th May 1953 when I write *I have been off games for a week because I was hit on the eye by a cricket ball*. I did not miss any days that term, so it could not have been too serious.

*

Before he discovered his and Sandy's letters, Jamie wrote the following initial comments on minor illness and injuries at the Dragon based on memories, sparked by Alan's remarks.

As to injuries and accidents, hockey was the dangerous thing, both stick and ball. Got plenty of nasty cracks on the shins; and I think I got a black eye once playing hard court hockey. It is surprising with hindsight how little we were injured given the fairly wild games played on bicycles and the weapons we used when mucking about sticks, pea shooters and all. I suppose cricket could be bad too, e.g. fielding near the batsman, but I don't recall being hurt. Probably had the usual share of sprained ankles or twisted knees playing games on the hard tennis courts, at ruggar and so on.

Don't remember any illness at home! But I recall evenings when very small at Beechcroft Road holding a bowl of bread and milk, warm, round the gas fire and sniffing and snuffing trying to keep warm - presumably cold or flu. And then a bit later at Dragons period, the business of inhalers (towel over the head with a steaming enamel bowl of hot water and eucalyptus or some such nostril clearing scent.) And Vick to be rubbed on and various smelly syrups and mixtures for coughs (some tasted quite nice). Milk of magnesia (for what?) Don't recall measles.

I did not suffer hay fever at the Dragons - even though we played outside on the playing fields and by the river a great deal - but I began to suffer from 1956 or so onwards at Sedbergh and home. I remember earache as a horrible thing. Don't recall getting medical treatment but I think of some sort of warmed up oily liquid dropped or put in on a cotton bud to ease the ear and presumably the pressure?

But I never suffered tonsil problems as many boys did. Nor ringworm (I think). Had a wart or two (not badly) on the hands that came and went after treatment with some kind of purple paint (Iodine?), and one bad one on the base of the palm which never seemed to go and had to be operated on in hospital, to be cut or burnt out, and bandaged for quite a while. I had the scar for many years. And sties in the eye treated with a rather greasy ointment.

Don't recall any awful cuts from this period. Grazes, yes, of course. They go with wearing shorts! Now you remind me: horrible, constantly grazed knees - like chaps; red and raw and rough a lot of the time; and after falls on hard surfaces you had stones, gravel dust and dirt in the scraped surface. Needed a lot of cleaning up. And thorns, of course. Can picture it now, the splinter operation - fingers held fast, a needle heated on a gas fire or match? And then dig!

And the gold standard treatment for all these minor exterior wounds was TCP - bathed on with cotton wool. That was fine and quite soothing, but Iodine, was painted or brushed on and hurt with a burning sensation, and worse on anything open.

At home, I had a broken little finger (on my right hand) in Germany, in the summer before the Dragons, from a fall on a hard concrete pavement and had my hand from wrist down put in a plaster. It seemed odd that it should have broken. It wasn't twisted, presumably just banged and cracked. I had a rather smart sling made from a striped cricket square (of my father's I suppose) and various other coloured cloths. And enjoyed the attention. The plaster got itchy, I think I had it changed and reset. Several weeks in all? Most annoying was that I was not allowed to swim.

*

The letters of Jamie and Sandy from the Dragon are much fuller than Alan's on minor illnesses. They show that we went through the whole gamut of schoolboy minor illnesses, accidents and various unhappy conditions. Not chilblains, but I suffered from chaps - which I connect in my mind with wet woollen gloves? Impetigo and boils are on the list, both horrid things.

Once again, Sandy suffered most. Sandy wrote in March 1952, *My boil nowe is all right*. What horrible things boils were, I remember an arm very swollen and hard, and the boil kept coming back. With Sandy, however, in 1953 what I think originally started as a boil led to nasty complications.

At the start in mid-February he was kept indoors for a stiff neck, or it may have been ear-ache, *I stayed inside on Monday just because I had a stupid old stiff neck witch was a very stiiiped [sic] reason to stay inside*. Then on 22 February he was in sick room because, *I have a bad leg. Dr Cameron dose [sic] not know what it is so he is sending a doctor to look at it called Dr Russard. I came in to sick room on Friday and think I will be staying in a long time*.

And I told the parents too, *Poor old Sandy is in sickroom with a swelling in his leg*; and the following week passed on word coming from sick room staff, *Sister says that Sandy's leg was caused by M and B pills (whatever they are) which he was given for his ear ache. He is going to the Radcliffe to be tested by a chap called Mr Buzzard*.

Sandy's story continued on 8 March, *I am out of sick room now I came out last thursday Yesterday I went to the Radcliff and we had to wait an awffull long time when we got going I had a p[r]ick in my blood vain and he took out a lot of blood and he took an x-ray and then another prick in my arm and he stuck the meddle in and some lovely liquid came out and went in to my arm*.

By 15 March he was out of sickroom but *I have to ware a Hockey shin pad over*

my swelling on my leg now.

The following October, one detects a note of understandable despair in Sandy's report of being sent to sick room yet again, *I went in to sick room on Saturday and was sick 3 times. Sister thinks I ate something that was not quite right or the[re] was something bad in the food though I don't know at all.*

Then there were all those accidents commonplace in a boarders' life of games, sports and rough and tumble and 'mucking about' inside or out.

On 25 February 1951 I reported my first black eye of that hockey season, *We start hockey to-morrow ~ I've already got a black eye which I got hit two days ago and it has swelled up ~ now I am off games. Sandy isn't yet.* But in March Sandy had sprained his ankle, *The [=there] is a concert [= concert] to night. I bould [= broke = sprained?] my ankle yester day.*

In May 1951 Sandy wrote, *I had an accident 2 days ago with my bike. My bike wasn't hurt but I have my knee in plaster and my hand.* [Apparently knees and hands can be mended, but bikes are harder to repair.] Then in June 1952 he suffered quite a different piece of bad luck, *Yesterday in cricet I were walking down the bitch [= pitch] after being out and a cricet ball hite me hard on the back of the head and I was dased ~ achuarly a boy through [= threw] it at the wicket as I was walking passed the wicket ~ I still fell [= feel] a bit funny*

On they go, part of school life - and presumably not confined to boarding school life. In March 1954 Sandy, *fell onto a bed rail and got an 'Easter egg' on back of head;* and in May that year he failed to heed parental advice, *You are always telling me how to cut an apple without having your finger in danger. Well school house knives are jolly blunt but still sharp anofe [= enough] to cut my finger. The knife went through the apple and into my finger and never again will I cut an apple the silly way.*

In his last term in January 1956 Sandy had only been able to play in one inter-form ice hockey match, *because of my leg which is cut and has a bandage on it. I can skate ordinarily because I am not so likely to fall over, but in ice hockey I always fall sometimes.*

Injuries in formal games must have been common too. In October 1952, I wrote that I had been *playing ruggar a lot ~ I've heart [= hurt] my leg and can't swing it. I was put off [= off-Ex] for 3 days. I did something to my thumb. Dr Cameron said with faith hope and charity it's not broken.*

And of course we all suffered a host of minor illnesses and irritants, those chaps, warts cuts, sprains and grazes that go with schoolboy life.

In January 1952 I suffered warts, *Tomorrow I am having the wart of my knee taken out. wart gone - only blister marks, I haven't any warts now except the faint outline of a blister.* [I remember it all well and later had another wart on the base of my right hand. After the wart was burnt out, the mark stayed for years.] In mid 1952 both Sandy and I suffered impetigo. Mine was treated in Canada in this summer holidays (by Doug, a former research scientist friend of my mother's from the Radcliffe). Sandy got it in October, telling our parents, *I have got impetigo on my face ~ I caught it on Wendsday ~ it has nearly gone by using the Dug stuff that he gave for James' face.* I recall impetigo as being very nasty - uncomfortable, sore and endlessly itchy - and it meant you could not swim and were sort of isolated in quarantine once diagnosed.

In February 1952 I suffered from *chaps all over my legs they are very painfull.* And the following March I had, *frightfully hard and cracked lips but sister is putting something on them.* They seem to have been cold, dry weather problems? And that spring, *Sandy was off games from a blood blister.*

And of course there must have been coughs and colds, sore throats and sneezes, but there are few mentions of them, except in holiday letters from Sedbergh. I think we were rarely sent to the sick room on their account, but were treated occasionally with medicines but normally with steam inhalers, Vick rubs (which only relieved symptoms very briefly) and so forth along with general analgesics. But after everything else, perhaps we were becoming impervious to the common cold by then?

In conclusion, there are one or two references to dental problems, potentially the most horrible of all. In March 1952 I reported having pulled out 2 loose teeth this week. New teeth arriving? I remember still the feeling of wobbling the tooth, first with the tongue for a day or two to loosen it, then with a finger till it was ready to come out. That was all very well, but in May came a first attempt to shape up my teeth which were too close together, by use of a horrible pink plastic plate - *I got my new plate two days ago. It is rather uncomfortable ~ I cannot speak very well. I cant say 't' 'r' 'd' 'g' (soft) and I lisp. I gave Jacko rather a shock when I was asked to read.* Various stories go with that one. I was supposed to wear it all the time, and then they tried getting me to wear it at night only. I absolutely hated it. I lost the winding key regularly, I lost the plate once and broke it once (on purpose) saying it had accidentally fallen out of my pocket (where I kept it wrapped in a hanky when not being worn) and I had trod on it. The dentist saw through that one. In the end my parents gave up.

DORMITORY LIFE

Here we start with Alan, though his account is far less vivid and complete than Sandy and Jamie's. We spend approximately a third of our lives asleep. In the other two-thirds, children often spend considerable periods in the places where they sleep. Their bedrooms are often their main playrooms and in boarding schools the life of the dormitory is one of the most private and influential. It is where the other boys can exert their pressures and where the unhappiness of leaving home strikes most forcefully.

Suddenly being thrown into a dormitory at the age of eight is quite a shock. Paul Watkins has written about his first night in a Dragon dormitory and the throwing out of his teddy bear in an initiation ceremony. Whether I took any toy to the Dragon I cannot remember, nor do I remember many of the events. But I did consider the dormitory I was in as an important place and there are a number of mentions and even a sketch of my dormitory. That it was also a sort of study for us is suggested by the account of my mother on her first visit to me at the end of 1950. She asked some boys she met at Plummer's where I might be, and they replied 'Well he might be outside. Or he might be in the dorm. I'm afraid I don't know.'

At the start of my second year I wrote to my mother on 7th October *Actually there are 6 new people in our house and one of them are in our dorm.* The following summer I went to a seaside resort with some connection to the Dragon at Milford on Sea. In my short letter to my parents on 20th April I bothered to tell them that *We have four people in our dormitory. Joseph sanders, Crispin Marshall, Gregory sanders, and Me.*

When I returned for the start of my third year, I had been moved from Plummer's to the more senior School House. I mentioned in my first letter on 28th September 1952 *I am in school house now and I am in a dorm called Auk some of the other ones are Doddo, Phenix, Levathen, Bearmoth, Icksorias, emu,*

unicorn, Ptrodactyll. This was a real advance, as I recall. On 18th January 1953 I wrote that *I am in the same form and dorm but I have moved up to 4th from 6th in soccer.* This hints at the three main ladders I was climbing - social (dorm and house), academic (form and sets) and games. Each was important and inter-acted with the others.

We were moved around somewhat, for on 2nd February I wrote *Auk and Bearmoth our dorm and another have been evacuated and I have moved into dodo wich is a big dorm and has about 14 people instead of auks 6.* It seems we started with a small dormitory and then later moved into bigger ones. But this was a short-lived move caused by illness, for on 22nd February I wrote *I went back to auk yesterday.*

It is clear that the dormitories were not just places for social life and sleeping, midnight feasts, rags and so on. They were also sporting entities, at least the larger ones at the top of the school. On 15th March 1953 I wrote that *There is going to be a dodo v Phenix match. Dodo and Phenix are two big dorms and they are going to have hockey match.*

Then in the summer term I was moved again, writing on 3rd May that *I am in a dorm called Pheonix wich is a big dorm and I am having jolly good fun.* It seems implied that social life in the dormitory was important and the importance I attached to it is shown in the fact that I bothered to draw a sketch plan of the dormitory with my bed marked. I wrote *Here is a sketch of our Dorm. That is Roughly what it looks like Except Everything is closer together.*

At the start of my fourth year I was moved again to another, smaller, house, which I only dimly remember if at all. Again I place the various hierarchies next to each other in a letter of 27th September *I have moved up two forms And I have moved up 5 sets in maths, English, French. I am in 3rd game. I am in a new hous called Gunga. And my dorm is Hugh Sedgewick.* (Hugh Sedgewick was a brilliant young scholar and poet who died in the First World War). Whether I stayed in Gunga or returned, as I seem to remember, to School House for my last year, I do not remember.

Unlike many other memoirs of dormitory life, I cannot remember particular raids, rags, midnight feasts, reading in bed, sexual hanky-panky or anything else. But I do seem to remember vaguely where in School House the final dormitories were, and that they were important for our sense of identity. Learning to sleep in a communal space was an important art we learnt, alongside the communal eating, bathing and other such things. As someone pointed out, ending up in a prison for a boy who had been through this experience was almost home from home.

*

Jamie notes that there is no doubt that the communal and very public aspect of dormitory life differentiates significantly the prep-school experience of boarders from that of dayboys. To many an outsider, it sounds horrific. Yet I do not remember bedtime or night time as something awful at all. Why? Perhaps for boys aged eight or nine, communal sleeping and ablutions was really no different from communal eating and play. We took it in our stride; and life at the close of the day was for us, as for puppies, marked by growing tiredness from endless play, plenty of tail wagging with the occasional bad-tempered snarl and snap, much exhaustion and finally a contented readiness to curl up and sleep in a communal basket alongside each other as space required. Nothing too horrific, but certainly involving some elements of rites of tribal initiation.

We must have learnt a great deal about ourselves and others by having to develop

and control relationships with our peers at such close quarters – as puppies do too. We learnt all kinds of rules for human behaviour, to give and take, assert a little, compromise a little, be kind and helpful expecting the same in return; and to know when to join in, tease, joke and rag and when to keep quiet or withdraw and so on. What an experience it must have been for someone who was a single child at home!

The spirit of some of this is reflected in Sandy's and my letters home – and some other aspects of dormitory life too. Of course there are references (suitably censored for parents) to ragging after lights out, midnight feasts or occasionally those special dormitory jokes and pranks – such as a prickly hedgehog in the form of a hairbrush shoved down someone's bed – although I'm not sure we were skilled enough to make proper apple-pie beds. But there are also references to being read to by staff, or playing quiet board games and of the presence of matrons or Ma this or that alongside masters in the processes of discreet supervision and control. At bedtime and night time a female contribution was probably rather important, especially for the younger boys.

As to sleep, I believe I generally slept well – despite numbers, noises, interruptions and bright light through thin curtains (if any?). Some of the interruptions are described in the letters. I also remember occasional but not repeated horrors of nights spent tossing and turning, bedclothes everywhere, sheets drenched in sweat, kept awake by bad dreams and anxious thoughts. But I think I was probably capable of laughing at it and was not alone in finding sympathy in that favourite Gilbert and Sullivan song about the Channel crossing, 'When you're lying awake With a dismal headache And repose is taboo'd by anxiety ...'

As said earlier in the context of feeling the cold, or heat, at school, no unhappy memories haunt me. But in the winter dressing gowns were comforting and rather special things. I had a lovely, large camel coloured one, with the usual twisted and tasselled cord tie. Tartan dressing gowns were popular too, and they were all of essentially the same cut, and bought to last a few years – with the effect that they were often too big (and all enveloping) or too small (with sleeves too tight and short). Also comforting in winter were slippers of soft woollen- covered material, pale colours or tartan, with a tongue (that turned eventually inside) and low backed heel which inevitably got trodden down. Did we have bed socks for extreme cold? I don't recall them; or eiderdowns – which might have been rather infra dig in School House; but maybe used in the junior houses.

In sum, the many references to dormitory life in our letters are cheerful notes about amusing, pleasing or curious incidents rather than a litany of evidence of generic discomfort or unhappiness.

Sandy and I started out, in our respective years, in Stradlings, Yatto's house (R. St J. Yates) in Charlbury Road. My Dragon career began there on 19 September 1949. From the start the dormitory in Stradlings was to me a friendly place, both in the evenings and in the afternoons when we retired there after lunch for half an hour's rest and reading time. The rooms were quite cosy and Ma Yatto and Ma Jacko were no doubt somewhere in the background to keep an eye on the new bugs. I don't think eight-year olds notice each other's physical, bodily presences too much – you just snuggle down in your own bedding on an old iron frame bed and sleep.

Of course there were difficulties to face and no one was immune from homesickness, which could be stomach-achingly strong at the start of terms and could recur in unexpected waves. But we had friends nearby and own toys too, soft animals, for company and play (my toy dog Towser could be spun off the rail at the foot of the bed and fly across the room with an adroit flick of the wrist). Four or six in a room was hardly a great number. I remember liking the dorm names, with an

exotic ring to them; and I remember there were trees outside, with leaves glistening in the rain on a lamplit road. [Maybe I thought back to those nights overlooking the corner of Charlbury and Bardwell Road when I later became familiar with 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', a favourite poem of my mother's at that period?]

For my third term, in May 1950, there was a shuffle around, *I am in a higher dorm now ~ 3 higher ~ its name is Galeleo [Galiloe] ~ (all our dorms are named after famous scientist[s], Kepler, Copernicus, ~~Galeleo~~ Galeleo, Ticho ~ not spelt right I'm sure!); and the following September I moved to Jacko's (C. H. Jacques's) for a year. Jacko's was considered to be part of School House, and more grown up.*

It seems I made rather few comments about life in dorms in that second year, and Sandy much the same. Perhaps this is the time when newly boarding children are so tremendously busy becoming involved in everything that they cannot yet stand back to comment on themselves or things around them. I had quite forgotten, but apparently we had dorm plays at the end of the winter and spring terms *on Thursday we have a fancy dress party ~ the sale in the morning ~ tonight we have our dorm plays which will be good fun and a semi-house supper ~ today there are carols sung by boys; then again in March, We have dorm plays tonight and a party after the concert.*

Dorm life inevitably entails risks from quickly spread epidemics, as described in Chapter 2C, but it is of course also the scene of first shared experiences that produce new friendships, as can be seen in my letter of May 1951, *J Burleigh, a boy in my dorm[,] wants me and Sandy to stay with him next Xmas holidays. Will it be possible?*

The move to Jacko's from Stradlings was manageable. All seemed familiar, down to the shape of the house. Maybe lots of us moved together there at the start of our second year? But the move to the School House from Jacko's may well have been a much larger and harder step - bigger dorms, more unknown faces coming in from other junior houses, and so on. The dorms there were rather big and daunting spaces, not warm corners. I see them in summer more than in winter - when maybe the large spacious rooms were at their airy best. Not so cosy.

But here the whole pageant of school dormitory life began to unfold. The onset of winter in October brought a benefit, *We['ve had cold weather most of this last week. It's nice to go to bed when its dark instead of sunshine.*

*

Then January 1952 brought more moves, *My dorm has all changed except for 4 boys of which one has not returned yet. We are seventeen altogether! My half I am the only one left from last term but now I have all my friends back.* Interesting, the references, elsewhere too, to half of a dorm; perhaps it was natural way to create teams and make teams of a more manageable size, of say six or eight - and you need two teams for a good rag.

One night that March there was no sleep, *We have had a horrible thunder storm ~ it kept me awake until 10.15 and then Carslaw snoring kept me awake ~ Heard Jock's clock strike 11 but then I went to sleep. We had Fork Lightning on Friday ~ I was watching it with other boys.*

But at other times, even snoring could be peaceful, *Last night in dorms I was watching the moon through the window the other three boys were asleep and they all snored together in time... Joc is now my housemaster but he only takes dorms once a week.* And for Joc, 'taking dorms' [inspecting and supervising the dormitories] was surely a good way to get to know the new intake into School House.

Good humour found no difficulty with excuses, *We had a good joke in dorms last night. Charlie Pinker's name is Charles George Travers Walrum Farquharson Pinker and in my book of Heraldry [there] was a badge for the Farquharsons clan and the storic of the badge was the Battle of Pinkie.* This was gentle ribbing, and Pinker (inevitably known as 'Stinker Pinker') was a friend, as Sandy remarked, *We are taking out a boy called Charles Pinker ~ he is very nice and he is in James dorm.*

And then came more traditional high jinks, *In our dorm last night we had a midnight feast ~ only it was really about 10.15.;* and in May Sandy and friends made up for an unfinished cricket match with *some good batting maches in our dorm ~ I raded another dorm*

A planned defence of my territory one night in May, however, went wrong, *Two nights ago I was all by my self in my Dorm so I laid a trap for any hostile raiders after I had been attacked once ~ the person to come in was a maid and a lovely slipper [two words illeg. = fell] bang on the middle of her head ~ I watched from the bit over the top of the door. [Sketch of door showing position of door, bed, Me and her]*

You inevitably got to know your peers pretty well in your dorm, just by propinquity, hence sympathy for illness, (Sandy in June 1952), *A boy has just come back to our dorm after having his Apeniks out,* and endless happy 'ragging'. We ran up and down chasing people, no doubt throwing pillows, toothpaste tubes or other peoples' clothes about, with masters passing through being witty or cynical or clipping you around the head. And shouts of 'behave!', and lights out and all that. I don't think I was conscious of uncomfortable or extreme propinquity - but occasionally of The Other in my space.

We rubbed along all right despite all the ribbing and ragging - just a bunch of boys growing up together who all knew each other well. Lavatory humour jokes may have been exchanged, complete with farting, but nothing worse I think, and in fact I don't recall any obnoxious behaviour. This was the youthful tribe at play. We no doubt learnt something from it about social rules and behaviour too; but our more gentle and sophisticated day boy friends must have been brought up in a calmer atmosphere at home.

Through my middle year, 1952, it was all about children at play. My first letter of the autumn term begins, *When I arrived at the school I played with the boys. I am in a new dorm now.* Note, no name of dorm. I am wondering whether at this mid-career stage, dorm or form was the more significant in my life? And reports of ragging games soon appeared (March 1952), *I have had great fun turning off lights we were caught once by Jock but he did not get really angry.* Rather more curious, however, was a strange incident on 22 October, *Terrible, Last night one of my dorm pals woke up with a yell and rushed to my bed and hit me. He told me a bit later that he'd dreamt that I had murdered one of his friends.*

*

Sandy's accounts were rather similar, He enjoyed arrival in School House in January 1952, *I am now in school house in a dorm called Emu with M. Evers, M. Morgom and A Steadman. At the moment the[re] only 3 people in our dorm not 4 because A.Steadman is away. School house is good for expeshally the morning plunges.*

By the summer term he and his friends were well dug in, *Yesterday we hade some good batting maches in our dorm ~ I raded another dorm.* In June there were inter-dorm and inter-house games, *On Monday the[re] was no prep and house*

maches ~ Charlbury played against small dorm ~ I played for charlbiry and took 3 wickets. I think these matches were occasional events for fun, like inter-form matches, and not part of the formal games system organised by levels of ability (see Chapter 13).

News was reported of dormitory incidents of a different kind - although it is not quite clear to me what sort of badge or large crest it was, *Last night our mammoth bage [= badge] fell out of the dorm ~ mammoth and went into the next door garden* - it sounds suspiciously like ragging to me. And a fire practice, I recall well, caused much excitement, *On Thursday we had some fire brackis [practice] ~ that was terrific fun ~ the[re] is a holo [hollow] canvas bag from our dorm window that goes all the wall down to the ground with a robe [= rope] in side that you get hold of and slide down to the ground in the canvas and on the rope you can go down as slow as you like our [= or] as fast as you like.*

One can see a pride in dorm connections in the manner of references to others, for example Sandy writing of a school cricket match in July 1953, *we declared for 0 wickets and 118 runs ~ won [= one] boy called Michel Evers who is in my dorm made 62 and the other boy who is in my dorm made 34*

And what tremendous pride in dorm spirit (October 1953), *I am in a very nice dormortry ~ it is every term the mostraggy dorm. It is divided into 2 different halfves ~ the first half witch I am in are the Redscins and the second half is the Palefaces. We have super prize fight[s] with pillows and war clubs made out of hanckeyes with a sock stuffed in the heal and towes [= toes] of your other sock and slippers and flannels and towels. On the first night after lights we were caught fighting and talking once in the evening by a master called Kit Kat and in the morning Miss kay then Joc.*

And a few weeks later, no shame, *On Friday night we were caught raging and talking after lights for the sixth time - so Joc waked [= whacked] us. My new rugger boots are real korkers...*

By Autumn Term of 1953, the start of my last year, references to dorms begin to reflect a growing seniority. For instance, I have the impression that we lived more in self appointed cliques than before (not just so many puppies thrown together), and one can detect an older boy's resistance to change when the January term brought a change of cast, *My dorm has all changed except for 4 boys of which one has not returned yet. We are seventeen altogether! My half I am the only one left from last term but now I have all my friends back.*

Ragging is most fun when done among friends; note the sympathy for Hawley's predicament in January, *We had a rag in dorms last night and in the morning Hawley's torch was confiscated which he had been using to see to unwrap sweets. I hope he gets it back.* And who could resist a winter power cut (1 February 1953)? *On Monday there was a power cut while I was doing my teeth. So we played dorm Xmas with Pillow sleeves and we had a wizard fight.*

Alongside the fun and games there was a burgeoning sense of responsibility too, *In dorms I got 99/100 for tidyness ~ I got a bar of chocolate and 8 sweets ~ they were all very good.*

Sandy's letters in 1954 reflect many of the same aspects of dormitory life, a useful friend, quiet games as well as ragging - and good chaps, In May, he wrote, *The[re] is a boy here who is in my dorm and is very nice. He knows more about a bike than a chap in a bike shop so he has mended my brackes which was very hard to mend.*

In the September term he was, *in Gunga Din[,] which I wanted to be in. and in upper 4b. My dorm has jolly D blokes in and is jolly D itself.* And in October they were settled down to the challenges of popular board games, *In dorms we played*

Cluedo which is a murder game[,] very very good ~ the idea is to find out the murdee by lots of ways ~ it is made by the makers of monopoly and totopoly. Things continued in the same spirit into Sandy's last year when he was, in Mr Willies form and in a jolly D dorm in school house. And a new game in dorms that year was one introduced from home by Sandy and me, poker dice. After some initial resistance from the powers-that-be, Joc allows pocker dice and I have taught other friends how to play and we play in dorms after we have bathed.

*

I can only think of dormitories facing out over the front of the house - and have imagined that bathrooms, sick rooms, matrons quarters were down the side. Perhaps there were some small dormitories or two facing the back or the side of School House. And I think the dormitories were on two storeys but I confess I do not remember. I can see from the letters that there was a strong feeling of identity and team spirit by dormitory, but am not sure how important were feelings of competition between dormitories. Nor do I recall any sense of hierarchies in or about dormitories. Indeed, I don't think of hierarchies as a special feature of Dragon life at all.

I recall being issued with coloured bands for team and relay races and competitions at Sports Day - but I have no recollection of who we represented! No doubt like most schoolboys I was terribly keen to get on to first teams at school, but the satisfactory thing where dormitory or form was concerned, was the joining in, not the representing. It was tribal all right, but not strenuously so. A propos, I cannot remember whether prefects had any duties of oversight and discipline in the dormitories at bedtime; maybe they contributed in some way to the supervision of the most junior members of the house, but I am not certain.

As to my own behaviour in dormitories, I think I may have been less of a rebel than Sandy and some others. I would attribute this to the schoolmaster elements in my home upbringing. I trusted tradition, and was respectful and accepting of hierarchies. It was something safe, something that worked; and it included some rights and benefits as well as duties and responsibilities. I was brought up to believe that nanny knows best - provided she has the blessing of the tribe.

3. DRAGON ALCHEMY



The Headmasters

A.E.Lynam (Hum) and J.H.R.Lynam (Joc) in the 1950's

A DIFFERENT SCHOOL: THE SKIPPER

When the Dragon was founded in the late nineteenth century, and as it expanded through the first half of the twentieth, there were huge pressures to create a boarding school with an ethic like that of its top competitors. The Lynam head-masters could have made it like Summer Fields, which was already in existence. The Summer Fields' philosophy was geared to taking the children of rich parents, giving them a strict and formal education, particularly in Latin, and winning top scholarships to Eton, Winchester and elsewhere.

Two writers on Oxford describe Summer Fields. Jan Morris describes it as 'a famous breeding-ground for Eton, going in for admirals, judges and Mr. Harold Macmillan.'¹ Peter Snow likewise describes it as 'an Etonian feeding factory ... which serve a few select areas of Belgravia "Very Pimm's-on-the-lawn", according to one member of staff.'²

Or the Dragon could have modelled itself on St. Cyprians, which later merged with Summer Fields, and which has been described for the early twentieth century by Cyril Connolly, George Orwell and others. Though Orwell's account may be a little extreme, it is worth describing what the Dragon *might* have been like in terms of its physical state and its aspirations.

Orwell's account also points to a deep contradiction in the school's philosophy, which is different to that I encountered in the Dragon, but shows how fierce tides tend to meet in these small educational pools.

'The various codes which were presented to you at St Cyprian's - religious, moral, social and intellectual - contradicted one another if you worked out their implications. The essential conflict was between the tradition of the nineteenth-century asceticism and the actually existing luxury and snobbery of the pre-1914-age. On the one side were low-church Bible Christianity, sex Puritanism, insistence on hard work, respect for academic distinction, disapproval of self-indulgence, on the other, contempt for "braininess", and worship of games, contempt for foreigners and the working class, an almost neurotic dread of poverty, and, above all, the assumption not only that money and privilege are the things that matter, but that it is better to inherit them than to have to work for them.'³

Orwell was aware that there was a danger of distortion. Yet he felt that his boarding experience was awful - and the accounts of a good number of those quoted in Brendon's book on preparatory schools is not dissimilar. Orwell writes 'Whoever writes about his childhood must beware of exaggeration and self-pity.... But I should be falsifying my own memories if I did not record that they are largely memories of disgust. The overcrowded, underfed, underwashed life that we led was disgusting, as I recall it.'⁴

*

Instead, the school followed another path, and much of this developed out of the personality and philosophy of its first, and perhaps greatest, headmaster. The Skipper (C.C.Lynam) was born in 1858 and went to King William's college, Isle of Man, 'a romantic place in those days, with few of the traditions or restrictions of the

¹ James Morris, *Oxford*, (1965), 160

² Snow, *Oxford*, 65-6

³ Orwell, *Essays*, 440

⁴ Orwell, *Essays*, 432

modern Public School.¹ This gave him an alternative pattern of education, where he learnt to roam freely and let his imagination develop. When he went to Brasenose, Oxford he was good enough to read mathematics, which he later taught at the Dragon, but found it dry and changed to history. He was a radical, almost an agnostic, anti-War, played rugger for the University for three years. He then followed two parallel careers, as a great schoolmaster, and as a passionate and expert sailor.

He was, we are told by Frank Sidgwick, ‘a keen player of bridge and chess; an indefatigable sketcher in pencil, watercolour, or oils; a most voracious reader of fiction; a capable plain cook. For thirty years he annually “produced” a play of Shakespeare at the school... often painting the scenery...’² To produce these difficult plays with little boys all aged thirteen or less (1888-1919) is no mean achievement. His views on how the plays should be produced reveal other sides of his character.

In 1904 he wrote about the preparations. ‘I always prefer that they should form their own ideas, even if not quite accurate ones, than that I should give them mine, I believe the boys take the greatest interest and delight in it, and, as far as their experience and imagination allow, appreciate its motive and action.’ After he had handed over the productions, he reminisced further about his methods in 1927: ‘... you know I have always preferred the haphazard to ordered method, anachronism to dull accuracy, impossible attempts at beauty to any limits of audacity; and, if you like, fiction to truth, credit to cash in hand, faith to fact. And I am afraid I must confess that I have always tried to make the most of outstanding genius rather than to aim at the high level for mediocrity.’

a The difference between the Dragon and its chief rival, Summer Fields, came out when the Skipper met a little boy from that school who said he envied the freedom of the young Dragons. The Skipper explained in telling a joke against himself that ‘Now our Summer Fields boys were great friends - or foes - of the Dragons whenever they met at games, but were rather jealous about the liberty the said Dragons were allowed, liberty denied to themselves. For instance, they saw them occasionally riding about on bicycles, a joy not permitted to any other Preparatory School in those days; or they came across heaps of them swarming up the Cherwell, unattended by masters, ragging about in four-oared boats or canoes as they passed through our bathing-place.’

A final assessment of his encouragement of the independence and originality of his pupils reveals some of the elements. Frank Sidgwick writes: ‘One of the most brilliant of his old pupils speaking at an Old Boys’ dinner, put the rhetorical question: What was the distinctive character of the school and its training? And found the answer in the Skipper’s refusal to force his boys into conventional moulds, in his active encouragement of originality, in his affording them every opportunity to discover and develop each his own interest and genius. The Skipper attached great importance to leaving boys free to do what they liked with their spare time, instead of forcing them into a scheduled programme out of school as well as in school.’³

*

It is difficult to cast our mind back to the prevailing educational philosophy in the 1880’s when the Skipper took over the Dragon. C.P. Harvey, who had been four

¹ *The Skipper; A Memoir of C.C. Lynam 1858-1938* (1940), 5

² *The Skipper*, 96

³ *The Skipper*, 23, 26, 42, 95

years at a conventional school and then went to the Dragon, suggests that we should contrast the Skipper's views with Dr Arnold of Rugby's philosophy.

He asks what Dr Arnold would 'have thought of a Headmaster who arranged strawberry feasts for his pupils at the Trout Inn; who played cards with them out of school hours; who encouraged them to write English verses rather than Latin verses; who laid bets with them in the classroom; who kept live-stock in his study; and who did not wear a neck-tie?' He continues that 'for me, the Skipper stands for the enfranchisement of schoolboys from the yoke of Arnold and for the final debunking of the system of conventional austerity which Arnold left behind him.'

'The Skipper by his own character and example gave the lie to a number of precepts and principles which had previously seemed inseparable from educations such as:

- (1) That religion consisted of a devotional exercise to be practised intensively one day a week;
- (2) That the distinction between what was 'good form' and what was 'not done' was equivalent to the distinction between right and wrong;
- (3) That discipline was synonymous with drudgery;
- (4) That school work was merely a method of keeping children quiet, and that complete ineptitude at lessons was a badge of success in after life;
- (5) That one's own ideas were of no value;
- (6) That filial affection was a thing which one did not display in public;
- (7) That bullying was a natural perquisite of seniority;
- (8) That uncomfortable clothing was essential to moral development;
- (9) That children should be seen and not heard; and
- (10) That everything which is good for you is unpleasant, and vice versa.

All these things seem to have been regarded as quite natural and proper by one's grandparents, and - to make the subject more depressing - they were commonly coupled with the proposition that one's schooldays were the happiest days of one's life.¹

*

The achievement of the Skipper carried on into my time and was spread by his son Hum and then Hum's son, Joc. From my observation in the 1950s, and research on the period, Joc managed to combine some of the best qualities of both his uncle and father. There was the inspired improvisation, and flexibility, dislike of too much bureaucracy, combined with affection for the boys of the Skipper. Yet this was combined with considerable practical efficiency and a complete mastery and quiet control.

These qualities are rather well captured by the science master during my time, Gerd Sommerhoff. 'I do not know whether one should describe Jock as good looking. He had an athletic figure. In his student days he had been a hockey blue and he was still a competent and energetic tennis player. He had a humorous face and always wore the expression of a man who was in total control. Very little escaped him. When the day was done he enjoyed his tittle, preferably in the company of leading members of his staff.' We shall encounter some of Jock's views on education throughout later chapters, but for a start Gerd's summary will do. 'One evening, Jock, glass in hand, casually mentioned that he had never read a book on education, but that he had two principles on which he ran this school: if the boys are happy they are likely to learn well and if the staff are happy they are likely to

¹ *The Skipper*, 117

teach well. And he certainly lived up to that.¹

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The tendency towards a broad curriculum and not too heavy an emphasis on formal lessons seems to have stemmed from Skipper's attitude towards children and his high regard for them. As Brendon's account shows, many preparatory schools were largely commercial ventures, often run by sadists or at least by people who feared or loathed children – or both. They are well described in famous memoirs by Orwell, Lord Berners, Roald Dahl and others. The Skipper, and as I remember them Hum and Joc, were not like that.

The Skipper was a fan of poetry and used to get the children all to learn poetry each week. It seems likely that the 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam' with its famous description of the potter and the pot was in the back of his mind when he made the following remarks to the Annual conference of Preparatory School teachers in 1908. 'Our boys are not clay to be shaped as we potters will, all much in the same way and that our way. They are something quite different, and so are we: each one of them is a marvellous complex creature not of our creation, and each one of us is not a god but merely a chance tool; and let us beware lest in our attempts to mould, the chisel may slip, and irretrievably damage the inherent life in what we regard as clay...' Given this view, he believed '...we have failed, unless we have helped the boy to develop his mind and his capacities in his own way, unless we have given him full scope, for all of imagination and originality that is in him...'

The Skipper was aware that teaching in a boarding school for year after year could warp the most idealistic and engender cynicism or at least staleness. He wondered, therefore in his 1908 speech to the Annual conference of Preparatory School teachers 'how can we best try to keep our youth and humanness, though we are schoolmasters and headmasters?' His answer was that 'We should try to retain our humanness in term-time, by refusing to shut ourselves up in our little kingdom, and by seeing as many and various people as we can, at the club, at-homes, as politicians, as members of various societies'.² I certainly remember that a number of my teachers seemed to have had serious outside interests, in sport, arts and other things.

*

The Skipper's philosophy lies behind the balanced attitude which the school sustained in relation to academic excellence. On the one hand the Dragon was a famous school for getting scholarships and exhibitions to public schools and in my first year, for example, the school triumphed (exceptionally) in getting the top scholarships to both Eton and Winchester. There was a heavy emphasis on Latin, which was a necessity, and L.A. Wilding who taught the top class wrote one of the two standard text books on the subject. So it might be thought to be driven towards the obsessive emphasis on rote learning and dry academic work which we find in descriptions of St. Cyprian's and other factories for producing Etonians.

Yet from the very start there seems to have been a counter-tendency emanating from the Skipper. At the school Prize-Giving in 1901 he told the parents that 'Our curriculum is more all-round' than that in most other schools of the kind and he expanded this on a similar occasion in 1903. 'As regards the work of the school I am not sure whether, with a view to getting Public School scholarships, we

¹ Gerd Sommerhoff, Gerd Sommerhoff, *In and Out of Consciousness. The Intimate History of A search for Certainties.* (1996), 80-1

² Jaques, *Century*, 50

are quite distinctly classical enough. As far as I can judge we do not give anything like so many hours to classics as others do. We do more mathematics, and considerably more English history and literature. Our top 30 boys get up a whole Shakespeare play very thoroughly every year, besides learning a great deal of poetry; and every boy in the school is taught drawing.'

He reiterated the message in a stronger way to a wider audience five years later in his speech to the Annual conference of Preparatory School teachers in 1908. He said that it is 'still more grievous if we have tied the intellect of a boy down by the old Jesuit device of vain dialectic, of facile making of Latin verse, etc., instead of exercising his reason and observation; if we have shut up his mind in the past to the exclusion of the present and future; if, when he longs for the bread of knowledge, we feed him with the cold stones of classical paganism without its divine afflatus....'¹

It certainly seems that though Latin was important, there was much else and we were also encouraged to take an interest in many things such as crafts, music, debating and so on. Perhaps most revealingly, in a way, when there was ice the formal class lessons were abandoned and day after day we would go off skating - far more important than lessons.

The Skipper and his successors seem to have realized that this went against the grain, but it was justified, they felt, by a holistic attitude towards education. Thus in the Prize-Giving speech in 1901 the Skipper told parents. 'We do not have such long hours, and we have more holidays. I give a good many "extra halves" - perhaps too many. Our holidays at Christmas are shorter, in summer longer, than most.'²

His view of cramming and formal examinations, completely the opposite of what Orwell reports for St Cyprian's or seems present in many of the top preparatory schools of the time, comes in an article he wrote in the 'Draconian' in April 1921. Although he was himself on the Board of the Common Entrance Examinations body, 'With this latter institution I am not at all satisfied. Its influence on our Schools seems to me to be disastrous. The papers are stereotyped in form. Thousands of back copies are purchased and used as a standard and as a means of "cramming" boys for the examination. Instead of a boy being judged by his real merit, character, and attainments, he is judged by his mark-getting powers in a very specialized examination, and this seems to me to be destructive of anything like originality or individuality in teaching and training.'³

I suspect that his views continued to be an influence until my time and that many of the teachers were aware that too much pressure on children was not a good thing. Thus perhaps the matter of formal class work was also treated with a certain irreverence. In Christmas 1953 'Term Notes', it was observed that 'Exam results are posted [in the covered playground], and the urgent injunction to all examinees to study carefully the examiners' comments and reports is dutifully obeyed by those happy few who are reasonably sure of a favourable comment. Of the rest, anyone whose eye is accidentally caught, in passing, by his own name followed by some hostile remark merely murmurs "stale!" and passes on.'

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Jamie comments that class work was regarded with typical Dragon calm detachment. We did not dismiss super academically inclined boys as swots. There may have been jokes about 'swots', but not serious ones, and of course there could

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 48

² Jaques, *Century*, 40

³ *The Skipper*, 39

be swots in lower streams too. The sheer size of the school encouraged so many other activities in which boys could excel that academic brilliance was just one other gift or talent. We admired most, provided they were pleasant personalities, and were generally envious that it all came to them so easily.

I think we admired them and their efforts in the last year especially, and were pleased and proud when they won top scholarships at top schools; but I do not remember any strong hankering to be right up in the top stream myself. A lot of the brightest seemed to be day boys (perhaps sons of Oxford academics), with whom we boarders were generally less familiar. I think I regarded the super fast stream as something of a beast apart - worthy in their calling, but just different!

A propos, I recall that the national 11-plus exam was rather looked down on by us (self and peers anyway) as something other schools and children worried about, but did not detain Dragons very long. There was some snobbery there. As I recall we did only one or perhaps two days of preparation for it, and sat the exam off the cuff in the big New Hall. I found the little intelligence tests involved fun, not difficult.'

Yet form work was also important, as the account of teaching and learning by Jamie in particular show. As Jamie also comments, 'Exams loomed large in my life, as my letters show. Exam marks featured in end of term and fortnightly reports and were counter-marked sternly or enthusiastically by Hum - and were evidently read closely by parents. Exams were a serious thing, even if some English self-deprecation and fondness for the 'gifted amateur' approach applied - but the throw-away exclamation 'stale' or 'stale news' was surely a public affectation (and a defence mechanism).

DRAGON CULTURE

At the end of each term, as young Dragons, we would come together to sing the School Song. Although somewhat tongue in cheek with a hint of irony and playfulness, it is worth indicating a few of the values which we were supposed to be learning from this rousing event.

Long ago there were creatures that ranged
Thro' the forests in hides of tough armour;
But some are extinct and some changed
And the forests are till'd by the farmer:
Yet a weather-cock glistens on high,
And upon it a Dragon is seated,
And the words on that tin mean 'go in and win',
And the Dragon is rarely defeated.

Let us always keep heart in the strife
While our wickets or goals are defended,
For there always is hope while there's life,
And the match isn't lost till its ended!
But whether we win or we lose,
If we fight to the very last minute,
The intent of the game is always the same -
To strive that the Dragon may win it!

There are Dragons in lands far apart,
Where July is as cold as December;
But within they've a warmth at the heart,
And a something that makes them remember!
So they think of the days of their youth,
And they drain to the dregs of the flagon
To the School-house afar, on the banks of the Cher,
And health of the conquering Dragon!

So farewell! For a time we adjourn,
Our health and our spirits retrieving;
And happy be those that return,
And lucky be those that are leaving!
There are visions of mountain and sea,
And of holidays floating before us,
So tonight we forget
Every thought of regret,
And we sing to the Dragon in chorus!

CHORUS (With much spirit, but not too fast.)

Stand up and shout with a ring,
Care to the wind let us fling,
The Dragon above is the Dragon we love,
So to the Dragon we sing!

The balance between jingoism and self-mockery is quite delicate and the reference to leaving as a fortunate escape is a particularly nice touch.

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For many years there used to be an allegorical wall painting in the New Hall at the Dragon. Tom Van Oss painted it in the 1930's and Jacques writes that it was 'prompted by Hum's constant concern to provide Dragons with inspiration and uplift'.¹

The artist stated that 'The motto of the School being "Arduus ad Solem", the picture represents the Efforts of Man to raise himself from the Darkness of Ignorance to the heights of a Lofty and Enlightened Mind, represented by the Citadel. In the centre the figure of Education - 'mens sana in corpore sano' - spurs on the spectator in strenuous effort. Around him are grouped the elements that go to the building of Character: Study, Athletics, Piety, Lofty Aims, Gentleness, Dreams and Contemplation, and Loyalty...'²

The Key to the picture went on to explain the significance of every figure and for a while it was a familiar feature of the New Hall until 'a later generation, in the climate of the sixties, began to find its perhaps rather facile idealism not to its taste.' It was probably painted over.

What immediately strikes me about the list of the virtues is that they include alongside obvious things like study and athletics, gentleness, dreams and contemplation. These are not quite so obvious.

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 50

² Jaques, *Century*, 131

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The picture was an exposition of the school motto 'Arduus ad Solem' (which had twenty years earlier been chosen as the motto for the newly founded University of Manchester). 'Arduus' may be translated here as: 'steep, high, lofty, towering, tall; erect, rearing; uphill; arduous, difficult', and 'solem', of course, is the sun.

The phrase is taken from Virgil's *Aeneid* and describes Pyrrhus attacking the palace of Priam, like a snake striving up to the sunlight after shedding its old skin. The serpent is traditionally associated with wisdom in classical texts, and this may have been one of the reasons for its choice. The name of the school soon became the Dragon and the idea of the serpent clearly fits here. The idea of striving is obviously widespread in mottos for institutions, as in 'Per Ardua ad Solem', by hard work to the sun, the motto of the Royal Air Force.

In fact a pupil, not a teacher, appropriately enough, invented the idea of the name for a school team. A boy heard that on the Governing body there was 'a Mr George, a Fellow of New College. I thought of the gold sovereigns then in currency with the figure of St George and the Dragon on the back. So I suggested, "I believe there is a Mr George who is one of the governors or something. Let's be the Dragons.'" This was immediately adopted as the unofficial name, and later the official one.¹

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Something of the social system which we were entering can be seen in a unique feature of the Dragon culture, namely the patterns of what you called people. A second technique was in the naming pattern. Many closed institutions use naming to encourage a certain attitude - for example 'Brother' and 'Sister' and 'Father' and 'Mother Superior' in monasteries and nunneries. At the Dragon certain teachers who had a special responsibility to look after one, were called 'Pa' and 'Ma', in other words father and mother. I remember this particularly vividly in my first year with my teachers, all of whom were in that year women. For example, in a letter of 11th February 1951, in my second term, my mother wrote to my father. 'I enclose Alans last letter, his writing is improving isn't it? "Miss Cleasby" ... is Jessie who is also a mistress at the Dragon, Ma Cleasby is Alan's usual way of referring to her!' So there was 'Ma Owen', 'Ma Mumford' and, as mentioned, 'Ma Cleasby'. I do not remember personally calling anyone 'Pa', but there is evidence that this was sometimes the case.

For example the *Wikipedia* article on the Dragon notes the calling of 'female teachers 'Ma' (e.g. "Ma Jones").' It continues that 'Previously, some male teachers had been called 'Pa' (e.g. Mr. Wyeth-Webb, who was known affectionately as 'Pa Wa-Wa'). This nickname was feminised when male staff members' wives became important figures in their own right (e.g. 'Ma Wa-Wa'). Ultimately, the masculine form fell out of common use, but the female form has remained popular.' It may have been present when I was there and certainly Paul Watkins refers to its use in the 1970's'. For example his first teacher was Mr. Winter; 'We called him Pa Winter'. Perhaps this suggests that teachers had this name if they taught the very young, pupils. I certainly don't remember calling my first housemaster 'Pa Plumber'.

Jamie comments that "'Ma" was used, as I recall, for the wives of housemasters or some other masters to whom one might need to refer, for example "Ma Yatto" and for matrons, sister or other staff holding a school position (i.e. not maids or cleaners

¹ *The Skipper*, 9

or similar). I do not remember any women teachers, but I suppose there were some. But the term “pa” I do not recall at all – not even for someone very ancient like Fuzz.’

After the first introduction to people who were surrogate ‘Pa’ and ‘Ma’ a young Dragon then discovered that all the teachers were like older brothers or perhaps very young uncles. That is to say, they were not Mr. or Mrs So-and-so, but had personal and sometimes rather cheeky nicknames by which they were directly addressed. I shall deal with this further below to show how hierarchy was subverted in the school through various inversions.

Jamie comments, however, that I never had that thought that they were older brothers or young uncles. They were masters or teachers to me, quite definitely – with elements of respect and even fear in those classrooms, even if teachers of a particularly friendly kind. The clever thing was the way that they impinged on us – by the style that was adopted. Perhaps this was because I did not have any old brother or young uncle, though I think I might have sensed some similarities to my relationship with Logic (20 years older) and Robin (Hone) (18 years older) (my youngest uncles) had I known them better.

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As for the use of nicknames between boys, I remember a little of this, but cannot even remember what my own nick-name was, so I think I used both this system, occasional Christian names (as indicated in my letters) and also the more conventional system described by Brendon who writes that ‘In boys’ schools the break from home was still emphasized by the widespread use of surnames.’¹

Such naming practices gave you an individuality, even a separateness, which kept you at a distance from others. They made you into semi-adults – ‘Macfarlane’, not ‘boy’ or ‘Alan’. There are signs that that the impersonal, or special, naming system isolated you from the set of ties of intimacy that would exist if you called someone by their Christian name – as I discovered even when I went to Worcester College in 1960 and was addressed by my teachers as ‘Mr Macfarlane’ – or one finds in other institutions such as prisons (‘Fletcher’), armies and hospitals.

Jamie comments on all this that the few names I do remember are simple to categorize. For example, I have three school team photos, rigger, cricket and hockey teams, and two of plays – (Macbeth and Pirates of Penzance) – plus one of Gerd Summerhoff’s radio controlled aeroplane. That makes my total stock.

It’s rather hard to see under the acting clothes who is who in the plays. But in the teams, when I remember a face, I apply a name to them unhesitatingly – which is either a surname, nickname, a first name or a combination. Thus I see Hedley-Smith (surname, no idea of his first name, and no nickname known to me); Thompie (Thompson) by nickname, (I think he was Richard, but he will always be Thompie to me, even though I spent a term living in his home with him); ‘Tom’ Stanier and ‘Chris’ Waddilove by first name, not ‘Waddy’, Evers (who sang and acted) and Milner Moore by surname and so on. In addition, some people had comical nicknames which came naturally, e.g. Charlie Pinker was ‘Stinker’ Pinker. It is hard to see a general rules and patterns but I suppose that some people’s nickname was in the end their surname. Presumably it depended, as later in life, in part on their character and on how well you knew them. Jamie also comments that such systems of naming at the Dragons were common to all boarding schools.

There is an interesting observation by Watkins that ‘There was an awkwardness

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 169

when you had taken friends out or they had taken you out and then you got back to school. It was awkward because you felt as if you had to be nice and you didn't know whether or not to keep calling each other you your real name or your school names.¹

The same awkwardness, incidentally, could be found between siblings, of whom there were quite a lot at the Dragon. The moment you returned to school you kept your distance and hardly noticed a younger sibling – family was more or less obliterated, as described in several autobiographies. Again Watkins gives an example. 'My brother Clive had started at the Dragon School, but I hardly ever saw him.... But the school had its natural ways of keeping the years separate.'² I think he is partly right about the years, but there is more to it than that. Talking to Jake's older sister Anna, I find that she remembered her two older brothers as being very protective and friendly. This was no doubt affected by the fact that she was a sister, that she and her brothers were not boarders, and that she was mostly at the pre-prep school, leaving after only one year at the preparatory school itself.

Jamie had a younger brother at the Dragon, one year younger than himself, so his comments here are particularly relevant. He writes that in the case of Sandy, I remember few difficulties although perhaps occasional embarrassment or irritation if he, younger bro, wanted something or to speak, and was in my way because I was otherwise occupied or with my own friends. Perhaps we both learnt to find the right moments! S on the other hand told me he remembered (especially of Sedbergh) that I could always be approached for help and advice, and it was something he valued. Which was nice of him. I also gather now from maternal letters that I frequently praised him and his abilities in letters home.

Jake Mermagen, who had an older brother at the school, writes that 'brothers called each other 'Bro'. This survived to the 1970's and 1980's as my two sons called each other 'bro' at the Dragon.'

It seems that as widely reported for Eton, and was no doubt the case in many schools, there was also a custom that you kept your distance from people in other houses even. This is suggested by the Skipper in his 1908 address who said that teachers had failed the boys '...if they fall in line with the miserable rules of school etiquette, which, among other silly things, try to prevent two old friends from speaking to one another, because they are not in the same house'.³

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Another Dragon tradition, unique in this School, is central to understanding its culture of semi-equality between staff and boys. It appears that the Skipper may have stumbled on this custom rather accidentally, though it fits with his egalitarian and informal ethos. He explained the reasons in his Prize-Giving speech to the assembled parents in 1901. 'I confess to not attaching much importance to outward politeness. I hate to be called "Sir" every half-minute. I prefer to be called "Skipper". It has been objected that the masters allow the boys to treat them with too little respect. A respect which means subservience and politeness in their presence, with dislike and sneering talk behind their backs, is to my mind most rotten. What I believe to be the true attitude of masters to boys in a Preparatory School is – be an elder brother *out* of school, and a master with the power of at once claiming and getting the closes attention *in* school. I am perfectly satisfied that

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 37

² Watkins, *Stand*, 74

³ Jaques, *Century*, 48

my staff entirely understand and act upon these principles, and I would not have them change them; and I believe all the better-minded boys appreciate their attitude. The stand-off master out of school is sure to be the greatest fool at keeping discipline in school. Moreover, consideration for others, the true gentlemanly feeling, is to my mind worth yards of outward veneer and polish. The most awkward boy is often the most gentlemanly and considerate.¹

The result was that masters all had nicknames. 'Wikipedia' mentions 'Inky', 'Guv', 'Smudge', 'Moocow', 'Lofty', 'Jumbo', 'Splash' etc. Of these Inky (Mr Ingram, sometime joint headmaster) and 'Guv' (joint headmaster) and Jumbo (???) were all at the Dragon in the early 1950's when I was there with these nicknames. Of the batch noted by Paul Watkins in the 1970's 'Inky, Bleachy, Waa-Waa, Splash, Case, Putty', Inky and Putty were there in the 1950's. Others I recall were 'Oof' (because this is what he said when he opened the classroom windows every morning - Mr Wylie), 'Bruno' (Mr Brown), 'Hum' (the Senior Headmaster A.E. Lynam, because he went around humming). Others were given names based on shortening or lengthening their name. For example, 'Gerd' was just Gerd Sommerhoff's first name, as was the Junior Headmaster 'Joc' Lynam, or 'Bruno' was an obvious name for Mr. Brown.

In fact the principles of working out the names was probably similar to the way nicknames were invented for new boys, described by Watkins. 'There was no point having a first name at the Dragon School because nobody used it. Instead they took your last name and said it to themselves a few times, rolling it over on their tongues. They found out if it sounded like another word, or an animal or a part of your body. If nothing came up, they'd add an 'o' to the end or 'ers' and see if that worked.'²

What effect did this have on us? I do think that notwithstanding the dissonance noted by the Skipper whereby you could be calling a master as if he was your older brother one minute, and being disciplined by him ten minutes later in class, the system probably did add to the relaxed and informal feel of the place. It was egalitarian, chummy, made you part of a club. Later in the army or in some Oxbridge common room you would re-live a world where seniors were half-affectionately referred to as 'Monty' (Lord Montgomery) or with some other diminutive. It somehow creates loyalty, commitment and mitigates a little of all too prevalent coldness and hierarchy. Snow describes this as 'a clever device which acknowledges and absorbs the pupils' own counterculture.'³ This was possibly one of the effects, emphasized by the fact that there were many occasions both in formal and informal games when masters and boys would 'rag' together, as I shall describe a little below. But I am not sure that it was an explicit political move to subvert rebellion.

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Naming is, of course, only a small part of the linguistic code which any institution will develop to divide insiders from outsiders and express social relationships. All closed institutions develop their own private language, or at least dialect. I suspect that the Dragon slang, which was one of the first things I would have to pick up when I arrived, largely overlapped with that in other boarding schools, though there may have been a few special words. Watkins noted that 'Crying was called Blubbing at the Dragon', but this was a word which one can find in many dictionaries and was

¹ *The Skipper*, 41-2

² Watkins, *Stand*, 7

³ Snow, *Oxford*, 167

used well outside preparatory schools.¹ In fact much of the slang was quickly propagated and copied with the emergence, precisely in this period, of a number of humorous books about schools such as 'Down with Skool' and the 'St. Trinians' sagas and especially in the new comics like the 'Beano' and 'Dandy'. It was often a juvenile image of the language which Public Schools such as Westminster, Eton and Winchester would also proliferate.

Yet wherever it came from, it had to be learnt and used properly and was always changing. A tiny vignette of this is given in a verse of a poem by Roger Wilding published in the 'Draconian' in 1963:

'Quis' and 'Ego', 'Bags I', 'Beef'
'Tich Frater' 'Fleb' and 'Fains'
'Excuse me sir, can we have 'per'
To go and watch the trains?'²

It is interesting that two out of these were ones which, as I will note, I took home - 'fleb' and 'beef'. Others were mainly gaming words - 'Quis' - 'who', 'Ego' - 'me', 'Bags I' and 'Fains', putting oneself forward, or withdrawing.

That the poem proceeded to describe:

'The gravel playground choked with boys,
Hopscotch, marbles, conkers, noise
Rationed nougat, lemonade,
Illicit sweets from North Parade...'

suggests that the context was mainly social playground activities. There were also a number of what would now be considered derogatory terms. 'Wikipedia' tells us that 'Temporary teaching assistants (usually in their late teens or early twenties, often natives of former British colonies) are known as "stooges".' As I will discuss below, girls were at certain periods known as 'hags' or 'haggises', but I don't remember other derogatory terms which were flung around in the pages of popular comics such as 'oiks'. One use of this term is in a letter from Jamie on 18th October 1953 when he wrote that there was a soccer match against the 'Oxford Street Oiks', though this may have been playful. 'Wikipedia' also draws attention to something slightly different, which were almost terms of art, or shorthand, often again used in games. It notes that 'As is the case at most boarding institutions, the Dragon has developed its own unique lexicon besides, incorporating a slang particular to the school ('pill' meaning ball, 'with you' meaning pass, and so on).'

I cannot now remember the slang, but I have combed my letters from school, and my mother's comments on my language, and find traces of this world there. On 29th April 1951 she wrote to my father that I was saying at the end of the holidays "Oh how fleb, the hols are almost over" every few minutes ("fleb" is his favourite expression, meaning everything that is awful, as opposed to "beefy" which is usually applied to himself!). I was still using this expression in my last year at school, when my mother describes in a letter of 27th December my attitude to a party she was arranging for my thirteenth birthday. 'Alan had spent the previous two days saying that he didn't want a party and he was going out for the afternoon and what did I

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 10

² Quoted in Jaques, *Century*, 72

want to go and ask a lot of fleb girls for...' I also used to 'lam up' my sisters - which meant 'beat up'.

Another source are the school 'Term Notes'. In Summer 1952 there is mention of a "wizard" fast bowler, "absolutely supersonic". The latter term I remember applying to my favourite cheese a few years later, and there are several mentions of 'wizard' in my letters. Another was in my first term when the Christmas 1950 'Term Notes' mentions that there were few 'bishes' with the production of the Mikado. This was reflected in a letter of my mother's on 3rd January 1955 when she wrote to my father 'I expect you've been listening to the Test Match most of the time, it is quite encouraging this time if we don't make a bish of it as Alan says'. Another term I think I remember was when on a visit of the school to Windsor reported in the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1954 'the guide got in a frightful bate because we didn't know any dates'. From the hints above, it appears that our school slang was not confined to school, in fact. It was used in the holidays and in this way would spread to our siblings and even our parents.

Jamie has noted two other bits of slang which he used, though both, I suspect, were in general use. Stew - to be doing nothing and being bored; as in my hope that Sandy and I would find something to do at the start of the hols although I was ill - 'I expect we'll do something other than stew inside playing totopoly, monopoly or such a game.' Secondly a 'cronk' - an old, probably battered, and slow car, to be compared to Mr Hornby's Bristol on return from Bloxham School; *after driving 22 miles in a Bristol 2 ½ litre ... cruising at 70-80 on the straights, we arrived well before the other old cronks (e.g. Wolsey 14, 1932? Morris 25, 1932).*

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One of the biggest shocks I remember about going to the Dragon was, in a sense, moving from Oriental, or rural, or pre-industrial, pre-bureaucratic time as I had experienced it for the first eight years of my life, to suddenly finding myself in a world ruled by clocks, bells and watches.

Jamie's experience seems to have been less of a shock, perhaps partly because of his home background, partly because of his temperament. So Jamie comments that 'I remember admiring and being envious of good, smart watches (some were even pocket watches, not wrist watches). I suppose I had one [indeed, there is much on it in the letters], maybe a simple one. I don't remember clock-watching particularly, or being constantly summoned by bells. I suppose I accepted it as quite natural to be summoned and pushed around by the clock as representing authority. I must have been generally someone who was happy to carry on until there was some obvious call to arms - and perhaps left it to others to worry about times, and being late.'

Kipling urged us to 'fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run', and this was exactly what we were learning. This has had a profound effect on my life where I follow Kipling's advice daily. And it is something I have seen as one of the central obsessions in schools I have visited in India, China and elsewhere. The easier pace of time in most societies, linked to the agricultural and social calendar is jolted by lessons starting precisely at a certain time, ending, rushing elsewhere, and then starting again.

Part of the reason for all this is that there always seems too much to do. A school like the Dragon did not want us to be bored and it wanted us to achieve on a wide level. So when it was not formal lessons, then a multitude of other activities, which I shall describe, meant that we had to work out our time very carefully. In my final year, for example, I had to balance being in Iolanthe, playing rugger, dancing, watching films, skating, doing all sorts of lessons and exams and many other things.

In order to inculcate this attitude to the effective allocation of time, the school ran a highly centralized and integrated time regime. It produced something straight out of 'Alice', with the little boys (and often the Masters) like the White Rabbit, scurrying from place to place muttering to themselves 'The Duchess, the Duchess', or its equivalent.

The mixture of clocks and bells are mentioned in the 'Term Notes' for Easter 1953 which mentions that when the Master clock in the common room and all satellites stopped 'clock-fed Dragons were soon at sixes and sevens, or to be more accurate, at twenty past nine.' Furthermore, 'Of the various masters responsible for ringing the various bells that morning some knew about the 9.20 idea....'

Public time announced by centrally directed clocks - synchronized time, which collapsed if the master clock stopped - and public bells, gave an atmosphere of something like a medieval village. It is not just a coincidence that the poetic autobiography of an early Dragon, the Poet Laureate John Betjeman, should be titled 'Summoned by Bells'. The situation was a preparation for public school, where it was even worse:

Doom! Shivering doom! Inexorable bells
To early school, to chapel, school again: ...
The dread of beatings! Dread of being late!

We listened to the bells, watched the clocks, and we also adjusted our lives through our control of private machines for gauging time, the wrist watch rather than the fob watch of Alice's White Rabbit. Here I have only just begun to wonder whether most boys had watches and, if they did, how they were adjusted to school time.

Fortunately I have a partial answer in my own case in two references in my letters. Much of my life has revolved about the hoarding, spending and stretching of time, and I could take some control of this because I knew from minute to minute how time was passing. I seem to have had a watch from at least soon after my eighth birthday, though whether it was a real one I do not know. In a letter of early February 1950 I wrote, *Thank you very much for the lovely watch and letters*. Later, on 30th April 1953, when I was eleven and a quarter, my grandmother wrote to my mother, 'I have bought the watch' and in the same letter I wrote to my mother *I have got a new cricket bat to take to school and a new watch wich is lovely*. My precise knowledge, as well as an elementary stimulus to mathematics, is shown few days later on 10th May when I wrote, *My watch is still working very well and it only loses about half a minute everyday*.

Time was measured down to the unforgiving thirty seconds, but it was also measured carefully over the progress of the term. Paul Watkins seems to have been particularly disoriented in his misery, for he writes 'I never thought much about the passage of time. There was only the black and white of school time and holiday time, class time and free time, and the gradual shift from one dorm to another as I moved up the school.'¹

This is not my memory or what my letters show. It seems very obvious that I was intensely aware of how many days of each term had passed, and how many were to come. This evidence will be presented under the ethnography of the school years below. And it is also clear that the passing of the term was marked more generally by customs such as the 'Gloats' which were put up in forms and dormitories about

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 73

three weeks before the end of term – presumably along the famous gloating lines ‘No more Latin, no more French, not more sitting on the old school bench’.

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Yet while there was a rigid code of time and too much to be packed into the term, the Dragon may have been unusual in also subverting this bureaucratic straight-jacket to a certain extent and emphasizing a more chaotic, or creatively charismatic view of how the world should be ordered. This is something I have only recently re-discovered mainly through the revealing 'Term Notes'.

This anti-bureaucratic tendency of subversion is closely linked to something else, the cult of the resourceful amateur, the person who does not need to stick to rules, who can deal with the unexpected, who is effortlessly flexible, who disregards convention and strict adherence to rules.

The rot, as modern management consultants would no doubt now feel, started right at the top with the staff and particularly the Junior Headmaster, Joc. The Staff meetings seem indeed, as reported in the 'Term Notes', to have been minimalist and indeed objects of some derision. The most important one was at the start of term, and there are world-weary accounts of them. The 'Term Notes' of Easter 1952 mentioned that ‘Last term’s intimate details were simply the result of your note-taker’s carelessness in forgetting to provide himself, for once, with the crossword.’ The following term there was ‘A Staff Meeting on the first Sunday night, summoned to tie up any loose ends, was soon at grips with the problem of whether boys should write on single, or between double, lines. But when the ladies in the far corner put down their knitting for a moment to point out that down in the ‘E’ Block they used no lines at all, it broke up in confusion’. In my last summer term the author could not even remember if there was a staff meeting at all.

The tension with other more bureaucratic expectations is shown in the response to the sudden threat that the School was to be inspected. The reaction hints at the conflicts of style in the account written in my last term at the Dragon, Summer 1955. A letter had come from the Ministry of Education pointing out that it was 25 years since they had last ‘recognised’ the Dragon School. An inspection was timed for June 6th ‘which gave us less than six weeks in which to get the shop window properly dressed, an undertaking with which little headway was ever actually made since the Dragon shop window is used so seldom that no one even knew where it was, let alone what to put in it.’

It is worth noting some of the outcome of this inspection and the style in which the school responded, as reported in the Headmaster Joc’s speech at the end of the term. ‘We thought it well to start this off with a Sherry Party, with view to putting the Inspectors in a good frame of mind; and I think that this was entirely successful. But some of the good was soon undone the next morning when the Chief Inspector sat himself on one of the older chairs in the huts, and tore the seat of his trousers on a nail. And another Inspector was somewhat shaken on emerging from the Geography Room to be addressed by a small boy as “Spiv”: but this was only a case of mistaken identity. In their report at the end of the Inspection, they were rude about the partitioned classrooms, the blackboards, the lighting arrangements, and a good many other structural defects (and quite rightly). But they were very polite about the teaching of the Staff, the confident yet friendly attitude of the boys, and the general atmosphere existing between boys and Staff.’

The whole place seems to have been run with an emphasis on spontaneity and creative chaos by the Junior Headmaster, Joc Lynam (his father, the previous Headmaster ‘Hum’, was now partly a ceremonial figure, though he did comment on

all my school reports). The descriptions of Joc by the elderly schoolmaster, Jaques, writer of the 'Term Notes', shows a spirit of friendly teasing which one might not have found in all schools. For example, in the Summer Term 1951 'Notes' it mentions that Joc was 'deprived of his favourite sport of posting one programme, announcing another, and carrying through a third...' In Easter 1954 Joc, who was passionate about skating and hockey, tried to maximize both. There was a lot of improvisation to increase amount of hockey - 'Joc was ready with an assortment of schemes for playing lots of it, and at the oddest times, by converting an afternoon into an evening, Uppers into Lower, a Monday into a Tuesday, or even lunch into tea.' No doubt many of the other masters, whom we remember as rather quirky, added to this creative sense of spontaneous chaos.

Jake Mermagen recalls that 'one Oxford man mum who wanted her son to go to the Dragon but couldn't get a place just bought the uniform and sent him into a class. The Dragon didn't know how to respond and accepted the fact.'

It is appreciatively noted, however, that Joc provided extra skates, bicycles, pens and other luxuries, all of which were known as 'Joc' skates, 'Joc' pens etc., in a way which would again add to the feeling that he was a sort of benevolent uncle. I certainly remember Joc with some affection and he may have been under special pressures when in Christmas 1954 the author notes that the 'E' block 'hitherto a more or less independent body, was incorporated in the main structure, a totalitarian move which accorded so ill with Joc's Liberal principles...' (The 'E' block as noted above was the reception year, mainly staffed by women as noted above).

On the skates, Jamie remembers that they were 'Ice skates with the clamp devices, with a little screw key to fit them to your shoe size, I remember well. And surprisingly they did not come off the whole time. Somehow they seemed to work, even if one's ankles didn't. I loved them because I loved the whole business of skating (ice or roller skates).'

More generally, on the whole atmosphere, Jamie comments on all this that 'some of these things are just very English - the resourceful amateur, scepticism of rules and government, subversion of authority and especially bureaucracy. In other words they are more than Dragon magic, but part of a wider ethic encouraged in a number of boarding schools - though certainly not all of them.

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The author of the 'Term Notes' lamented that the Summer term 1952 was completely normal without 'that touch of the unexpected which Dragons normally expect'. The general tone of the 'Notes' is one of irony, joking, even mildly carnivalesque. There is a scepticism of rules and government and a commitment not to take anything absolutely seriously. No wonder the masters and the boys revelled in the humour of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas which are precisely about the poking of fun at the establishment - the law, the police, the navy, the House of Lords, the aesthetes. That the school produced a number of people who in one way or another poked fun at authority, whether comedians like Hugh Laurie or writers like John Mortimer, is not surprising. We were to remember that the teacher who we were taking seriously one minute, was also the good sport and older brother whose nickname we could use and who could be teased.

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It is the absences which tend to be overlooked and so it is worth pausing on the fact that though the Dragon was a formally Christian school, it was rather laid-back in its emphasis on religion - particularly in comparison to a number of other

preparatory schools. Religion was there, of course, and elsewhere we shall examine the sermons which we heard and the Remembrance Day events which moved us. Here it is enough to note that even as late as 1977 'unlike many other Prep. Schools, they still do not have their own Chapel.' He then quotes some thoughts written down around the time of the First World War by Hugh Sidgwick, who echoed the 1908 speech by the Skipper which had warned against 'the falseness of all the gods of society, gold, sham religion, conventionality...' ¹ Sidgwick wrote that 'In a normal Preparatory School, especially of the more fashionable type, nothing would be more obvious and natural than for a War Memorial to take the form of a Chapel.... But we are not an ordinary school, and our tradition has always been cast in the opposite extreme. Routine, orthodoxy, ritual, unreasoning compliance with *comme il faut* - all these we have deliberately avoided. ... freedom and sincerity and spontaneity and genuineness, and mistrust of the second-rate and the second-hand, are things a good deal of risk to obtain.'²

Jamie adds further thoughts on this. Organized religion, he recalls, was a minor not a major feature of school to me. Evidently my Oxford Bishop grandfather regarded the Dragons' religious education as sufficient and satisfactory, or I think we would have heard, or even been taken to extra services with him on Sundays.

I recall services upstairs in the big New Hall; with some blue velvet curtains drawn to form a backdrop for a simple altar, presumably on Sundays and perhaps on one or two other occasions. Hymns to a piano. I don't recall any sung psalms.

The little volume of 'Hymns and Prayers for Dragons' (which I still have) is very familiar to me, but not very worn. Presumably it played some role in introducing us to Christian worship and western music - but I am not sure exactly when we said and sung them. I think there were morning prayers with maybe one hymn and a few simple words every morning in the Old School hall. I do not, however, remember any formal evening prayers either in School House or in Stradlings or Jacko's. I think we said bedside prayers but privately in those two small houses. We trooped to Christchurch Cathedral once a year or so (maybe older boys).

I think of the school as being Christian, all part of the Lynam tradition, but I find myself wondering now whether the Dragon was not actually rather modern, secular and liberal in attitude. I can also picture some of the masters (in their broadly cynical style and general Weltanschauung) as the Dawkins of the day.

DRAGON SOCIETY

One of the techniques to train us about our future worlds was to arrange life in a series of parallel ladders up which we were encouraged to climb. There were intellectual ladders, the school forms arranged in a dizzying set from Lower Five where I arrived to Upper 1, which I never attained. This was based on classics and parallel to it each subject was arranged in sets, from E 5 where I started, to A1, which I never attained in any subject. Twice a year there were exams and we were gradually toiling upwards towards a possible distinction of some kind.

Perhaps more significant to us there were the Games teams, from fifth game or even lower, up to the First XV or First XI, depending on the sport. From the first, the masters were on the look out for talent and we were spurred on to try to climb

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 84-5

² Jaques, *Century*, 48

the ladder to win the respect of our peers and, certainly in my case, my sports-loving father. As well as the formal four team sports – rugger, football, hockey and cricket, there were others, tennis, swimming, athletics among them, where we gradually moved upwards through teams and sets. These shaded into more informal hierarchies in many of the playground games and hobbies, boys being ranked in marbles, conkers, five-stones and other annual crazes, as well as strength in fighting or facing pain.

Then there were hierarchies in drama, music, art and other activities such as chess.

Those who played major parts in the annual Shakespeare or Gilbert and Sullivan events were given considerable status.

There was the equally important placing in hierarchies which were more structured in the sense that they did not depend on personal effort, but placed people in inexorable classes. These included school houses, dormitories, ‘suppers’ and ‘tables’ (what time and with whom one ate). Special targets were being the captain of a team or, a minor target, a school prefect.

I learnt from all this that life, as the school motto reminded us, was a constant struggle. One might be doing well on one ladder, but slipping on another. Nothing was assured. Only skill, concentration, commitment and effort would move one upwards and gain the esteem of teachers, other boys, one’s parents and above all oneself. We were always being watched, judged, examined – formally and informally – and trying to prove ourselves.

This effort, so brilliantly satirized in ‘How to be Topp’, is obviously one of the major features of such schools. The ambitious tried to be top in everything, as it is reported of the young Rupert Brooke the poet, who in an autograph album defined his idea of happiness as being ‘at the top of the tree in everything’, including his favourite activities cricket, tennis, football, reading and stamp collecting. His diaries describe his excitement as he moves up these ladders.¹

Of course this straining upwards could have a considerable cost. In some cases, as with Paul Watkins at the Dragon, one could begin to realize that one was not ‘officer material’. ‘There were the ranks that had names, like Prefect and Head Boy and Captain of the Rugby Team. I knew almost from the beginning that I wouldn’t have a rank like that.’² I knew the same – I would never sing a lead part in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, I would never get into the top class in Latin, I would never be a captain of the team or ace chess player. Yet there were many consolation prizes for those who were not effortlessly brilliant and I was content with striving for these.

There must certainly have been those who felt inadequate and unable to achieve much. Yet I think that the way things were arranged in general meant that even the mediocre, like myself, felt a certain degree of hope and as we went through the school and automatically moved up in various ways, our self-confidence was boosted. As we will see from an analysis of my school reports, my teachers were constantly writing that I was capable of good things, and often congratulated me on doing well. I was supported and pushed on by what now seems a genuine concern that I succeed as far as my abilities would take me, even if it now seems evident that I was quite clearly classified in formal education, though not in games, as a middling person.

The success of the school in giving people self-confidence through helping them

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 57

² Watkins, *Stand*, 74

climb the various ladders and in preventing the usual scrabbling of ‘frogs in a well’ syndrome, found in many schools (where, as in the Indian proverb, the frogs at the bottom of the well would rather drag down any aspiring and escaping frog rather than let it climb out), only really comes out when we compare it to its opposite, which we can do by mentioning the case of George Orwell.

Here was an obviously brilliant boy – he finally won a scholarship to Eton and Wellington, was second in the national Harrow History Prize (Townsend-Warner) which the Dragon also competed in, was clearly imaginative and sensitive. Yet he writes that he felt ‘damned’. ‘I had no money, I was weak, I was ugly, I was unpopular, I had a chronic cough, I was cowardly, I smelt.’ This had a catastrophic effect on him for many years. ‘The conviction that it was *not possible* for me to be a success went deep enough to influence my actions till far into adult life. Until I was about thirty I always planned my life on the assumption not only that any major undertaking was bound to fail, but that I could only expect to live a few years longer.’¹ As I will discuss below I came out of the Dragon with the opposite conclusion. I learnt to believe in myself and what I could do.

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Jamie comments generally on this set of ladders we were moving up as follows. I think of such hierarchies more in the Sedbergh context and not especially as a feature of Dragon life. In games for example, I am still not sure whether I was in the first or second cricket eleven at the Dragons. I don’t think it bothered me, and I don’t remember any strong feelings of omission, injustice or offence when I did not make a team. But perhaps that is hindsight!

In classes, again, I accepted that some boys were brighter than others; I might have covered envy with the usual jokes about ‘swots’. I don’t recall ever looking down on someone in a lower class or stream. One element here may be that Sandy was usually in a slower stream than me – and as I saw it that was just how it happened to be.

I recall some pressure of (over-) high expectations of me, and did not much like that. I now know from those maternal letters that this was true. It seems that I was over-promoted, and found the top/fast stream too much for a while, and then was brought back to a more sensible level in the last year. Since I had forgotten that detail until now I guess I coped with it with a degree of equanimity.

I don’t remember being conscious of unwanted complications being involved in hierarchies of suppers or dormitory life. Nor do I recall having strong feelings about the role of prefects or about being a prefect, which I was for my last two terms. These things seemed a natural part of school life. Perhaps my attitude was attributable to the atmosphere at home and partial upbringing in a school environment. I was trusting of tradition and hierarchy, respectful and accepting. It was something safe, something that worked; which included some rights and benefits as well as duties and responsibilities. I was brought up to believe that nanny knows best – provided she has tribe and family blessing.

Jake Mermagen comments that “Houses” were created in my last year, possibly last term. It had nothing to do with where you slept. Dayboys and boarders were all allocated a house such as ‘Norham’, ‘Bardwell’ – mostly, as I recall, to enable inter-house matches at sport.’

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¹ Orwell, *Essays*, 444,445

Part of all this, as Orwell points out, was to do with the system of rules, the breaking of rules and the punishments for such breaches. One of the things which shines out of Orwell's account is that not only were there numerous official petty rules, but it was impossible not to break them, impossible not to be detected by a severe surveillance system instituted by the teachers, and then impossible to avoid brutal punishments. A similar regime, the blueprint for Orwell's *1984*, can be glimpsed in many of the schools described in Brendon's survey of preparatory schools.

Part of this was true in the Dragon. We had almost no private space – from the start as boarders we lived communally and everyone could see the shivering, naked, little boy in the bath, in bed, in the changing rooms. The memory of Siegfried Sassoon who 'felt that the only life he could call his own was inside his play-box along with his tin of mixed biscuits' strikes a chord.¹ We were living life almost completely in public in a very crowded space.

There seems to have been at least some recognition by the school of this difficulty. In the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1954 it was stated that 'At one end the Junior Changing Room has acquired a new spaciousness most welcome to junior changers, for whom dressing and undressing, probably for the first time in public, possibly for the first time unaided, was quite enough of an ordeal without the additional embarrassment of putting one's leg into your neighbour's shorts.' The baths were equally intimidating at first, Watkins commented that 'We sat two boys in each bath, knees pulled up to our chins.'² I certainly remember that at Sedbergh it was sometimes three to a bath.

It was difficult to conceal anything. We did creep off to smoke, or eat illicit foods, in tree huts in summer, as Jake remembers, smoking with home made pipes. There were conventions amongst the boys themselves which allowed them a tiny bit of personal space. Watkins described how 'It was always quiet on the first night, and sometimes you could hear boys crying in their beds.' The crying was not brought up the next day, but it should be as muffled as possible. Watkins himself described how 'For the first days, I cried after the dormitory lights were out. I pressed my face deep into Oscar Bear's foamy yellow stomach because I didn't want anyone to hear me...'³

For the most part it was almost like the famous description by Bentham of a model prison based on a 'Panopticon', where the warders were (in theory) watching one all the time. In some ways, the fact that teachers were playing with us and trying to be older brothers, and then became teachers, made the surveillance deeper. Yet though I remember the shock of lack of privacy and loss of personal control, I don't on the whole remember a sense of being watched all the time.

One except, Jake Mermagen recalls, is that 'Joc used to listen outside dorm doors in School House. I can still see the glow of his cigarette when he came in and read the riot act.'

Jamie comments that I have no recollection of being under any kind of watch, control or observation, permanent or temporary. In fact my recollection is how remarkably free we were the whole time, and unwatched over, and able to get into all sorts of trouble at any moment (whether walking to North Parade, mucking about by the river or whatever). I have no images in my mind of masters peering through

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 208

² Watkins, *Stand*, 12

³ Watkins, *Stand*, 11

the bushes, or surveilling from the road what was going on in the playground or playing fields. Perhaps they did it cleverly. Or perhaps this is because schoolmasters were already part of my home life, so I saw them as minor replacements for parents or relatives who know how to keep their distance and not interfere, but can be found and turned to at moments of trouble.

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The absence of bullying as we remember it may have arisen from something that the school, probably like a number of others, was one where on the whole formal rules were kept to a minimum. It was a little like the English system of common law, which is largely based on precedent, on common sense, on the assumption of 'reasonable' behaviour, on only a few and vague absolute rules – though shalt not kill, attack, steal etc. A concept of 'negative liberty' which states certain things which are internal inalienable rights, but does not, as in continental law, try to stipulated many positive commandments prevailed.

The contemporary official Dragon website claims that 'The school has a comparatively informal ethos, relying on common sense and individual responsibility rather than a long set of formal rules.' From my own experience, the description is a reasonable one. I do not remember being oppressed by rules and regulations which it was difficult to keep and I suspect that once again this was a long-term influence of the Skipper, who knew as an expert sailor that sailing is best done on the basis of some simple general principles, applied with flexibility and ingenuity to meet the constantly varying and impossible to specify in advance circumstances. This is exactly how we learnt to play team games – a few negative rules as to what you could not do, and the rest was skill and effort.

Jamie comments: 'Lax and liberal I should say. Another of the miracles achieved by Joc and company. I never lived in fear and trembling of rules. I think we were mostly allowed to run free and were chided or otherwise punished if and when we got it wrong. My memory is that the Dragon was less authoritarian than Sedbergh (although it required an obvious disciplinary framework to help look after and keep safe much younger aged boys). There must have been plenty of rules relating to safety and play (e.g. no bikes after dark, no going down to the river until you had passed the Clothes Test.) But I have no memory of objecting to them as unnecessary or 'plain silly' as boys can.'

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Alan continues that this can be seen as yet another of the tactics to produce an imperial elite, too arrogant for its own good. My mother implied this on one of her three visits to the Dragon. *'Macbeth' was very well done really... The boys were word-perfect but fearfully pompous and droney ... We went to the service next day and the same lot of little boys got up and droned again, this time they read us Shakespeare's best known sonnet (after explaining carefully what it meant!) and a long excerpt from 'Faust' – can't think why, but they were all so pleased with themselves.*

It is all in line with various mission statements of a number of schools. Brendon quotes a number of statements which point to the desire to make these schools 'the cradle and crèche of Empire, inculcating the 'virtues of leadership, courage and independence', encouraging 'the sacrifice of selfish interests to the ideal of fellowship and the future of the race'.¹ Such schools prepare the little boys, in other words, for the loneliness of colonial frontier life, and the legitimacy of hierarchy.

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 51

Put in an amusing way, we were being trained to stand on our own feet and to be ready to go out and change the world in a way which the saga being written a couple of streets away from the Dragon by a man who young Dragons every day encountered us every day and who sent his son to the school.

Peter Snow suggests that 'The hobbit heroes are clearly North Oxford children; they have the bodies of children but the minds of adults; they speak with all the distinctive spry confidence of Dragon School pupils; they are good marksmen (Ouch!); they become extremely distinguished in the outside world: Frodo (Old Dragon, 1929) has done outstandingly well in Mordor...' This is why in 1970 a film unit come down to make a film about Professor Tolkien 'who would naturally be perfectly at ease with any sort of Dragon. So fifty of them, including the Professor's grandson, all Hobbits for the evening, milled around a bonfire on the river bank by the Barge, armed with torches...'¹

To get an idea of this little world which boosted self-confidence and in which the children really ruled their own world to a large extent, one could do worse than study another fantasy classic, the Harry Potter series, which the Old Dragon, Pico Iyer, felt was closely modelled on the sort of world he had experienced at the Dragon. Part of what makes Harry Potter attractive is that although there are treacherous masters and bullying and some injustice, on the whole the headmaster, not unlike the headmasters of the Lynam family, cares about the boys, believes in them, and supports them. There is a feeling that, in the end, it is a just world where evil will not triumph.

Jamie describes the effect. The freedom of action and thought was very considerable for a prep school I would guess. Action was governed by some rules (but independence of thought was encouraged. I am amazed at the range of activities attempted or on offer, from intellectual pastimes (newspapers, crosswords, chess, good library, science with Gert) to original hobbies and leisure pursuits. There was usually a master (or two) who could help and take you further into any interest if you asked. I don't suppose that I or many of my peers actually made enough of the opportunity. The point is that the staff and opening were there if you wanted them. It was your choice. And I'm sure the Dragons producing its fair share of passionate amateur entomologists and other rare breeds. 'Your choice' might indeed be a good overall description of dragon principles.

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It is difficult to keep order in a boarding school with hundreds of very energetic and rumbustious and, at the least, mischievous little boys. There is a temptation, which teachers in many preparatory schools succumbed to, as described by Dahl, Berners, Orwell and others, to do this through fear. At the worst, they could become, as Evelyn Waugh and others described, like prisons, or even more extremely, as Alistair Horne described Ludgrove, 'a Belsen of the spirit'. The boys were regimented, not allowed to make a noise in the corridors or whisper in prep, constantly checked and slapped down as many of the classic accounts show.

If they disobeyed any of the rules, they were mercilessly beaten or deprived of food or leisure, made to feel both morally sinful and criminally culpable. This is the world which Orwell graphically describes and which, above all, he learnt was unjust, invasive, irrational and cruel.

Orwell, despite his dislike of his father, writes 'Your home might be far from perfect, but at least it was a place ruled by love rather than by fear, where you did

¹ Snow, *Oxford*, 233

not have to be perpetually on your guard against the people surrounding you. At eight years old you were suddenly taken out of this warm nest and flung into a world of force and fraud and secrecy, like a gold-fish into a tank full of pike. Against no matter what degree of bullying you had no redress. You could only have defended yourself by sneaking, which, except in a few rigidly defined circumstances, was the unforgivable sin.¹

Thus he seemed to learn the lesson that ‘Virtue consisted in winning: it consisted in being bigger, stronger, handsomer, richer, more popular, more elegant, more unscrupulous than other people – in dominating them, bullying them, making them suffer pain, making them look foolish, getting the better of them in every way. Life was hierarchical and whatever happened was right. There were the strong, who deserved to win and always did win, and there were the weak, who deserved to lose and always did lose, everlastingly.’²

Orwell was writing about preparatory school in the First World War and things had moved on very considerably. It is in the contrast that the change becomes apparent for this was not my experience at the Dragon. I may have accepted that ‘whatever is, is right’ as Pope put it. But it also seemed to be a generally benign and quite just world. This even applied, it seems, to punishment.

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There was a constant debate in boarding schools about the use of sticks and carrots, physical punishment in particular. The Dragon seems to have emphasized carrots, prizes, praise, little marks of distinction and esteem which I remember in school assemblies, note in my school reports, keep in form prizes and pleased letters from my parents.

Yet there was also the stick, or variants on it such as the slipper, gym shoe, long ruler, bat. Many of the most vivid memories of boys who went to preparatory schools, certainly before the Second World War, are of the humiliating and extraordinarily painful beatings they suffered. I have often wondered recently what happened at the Dragon since, unless I have suppressed the memory, I do not remember ever being beaten or even being physically assaulted in other less extreme ways such as having my hair twisted, board-rubbers thrown hard at me, kicked or punched, by members of staff.

Some light is thrown on this by an overview by Jaques who writes that ‘A graph showing the use of this “corrective” on Dragons over their first hundred years would show a steady decline from the “horrors” of the earliest days.’ He argues that boys ‘have for the most part accepted a visit to the study as the natural sequel to detection in an individual misdemeanour, and more spontaneous correction with the nearest available implement for any tendency towards dawdling in the changing-room, talking after lights-out, ragging in boot room or passages etc.’³

This suggestion of order kept mainly by lesser forms of violence is confirmed by my contemporaries. Philip Steadman told Brendon that ‘It is true that there was a certain amount of “knockabout violence” in the classroom, throwing board rubbers, pulling hair or (on one occasion) breaking a pipe over a boy’s head’.⁴

Jake Mermagen comments that ‘Tubby Haig was the most famous thrower of blackboard rubbers and chalk. Rumoured to have had a plate in his head as a result

¹ Orwell, *Essays*, 443

² Orwell, *Essays*, 443

³ Jaques, *Century*, 43

⁴ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 200

of a war injury, leading to occasional loss of control. I was in his form. It happened very rarely. He was a wonderfully kind and generous man in spite of his reputation.'

Other boys also attest to some beating, continuing at least into the 1970's. Watkins describes how Pa Winter had a system... Three red marks and he'd give you a chocolate bar... But three black marks and he would beat you.¹ Brendon notes that 'One father I met compared his children's experiences at boarding school with his own at the Dragon in the 1970s. Even though he enjoyed his schooldays, he could not imagine subjecting his own offspring to the wealth of whackings...'²

Two things strike me about the system. One is that the old adage 'this hurts me more than it hurts you', seems to have lain behind some at least of the punishment. The Skipper gave his views on the vexed matter of beatings in a speech to parents in 1905. 'I have had a certain amount of correspondence with some parents on the subject of corporal punishment. I believe that boys have been told before they came here that awful horrors awaited them in the study at the School House. Well, all I can say is that I set corporal punishments the subject for an essay to the top thirty-six boys in the School, and that they unanimously expressed their approval of it, as far better than "impots", keeping in, or punishment drill. I am afraid that the essays proved that it was hardly as dreadful as it ought to be!'

More curious is the way in which he continues. 'I do not believe in corporal punishment a bit for really serious offences. I think that these want treating in a very different way, and that nothing but an appeal to what is good in a boy is of any use under such circumstances - but for faults of forgetfulness, carelessness, and repeated neglect of work, it seems the simplest, least hurtful, and most efficient corrective.'

Jamie's comment on all of this is that physical punishment does not figure in my mind as being very common, or some awful constant threat. I was beaten by Joc once or twice in his study, bending over a chair, presumably with a stick, after a serious talking to, for a misdemeanour (erased from my memory!). The whole process hurt, bottom and pride. And I was also got the slipper from Joc in connection with poor form work. I remember doing Latin (I think) translations over his knee. The book was on his (untidy) table, and you looked up and did the grammar or whatever, and then if you made an error down came the hand (or gym shoe, or whatever weapon was being used). I have an impression that no other masters were allowed to beat - it was a house thing or maybe chiefly from Joc as Head Master.

In classrooms I don't remember any other physical punishment beyond a few blows with a ruler, or some kind of strap (?). You had to open your hand to receive them. Then there were a few school-mastery tortures, such as twisting the hair above the ears, or a ruler up the back of the neck for a warning of trouble ahead. But all these were to do with getting form work wrong or idleness or similar, not for matters of wrong-doing.

Alan continues that in fairness to some others, it should be mentioned that beating was not confined to the Head Master. There were several masters who would now have been reported as sadists and who beat several of those who have written to me quite mercilessly, particularly for stubbornness. All I can add is that I cannot ever remember being beaten at the School.

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¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 10

² Brendon, *Preparatory*, 200

The boarding school system was, among other things, meant to teach you how to live the communal life which you would find in an even starker form in public school, and then later, in a milder form perhaps, in the army or in many of the other 'clubs' of various kinds for which England was famous. Brendon notes that 'commentators have stressed the familiarity such a boy will have with the "mysterious internal workings" of English institutions such as the regiment, the bar, the House of Commons and the gentleman's club. Now, as in the past, these can act as a home from home where a man can "live his school life over again", often encountering men he met as boys in the classroom, dormitory or sports pavilion.' As one Old Dragon, William Buchan wrote of the RAF in the 1940s 'I was simply back at boarding school'.¹

Yet the Dragon may have done this in a distinctive way. As noted, in many schools the boys were suppressed, kept in rigid order, told to be absolutely silent in the passage ways and especially in the classrooms during lessons. It is often noted that the boys (and girls) were permitted to be very noisy and exuberant. I remember this during my time, and it was then that in my last term the Government Inspectors came to the school and the 'Term Notes' state that 'The Inspectors had already commented fairly freely on the amount of noise made by Dragons; they now discovered that they hadn't heard nothing yet.' The picture painted in the Wilding's poem was of 'The gravel playground choked with boys, Hopscotch, marbles, conkers, noise'.

Jamie also recalls the noise. I remember a huge amount of noise going on whenever boys were outside at school - especially when the whole school was out. Marbles time in the big yard for example, must have sounded like an oriental bazaar. Tremendous noise also in the covered rink for football or roller skating or hockey with old broken sticks. I think it was sensible and clever of the staff to allow it (and live with it). The school was well isolated from other buildings and houses, surrounded by its own, and far from the general public. Noise on the playing fields 'mucking around' was presumably thinned out by dint of the small numbers in a huge space. When there were just boarders, i.e. evenings and weekends, it may also have been a little quieter - but exuberance was very much the order of the day during breaks and until after school hours, when we calmed down (perhaps exhausted by then).'

Yet Jamie also points out from his vantage point next to a Suffolk primary school that noise was not a monopoly of the Dragon. Yet many of the accounts of other schools of that period or a little earlier tend to show an attempt by the staff to control exuberance. And certainly the school inspectors were surprised when they visited the Dragon.

Finally, even inside the classroom, although there was not too much noise, there was an unusually open discussion. Jaques suggests that 'from quiet early days the atmosphere in Dragon classrooms was, perhaps, somewhat freer than elsewhere, and the listener at the keyhole might hear the voice of the pupil being raised to make a constructive contribution or put a query, not lowered for a hesitant answer to a peremptory question.'² This again may have been the case in some other schools, but certainly not all of them.

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The Skipper realized that little children taken away from their parents might well

¹ Quoted in Brendon, *Preparatory*, 115

² Jaques, *Century*, 44

be lonely, miserable, lost. He attempted to ameliorate this by various devices. One was to encourage links with home. Rather curiously, in his 1908 speech to assembled headmasters he wrote 'We have failed, if our boys are ashamed to kiss their parents in public' and he defended the long school holidays which would mean that, unlike other schools, parents and children could see more of each other.¹ At the Prize-Giving in 1901 he told the assembled parents. 'Our boys have more independence, and less supervision: thus certain Headmasters have expressed horror at the way I let my boys go into Oxford, if they ask me; go on the river; go and see their parents in term-time. "Don't you catch all manner of diseases?" they say. Well, we don't, and I don't believe the boys abuse their privileges; I hate the entire severance of family ties by keeping a little boy three months from his home.'²

The conscious effort to mitigate the severance from home may partly explain why, while I am sure that Robert Graves is right that we returned home 'with a different vocabulary, a different moral system, even different voices', Royston Lambert's observation that 'boarding life distorted relationships and rendered "a family's holiday-time existence unnatural"', does not fit with my experience.³ Because I have so much material both on my school life and life at home, I can check this not only from my memory. I saw these world as parallel universes. One was not 'natural' and the other 'unnatural'. They both existed, just as we had learnt to operate in many parallel universes through games, literature, films and other imaginative worlds.

There is strong evidence for this, in fact, in the letters from and to my parents which I wrote at this time. These letters kept the connection between the worlds very much alive. A description by Paul Watkins of the letters he received from his parents in America suddenly brings back my feelings about receiving letters.

'The only other contact I had from home was in letters. Some days it seemed that I was living from one delivery of mail to the next. At the end of breakfast, Pa Vicker would walk in with the stack of letters and everyone stopped talking. I scanned the stack for the pale blue of an aerogramme ... I kept all the letters, but I never read them twice. It became a superstitious thing...'⁴ As for re-reading them, I think I did re-read them, certainly when it came to answering points made in them. The goings on at home in Dorset or in Assam are constantly referred to and asked after in my letters which suggests that I coped with the parallel worlds quite easily.

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In fact the Skipper founded a tradition which probably worked particularly well with the intellectual and often interlinked middle class families in north Oxford, of encouraging the pupils to be particularly considerate with their parents. At the Speech Day in 1898, the Skipper said "Holidays! Make them pleasant for all around you and then you will enjoy them. Remember the old Commandment, "Honour they father and thy mother that thy days may be long' - I would rather put it that THEIR days may be long!"⁵ This seems to have been an exhortation he made at the end of each term according to Canon Mayhew, an early pupil, who remembered that 'He never preached except at the end of each term when he dismissed us with

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 48

² *The Skipper*, 41

³ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 203; Royston Lambert, *The Hot House Society; An exploration of boarding-school life through the boys' and girls' own writings (1968)*, 204

⁴ Watkins, *Stand*, 38

⁵ *The Skipper*, 43

the injunction to be as nice and kind and unselfish to our parents and brothers and sisters as we could.¹ This of course, was much wider than the Dragon, since it was part of the ethic boarding schools were trying to encourage.

On Speech-Day in 1918 he said 'The changes have all been to the good, and all the good traditions of the boarders have been maintained ...the almost unique (in Preparatory Schools) encouragement of parents to see as much of their children as possible during term-time and so to keep the home-tie strong - this tradition of our school has been carried on. Hospitality to old boys and parents, another traditional feature, has been maintained as far and even further than rations will allow!'² Often a child's parents were abroad or away, so visits or outings to see guardians, surrogate parents or other close relatives, such as grandparents who lived very close to the Dragon in Jamie's case, were also encouraged.

As to the very different experience of the large proportion of the boys who were dayboys, which we did not share, we have given a brief sketch in an afterword.

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It is clear that the Lynam family, and particularly the Skipper, refused to make the normal strong distinction between school and family. This arose out of their own attachment to the School. The Skipper's father was the chief architect of the early buildings and five of his children were associated with the school, including two of the Skipper's younger brothers who were pupils during his time, the Medical Officer for many years and the Skipper's brother Hum and nephew Joc as subsequent headmasters.

Families have wives and daughters as well as sons, so in line with this the Skipper was very keen that the school should include daughters as well as sons. He sent his own daughter 'Kit' to the school in 1896, the first girl at the Dragon, and henceforth, much against the trend of other preparatory schools I suspect, there were always some girls at the Dragon and by the time I was there were a dozen at the school.

This was a deliberate policy. In 1908 in his address to the preparatory heads the Skipper said 'And there is one more point. In this assembly I hardly dare to introduce it, but it is this we see a great deal of boys, but we do not see enough of girls. I believe that the presence of girls in one's school is quite as good for the masters as for boys and for the girls themselves; and I beg of you to consider co-education as a means of making us more human.'

On Speech day in 1914 he noted that 'For the first time a girl' - Norah Jolliffe - is head boy. I have sometimes been, shall I say, criticized for admitting a few very select girls to the School. Personally I have no doubt whatever of the good effects it has on the boys, nor of the benefit that the girls themselves obtain. It is absurd to say that it makes the boys girlish or the girls boyish ... The prejudice against the presence of girls at a preparatory school is merely a silly conventional attitude.' In the Speech the following year he returned to the theme. 'I am more than ever convinced that it is an excellent thing for the School to have about a dozen little girls amongst the boys; and from what whose parents say who have their girls here I am equally convinced that it is good for the girls themselves...'³

Thus began the tradition of there being some girls, including such distinguished future writers as Naomi Mitchison and Antonia Fraser, or academics such as

¹ *The Skipper*, 100

² *The Skipper*, 46

³ *The Skipper*, 32-3

Caroline Medawar or international stars such as Emma Watson ('Hermione' in Harry Potter).

The really curious thing to me, though, is that I can hardly remember the girls. I remember some outstanding ones, like the red-haired Tyrell Gatty, (whom Jake Mermagen remembers playing in the rigger team, until opponents asked that she be dropped) and when I see their faces in plays I recognize them. But I seem to have been, as I was with my sisters at home, more or less gender-blind. They were just other pupils whom one liked, respected or shunned. This of course was a period when the age of puberty was later and I did not reach sexual maturity until the very end of my time at the Dragon. So apart, as I recount elsewhere, of noting the beauty of chorus girls in 'South Pacific', or asking for pin-ups for the Prefects study, I did not really think much about girls as sexual objects.

My experience seems to have been different from that described twenty years later by Paul Watkins whose memory seems a bit faulty. To start with he says that 'There weren't many girls at the Dragon, only a couple who were the daughters of teachers.' I am pretty sure that by then there must have been several dozen, and even his account which describes a small army of girls marching through the school announcing his failures does not fit.¹ When Antonia Fraser was there, twenty years before me, she was not only 'intensely happy' (playing on the wing in the rugby team, among other things) and was one of forty girls in a school of some 400.² My cousin Anna, who was at the school for three years just before me, says that it was a wonderful time.

I also wonder whether Watkins is right in claiming that 'girls were things that belonged outside the school, to the streets of Oxford and to home and to the holiday. Even if there had been many around, we wouldn't have known where to put them.' I put them where I put everyone else - in the various hierarchies of trust, respect, liking which I assigned people to at the Dragon.

I certainly don't recall the snogging, groping, grabbing in the school dance which he describes.³ But then I do not remember ever using what we are told was the common nick-name for them 'Haggis' or 'Hag'. Watkins states that 'A girl was called a Haggis at the Dragon School. You had to call them that, even if you didn't want to.' Peter Snow notes that the school is a 'boarding school with some day boys which also takes girl pupils (interestingly known at first to the boys as "hags")'. What he means 'at first' is not clear.

I can't at the moment find anything about the use of the curious word 'Haggis' in relation to a girl. In one of my letters to my mother I described the ladies looking after me when I was sick as 'Hags' and made a joke about their potions being like the three witches in Macbeth. I suppose I may also have been playing on this term, unknown to my mother. Possibly the school banned the use of the word 'Hag' as derogatory, so the boys changed it to 'Haggis'?³ Jamie cannot remember the use of the word 'hags' at this time, and comments that 'I feel the co-education theme is essentially minor at the Dragons. The Skipper was an enlightened liberal ahead of his time in supporting the notion and principle, but he did nothing to make it a coeducational school in a full and proper sense. No boarding girls for example. The propinquity was actually limited. Girls remained distant objects (which is what co-education aims to alter, especially for boys without sisters).

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 68

² Brendon, *Preparatory*, 124

³ Watkins, *Stand*, 43,68

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My life seems to have been rather innocent at this time. In this I seem to be in line with much of what Brendon found. She mentions the consolations of masturbation, but concludes that 'Generally sex does not loom very large in memoirs of prep school life and still less is it the subject matter of boys' letters home.' Brendon notes that 'An even more hidden aspect of prep schools is the paedophilia for which they could provide ideal conditions and refers to Randolph Churchill's 'Twenty-One years' and Evelyn Waugh's 'A Little Learning'. She further writes that 'There can be no doubt that some prep boarding schools have harboured active paedophiles, although it would be wrong to assume that this was common or that large numbers were affected.' One of the only cases she cites, from another school, is that of my uncle Richard Rhodes James in his autobiography, 'The Road from Mandalay'. She also notes 'Nor did Royston Lambert's survey find much evidence of "sexual deviation on the part of the staff" ...'

One Old Dragon interviewed by Brendon could not imagine subjecting his own children to beatings and to the 'sprinkling ... of dodgy masters', though what their dodginess consisted of is not stated.¹ And Paul Watkins occasionally alludes darkly to 'dodgy' behaviour bordering on abuse. It is only some fifty years later that several people have told me that there was a fairly persistent paedophile in the school. Personally I got on well with this individual and none of his victims, one of whom was one of my closest friends, ever told me about it at the time.

We were assumed to be rather innocent of the facts of life, and this is why the 'Official Sex Talk' in our last term, before moving on to the depravities of public school, was considered both necessary and a big event. Paul Watkins remembers this talk, whose reputation in advance was 'legendary', but which, taken by the female biology teacher, turned out to be a great anti-climax, limp in its contents and even in its graphic depiction of the male member on the black-board.²

*

I had not realized until very recently that there was an official manual of sex instruction for prep schools. According to Richardson it was called *Healthy Boyhood*. 'It began with the birds and the bees and ended up with this sentence: "And if, when you get to your public school, another boy ever tries to get into your bed, report him instantly to your housemaster."³ I would have been shocked to read such a book and we were never shown it as far as I recall. I suspect that Joc would have tossed such literature in the bin.

I do, however, remember that the 'sex talk' was given in the Quiet Room or School Library. It was given by the head-master Joc. I vaguely remember that it was quite calm, low-key, matter of fact and vaguely helpful. The strictly biological side was dealt with by Gerd, the biology teacher, who I seem to remember showed us slides of live sperm swimming along (reputedly his own).

My remembrance of the fact that the sex talk was by Joc, and also the slightly tense anticipation of the event, is brought home by a vivid memory. Joc was going round the room asking whether we could attend at time A or B. A number of boys had answered with the pronunciation of the word 'either' in one way – say 'Ayther'. I then answered deliberately 'EETHER'. Everyone laughed and relaxed a little and Joc complimented me on my humour. It was one of the first times I realized that

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 65, 163, 155, 164, 200

² Watkins, *Stand*, 86

³ Maurice Richardson, *Little Victims; Prep School Memories* (1968), 124

humour could deflate embarrassment.

Jamie writes on this talk that I recall it as a calm and collected warning shot about perils at big school ahead, not about sex generally or girls, but I may be wrong. Perhaps it wasn't quite what speculation before hand had led you to believe, or what it might have been cracked up to be by leavers of a previous term; and thus ended up as something of a non-event.

More generally, Jamie writes that I agree with comments on paedophiles, sex education etc. Is it relevant to the Dragon School experience (and that of other prep schools) that the usual leaving age around 13 ½ is so precisely close to the puberty watershed? The hormones are changing so fast and the development of individual boys so markedly different that it is rather difficult for the school to handle the issue in a collective fashion. Why for instance did prep schools not stop at age of 12½? This probably relates to convenient scales of advantage in administrative, housing and catering costs. All public schools around the country seem to have houses of about 60 boys – five years of approx 12 boys for five years. Thus schools develop in multiples of 60 – near enough 360 or 420? Furthermore, you can't take children younger than 7¾ but you need them there for five not four years for financial reasons if you cannot increase size easily.

DRAGON STAFF

As with other aspects of the education process it is the curious and exceptional which we liked to remark upon. Jamie points out that his and Sandy's letters contain, as would be expected, no assessment of the staff, of our liking or respect for them or of their influence on us. But here and there it is possible to read a little between the lines, and, once again, Sandy's remarks are more open than mine.

There is no doubt that Joc had a tremendous gift at gathering around him people to whom boys could relate. I do not recall many members of the staff today in any detail, but in our letters a general warm attitude towards the Dragon staff emerges quite clearly. There are no negative references either even if the staff came in different shapes and sizes and I recall that some could on occasion be more sharp and acerbic than others.

Those we knew best were of course our housemasters, Yatto and Jacko, then Joc and the staff assisting him in School House such as 'Putty' Barraclough, 'Denny Whiff' Denison Smith, 'Kitkat' Kitson. Then there were the heroes on the games field, the prime example being J.C. 'Minnie' Marshal, Oxford and Scotland rugby player. There were form masters and others constantly active around the school, Dog Wylie, Guv, Inky, Gerd and Bruno, and some less obvious staff members who also made a mark. I got on happily with Plum Plummer, Woodhouse was rather dry but always interesting, and many of us liked Tubby (despite a temper?) and Fuzz Francis of the older generation. Another old timer was Mr Purnell who left in July 53, as Sandy reported, *The[re] was a half holiday on Thursday because Mr Pernell was leaving the school after he had taken PT for fifty years and he is now 73 years old.*

Sandy, as mentioned above, liked the form master he had in March 1952, Mr Chitty, *My games master for hocky is Mr Chity and he tacks [= takes] my form wich is nice.* And there is affection as well as respect Sandy's remark in June 52, *The[re] was a mach yesterday between the 1st 11 and the staff ~ the first eleven won ~ Joc kept wicet ~ and on Friday the staff played a Collage and Mr chitty kept wicet in bare hands. I thought he was not wise.* And in January 1956 he was delighted to

have Guv as his form master, *I have moved up 3 forms to upper 2b. Mr gover takes us and he is jolly good at teaching.*

Of course the staff could not always be perfect and in his first summer Sandy was disappointed with the quality of cricket coaching, *To Daddy !spechly! our gams master duse [= does] not tell us what mistakes we macke in crickit ~ shull I say frome you that he is very bad at teching us for games and how ourt too [= how he ought to]*

The staff brought all sorts of skills, and there was a whole clan of them. As well as classy performers in rugby, cricket and hockey (at which Joc himself was a Blue), two others had apparently rowed for their college at Cambridge. Some staff contributed lectures which seem to have been popular ones. In February 1955 'Spiv', Sandy's geography master, gave a lecture on old castles. In January 1954, there was a lecture on *South Africa by Dog (Mr Wiley)*, and in December 1955 Sandy reported lecture with slides by Pluto the Australian on the Great Barrier Reef, *It was v.v. good and very interesting....Also Mr Potter showed us a short film on Australian football which looks a very good game.* Even former masters could be roped, as in July 1952, *On Friday one of our old masters gave us a lecture on Weather forcast [sic] which was very interesting.*

Staff playing matches in front of or with boys was another winning device, as Sandy wrote in July 1952, *The[re] was a staff mach yesterday and one of the masters took a lovely left handed cach.* Performing themselves on the field enabled staff to make comments to boys that carried weight, as Sandy said, *My games master said that from [2 words illeg.] of my games and I play best at inside left[,] which is very trew.* In addition, the use of the school grounds for matches at senior levels brought another dimension of example, as in May 1954, *The[re] is a ma[t]ch today on our school ground of men[,] Cowdrey's XI v. Mr Marshals ~ Cowdreys xi had 4 players in the univ team (preety [sic] hot) and Mr Marshal 4 masters not quiet [= quite] so good but preety hot.*

Joc was also clever, for instance, in his recruitment of temporary (or were some trial?) staff, many of whom brought special skills, and who for one reason or another might be attractive role models. An Austrian, Siegfried, was present in the icy spring of 1952, *Our Austrian master is really terrific. He says he has skated many competitions and races, He is teaching the Boys ice hockey.* The same term, another new master arrived, *He is an Australian and takes me for geography;* and in July there were apparently two Australians - who naturally enough figured on the river, *I am being taught by 1 of the australian masters the crawl.* And one new arrival in November 1952 stood out for a different reason, as Sandy reported, *a new master just come - he is six foot five and a half inch.*

Also valuable were some consultants brought in from outside such as an Oxford musician, Mr Collinson who taught Sandy the trumpet. In February 1955 Sandy wrote, *the person who is going to teach the trumpet to me, is coming down here at half past twelve to-day. Mrs Senior says that he sounds a very 'D' chap;* and at the end of the month he added, *Mr Collinson is a terrifically nice chap. He is coming down after the service to-day.* Collinson came to the school to join in the orchestra and in July Sandy went to hear him play in a concert in the Sheldonian.

*

A vital part of the Dragon magic was Joc's use of staff in a host of familistic ways which allowed boys to relate to those whose were teaching, disciplining and looking after them term in, term out. Sandy's and my letters home have plenty to say about this informal interface outside the classroom was a cement which held together the

whole teaching process together, especially for boarders. They show a relationship bonded on an equal basis of friends rather than a strictly staff-pupil one. Sandy's straightforward remark in October 1954 shows how perfectly naturally it all worked, *Mr Marshall (Mini) takes me for Rugger, and English.*

Inside games (Kim's game, bobbing for apples, recognition of advertisements, etc etc.) were a popular event on a rainy weekend, They were run by teams, *Mr Britton took clubs mr taylor diamonds Mr Michell took hearts and I have forgotten who took spades.*

Gerd Sommerhoff was the conjuror and ran his band (which jazz critic Sandy thought was rather weedy), and Jacko brought the cap and bells, not only at school entertainments, but also quite informally in Charlbury House of an evening, as Sandy wrote in February 1952, *Last night Jaco who is my our housemaster played on his Youlalaly and sangd songs: Steam boat bill, Grandmother has left the old arm chair and Iven Scavensci skevar.*

Reading aloud was valuable for instruction and familiarising boarders with the literature, but, as in any home, it included an important bonding element. In February 1952 the matron at Charlbury was part of the team who read books in dorms, a clearly popular event, *our Matron is reading a book about Be[al]vers in the rokey[s] of Canada ~ it is great fur,* and again in May 52, *Miss herd our Ma is reading a book of J. Sanda [?= Saunders]. It is very good and exiting.* And in November in School House it was the turn of another good reader, *Yesterday Mr Denison smith read us the story of Scruge and the Christmas currol [sic] it has gosts in but very exiting.* A remark by Sandy shows how these readings could be remembered long afterwards - in this case three and a half years when he wrote in May 1954, *This evening there is a film of Vice Versa ~ in Stradlings House Yato read us the book but we only got halfway through the book.*

*

Different staff members had different parts to play in all of this. I do not know of course how these things were arranged, divided or worked out among them; presumably of the basis of interests, enthusiasms, talents and availability, but to us boys it all seemed so natural. And without any doubt, the staff made the school for us, and I am conscious today of the debt I owe all those persons and others who helped things along at the Dragon. I will try to give a few examples from letters.

In my first term there was an informal concert with participation from staff as well as boys, *This evening there is a concert. J. Chatterton, D. Evers and C Evers are singing with the masters. J. Chatterton was Koko in the play there ~ Mr Yates and Mr Barnwell are singing solos ~ a story about the school rather like Hiawatha.*

There were instances of individual attention and help - which could make a difference to a boarder - or friendly cash tips or sweets as inducements. Sandy wrote for instance in July 1950, *I past my clothes test on Saturday ~ It's when you jump in with your clothes on and swim across the river and back ~ I now get a shilling from Mr Woodhouse my formmaster*

In July 1952 it was Mr Chitty who was paying up for passes at diving tests, *I am diving a lot now and I passed my running spring and middle [tests] and my form master gave me 2 pence because if you pass anething you get a penny.* And in May 1954 Dog Wiley was handing out the pennies in exchange for better length bowling, *Mr Willey said first person to hit [t]he middle stump reasonable length gets the penny and I got both pennys but yesterday.* What could be more avuncular, but did Joc, I wonder, have some coin trove from which to fund these bribes?

There were times when staff came to plain playing in an avuncular role, as when

willing sacrificial lambs for prep school jokes, and Sandy for one clearly felt quite relaxed about passing critical comment about them as in a letter of May 1952, *one of the marsters brothers has just come in ~ he is reading the Sunday times with no interst at all. I went to wen [=one] of the marsters and said 'what does a ship do when it comes into a harbour?'* He said I do not know. I said ties up[,] ancors down and rofles the waves and pulled his tie up stamped on his foot and rouffled his hair. (he laughed).

Or staff might agree to be victims of autograph hunting campaigns, as for Sandy in March 1951, *When the masters sing [= sign] their Autographs the[y] write the name in very posh writing in red or green or purpal or blew ink... Now I have got 3 masters autographs and 3 mistressis ~ some are very good;* or not so willing, as the case might be, as he wrote not long after, *I have got one of the master's autographs wich is very hard to get and only about 8 boys in the school have got it.*

In March 1952 Sandy reported how mistresses too were willing to play along too. *The[re] is a method of macking half a crown out of a penny and now I have 2 and they are just like a ordeary [sic] penny ~ somboody got 50 pennys off[] a mistress like [= ?by] that method of asking half crowns.*

Staff contributions to the rich programme of school entertainments, those bonding events, mostly at end of term and half terms, from firework, picnics and expeditions to indoor games, smoking concerts and parties have been described elsewhere. Members of staff had their own particular roles and responsibilities in all the activities, fun and games. This was of course another of the advantages of the size of the Dragon School; such a range of contributions could not be achieved in small prep schools.

It was Joc and the house-masters, of course, who provided avuncular attention in the houses, the Easter eggs, Christmas pud or the propelling pencils at the Coronation. The house-masters such as Yatto took us out on weekend picnics into the surrounding countryside in our early terms. And as we gradually advanced to more intensive informal activities at school, both indoors and outdoors, other staff made their appearance.

While Brito ran the cine club, and Bruno the plays, it was Mr Dodd for instance who was chairman of the debating society. Several staff helped with the fireworks evenings, or dancing classes. Similarly in other activities, Ticks was the swimming supremo, as Sandy wrote in June 1952, *Bikes have started on the field and Ticks (Mr Hicks, Teddy Hicks, Thicks, ticks) is going to start taking the river's temp,* and it was Dog Wiley who looked after the playing fields and pitches, and would hand out sweets to those who helped him clear the playing fields of twigs to allow proper mowing at the start of the summer term. He was also in charge of snowmen on the playing fields (because you must not leave compacted ice too long or grass suffers, I imagine) as in December 1952, *now the earth is hard as iron but it was the forest [frost] [word illeg.] and we could catch cold. But today (it is Sunday) Mr Willy is organising a very very big snow man for us.* (Note the linguistic reference to the Christmas carol). Dog was also in charge of the playground ice slide.

It was Joc himself who laid out and started the beautiful ice rink on the School House tennis lawn, but masters helped out in the evenings, as Sandy wrote, *from about half past six to about half past nine the masters take turns in flooding it with a howse and the rest of the night it freezes hard. Then in the morning we have lovely smoth ice*

It was Guv who ran the first dance at school for Upper 2b with gramophone records from Linton Lodge, lashings of party food, cabaret turns (*Gerd came and did a funny act with liquid oxygen, which was very funny & Jacko came and sang*

songs and accompanied himself on his guitar) and a dozen girls from Wychwood invited.

The staff of course attended the major half term expeditions. They could watch the boys and Sandy could watch them as at the Guinness Park Royal Brewery in London in November 1954, *Mr Montgomery shod [= showed] us round. There are some wizard gachets [= gadgets]. We saw it from Hops Malt and Barley to Guinness going away in huge tankers. We had tea in their grounds and the masters drank for too long so we missed the train back to Oxford.*

On the outing to Bath and Bristol in February 1954 Sandy went with his form master Putty Barraclough - and sounds entirely like a family occasion, *There were two very good little cars[,] 4 boys in each and a master driving. My form master drove the one I was in. when we had gone seventeen miles we stoped and had two bananas and a bottle of lemonaid by a stream. This stream was so clear that it was lick [= like] a under water photograph and you could see lots of trout swimming about.*

There was no side on the part of staff, and they, like affectionate relatives, were happy to have the joke on them, as when Dog Wiley took a Dragon team on an away match round Rugby School, *We met 12 O.Ds who had left in the last year or so. Then we saw the Classical VI, I think, the very small dark form room with its own library. On one of those desks we found E.A.W. neatly carved. Mr Wiley hurried us away from there.*

And staff playing the fool in front of the boys was always popular, as in the summer regattas, or in the coronation celebrations in June 1953, *The staff played musical chairs. Mr Parnwell won and Mr Gover was second. There was a great amount of cheering and cheering.*

*

There were some unwritten rules, however, and staff participation in certain areas of activities of the boys was taboo, in 'crazes' for example. Thus masters played no part in marbles, conkers or playground games; nor in field games with bikes or torches, or in rink games that I recall; nor in indoor games such as five stones, Dover Patrol. Chess, being a quasi-formal school game, I imagine, was an exception.

On the playing fields staff supervised and organised formal games of course, but often also provided further care or encouragement for individuals while monitoring or joining in - or asked for help themselves, as did Mr Wylie did when he wanted the cricket pitches cleared of debris from trees after the holidays ~ *I have been helping Mr Wylie mow the field by clearing all the sticks away so they do not get caught in the mowing machine - doing that we earned 2 sweets.* It was the same with classwork, and help and encouragement could come from others as well as your own form-master. For instance when Sandy was having difficulty deciding on what subject to give a talk in class in December 1955, he turned Dog Wylie who helped him out, *By the way I made my speech the week before last on 'flyfishing'. Mr Wylie lent me lots of flyfishing tackle and I made a much better lecture than last time.* And I benefited from friendly (and positive) help when I must have been getting out of my depth in discussions after a debate in October 1953, *I had a big argument with a member of the staff whether soccer or rugger is more difficult to play. I said rugger was. In the end he gave in because Mr Wiley and Mr Marshall (Scottish full back) helped me.*

Joc's extended Sunday morning breakfasts for two or three boys at a time - as useful no doubt to him as they were hugely enjoyable for the boys - are described elsewhere, but he treated boys on other occasions in grown-up ways which were

appreciated and remembered, such as in November 1953 after a late evening return to school from Cheltenham, *When we came back we had cider and biscuits with Joc in his study.*

Masters also provided - and boarders were perhaps the ones who benefited most - support for numerous informal games and sports, skating, snowballing, tennis or hard court hockey as well as with formal games and other school activities such as music and drama. Sandy wrote of cricket coaching, *Mr Duchal(?) was co[a]ching me on bo[w]ling a length.* Then there were hockey matches against staff, who had to use walking sticks which were always fun. Gerd Sommerhoff joined in the tennis, although according to Sandy not a natural gamesplayer (*he is not terribly good but has a really really fast service and hits the ball jolly hard*) and there was Sandy's famous game of hockey reported in his last letter from the Dragon, *Yesterday afternoon I played for the 2nd XI v the lady staff ~ it was great fun and v Funny. I will tell you all on Tuesday.*

And staff might join in occasional very informal field games, such as when there was a craze for rounders in March 1953, *Everyone is playing rounders. Masters often play too.* Or it might be a session of rowing on the Thames, as Sandy enjoyed in October 1954, *Today we went on the river with Mr Parnell who is a very nice man about 25. We had wizard fun.*

All these activities and responsibilities accepted by the staff provided opportunities for teaching, supervision and monitoring as well as simply joining in - a wonderful mix of home and school. (It was, naturally enough, the house-masters in the first place and younger staff who were in the front line - the older generation, Hum, Fuzz, or Tubby having passed on the baton). And what is evident from our letters is that this wonderful cocktail of formal teaching and informal joining in with the schoolboys' life, was all mixed up in our mind, just as Joc and his colleagues hoped it would be. I cannot think of any boy who was against it and tried to stand apart.

On the contrary the principles of sharing and participation crossed over into the boarder community itself. The examples of staff-boys interface probably encouraged us, boarders in particular, to support each other in numerous ways beyond merely playing games with and against each other - with points of advice on school learning, in trying out new methods in sports or investigating new hobbies together. In addition those who were in a position to do so, such as Sandy and I, regularly invited different boys out to Sunday lunch or tea or both at Belbroughton Road, a practice enthusiastically encouraged by our grandparents Hone and no doubt supported by Joc and his house-masters. Furthermore, I suspect that the feelings of a 'freemasonry' between boarders which dayboys Tom Stanier and Patrick Lepper noticed, were part of this habit of sharing and caring.

BOARDERS AND DAY PUPILS

The greatest part of 'Dragon Days' relates essentially to a boarder's life at the Dragon. The day factor, however, was a considerable one and here Jamie offers a few tentative thoughts about day-boarder interface as we experienced it at the time. I also refer here to one or two comments from the perspective of a dayboy kindly contributed by Upper 2A colleagues of fifty-seven years ago, Tom Stanier and Patrick Lepper. Finally, I attempt some comments at the end of this paper on the effect on the school as a whole of having perhaps a third of the pupils as dayboys and day girls (less than ten out of a school of 400 in our time).

The place of daygirls is an important related issue. From the very first, there were a few girls at the school, and they continued in our time. As yet we have not been able to locate any girls of that era who went through to the end of the school and are prepared to share their memories, though we have talked to one or two from earlier periods or who went to the school for a year or two. They seem to have enjoyed the school very much, but until we receive further memories we shall leave the question of day girls at the Dragon for further treatment.

Unfortunately we have no evidence from our collections of letters to guide us on this topic, either to day boys or day girls. There are no references in our letters home to 'daybugs' individually, as an entity or in any other way. It would probably be wrong, however, to conclude from this that the differences between dayboys and boarders were quite insignificant. I think they were important; and the intensity of the interface was a complex issue.

At one end, of a continuum, that of formal school teaching, dayboy and boarder lives were closely conjoined. This was the case in class and for all lessons, in formal team games and in school-supported creative activities - drama, music, arts and crafts - although even in this first category there are some variations to note. At formal school functions we were all present, speech days, Remembrance Day service and maybe for an End of Term Service in New Hall, but not necessarily for all Sunday services.

In the centre of the continuum are located some semi-formal, staff-organised, activities which have a high dayboy rate of participation - depending on such things as the timing of the event (close to school hours, or well outside, say on weekend evenings) or the season (after dark in winter, or on bright late summer afternoons). For example, 'Cine shows' were essentially put on for boarder entertainment on winter nights (usually Sunday evenings, sometimes on a Saturday) before the days of television, but were open to dayboys who no doubt attended in numbers depending on weather, other activities at home and so on.

Also relevant again was the level and nature of staff support for the event. Some school lectures came nearer the formal learning end of the continuum - Hugh Gaitskell (OD) speaking on the economy was I expect under a three line whip. Harald Abrahams (OD and sporting hero) on the Olympics was a must. The programme of talks is discussed in detail elsewhere and each would have a different level of dayboy participation. At one end of the scale, some talks were instructional (medieval castles, some geography lectures), others were presented more as entertainment for borders (a talk by a young Australian master on life in Aussie with films of the Great Barrier Reef). In between were talks of a career nature (RAF, Royal Navy, missionaries in Africa), or relating to that holy trinity of Empire, exploration and adventure. Other entertainments were put on almost as facilities for all: dayboys and boarders staff and parents alike, such as the Coronation, Royal events, great moments of British endeavour (for example the Everest expedition), etc., screened on television or film at school, or visited in a down town cinema.

Dayboy participation in activities in this middle zone would of course also depend on personal interests, as is evident from remarks made by Tom and Patrick (who had very different personal interests). For example, Patrick, 'certainly was keen on the Debating Society, and was at one time its Secretary'. Tom came to lectures on cricket, but voluntary dancing was a bridge too far. 'I came to the film shows, and enjoyed them very much. Likewise the odd talk. I remember John Woodcock for instance, as a very young Times Cricket Correspondent, talking about the 1950-51 Ashes tour of Australia. Needless to say, he used slides for illustration rather than film clips....My mother encouraged me to go to the dancing classes, but I was

adamant that I was having nothing of that. My heroes in the Wizard and Hotspur would have eschewed such activities...'

The Chess Club was attended equally by dayboys and boarders, participating alongside each other in competitions, teams and matches. Active membership of the Debating club, the Cine Club (for film making) and Gerd Sommerhoff's Science club was similarly also taken up equally by boarders and dayboys. Gardening or bird-watching 'clubs', on the other hand, were at the other end of the scale, and almost entirely boarder affairs. Voluntary dancing classes were open to dayboys, but again may have attracted a low dayboy turn out being mostly held on winter weekend evenings.

In the world of play, crazes and pursuits carried out in school breaks on the school playground, the rink, or indoors in class rooms, involved equal participation - marbles, conkers, ice slides in winter. For those who were attracted to them, active playground games such as Lurky, Rescue, Bad Eggs were played by boarders and dayboys alike provided time allowed. There may, however, have been less interface in some indoor pursuits, which boarders played mostly out of hours in School House and not so much in the Quiet Rooms or class rooms. These included board games such as Monopoly, Dover Patrol, card games of all kinds, paper games such as battleships, draughts and fox and geese and crazes such as spinning tops, tanks and five stones. In School House there was a billiards table (I only recall billiards, but perhaps snooker was played too) and so far as I can remember this was confined to boarders.

In winter time, there must have been a high rate of dayboy participation in skating at Port Meadow on those free afternoons instead of games, or when Joc gave the school time off. Dayboys may, however, have made rather less use of the skating on the School House tennis lawn (there was not much space). Snowball fights and forts on the fields probably took place in later afternoon, or at the weekend and I imagine they were principally games for boarders.

Outdoor and field games were affected by timing and season - which created a kind of dayboy participation watershed. In summer time dayboys (many of whom came to school by bike) joined in field bicycle play. But in winter time, dayboys (who might not want to travel home after school later in the dark) did not participate in torch and searchlight games. Swimming and river activities were somewhere in the middle of the continuum. There was complete dayboy-boarder interface in swimming relays which was an interclass activity. But long summer days brought other opportunities for swimming or boating which tended to exclude dayboys (although they may have followed their own riverine pursuits at home). Early morning swimming was a School House thing; use of boats was a weekend thing, and just messing about by the river at all times was a boarder thing for hot weather.

An important allied point here is that the headmasters were at pains to avoid artificially creating any conscious divisions (as one would expect). There were matches in all the principle sports and games between dorms and between forms, and even, Sandy reported once, between fair haired and dark haired boys; but there were no matches played between boarders and dayboys. Nor do I recall in ragging - the most informal of all activities - any alignment of participants by dayboys or boarders - be it in hurling missiles (chalk, paper darts, water bombs), or physical toughing up a rival gang. It might have happened by chance when groups of friends on one side of a classroom took on the other side - but I cannot remember any conscious decisions to do so. Pillow fights between dorms, on the other hand, were tribal affairs - involving a strong sense of dorm identity. This kind of tribalism was absent from the daybug-boarder divide.

Some school activities were essentially oriented to boarders - for entertainment (and bonding) purposes. Major half term expeditions were made for boarders; and I do not remember any dayboy participation. (Presumably parents of dayboys also used these half terms if they could for trips away or other family bonding). Small expeditions, particularly in Junior houses, were again boarder affairs. On the other hand everyone joined in the major school expedition to the Festival of Britain in 1952. Similar divisions can be identified in the realm of Dragon music. School concerts involved the whole school, but house concerts were a boarder activity. End of term singsongs were chiefly for boarders, but I think that as war-time years moved away, day boys increasingly participated.

But to what extent were we conscious of all these differences and variations at the time? Such perceptions and feelings are easily lost in the fog of time, but the following factors may be relevant.

Despite the differences in personal interests and lives at Dragon age, and writing separately later, Tom Stanier and Patrick Lepper took strikingly similar views on dayboy-boarder interface at the time. Asked, for instance, whether dayboys considered themselves a breed apart and whether there was any special feeling of dayboy identity, Tom remembered that 'There was no special community feeling whatsoever. It was not that I disliked any of my fellow-dayboys: we were just 200 different individuals.' And Patrick recalled feeling that 'dayboys were a breed apart, but not in a superior way, rather a consciousness that we were a different and rather humdrum breed. Mongrels looking at the pedigree dogs.'

Relevant to the latter perception, it seems, was the essentially more tribal, and hierarchical, behaviour of boarders. Asked whether boarders stood out as being in any way as odd or different, and if so, why, and whether in their view at the time boarders' emotions and development seemed stunted, Patrick remarked, 'They seemed to me to be the cocks of the walk, full-time residents whereas we were only part-time, better known than we were to Joc, Hum and other important figures, familiar and at ease with all kinds of activities unknown to us (or so it seemed). Certainly not stunted, if anything the opposite. Nevertheless, there was no reserve between boarders and dayboys in the same form; I think we all got on well. But to me, there were always occasional, subtle indications that between two boarder friends of mine there would be shared experiences or jokes, say, that were outside my ken.'

Tom highlighted a further intriguing and important point, 'I never thought the boarders were odd or different, and during school hours I had just as many boarder friends as dayboy friends, but there was perhaps a feeling that boarders represented a kind of Freemasonry - there were aspects of their life outside school hours that I had no idea about, and I had a vague sense that Joc cared more about the boarders than the dayboys. As far as emotions and development were concerned, I think we were all stunted not just the boarders! It takes an awful long time for boys to grow up. I'm still trying.'

The tribal behaviour fostered in the boarder culture certainly had elements of freemasonry about it; and represents indeed a key difference between dayboys and boarders. Boarders' lives were lived constantly in hierarchies, by house - with a most important distinction between 'junior' houses, and School House - and then by three 'Suppers' in School House (according to age) - by dorms, with prefects present, even if their powers were very circumscribed, and so on, whereas, as Tom says, 'There was no structure to the dayboy group whatsoever, and none of us dayboys were prefects.'

Tom and Patrick both felt that boarders might benefit from closer contact with

the staff (for example, in receipt of more coaching at games). And the answer is, yes we did; and in a sense this kind of avuncular attention, bonding and supervision was a vital part of the role of staff acting *in loco parentis*. But I suspect that the assistance had more to do with compensation (for absent older family) rather than sporting or other advantage.

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How did boarders see dayboys? We undoubtedly saw them as being different - as the nickname 'daybugs' shows. But the principle and essential difference was one of propinquity. For us boarders, dayboys were not a permanent presence at the school, whereas when dayboys came to school, boarders were always there. Thus it was not that dayboys seemed a different type of person; it was simply that we saw less of them, and they did not figure in our out-of-hours school life. But so far as I can recall no deep feelings or complicated calculations were involved and we accepted that difference quite happily as just a natural part of life at the Dragon.

And yet - somewhere deep down inside I recollect vaguely an awareness of differences. Dayboys seemed to be

- (1) the brainy ones: in the fast stream and the Upper 1 team (not resented, but admired)
 - (a) more culturally aware: au fait with newspapers, politics, social and civic affairs. This may be a false impression relating to the fact that they lived in the town, by definition a grown-up world. And indeed it may be the case that they had more access to grown-up conversation at home.
 - (a) better in debates, public speaking and presentation. Probably because those who bothered to come had natural skills in the arts of rhetoric
 - (b) better at chess than boarders; and better at marbles;
 - (c) but did not participate in all crazes. I do not recall playing board and card games with dayboys (which would have been either in classrooms or Quiet rooms).
 - (a) more connected to the town, appearing on bicycles with lamps through the leafy gloaming of North Oxford.
 - (b) had different pocket money arrangements and therefore wider access to goods, whereas our shilling a week (or was it 6d?) was always hypothecated to sweets from the tuck shop, and special terms had to be made with Joc to draw larger sums for presents or other bigger items.

These thoughts are probably misplaced guesses mixed with ill-informed prejudice. But behind them may lie the truth that boarders tended (under peer pressure) to have a go at everything, and therefore average boarder performance was only fair, whereas the dayboys who bothered to turn up and join in a particular activity, were commonly those who were already skilled at it - say, for chess or debates - and hence the daybug in general apparently put in a better average.

We boarders were perhaps the equivalent of 'the hearties' and (I fear) in a sense more childish, with our traditional games played with fiendish enthusiasm, our messing about and our ragging. Dayboys, where individualism was the order of the day, took perhaps a more intellectual interest in what was on offer in their School surroundings.

I do not recall feeling envious of the home element in a dayboy's life. I was in the possibly unusual situation of being a boarder and yet having my grandparent guardians and what was in effect my second home only two streets away in Belbroughton Road. Dayboys were not part of our 'going out' life on Sundays or

weekends, which was an important feature of boarder life and cemented friendships; nor were they of course part of the round of minor personal celebrations such as birthday tea parties in School House. It was natural for a boarder to have more friends among people of whom we saw more.

Somewhere in all of this is the sibling factor. For dayboys the Dragon could be extended into home life if you had a brother (or sister) at the school, or as Tom Stanier had, a brother a little older who had gone through the school before you. The presence of Dragon neighbours was also relevant, and if you could play, again as Tom and Patrick Lepper did, in a Dragon cabal at weekends and in the holidays you were creating a kind of variant of boarding life.

On the other hand, how did boarders see themselves? I was certainly conscious of strong feelings of bonding and unity with my boarder peers; we became a merry band of men, with a language and shorthand of our own and a common identity moulded by a variety of shared experiences quite separate of those of dayboys. But I do not think this tendency to tribalism was something which consciously excluded dayboys or led us to view them as The Other. If we ever thought of ourselves as superior, tougher or more resilient (than fleb dayboys) I think it was essentially ironic and self-mocking and a natural product of a group of 'hearties' struggling towards some kind of self identification and to find a sense of self worth.

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The most important difference I believe is the one identified immediately by Tom and Patrick: that dayboys were more individualistic while boarders had an enhanced sense of community which itself entailed hierarchical systems and tribal structures to which there were certain pressures to conform. I think that the large numbers of dayboys and boarders at the Dragon had in this situation several important beneficial effects – although we were not conscious of them at the time.

Dayboys were a leavening in our boarder lives. They introduced or encouraged us different activities, hobbies and pursuits. They opened up our boarder society and allowed us to peep over the distant goal posts to horizons beyond.

I think dayboys were probably better drilled at home. There is a parenting aspect here. I know from my own experience as a parent of Dragon boys that boarders, once they return to the home fold (especially if it is overseas), experience something of a see-saw life through the holidays. At first they tend to be spoilt and receive too much attention, complete with cultural outings and sports practice, then they are allowed to run free, (as parents return to work or get tired of spoiling the brats) and finally have to submit to discipline, reminders of class work and maybe even a little holiday prep or homework, before being despatched back to school.

Thus dayboys were possibly more detached and dispassionate about school for being able to see school and home life as extensions of each other. They were less fanatical about the importance of games – which was drummed more into boarders (by peers, not staff) the whole time. And an academic parental background for a few may have had a helpful effect too,

Also important for boarders was that dayboys provided us with a break from constant peer pressure. They rescued us from a hothouse atmosphere which could become oppressive. After sitting next to and having to commune with the same companions from dawn till bedtime, in the dorm, the locker rooms, the dining room, the quiet rooms, it was a form of escape to be able to sit next to a dayboy in class, at games, music or in acting in plays.

Dayboys also brought a whiff of home which was possibly fortifying. The fact that they could escape from school – and where on earth did they do their prep? –

reminded us that there was a life beyond Bardwell Road. And perhaps dayboys' links to the town made going down town less of an awkward or frightening undertaking for us.

In sum I think the close interplay between dayboy and boarder was a very positive factor for both. Also rare and important was the sheer size and scale of the Dragon enterprise with eighty pupils coming into the school each year, 40 dayboys and 40 boarders. Such numbers the school each year (vast, in comparison with small prep schools). brought Joc and his staff huge opportunities to make use of day-boarder interface at its different levels.

Alan and I, and Tom and Patrick, were there at a good time. I suspect that things may have changed a lot since then. The hey-day of 'boarding' (a vibrant form of education for two or three generations from the late nineteenth century) was almost certainly coming to a close in the mid 1950s in the face of so much other societal change. The Dragon today (2011) has 800 pupils, one third girls (including some boarders) and the majority are no longer boarders. The change is significant - but neither to be applauded nor regretted by seventy-year old Dragons. Just one of those things.

THE CEREMONIAL CYCLE

The school had built into it a number of safety valves or ways of diminishing pressure of hierarchy or authority. Any anthropologist familiar with intense, bounded and normally strongly stratified societies based on face to face relations would recognize these cathartic outlets of the kind often analysed in relation to carnivalesque inversions of the social order. Carnivals and charivaris re-affirm the social structure by either mirroring it through rituals, or by temporarily inverting it. These were mixed in with special events which gave something to look forward to and an atmosphere of excitement, even euphoria.

There seem to have been quite a few of these special events at the Dragon and although I don't personally remember any of them in detail, I remember in general that they were hugely enjoyable and I looked forward and participated where I could with gusto. Apart from Guy Fawkes, there is no mention of these events in my letters. Perhaps this is partly because they often took place just before returning home at the end of term, partly because I was not sure how to describe them to my parents. Jamie agrees 'about end of term events and entertainments being missed from our letters because of timings of last letters home. The wonderful sing songs for example. There must have been many other goings-on and escapades, formal and informal - such as boating parties, more dorm midnight feasts?' Indeed.

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Towards the end of term, we would begin to celebrate the coming release from school and the excitement of Christmas in our own way. In my first term it is also noted that there was 'a widespread outbreak of Christmas decorations in the dormitories...' A custom which applied to this, as well as other terms, is mentioned. In the Summer Term of 1953 the 'Term Notes' refers to the fact that 'Only three weeks more now, and in class-rooms and dormitories highly-coloured "Gloats" appear on the walls...' The following Christmas term it again mentions 'Gloats' on classroom and dormitory walls. There was also in Summer 1955 'An outbreak of Form Feasts', though whether this was a new tradition, or applied to other terms, I do not yet know.

Jamie notes in a letter of 30th November 1952 'after tea I went and played in my

form and made a gloat', which suggests that they were made a couple of weeks or so before the end of term. In his letter there is a Sketch of a gloat - showing a window with '17 Days till the End of Term'. Either side of this are sketches of Christmas puddings, crackers and turkey.

He remembers them and writes 'Yes, I, like others, enjoyed making them - but I loved making all sorts of charts (and still do). They were all part of that wonderful build up to end of term, which could give you every now and then a real feel of excitement in the tummy! It was a kind of calendar with dates marked off in (coloured ?) ruled lines and all quite pretty and tidily kept. Did we keep them in desks, or in books or were they allowed to be displayed on the walls? Were we allowed to keep them for the last month, or four weeks or what? I didn't go in for detailed ones (of every lesson or every hour to go) on squared maths paper, but I think there were all kinds of variations.'

At the very end of the Christmas Term there were a number of special events. There was a special sale of various items in the Old Hall, which was eagerly anticipated. The 'Term Notes' for 1950, for example, describe how the End of Term Sale, where people queued and rushed in as the doors opened 'took place, as usual, on the last afternoon of term. It had been agreed that the proceeds of the sale should be divided between the War Memorial Fund, the Leavers' Exhibition Fund, and the Equipment Fund ... A profit of more than £80 resulted from the sale, of which the Ladies' Stall realised over £30...'

There were two sets of Christmas Carols, one a formal Carol service held at a local church, then, in the evening, informal community carols in the School Hall. There was a Fancy Dress Dance, the culmination of a term of dancing lessons for all boarders and most dayboys. This is briefly described in the 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1952.

'So the scene of gaiety, warmth and colour inside the New Hall that evening was in marked contrast to the white desolation outside, a contrast which was further emphasized when the first prize for home-made fancy dress went to a pair of naked savages. The cabaret turn in the interval featured J.M.B. providing the sound effects for the 'Twelve days of Christmas', or, to be accurate, for about seven of them. And at half-past nine, since the dancers showed no signs whatever of going to bed, steps had to be taken to "eliminate" them.'

Jamie wrote a letter, presumably on the Sunday before the end of the winter term 1950, aged nine, about some of crowded end of term events. 'This is my last letter from school this term. I have had my history[,] English, geog, french exams ~ my Maths one is on Monday ~ on Thursday we have a fancy dress party ~ the sale in the morning ~ tonight we have our dorm plays which will be good fun and a semi-house supper ~ today there are carols sung by boys ~ on Monday no prep ~ we have the Home talent as well ~ on Thursday we have speeches ~ today I don't go out with granny and grandpa ~ yester day there was a match[,] the last one this term. We also won 8-0 ~ We also had an impromptu debate ... We don't have reports being the last week of term ~ yesterday on Monday there was a terrific snow storm ~ everything was wite ~ in the evening we had no prep but an hour of fire works in the snow ~ the ground looked beautiful when the fireworks gave a red light then changing colour to blue etc. ~ otherwise we've had very good weather.'

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There was a communal Sing Song, which seems to have occurred at the end of other terms as well. I dimly remember this, and that one of the staff particularly captivated me with his rendition of 'Abdul and Ivan'. I now learn that this was

'Jacko', C.H. Jaques, the author of the 'Centennial History of the School' and 'Term Notes'.

A vignette from a more recent leaver, Paul Watkins, describes how 'On the night before we left, we all crowded into the Old Hall for the Sing Song. The teachers dressed up in their old Army clothes or jammed their butts into a pair of boy's corduroy trousers and made fun of themselves on the stage. They threw sweets out into the audience.' 'This is real topsy-turvy carnival, though there is no sign that we as boys put on a performance to satirize the school and the authorities which I remember from my public school end of term House Concert.

The former Dragon master Bev MacInnes provides another picture of this event. 'The boys and a few girls started off with a selection of well known songs; often with words referring to contemporary events at school. "Old MacDonald", "The Drunken Sailor".... The compere worked the audience into a good mood. After half an hour of singing, then the Sing Song went up a gear to the staff acts.'² MacInnes gives the text of a spoof with Latin interspersed in it. This 'impressed me because no matter how senior and awe-inspiring some of the senior staff were to me, and no doubt to any children as well during the School term, they also positively relished the chance for a bit of slapstick at the Sing Song. It showed that there was no place for pomposity or hubris. This is an essential thing to remember if a teacher is to be a success.'

Later Jacko appeared as a French Canadian Coureur Bois, with a plaid jacket and fur hat, and with his ukulele, played "Olga Polouski" , and "Jean Baptiste and his Doggie". Finally, 'Joc as Headmaster came on to round out the evening. He sang a song about "The School along the Bardwell Road" to his own words and very much reflecting what had happened that term. We then linked hands and sang "Auld Lang Syne" which means long ago, and went off to unwind before bed.'³

Another interesting account of the Sing Song in my time is given by Gerd Sommerhoff. '...on the last night of the autumn and lent terms,⁴ the staff would entertain the boys to a little variety show, called the "Sing Song". It was performed on a rickety stage in the old assembly hall. So that the performers would not have to stand on their dignity (there was not much of that anyhow), no adults were admitted to the audience except other staff. At these occasions I would often play the part of a mad professor all of whose experiments went disastrously wrong.

Now, the Sing Song would be concluded by the Headmaster's Song: a string of ditties sung by Jock, accompanied on the guitar by Chris, a classics teacher. In this song Jock would mention all the naughty things that had happened during the term which he was not supposed to know about: that midnight expedition of dormitory X, or that pint which had been one too many for teacher Y. But, if the crime was mentioned it was also thereby pardoned! One can imagine the boys' suspense before Jock started on his revelations. One can also admire the low cunning of this item. Since the prefects knew that any misdemeanour they might betray to Jock would also be forgiven, they had no qualms about slipping him enough information to give plenty of spice to his song. It was a brilliant way of keeping the Headmaster's

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 48-9

² MacInnes, 113

³ ' MacInnes, 115

⁴ Gerd says that this occurred in the Christmas and Easter terms, while Paul Watkins and the 'Term Notes' state that there was also a Sing Song on the day before the end of the Summer Term.

finger on the pulse of events!’¹ Jamie adds ‘I remember most vividly Gerd’s skeletons – painted in some special UV-receptive material on dark clothes and sheets etc onto which a blueish UV light was shone – and lights went out and they danced and disappeared and reappeared etc.’

MacInnes comments that ‘The legacy of the Sing Song was that the children and staff laughed together. It was not a case of the children laughing at the staff ... self-parody...’ Later, when he had left the school for some years, he reflected that ‘I believe that the Sing song was more important than any of us realised at the time.’ This was because ‘As with the Sing Song, the dancing and the School Dance were a coming together. We were all equals again and it did much to reinforce a feeling for the School and to increase everyone’s respect for it as an institution.’²

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The Easter Term was the grimmest of the year for weather and illness but was rounded off with other festivities. In a letter home of 18th March 1951 Jamie describes some of the events that are in prospect, noting that, *the coming week will be crowded at the end because we have the sing song, house-supper, impromptu debate, a lecture and a cine show.* A week later, on the 25th he gives a fuller account.

To-night we have a masters’ concert with some boys. We’ve had an impromptu debate with 4 motions ~ 2 motions won and 2 lost. We have dorm plays tonight and a party after the concert. This morning we had eggs and chocolate Easter Eggs. On Good Friday we had ‘hot cross buns’ which were jolly good. On Friday there was no work at all. Free afternoon and a service in the morning. On Tuesday we have only 3 periods of work, for me Art, Art, music. Then speeches and reading. Our form are reading from ‘Oliver Twist’. I’m reading Mr. Limbkins’ part. we then have a half. Then a school concert ~ then a ‘House supper’ and a sing-song which goes on till about 10.30 p.m.

At the end of the same term two years later, Jamie wrote on 30th March 1953,

On Saturday we went to a performance of Trial by Jury. It was very good indeed. In our last week of Greek we have been doing Greek history instead of Grammar. Wednesday we played intergames matches. Our 1st XI lost 5-4. On our Sing Song we had the Jazz Club, two poems from masters[,] the new film and another performance of Trial by Jury.

Some of the events are described in the ‘Term Notes’ for my last Easter Term in 1955. ‘As is usual in this term, ordinary school periods continued until 11 o’clock on the last morning...’ Between then and bedtime ‘leavers’ prizes, speeches, walking sticks v. hockey sticks, a concert, a house-supper, a sing-song’ were all fitted in.

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The last term of the year was special, partly because it was for one fifth of the children their last term, partly because uproarious events could usually take place outside, and particularly along the river, as well as indoors. One special event was the leaver’s picnic, when we took strawberries and fruit drinks on punts up the Cherwell and played games and fooled around. In the Summer of 1951, the ‘Term Notes’ describe how ‘The leaver’s picnic up the Cher followed the usual lines, short

¹ Sommerhoff, 83

² MacInnes, 117

oblique ones from bank to bank, the only straight one of any length being the one followed by Tubby overland from the point of disembarkation to the Victoria Arms. A feature this year was a game of rounders between the boys and the Junior members of the staff...'

Another description is of the one I went on in my last term, the 'Term Notes' for 1955 describing how 'The Cher had a bumper season, the adjective being particularly applicable to the closing stages of the Leavers' Picnic.' Jamie's describes this event in his last letter from the Dragon, on 18th July 1954: *Last Sunday river expedition was simply wizard. We rowed up to Easham and then had tea, strawberries and pop and cakes ~ we bathed and then rowed back. There were no unusual happenings, drownings, blisters, broken legs, 2in cuts and crab catchings. Altogether we had great fun.*

There was also the 'Rag Regatta' which is usually described in the 'Term Notes'. That for 1951, for example, is described as follows. 'It is the last afternoon, and a large crowd is assembled at the river, drawn there by the rumour that the Rag Regatta is to finish with yet another show devised, produced, and directed by Gerd Sommerhoff. The show begins; the expected succession of startling apparitions, including an alligator, come round the corner of the Barge, and the spectators are just dropping into their usual 'nothing can surprise me now' frame of mind when round the corner of the Barge comes the Junior Headmaster on a horse - and they find that something still can.'

The following year the theme was 'Invasion through the Ages, and included the cooking of a missionary. The following year, 1953 contains the following description. 'The Rag Regatta developed along the usual lines. J.O.U. carried his female impersonation one step further, and, needless to add, one step too far. All the Australians on the Staff hurtled down the bank into the river on one small bicycle. But "the usual lines" hardly applies to the lines on which a simian "Ticks" swung himself across and above the river with the help of a hitherto unsuspected tail.' In my last year the Regatta features the Staff in a Bathing Beauty Contest - cross-dressing again.

A central organizer of the event was Gerd Sommerhoff, and his description of several of these carnivalesque event is worth quoting. 'The end of the summer term would be marked by different frolics: a Rag Regatta on the river. The climax was always a set piece enacted by costumed members of the staff, and there was never a lack of volunteers, despite the convention that they would all finish up in the river before the show was over. For most of my years at the school I was put in charge of this event, since I was one of the few teachers who did not at that time have exams to correct or reports to write. It gave full scope to the imagination.'

'One year, I remember, I decided to stage an invasion of ancient Britain by a contingent of Roman warriors from across the river. The invaders were to be equipped with a powerful ballista, designed to catapult missiles consisting of rotten fruit across the river at the community of ancient Britons whose menfolk were at the time happily engaged roasting a captured missionary in a barrel over a merry fire, while the wives looked on impassively from their spinning wheels. Secretly, however, it was also arranged that half the missiles would overshoot this target and hit the audience sitting on a slope beyond the main scene.'¹ (Through a miscalculation, the missionaries' feet were actually boiled and his screams were all too real!)

Another year the theme was 'the conquest of the West, with Jock, dressed as Indian chief, another was the Belles of St Trinians (all played by male members of

¹ Sommerhoff, *Consciousness*, 84

the staff)' and 'a mock Royal Tournament at which the Royal Box consisted of two decorated chairs placed on top of the high diving board!'¹

Jamie recalls that 'Greasy pole was the big event, yes? A floating pontoon anchored the other side of the river, with normal river punts and traffic going past behind, and presumably various kinds of entertainment arranged for boys to play invented games. And masters dressed up in funny clothes and playing the fool in the water for our entertainment.'

The Regatta was just the start of the day, for there was then a formal concert. A feast and then a sing-song. In 1953, for example, 'The concert in the evening was so popular that it finished an hour late. The time-lag increased with the House Supper; and after a two hours sing-song it was hardly worth going to bed.'

Finally, there was an event which only occurred once in our time at the Dragon. 'By tradition, every five years 'Trial by Jury' was produced, with the Headmaster as the judge, members of the staff as the learned council and drunken jurors (performed with amazing realism!), and the boys as the bridesmaids.'² This occurred during my time in Easter 1952, and the photographs, particularly of Joc looking slightly amused in an imposing wig, bring back dim memories of the event.

Jamie recalls of this: 'Yes, of course! And enjoyable it was too, and spirited and clever and a success - but I recall it was also all rather grown up and different, and not absolutely our thing. I remember a wood boxes everywhere, and that the play was not as easy as our hum-along favourites. We were of course all Gilbert and Sullivan fanatics. Part of the fun was of course acting in it, or listening to others rehearsing, but with Trial by Jury you didn't get to know the tunes properly.'

As we left the school, there might be some final last act of defiance and subversion. I don't remember any myself, but the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1954 mentions that 'In the last few days one expects some piece of somewhat eccentric behaviour on the part of those who are just about to become O.D.s, and this term was no exception.' This took the form of some pyjama-trousers on the School flagstaff.

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Yet, in a way, Old Dragons never left, especially if they died in an heroic way. It is worth briefly considering one final unifying part of the ceremonial cycle, the Remembrance Day service at the Cross on the playing fields. These Remembrance Day services for the memories of the death of distinguished Dragons, several Victoria Crosses amongst them, were largely occasions of sadness rather than the extolling of military valour. The attitude and feelings are caught in the poetry of two Old Dragons of an earlier period.

John Betjeman wrote:

'Before the hymn the Skipper would announce
The latest names of those who'd lost their lives
For King and Country and the Dragon School.
Sometimes his gruff voice was full of tears
When a particular favourite had been killed.
Then we would hear the nickname of the boy,
"Pongo" or "Podge", and how he'd played 3Q

¹ Sommerhoff, *Consciousness*, 83

² Sommerhoff, *Consciousness*, 82

For Oxford and, if only he had lived,
 He might have played for England - which he did,
 But in a grimmer game against the Hun,
 And then we'd all look solemn, knowing well
 There'd be no extra holiday today,
 And we were told we each must do our bit,
 And so we knitted shapeless gloves from string
 For men in mine-sweepers, and on the map
 We stuck the Allied flags along the Somme;
 Visited wounded soldiers' learned by heart
 Those patriotic lines of Oxenham
 What can a little chap do
 For his country and for you -
 "He can boil his head in the stew",
 We added, for the trenches and the guns
 Meant less to us than bicycles and gangs
 And marzipan and what there was for prep."¹

*

The emphasis was on sacrifice - on repaying the sacrifices of those who had died in two world wars that we might live. Each Memorial Day when we were at the Dragon one or two boys would read 'The Trust' by C.A. Alington (later headmaster of Shrewsbury). Neither Jamie nor I remember this reading, but it was clearly important at the time.

'THEY trusted God - Unslumbering and unsleeping,
 He sees and sorrows for a world at war,
 His ancient covenant securely keeping,
 And these had seen His promise from afar,
 That through the pain, the sorrow, and the sinning,
 That righteous Judge the issue should decide
 Who ruleth over all from the beginning -
 And in that faith they died.

They trusted England - Scarce the prayer was spoken
 Ere they beheld what they had hungered for,
 A mighty country with its ranks unbroken,
 A city built in unity once more;
 Freedom's best champion, girt for yet another
 And mightier enterprise for Right defied,

A land whose children live to serve their Mother
 And in that faith they died.
 And us they trusted ; we the task inherit,
 The unfinished task for which their lives were spent;
 But leaving us a portion of their spirit
 They gave their witness and they died content.

Full well they knew they could not build without us

¹ From Betjeman, *Summoned By Bells*, 44-45

That better country, faint and far descried,
God's own true England; but they did not doubt us —
And in that faith they died.¹

The reading of this poem helped create the mood celebrated in another Dragon poet's lines about the Remembrance Day service, in 'No Ordinary Sunday' by Jon Stallworthy.

The second and third verses are as follows.

A granite cross, the school field underfoot,
Inaudible prayers, hymn-sheets that stirred
Too loudly in the hand. When hymns rang out,
Silence, like silt, lay round so wide and deep
It seemed that winter held its breath. We hear
Only the river talking in its sleep:
Until the bugler flexed his lips, and sound
Cutting the fog cleanly like a bird,
Circled and sang out over the bandaged ground.

Then, low-voiced, the headmaster called the roll
Of those who could not answer every name
Suffixed with honour - 'double first', kept goal
For Cambridge' - and a death - in spitfires, tanks,
And ships torpedoed. At his call there came
Through the mist blond heroes in broad ranks
With rainbows struggling on their chests. Ahead
Of us, in strict step, as we idled home
Marched the formations of the towering dead.

This reflects the first and second world wars and there was nothing in my time similar. I did, however, mention the Remembrance Service in my letters, for instance on 2nd November 1954 writing to my mother that 'There is a service on the field in commemoration of the two world wars and it was poppy day the day before yesterday, and Guy Fawkes day was yesterday.' I also noticed the tears in the voice of the Skipper's son Joc, but this was for the departure of the King. On 11th February 1952 I wrote home that *Jock made a very good speech on the day the king died and he was nearly crying and he was faltering. And lots of people were crying.*

*

Jamie comments on these Remembrance Day services: 'Yes, certainly a notable occasion, with lectures in preparation for the occasion from Hum (?), Fuzz or the elderly who knew what it meant. They must have explained it well and got over the point across. I recall being quite moved and thinking it was important.

I had lost three great uncles (covering both sides of my parents' families) in the first war, and one parental (submariner) cousin in the second war. I also had one uncle twice wounded and a godfather badly wounded in the second war. I suppose

¹ From *Valour and Vision: Poems of the War*, ed. Jacqueline Trotter, (1920), 120

the Oxford grandparents reminded Sandy and me about these too - which must have added poignancy later on.'

4. PASSING THROUGH

The School House to which we moved after a couple of years. The tennis lawn in the foreground was the scene of winter skating. The boy's room for singing in the evenings is on the ground floor, left.



PURGATORY: ALAN'S FIRST THREE YEARS

I do not recollect my departure from Broadstone for the Dragon in September 1950, though the moment is caught in a photograph [in a previous chapter] which shows me in my Dragon uniform, with my suitcase, and accompanied by my grandmother. We are standing in the drive of 'By the Way', presumably in later September, from where I will proceed to Broadstone railway station, then to Paddington and on to Oxford. I am wearing the dark blue uniform, a tie, long socks and lace-up shoes and a rather apprehensive smile.

The next three months are a blur. I do not remember the details of the reception I received or the misery, except for some mild 'hazing' or initiation rituals involving being made to jump off chairs blindfold and so on. The only external account of myself is that by my mother, quoted in the long letter, quoted in an earlier chapter, at the end of my first term. So here I will stick with the objective, outside, world of formal reports and classes.

*

The class was allocated on the basis of classics. There were six classes in the Lower school, seven in the Middle, and ten in the Upper. I seem to have gone in at the second to bottom, Lower 5. I was taught by Mrs A.T.Owen (Ma Owen), whom I remember as a rather kindly figure and who first presented to me the shocking complexities not only of a foreign language, but one with so much grammar. We were, I believe, taught out of Kennedy's 'Latin Grammar' (which we modified to 'Eating Grammar'), though it may also, or instead, have been from L.A.Wilding's 'Latin Course for Schools', Wilding being the senior Latin master at the Dragon. I vaguely remember the puzzlement of having to decline and conjugate verbs, the effort of learning 'Amo Amas Amat Amamus ...' the rest escapes me. Yet the first report I have, the fortnightly one written on October 7th by Mrs Owen, states that in a form of 16 I was equal 10th and had made 'A satisfactory start'.

In all other topics we were in sets, numbered from A to E, and with five divisions 1 to 5 in each. I was in E3 for English, and was equal fifth. Mrs Owen described for English: this was 'Good, intelligent work'. In French I was in the same Lower 5 class and there was no placing. The comment by BD was 'Satisfactory'. My best subject was mathematics where, although I was in E5, the lowest class, MPS noted 'Good work' and I was equal first out of 13.

I have preserved no more fortnightly reports for this term, but do have the termly report in December 1950 when I was aged 8.11. I was absent for no days, so my health seems to have been alright. In Classics, a month above the average age, I was tenth out of sixteen in term marks and fifth in the exams - amazing that we were already doing exams! Mrs Owen commented here that I was 'A quiet little person, who promises well - he is an excellent examinee.' In English I was again a month over the average age and was seventh out of sixteen and second in exams. Mrs Owen noted - 'Good - v. keen and interested in all he does'.

In Geography there is as yet no set given but I was 5th and it was 'A good terms work' according to J.W. In French, however, I was 15th out of 16 in both marks and exams, and it was commented (and emphasized in the headmaster's red ink) 'Slow progress: more effort please'. In Divinity I was 'keen and accurate', again according to Mrs Owen, and in Biology there was 'Very neat and accurate work' according to EAB. Mathematics was the best in certain ways. In Set E4 out of fifteen I was equal third in marks but only equal sixth in the exams. RCM (whom I recall as Mrs Mumford) wrote 'A very good term's work with a disappointing drop in the exams.'

My housemaster, L.C.Plummer, wrote he 'Has settled down very well' and the Junior headmaster, Joc Lynam wrote 'Mostly *good* work.'

Although dealt with elsewhere, it is worth noting in this most important of terms, with its negative portrayal by my mother, that my art and handicrafts were reported on encouragingly and that I played rugger 'with incredible dash'. It does not seem to have been as gloomy as I dimly remember.

*

I have one fortnightly report on 1st March 1951 for this term. I was first out of 14 in Latin and Plummer commented 'Well done!' I was ninth out of fifteen in English, which was 'very fair'. My Mathematics was 'Satisfactory work' and I was 9th out of 16, and 8th out of 16 in French exams, with 'Satisfactory progress'. The headmaster commented 'Good'.

At the end of my second term, in March 1951 when I was 9 years three months, the termly report showed that I had been quite ill, absent for 13 days, by far the largest number of any term at the Dragon. I had caught both 'flu and chicken pox, as described in more detail elsewhere.

The report in general was a considerable improvement on the previous one and my mother's return from India and the Christmas holiday, the first together for three years, may have helped.

I was up one class in Classics, in Lower 4, and my age was just one month less than the class average. [NB. Class sizes in this and previous term were 15-16 - presumably less than half what they would have been in a State school] There was no exam this term, but I was equal tenth out of 15. Mrs Mumford wrote 'He has at last realised that there is real satisfaction to be gained from work well done. Some pleasing progress latterly.' She also taught me English/History (the reports always came together for these subjects) where I was up a set in E2 and was equal eighth out of 15 and in English my 'Written work shows marked improvement' and 'Some good History results'. She also taught me Mathematics in the same set as before, E4, where I was now equal first out of 16 with 'A term of very good progress'. I had 'worked well' in Geography and in French was up a set in E2 where I was 9th out of 15 and there is the comment that 'He has gained self confidence and made good progress'. Mrs Mumford also taught divinity where I was 'Good' and in Biology it was 'Very good work'. The housemaster commented 'A good term. He is coming on well, and the headmaster wrote 'Alan has come on admirably all round.' The fact that it was the soccer term, where I was 'keen and skilful' may also have helped.

Then came the school holidays. At the end, on 24th April my mother wrote *This week I've got to get Alan cleaned and mended up for school and his trunk off in advance quite when I don't know!* Five days later on 29th she wrote of my imminent departure.

'... it was all great fun but tiring and I'm quite glad the holidays are drawing to their close! I shall hate saying goodbye to Alan and he is already saying "Oh how fleb, the hols are almost over" every few minutes ("fleb" is his favourite expression, meaning everything that is awful, as opposed to "beefy" which is usually applied to himself!). I shall miss him so much, he is more of a companion to me than the girls are yet. And is a very affectionate little boy, although terribly irritating at times!

In the same letter she wrote. *I've been washing and mending and sent Alan's school trunk off yesterday so it's all been quite hectic but of course I love it and*

so far haven't started hay-fever and am feeling pretty fit. Alan goes back to school the day after to-morrow, Fiona to-morrow and Anne on Thursday and after that I shall have a gorgeous clean up, the house is in a fearfully mucky state.

On 1st May my grandfather noted in his diary 'Saw Alan off to school'. On the 6th my mother wrote a revealing piece about the tension between holidays and school and some of my character at this point.

Alan went off on Tuesday, very cheerfully I was glad to see. I think he was quite looking forward to being among the "chaps" again. Monday, his last day, was not a great success. It was a miserable day so suggested we spent it quietly at home and after I'd washed up lunch we took "Dominoes" and "Snakes and Ladders" by the drawing room fire and he and Anne and I settled down to what I hoped would be a cosy afternoon. However after a couple of games it ended in a shambles, Alan stalking out with much door-slamming and threats never to come back. Anne and I left feeling rather flat and cross. Alan simply cannot lose at any game and cheats at once if he is. I can quite sympathise (as you know!) when his eyes fill with tears because he can't throw a six - but feel he mustn't be allowed to get away with it all the time. Don't you agree? I felt miserable that his last afternoon should be spoilt and to round it off he climbed on the kitchen table and knocked down (and smashed) a bowl of batter which I had prepared to make pancakes for tea and I was very cross about that too! Poor Alan, now of course I miss him terribly but really I think it was time for a bit more discipline. I hope I haven't given you the impression that he is an unpleasant character. He is a typical small boy I fancy who needs a good belting now and then and definitely a father? Anne and I took him by train to Bournemouth station and he didn't seem at all worried at the thought of the 3 and a half hour train journey. He was well supplied with comics and would have lunch to break the monotony. He was looking so well when he left, fat rosy cheeks and his hair bright and curly. When I take him out from school he has dark lines under his eyes and the little hair they leave him is plastered to his head and he looks awful. I'm just warning you! Daddy gave him a 5/- tip and just before he left he pressed it into my hand and said "This is a parting present 1/8 each". I was truly touched, particularly as he just loves money, but of course couldn't take it - but those sort of little gestures of his melt me absolutely.

On 23rd May my mother wrote

I must write to Alan now. I enclose his first report, thank goodness he has your ability to do sums. His letters have been a couple of scrawls saying when is half term and the end of term and could I send him a tennis ball and some lemonade powder! On 6th June my mother wrote I heard from Alan yesterday, six riddles and the startling news that they were wearing Aertex vests! He seems happy though.

Even in the middle of this term, before my father returned, my mother was gearing herself up for another departure, writing on 17th June as follows:

A pity we have to go back to India on Jan 1st as the school holidays won't be over and even our Christmas will be overcast and the whole of the last precious couple of weeks with Alan taken up with cleaning and packing. Could they

possibly put it off for a couple of weeks, then Alan will be back at school and the parting not so unbearable for either side. A little thing but would make all the difference. Could you ask darling. I expect Cappie could fix it.

There are four fortnightly reports for the summer term which I shall give in a little more detail as my copy of the termly report for the summer term is missing, though I do have the 'Draconian' summary of the term. In Latin I was in the same class of 16 and was 8, equal 8 (twice) and 9th. I note that a number of the boys in this class later went on to win scholarships to top public schools and I was above a number in lower classes who later overtook me. In English/History I had moved up to set E1 and was around the middle of the class. The comments were 'Some improved written work. Come on well.' 'Most satisfactory', 'A very good essay. History less good' and 'An all round improvement. A big effort in the exams please.' Both subjects were still taught by Miss Mumford. In French there was no placing in the fortnightly reports but I ended up equal 15th by the end of term. I made 'a fair start', was 'V.fair', 'improving' and 'V.fair'.

Mathematics was again my best subject. In the first report by MHB I was up two sets into E2 and was equal first out of 17 with the comment 'Very good'. The next week I was back with Mrs Owen but up one set to E1 where I was equal eighth out of 17 and 'Quite promising'. I ended up the term as equal eighth. The headmaster's comments were 'doing well' and 'good' three times. It is worth noting that the amount of care taken to report back with these fortnightly reports sent to our parents with our letters is rather impressive.

There was no housemaster's report on the fortnightly reports, but my headmaster commented that I was 'doing well' and then 'good' in the next three reports.

I was clearly aware of the high standards of the school, noting in an undated letter in the summer term 'We had no prep on Monday because there was seven scholarships 1st 9th and 14th at Winchester 1st at Eaton 4th at charter house and a few other ones.' The first scholarships at Eton and Winchester were special and were noted in the 'Term Notes' as leading to 'unconditional no-prep' and described in the 'Century History' of the school as follows. '1951 will always be remembered as The Year of the Double Top, when the first place on the Winchester Roll was won by John Dunbabin and on the Eton Roll by Luke Hodgkin.'¹

*

My father took me back to school for my second year on 24th September 1951, according to my grandfather's diary. This was the only time he took me to school in my time there. I wrote a couple of weeks later from my first house, 6 Bardwell Road, on 17th October: *Dear mommy, I hope you are very well. Actually there are 6 new people in our house and one of them are in our dorm....* That term there are a couple of letters from me, which will be worth looking at for the handwriting, and several from my mother who spent some time in hospital being tested for tropical diseases.

There are two fortnightly reports which talk of 'a very fair start', 'some good work', 'good progress' and so on. I had now moved up to M7, that is middle seven. My form teacher was also my housemaster, Mr Plummer. I was clearly fit as I missed no days during the first term. In Classics I scraped along. Plummer wrote,

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 192

'Very fair. He could have done much better with a little more effort'. Likewise in French it stated 'Takes things much too easily. Is capable of good work when he really tries.' In English and History, 'Has come on well in history'. Likewise in Geography 'Good steady work'. I was also taught by Plummer in Mathematics I had made 'Good progress'. Both my divinity and science were satisfactory, and my housemaster's report was 'A good term' and the headmaster wrote 'Much good work. Some improvement will be hoped for in certain subjects'.

At this time my parents were still both at home and I was looking forward to my first family Christmas with both my parents since India, but no doubt also aware that they would both be leaving again at the end of the winter holidays.

After Christmas my parents then left shortly after I went off to school. On 18th January I wrote to my grandmother

Dear Granny, Please could you tell me what the Adress is of mummy. I hope this letter gets to you in time. And will you tell mummy that I have got one of her yellow gloves lots of love to mummy the girls daddy. And lots of love to you and Grandpa Love Alan. And pleas when you right tell me wether Ordanary envelopes are allright.

A few days later I wrote again *Dear Granny, I hope you and Grandpa are well I should think this letter will be After mommy has gone off. I am enjoying school Already and the days are much quicker now.* A couple of days after this on 22nd January my grandfather noted in his diary 'V sees Iris and Mac off in Billy's Car'.

*

In the school reports for the next term and a half there are signs of a diminution in my effort and energy. It is true that I was ill for 7 days in the term, and one of my mother's letters refers to this. On 3rd March 1952 she wrote *Thank you for your letter this week, but we were sorry to hear you'd been in bed a week, was it your cold or something else? I hope you're quite alright now.* But this may not have been the root problem.

I was still in Middle 7, but had moved up in sets in all other subjects and may have been pushed beyond my level. In Classics I did 'Variable work. When he really tries hard he does quite well'. In English 'Rather colourless work and lacking in drive'. In French 'Has done some satisfactory work - but more effort and perseverance are still necessary'. In Mathematics 'His work is good, but he is held back at present by being so slow in his written work.' All this suggests a loss of impetus and even in art I was 'still using weak colour'. Games were fine as was science and geography, but even divinity was only 'very fair'. On the other hand the housemaster was enthusiastic 'A very good term', though the headmaster noted 'Moderate results. Alan must *go hard*'.

On 30th April I wrote to my parents, *I am writing this Just before going to school robert is taking me to Watrloo and he will put me into the Oxford train at paddington.* My uncle Richard took me out once this term, my grandfather noting on 2nd May 'Richard takes Alan out at Oxford', and again by my grandmother on 28th June 'V goes to Oxford to see Alan'. I do not recall these visits, nor the journey home at the end of term, when I arrived finally at Broadstone where on 24th July 'V fetches Alan from Broadstone'.

The summer term started well with a fortnightly report on May 17th where I came second in Latin which was 'A most encouraging start'. Other subjects were satisfactory and 'mostly good'. I did not miss any school this term. The results and

reports suggest a slight improvement.

There is a little evidence that, perhaps as the effects of my parents leaving home began to be offset with the plans being discussed for my visit by air to them in December, I began to pick up. In French there was 'A considerable improvement during the latter half of the term - reflected in a good exam result.' The housemaster thought I had had 'A very good term', but the headmaster wrote 'Results at present moderate. We hope for a "big push" next term.'

This conclusion at the end of my second year suggests that the school recognized, as my mother had, that I had potential, but I was holding back, something very different from my performance in games.

*

On 22nd September 1952 my grandfather noted 'Alan leaves for school' and a week later on 28th September I wrote to my mother *I am in school house know and I am in a dorm called Auk some of the other ones are Doddo, Phenix, Levaiten, Bearmoth, Icksorias, emu, unicorn, Ptrodactyll*. It seems to have been the pattern to spend a couple of years in a junior house with twenty or so boys, and then, in the third year, to move to the much bigger School House next to the school. This was, as I recall it, a great improvement in my social life and I already began to feel I was moving up the school hierarchy and was now directly under the eye of the Junior Headmaster, Joc Lynam and with a new school matron whom I think was motherly and protective.

Even before I left for school I was anticipating with excitement the trip by air to Assam which I would take after the end of term. On 19th September I wrote to my parents. *I am getting excited about my trip to India. How nice it will be to see you all again. Best love to you all Alan*. On 12th October I wrote *We have had thick frost here and I expect we will be having snow quite soon it is only about another 6 weeks till the end of the term, and it goes quite quickly*. A week later on 20th I wrote *Dear mummy and daddy it is only a very little time till I will be seeing you again*. And then, just before the end of term I wrote on 7th December *There are only 9 days untill the end of term so I will probably arrive about a week after this*. It looks as if I went straight to London from school, for on 16th my grandfather notes 'Violet leaves for London' and the next day 'Alan flies to India'. [I went alone as my sister Fiona had gone back with my mother the previous January]

My first fortnightly report for the Christmas term on 4th October showed that I had moved up from Middle 7th to Middle 3rd. This was a class run by J.D. Briton whom I vaguely remember as a pleasant teacher. He noted 'A satisfactory start'. In Mathematics I had only moved up two sets from C4 to C2 and was next to bottom at number 17 - which was only 'Fair'. In French I was only up one set to C4 and was equal ninth out of 17, 'very fair for a start'. In all, the headmaster thought this 'Moderate'.

The end of term report, when I was 10 years 11 months, shows that I had missed no days through illness. I was three or four months over the average age in Latin class and in all my sets. My classics report was again weak. 'With more effort, he would make the progress, of which at intervals he shows himself capable.' In Mathematics 'He is rather slow and appears to find the work difficult.' In French I was 'Quite good - and with even more care over his written work he will become much better.' My Geography and Divinity were 'Satisfactory' and my Science, with Gerd Sommerhoff for the first time, was 'Good'. My only real improvement was in English. Joc Lynam as housemaster commented 'Coming along well', and the

Senior Headmaster A.E.Lynam 'Moderate success in school work'.

*

I arrived back from India, flying by comet, on 15th January and was met by my grandmother. I probably went straight to the Dragon as my grandfather notes on 22nd January *parcel of Alan's clothes to matron*, presumably because they could not go in my school trunk. Certainly by the 18th, three days after I arrived back, I wrote from the Dragon *I am in the same form and dorm but I have moved up to 4th from 6th in soccer.*

I was clearly looking forward to the end of term, writing on 1st March *Dear Mummy and Daddy, there is only about four more weeks until the end of the term.* Two weeks later on 15th I was more explicit. *There is only about 13 more days until the end of term and I am getting very excited.* But it seems not to have been too bad a term, unless I was keeping up a brave front, since I wrote on 25th to my parents from home that *It was nice getting back to By-the-way after a very pleasant term.*

There are no surviving fortnightly reports for this term, but that of March shows that I was doing well in all subjects except the crucial one of Latin. Even the housemaster, Joc, commented that though I was 'Coming on well', 'He must go very hard at his Latin.'

Most interesting is the report on English where the effect of going to Assam might be behind part of the change. Although I was only 11th out of 17, the report was 'Very satisfactory. Lately I have been much delighted by the vividness of his essays.' It will be interesting to see whether the vividness of the quite large numbers of letters that survive for this period shows a significant change.

There was then an Easter holiday and my mother, remembering her own school days, wrote towards the end of them in commiseration on 24th April. *Darling Alan, No letter from you this week, perhaps you've been too busy! I suppose you're beginning to think of the end of the hols now, depressing thought, but the summer term is the best really isn't it?* I wrote six days later on 30th later quite cheerfully. *This is the last day of my holls... I have got a new cricket bat to take to school and a new watch wich is lovely... My grandmother's comment, appended to my letter, is revealing. He comes back from school so mute and quiet but returns to his own cheery - even cheeky - self and he does look grand.*

On 3rd of May I wrote with a picture of my new dormitory and the placing of my bed in it, as follows: *I have been at school for 2 and a half days so far. I am in a dorm called Pheonix wich is a big dorm and I am having jolly good fun.* I suffered an accident shortly after as I wrote on 18th May that *I have been off games for a week because I was hit on the eye by a cricket ball.* Since I missed no days of school this term, it was clearly not too bad.

*

The big event of the term was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth on June 2nd. I remember this as traumatic for a strange reason. I had a box brownie camera and lent it to a bigger boy who said he would take some photographs of the procession to which he was going. When I received the prints they were totally hopeless - I have one or two still which just show a few heads. He kept asking me how they were and I was too ashamed to admit they were terrible - a farce that went on for some weeks as I tried to avoid meeting him in the playground. This has remained indelibly with me - along with the dispiriting photos.

As for the lavish events of the day put on by the school, I can't remember anything. They are described, however, in the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1953 as follows. 'The day began, decently late, with bacon and eggs and a Coronation pencil

all round. And for the rest of the morning the television screen in the New Hall was the focus of attention, and in excellent focus too. And a good many of us were soon feeling a little uncomfortable about the lukewarm, or even hostile, reception given to television on its arrival last term.' Further excitements included an 'Emett train', and 'an evening party in the New Hall, including musical chairs - an elongated fiery Dragon along the river bank and fireworks - finally a hot sausage on a stick on the way to bed, and the unusual experience of saying 'Good morning instead of Goodnight...' It is strange to me that I do not even remember the special hot sausage. Nor do I remember the events, fun fair, fete, bicycle games and other excitements described in meticulous detail in a number of articles in the same issue of the 'Draconian', and illustrated with a series of photographs.

My mother wrote about this event on 5th June. *Darling Alan, So the excitement is over, and everything back to normal again I suppose - here we haven't felt it the same way but we managed to get all the commentaries on the wireless, not the same as Television which must have been wonderful... That seems about the lot darling, no letter from you this week, hope all is well, I expect there was too much going on. Send us the pictures of the Coronation if they come out. Lots and lots of love, Mummy x x x x'* I am glad that she added 'if they come out'!

None of my letters for this June have survived, but on 2nd July there is the first reference to school exams. I wrote *There are only eight more days untill we go home. We have done the science exam and the Geography exam.* I also have my first school prize beside me, for 'Middle 3 for Recitation', signed by Hum.

*

I arrived home, according to my grandfather's diary, on 21st July, and my school report arrived either with me or slightly later. I shall examine this report below, but it is worth noting a real delight on the part of my mother that, at last, I seemed to be picking up. On 13th August she wrote *No letter from you yet these hols, but I know you've been very busy one way and another! We got your report last week, very good, Daddy and I were thrilled and Daddy promises me he is going to write to you about it to-morrow. Jolly good show.*

The final term report when I was aged 11 years six months showed that I was not away ill. In Classics 'He has not found the work easy, but has made splendid efforts'. In English and History I was 'Very good. One of the most enthusiastic and improved members of a goodish set'. In Mathematics I was first in both term and exam marks and the report was 'Good, steady work. Well done!' In my letter on 6th July I had noted *We had the Ned Bathew wich is a maths paper and I got 77/100 I was =35 out of three hundred.*

In French, likewise I was first in both term and exam marks and was 'Excellent!' Only in Science was I now only 'Quite good' and even 'Weak' in Geography. The housemaster wrote 'Does well in his quiet way', and Hum wrote 'Admirable work and progress'.

This is indeed by far the best report I had received so far at the school and the first time that I was coming top in one or two subjects. After a real struggle with both French and Latin I was increasingly able to master language and grammar. I really seem to have pulled up. I suspect that at this time the school still had hopes, after three years, that I might be in the upper stream.

PARADISE: ALAN'S LAST TWO YEARS

I returned for the start of my fourth year at the end of September and wrote to

my parents on 27th September, *Dear Mummy and Daddy, I hope all is well out there. I am back at school now. I have moved up two forms And I have moved up 5 sets in maths, English, French. I am in 3^d game. I am in a new house called Gunga. And my dorm is Hugh Sedgewick.*¹ My good progress in the summer had obviously paid off. What surprises me about this is that I had moved to a new house (which lies on the corner of Bardwell road, just across a narrow lane from the main entrance of the Dragon). I don't remember moving to this house at all, and it is curious that my housemaster continued to be Joc Lynam.

I wrote several letters home in the first term, but hardly noted anything more about formal instruction except that on 30th November I wrote to my parents *We had the Geography Exam on Thursday.* I also noted that *There is only about another 2 and a half weeks left until the end of term and exactly 3 weeks until my birthday.* The term obviously ended in mid-December and I either went from school, or immediately from Dorset, to Scotland for on 15th December, as my grandfather noted in his diary 'V. goes to London to send Alan off to Scotland.'

The termly report shows that I missed no days at school. In Classics it was 'Steady work and progress'. There was 'Very good progress in both English and History'. In Maths, 'Much good work. He has made steady progress'. In French 'Quite keen work. Grammar good.' Other subjects were good the housemaster Joc noted 'Continues to do well' and Hum the headmaster commented 'Alan has come on well'.

In all subjects I did better in exams than in the term marks, so there was hope. But I was still in a rather middling level of class and stream and not moving into being a 'high flyer', the sort the school spotted as potential scholarship boys for Eton and Winchester, though they may already have realized that my parents were unlikely to enter me for such expensive places.

*

After spending the Christmas holidays with my godmother and aunt in Scotland I returned south, where I received a letter from my mother in India written on 4th January. She wrote

No letter from you yet these holidays - but maybe it's the Christmas rush in the post offices! My last letter took a month to reach Granny, so I hope you have been hearing from me. I do wonder where you are and when you are going back to Granny. I don't even know when you go back to school actually. Here we're still doing Exams, isn't it an awful thought - but they should be over in a day or two and then we shall have 6 weeks in the clear. By the end of it the girls are thoroughly bored and ready to start again. They haven't minded their Exams too much, though Anne got a bit hysterical over deltas and isthmuses and what-not. Fiona's spelling is still pretty awful and she seems to have the family complex about the word "WHICH"!

I then wrote to my parents on 17th January that *I have been back at school two days and so I have not much to say I am in 1st game and with considerable luck I might get into the first 11... We have had lovely weather at school already but I don't doubt there will be bad weather and diseases ahead Well that all for now Lots of love Alan.* In fact, if there were diseases, I do not seem to have been affected by

¹ Gunga was another house, just next to the school. But unlike Plummers and the other first and second year houses, it was for older boys, a parallel to School House. Moving up five sets might mean something like moving from E5 to E1, or E1 to D3.

them since I missed no days at school. But, as Jamie comments, the phrasing and affected world weariness is rather touching.

A letter home describes the bitter weather with a good deal of skating and I was obviously cold, but seem cheerful. On 2nd February I wrote *we have had freezing weather. And I have not played any games (except ice hockey). We have had a wizard time except for the cold as I have lost my gloves.* Two weeks later I mention that 'The end of term is on the 26th of March' and sure enough my grandfather in his diary mentions on that date 'Alan arrives back'.

The term report was also encouraging and I also appear, significantly, to be enjoying myself. In Classics there is 'Good, steady work and progress - and there have been more smiles than last term!' In English it is 'Quite good all round'. In Mathematics 'Very good work and progress this term'. Even in Geography I am 'Keen and interested'. My Divinity is still a tick and now my Science is 'Very good'. Not only did Mr Wilkinson note my smile, but also Joc my housemaster noted 'Doing well and smiling more.' The headmaster Hum wrote 'Most satisfactory work and progress'.

The frequent references to smiling reminds me that sometime in my third year I was offered two shillings and sixpence by the matron in the School House if she ever saw me smiling - and I don't recall her ever having to pay me. And my mother also talks about my anxious look. Others have commented that I was very quiet and subdued. I was clearly quite a repressed little child, small for my age and filled with a certain sadness - though whether this was mainly the effect of my mother leaving me, or the boarding atmosphere (my grand-mother's comments on how I revived with good food and freedom in the holidays is indicative here) it is difficult to say.

*

My increasing smiles may have been linked to my knowledge that my mother would be returning within a few months. After the Easter holidays I wrote on 6th June to my father 'Dear Daddy, I hope you are not feeling too lonely without Mummy there.' My grandfather notes in his diary on 12th June 'Iris arrives in England [Iris here, flight no. BA919]' and the next day 'Meet Iris'.

My mother soon decided to visit me at school, writing to my father on 21st June *We're going to Oxford this week-end to see Alan. I hope it won't be too ruinous, but will be our last big expense...* My grandfather notes that she left for Oxford on the 26th and returned on the 28th.

My memory of this re-union is painful. I awaited the precious mother I had not seen for 18 months, having said I would be by the pillar box on the corner of Bardwell Road and Charlbury Road. Finally a figure emerged from a taxi. Instead of the beautiful lady I thought I remembered, a small, limping, mother emerged. I had somehow not noted before that polio had made her limp. I was so ashamed that when we walked off I walked a good few feet behind (or in front) of her so that my friends would not realize that this was my mother. It seems that she also had my two sisters with her, but I cannot recall that part.

Since there are only a few accounts of my mother's visits to take me out, which give some insights into how she perceived the school, and how she found me, I shall quote a lengthy letter she wrote the day after she returned from the Oxford visit which then went on to a trip to the zoo in London. [I use this account in several places, so shall have to decide where it best fits and shorten elsewhere.]

She wrote to my father on 29th June as follows.

My dearest, I took my paper with me to Oxford, but didn't find a minute to write so I'm afraid this will be overdue... we got back at 10 p.m last night and I'm still aching all over from the almost non-stop catching of trains and buses which the week-end involved. It was most exhausting and expensive but of course lovely to see Alan again, just the same, he doesn't appear to have grown much but was looking very well and was full of chat. We left Bournemouth soon after nine and got to Oxford a bit late, about 1.20, then had to queue for a taxi so arrived panting at the school to be met by the matron with the vague information that Alan "might be anywhere"! There were thousands of small boys swarming everywhere and I thought I'd never find him, was getting hysterical and the taxi driver nasty, when he eventually appeared and we raced to Linton Lodge arriving as they were clearing away lunch! However we got some (at vast expense) and then carted ourselves and luggage back to our hotel in the Cornmarket. It was a gloomy place run by two old ladies and only served meals on Sundays, so we had to trail out to look for tea, back to the Dragon for "Macbeth", back again to look for supper and finally to bed at 11 p.m. frozen cold as I'd forgotten my bottle! "Macbeth" was very well done really, but as usual one could see nothing except the hats in front, the girls were thrilled however and Anne kept up a running commentary which my neighbours said "made the show" for them. Ann, when Lady M. appeared in her nightie - "Ah, here comes an angel"! and after the murder when she appeared surprised - "She knows perfectly well what's happened in an indignant voice! The boys were word-perfect but fearfully pompous and droney, I was struggling not to giggle half the time and when Lady M. slapped her bony chest and shouted "I have given suck and know how sweet to love the babe that milks me" I nearly collapsed on the spot. Everyone else was frightfully impressed so I fear I must be flippant. We went to the service next day and the same lot of little boys got up and droned again, this time they read us Shakespeare's best known sonnet (after explaining carefully what it meant!) and a long excerpt from "Faust" - can't think why, but they were all so pleased with themselves. It was very hot in the hall and several boys were sick so I was glad when the service was over. As usual I spoke to nobody and no-one to me and was quite glad to get away from the place - not a satisfactory school from my point of view. Robert joined us for lunch, very smooth and undergradish, off to Goodwood one week-end and Henly the next ("Going in a party, care to join us old chum"?). He suggested we took a bus to Cumnor and walked to Bablock Hythe which was only about 5 minutes - we actually walked for 40 minutes, and after a row on the river and a long tea we looked for the buses back and found the next was 9.30 p.m! It was then 6 but Robert said we could easily thumb a lift so he and Alan went on ahead and sailed off in a car almost at once, we walked and thumbed without success and finally got the 9.15 bus - I'll leave you to guess what the 3 and a half hours were like! It even rained! On Monday, yesterday, I took them all up to London to the zoo - not as crazy or extravagant as it sounds - the trains from Oxford here are so bad I would have to stay another night there and fed and amused them all day so it wouldn't have worked out any cheaper and I didn't know what to do with them in Oxford anyway.

Jamie comments on this: What a wonderful parental account of Macbeth and chapel and Dragons at work and play on a public stage. Yes, she's largely right. Faust, indeed! But what a complex path Joc had to devise for the performing arts (including chapel readings). He aimed very high, and that was probably right despite the instinctive reactions your Mum felt and I as a parent would probably have felt

too. My mother seems to have vacillated between the two views. First she said, 'for Heavens' sake, Hamlet. Why do the Dragons do it'; but then she actually liked it.

The incident where Robert and I got a lift (from a Dragon parent, I believe) straight away and my mother arrived at the Randolph hotel soaked and cold with my sisters is one I remember well, down to the hitch-hiking and sense of relief when we were picked up. Jamie comments 'Hitchhiking cannot have been altogether an easy and pleasant prospect at this age even with an undergraduate uncle. Very forward. Or perhaps times really were totally different in 1954. I remember my mother in 1955-7 period saying that she was always prepared to give lifts to servicemen in uniform but to no one else.'

Not only was I chatty, rather than monosyllabic like the first time she came back, but I seem to have enjoyed the visit, writing about ten days later on 12th July to my father *Dear Daddy, I hope that you are not feeling very lonely. I had a lovely time with mummy at the zoo.*

*

Anyway, the term continued and towards the end my mother wrote to my father on 19th July, three days before her birthday, *Alan is coming back on Thursday (a nice birthday present) and Robert is coming with him so the fun starts - I'm longing to see Alan and the holidays should be fun if the weather will only be kind, it's been pretty miserable so far but looks like improving.* More gloomily she added *I will ask the Dragon to wait a bit for Alans next terms bill if we can't cope, rather than than you borrowing any more.*

I did indeed arrive on her birthday, as my grandfather noted in his diary: 'Robert and Alan arrive'. My mother reports on my state of spirits three days later in a letter on 25th July to my father.

Quite an eventful week and the house is bulging at the seams with Robert and Alan back, its great fun to be held up by masked gunmen behind every door and the stutter of machine gun fire echoes down Corfe Lodge Road to the discomfort of the few of them who aren't stone deaf. Alan looks very fit but is slightly husky, he was very pleased as he got his cricket tie before leaving ("by some fluke") and has brought back a picture of himself in his team which I'll send onto you - he looks terribly tough but rather sweet! He and the girls get on very well at the moment.

The termly report when I was aged twelve and a half shows that I was not absent at all. I was till in the same classes and sets. In classics I had 'Worked hard and has made definite progress.' In English C.H. Jacques or 'Jacko' wrote 'A good Term. Quite a flair for writing; and knows some History'. In Mathematics I 'coming on well'. In French also I was 'Coming on well: he has ability and with real hard work he should make this a strong subject'. In Geography I was 'much improved: a better understanding of the subject'. My Divinity was good and my Science very good. Joe my housemaster thought it 'A very good term' and Hum wrote that 'Alan has done well - rather older than the form age average.'

So, by the end of my fourth year I was still in the Middle Stream, and in the final year had to move as far up the ten classes in the Upper stream (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b etc) as possible. It was a big challenge.

*

My grandfather noted in his diary on 21st September, 'Alan goes to school'. This was my final year and it appears from a letter two days later from my mother to my

father that I was happy about this. *Alan went off very cheerfully, I haven't heard if he arrived, he was to spend the day with my godmother in London and catch the train to Oxford in the evening.* I was travelling from the Lake District on my own.

The question of my school fees came up several times in the term in letters. My mother on 30th September wrote to my father that she did not have enough money for my fees of £95. Three weeks later, on 22nd October she wrote in some relief. *I got a letter from the Dragon School this morning, saying they would reduce Alan's fees by 10 gus a term and enclosing a cheque for that amount to square last terms account. I was most agreeably surprised and will now go and buy Alan's new coat, with the happy feeling that I'm not spending anything. You mustn't go and visit him in a large Bentley or it'll look fishy.* Actually, a large Bentley was the last thing we could afford.

My mother spent much time trying to plan, complicated by the move of our long-term base from Broadstone to Windermere in the Lake District. She wrote on 10th October:

My move is complicated by all the children's half terms which happen just about then. I'd like to fit Alan's in anyway if possible as he may be in "Iolanthe". Also I want to talk to somebody about him. So I shall probably find myself carting all my little boxes and parcels to Oxford and then on from there - does anybody else live such a complicated life as me I wonder - nobody seems to!

In the same letter she spoke of other reasons for wanting to visit me, and the continued financial difficulty, this time of the school uniform. *I've had a series of letters from Alan's matron saying "Where is Alan's second coat?" "What about gumboots". I'd hoped to get away with not sending them as he needs new ones but shall have to do something now.* She was, however, clearly proud of some of my achievements. *Alan is in 1st game at Rugger so may be in the team. I've found the picture of him in his cricket team and will send it separately. I wish I could see him playing in a match, perhaps we will next summer.*

She was also clearly worried about my academic progress and, particularly, having already been accepted in principle by Sedbergh School, whether I would pass the essential Common Entrance exam. On 30th September she wrote to my father *Alan writes to say he is in 1st game at rugger - don't know if that is the 1st XV - and has gone up in form. I must find out if he's going to pass his common entrance. He says he took the exam last term and passed so there's no reason why he shouldn't next year.* Meanwhile I hardly wrote about my intellectual pursuits except obliquely on 2nd November to my father when I wrote about one of my favourite subjects, science. *I am in the science club and at the moment I am making a one valve wireless set.*

* There is a revealing and detailed account of a further visit paid by my mother to the school. The two main aims were to watch me in the opera 'Iolanthe' and to talk to the headmaster Joc Lynam about how I was getting on and, in particular, whether I would pass my exams. I shall quote this letter on 14th November to my father fairly fully, just leaving out details of the complicated journey to the school from the Lake District.

I'm just back from a Sunday taking Alan out, and am sitting in my cheerless hotel room feeling very tired and a bit sad as I always do after leaving him, wish you were here to take me out and give me a brandy! But I was very pleased with Alan who looks very well and was most cheerful and full of chat.... I went to the evening performance of "Iolanthe", meeting Robert at the door, and being related to a performer we had good seats and it was really very well done. Alan

was nearly invisible under an enormous coronet and being second row chorus was hidden a lot of the time but didn't disgrace me by dropping anything or singing out of turn. After the show parents of performers were invited to a fork supper by Joc, and Robert and I ate ourselves to a standstill and drank a lot of cider but of course nobody spoke to us and when we were full we quietly left! I went to chapel service this morning and afterwards had my interview with Joc. He was very charming, gave me a sherry, and said Alan would definitely get through his Common Entrance but didn't think there was much hope of a scholarship but he would discuss this with his masters at more length. He said Alan was very popular with the other boys and with the staff which pleased me as Alan never introduces me to his friends or in fact mentions them! He also praised his rigger, especially his tackling which was marvellous he said, poor Alan, he told me he never enjoyed a game of rigger till it was over! Joc said there was terrific excitement over his Colours, much more than over the average boys, all of which pleased me a lot and will you too I'm sure, apparently he isn't the problem we have always imagined him to be! Robert joined us for lunch and we spent the afternoon in the usual way playing ping pong etc then ate a large tea and watched children's TV. which was a pirate play but the large meals and overheated hotel were beginning to tell on me and I dozed through most of it. After that there was nothing to do but read for an hour and then I took him back and caught the bus back here and here I am! I have a front room and the traffic kept me awake most of last night, hence my more than usual weariness, also have a sore throat so am in for a cold I expect.

*

Strangely, though I had gone home a few days early because of flu, the Termly Report noted me as not missing any days - perhaps taking a child away on the suggestion of the school did not count as absence. In Classics it was 'A good term's work: he works neatly and sensibly and should do well.' In English it was 'A very good term's work'. In Mathematics I was just younger than average in the second to top set, and came equal tenth out of fifteen in term marks and 8th in exams. This was 'A fair terms work - he tries hard and has made good progress in recent weeks.' In French there was 'Much good work. He is coming on well.' My other subjects were mainly satisfactory.. The housemaster Joc again noted that I was getting ever more cheerful. 'A thoroughly good term all round - with the smile emerging most satisfactorily!' Hum wrote 'Good work and progress'. Clearly I was now climbing fairly steeply.

*

My grandfather notes in his diary on 14th January 'Alan goes back to school'. My mother commented on other aspects on 17th January. *I shan't go down to Oxford this term, Alan doesn't seem to mind whether I do or not! He has had a very good Rigger write-up in the magazine, his play would have warmed the hearts of Old Dragonians! I'll send it out to you to frame... Also a note from Alan to say he is a prefect this term - very fed up because it's thawing there.* This was supplemented by further news from me in a letter of 1st February to my father who was still in India, but due to return in April.

Dear Daddy, I am back at school now and we have had two week(s). There are lots of things to write about for a change so I will start from when I came back. I had an uneventful journey back but when I got to Oxford I had to wait for over an hour for a taxi when I got to school (I forgot to pay the taxi driver) I found out

when I got to school that I had moved up in dorms to 'Leviathen' the top one also I am a prefect (Which means I have to be a saint and I have a few privilages) I have also moved up in French.

In relation to the prefect status, the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1955 mention that there were three heads of house and 21 prefects at that time, of which I was one. Since there must have been about eighty boys or so a year moving through the school, I was in the top twenty-five per cent or so in terms of perceived leadership qualities. My feeling that it was mostly duty and little privilege probably reflects a tendency at the Dragon to play down authority - whether of the teachers or senior boys. As early as 1901 the founding Head Master, the Skipper, had set the direction when he outlined as part of his philosophy that 'I don't believe much in a *prefect* system among *little* boys. I trust in a general way to the bigger boys keeping things straight and keeping up a good tone, rather by example, than by being given authority over the kids. I think such authority often makes boys prigs, and sometimes bullies. Of course I am not speaking of boys at the top of Public Schools. That is quite different.'¹ Unlike a number of other preparatory schools, it seems that prefects were never allowed to beat younger boys.

The cost of the school, even with a reduction of ten guineas, was still worrying my mother and she wrote on the same day to my father *While we're on the subject, I'd be grateful for some money this month please darling - I haven't been able to pay Alan's school bill yet. If you could send me £100 this month for that, and £100 next month to clear up bills, I can carry on till you come on that.*

*

My promotion to being a prefect for the last two terms may not have meant much in the un-authoritarian atmosphere of the Dragon, but a curious insight into the approach of puberty, the relaxed school rules, the degree of my saintliness and one privilege I did have is shown in a couple of letters at this point.

On about 18th February 1955 I wrote to my mother *By the way if you have not sent the tuck you could cut the front Pictures of the 'Picture Post' and the big double page ones inside of film stars and send them along some time next week because we stick them up on the walls of the Dark-room (the special room of the prefects) Lots of love Alan*
P.S. don't forget the tuck?
P.S.S. Don't forget the pin ups?
P.S.S.S Don't forget either?

My mother wrote on the same day to my father in semi-amusement. *Alan has got his football colours as you probably know, his ambition is to get them all but he is a little doubtful about hockey. He wrote asking me for Pin-Ups to put on the wall of the prefects study. I ask you! I sent a pile of women in bathing dresses which will probably be rapidly confiscated.* I do not remember this incident, but may find the demurely clad figures as I excavate further into my childhood archives.

The term was marked by illness, as the spring term often was, and I wrote in an undated letter in March to my mother *I hope you have not got any illness. At the moment there is a slight epidemic of chicken pox and about people are ill.* I was sick with something for on about 17th I wrote with mock humour to my mother. *This is the last letter I will be writing this term. By some bad luck I am in the sick-*

¹ *The Skipper*, 41

room because I was sick on Friday morning but I have been perfectly alright since but the hold hags (Three witches from Macbeth) have been trying their foul concoctions on us in the form of many coloured gargolls (of course I have not got a sore throat). My mother also wrote to my father two days later I got a card yesterday to say he was in the san with sickness and temp. So immediately visualized the worst sort of appendicitis but hope it turns out to be a chill. There always seems to be a crisis about his return and I'll be relieved when he doesn't have to come so far.'

The only piece of academic news was slipped in casually in a letter on 13th March to my father that 'Common Entrance is over and no one has failed.' Thus my smooth transition to Sedbergh School was safe. Then on 25th my grandfather noted in his diary 'Alan returns from School'. My mother wrote on the 27th

Alan arrived on Friday evening a friend of his travels all the way with him and they seem to enjoy the journey. His sickness turned out to be nothing, thank heavens. He looks tired as usual after the term but very cheerful and is very absorbed with his electric trains and is really taking pains and concentrating on them which is a change. Yesterday afternoon I took them to see "The Yeoman of the Guard" as done by the Windermere Grammar School. It was very good I thought, though a bit wooden in parts - but Alan was most scathing and compared it unfavourably with Dragon School productions, wrongly actually!

On 2nd of April my grandfather noted in his diary, 'Alan's term report came. 1st in form in classics'. I was clearly very small, my mother noting the next day *Fiona now weighs 5 st 12 lbs and Anne not much less. Alan doesn't seem to alter at all!* But I was ready for the big event which was the arrival back of my father from India, arriving in England on the 21st April, the first time I had seen him since Christmas 1952.

*

I went back to school on 27th April and on 10th I had my first ever joint visit from my mother and father, as noted by my grandfather in his diary when he wrote 'Iris and Mac go to Oxford to see Alan'. I can't really remember this visit, but suspect that if they had a car it was less hectic than my mother's visits.

Nor do I make any note of the General Election which took place that term. I do vaguely remember that people were going round canvassing for something, but it may have been for our own mock elections. It seems that on the whole the boys were not encouraged by the school to take too much interest in national politics. In the election of Christmas 1951, the 'Term Notes' mention that 'There was little election excitement, and any incipient reactions of an unseemly or unbridled nature were cut short by a reminder that the citizens of to-morrow are not expected to meddle with the elections of to-day. So Dragons adjourned to the New Hall and held their own election, rather well.' And in the one in my last term the 'Term Notes' comment 'Meanwhile a General Election had come and gone, without noticeably disturbing the equilibrium of somewhat pre-occupied Dragons. Perhaps a slight swing to the Left could be detected? If so, it was probably not unconnected with the Labour Party's decision to abolish the "eleven-plus". After the election, the same source reveals, there were five Old Dragons in Parliament.'

*

I seem to have taken a further examination, for on 11th July my grandfather noted that 'Alan has passed his school cert exam'. How this school cert differed from Common Entrance (and indeed it may well be the same) I am not sure, but in a

I liked and though I came only 13th out of 17 that fortnight, had made 'Really excellent progress. Translation really good'. I was in the same sets for other subjects and though Mathematics and French were good, my English was not - 'Some rather poor work'. But my last fortnightly report is interesting. It was written on 10th July, just after our Common Entrance Exam results were known. Out of a class of 17 I was equal thirteenth and Mike Gover noted 'Good results in C.E.Exam'. In English I was equal eighth out of seventeen. 'Well done in C.E.E.' In Mathematics I was equal first out of 18, 'Well done'. And in French, equal second out of 15 'v.g.'.

At the end of all this, my final termly report in July 1955 was very satisfactory. I had missed one day in the term, and was a few months older than the average in most classes, but was now doing well. In Classics in Upper 2B I was placed 13th in term marks and 11th in a class of 17. 'He has made v.good progress with v.good exams to finish up. Best wishes.' In English and History, in a class of 17 I was equal eighth and in the exams equal ninth in English and equal sixth in History. 'A very good term's work. Don't stop using your imagination in English. Well done.' In Mathematics, which was my best subject, in the second to top set I was equal first in the term's marks out of 18 and fourth in exams, 'A thoroughly good term's work: well done!' Even Geography, which had long been my weakest subject, was satisfactory. I was equal tenth out of 34 in term's marks and twelfth in exams and this was 'Very good'. My Divinity was 'v.g.' and my Science 'Very satisfactory'. Joc the housemaster significantly wrote 'Alan has done very well all round, and the smile has nearly ousted the frown! Best of luck to him at Sedbergh'. Hum the headmaster wrote 'Highly satisfactory - We all wish him a happy and useful career'.

So the term ended, with even the weather smiling on me as I left. 'The Term Notes' for this last summer term mentions that 'the thermometer moved purposefully upward towards the eighties and stayed there or thereabouts for the rest of the Term, providing a finish such as we had not experienced for three years. But blue skies and hot sunshine for the final fortnight...' Dragons, we are told 'went home for their summer holidays well and truly sunburnt.' My grandfather noted in his diary at the end of this month 'Record month for fine weather. No rain for 29 days'

PASSING THROUGH - JAMIE'S FIVE YEARS

My Dragon career, no doubt like many others, proceeded in fits and starts - but I cannot think of it in terms of purgatory and paradise. The start in fact was rather good - because I had been well prepared for it by decent pre-prep schools but, more importantly, by a family, especially on the Bruce Lockhart side, engaged in the world of private boarding school education. This is described in my account of my home life in 'Different Days'. I was also already familiar with North Oxford, and benefited from having my Hone grandparents living in a lovely house in Belbroughton Road less than half a mile away from the Dragon. This was more than a life line, it was a kind of second home which Sandy and I visited most weekends throughout our Dragon career and where we often spent at least a few days at the start and end of terms. School and home for me were thus mixed up from the start

Being bright and extrovert and in not totally unfamiliar surroundings I got off the mark quickly. Perhaps too quickly, because in my second term and at the start of my third, I became rather too pleased with myself and needed to be brought back to earth. In my second year (Autumn 1950 to July 1951), aged from nine to ten and based in Jacko's Charlbury House, I went through some bad patches in general

development too. I suspect that at this point an educational problem arose as well, namely the streams into which I would fit best. I was probably over-challenged by some promotions in my third year, and lost confidence.

As I turned eleven (March 1952) weaker suits in my learning apparatus began to assert themselves, a slap dash approach and carelessness. I became lazy when form work went well and lost concentration when it became difficult. Interestingly, however, my letters show that this was also the time at which my self awareness was developing very quickly. I was growing up fast and establishing my self-identity and finding my place in school society. Both parents were absent in the USA from January 1952 to April 1953 (and my father for three months longer at both ends of that tour of Foreign Office duty), so maybe some stabilising element was missing. And at the same time, although comfortable with my relations with both sets of grandparents, I was perhaps under some pressure of expectations from the Bruce Lockharts at Sedbergh. I think the upshot was that I was thrashing around a bit in all directions in that year of 1952.

By 1953, rising twelve, however, I had reached calmer waters and sailed along happily, if occasionally lazily, near the top of the second stream academically and cheerfully engaged in school sporting activities at the same sort of level for the rest of my Dragon days. There are few comments in letters home on form work until 1952; thus my first fuller remarks on my academic performance coincide with the squally passage. I do not recall feeling miserable in my first year or two (other than normal bouts of homesickness and flu) and I greatly enjoyed, so far as I can remember, my last three years. I think my memory has probably flattened out emotional experiences, but I cannot find any indications of serious unhappiness in the letters. My school days were happy ones.

*

My safe introduction to Stradlings House in September 1949 was reported to my mother by Ronnie 'Yatto' Yates. (He himself spelled it as 'Yato'.) This excellent letter mentions the 'pater' system under which one of two older boys were kept on in dorms to help new boys settle in to Dragon life. It also brings home and school together by addressing, in very sensible terms, my father's concerns about my development and behavioural problems.

19th September [1949] 1 CHARLBURY ROAD, OXFORD
Telephone 9265

Dear Mrs Bruce Lockhart,

This is just a hasty note written after they have all sunk to rest on the first night, as I am sure you must have been thinking a lot of Jamie today.

We were so delighted to make his acquaintance on Saturday when he came round and had nursery tea with us all and saw the whole place. He was delightfully easy and not in the least shy and extremely nice to my own who are younger. Christopher, who is nearly 6 but rather an outsize, was thrilled; and Jamie's prowess on his bike so inspired him that he finally got going on his own - a thing which through lack of competition we had failed to make him do before.

He was in great form tonight on arrival in spite of the chaos reigning. We have a household of 25, and of these 12 were in the house last term, 4 have come on from a smaller house, and 9 are new. He is in a dormitory with four other new boys and two who came last term to look after them. One of these is Bernard Gadney's son and I feel that your husband may have met him on the rigger field. I knew a good bit about all the new ones and I think that they ought to be a

very nice lot to start with. The dormitory makes such a difference and if it is a cheerful collection, things generally go well. All except one were very bright and happy tonight, and if the one follows the same course as his elder brother he will be all right in a day or so. Jamie himself was quite unmoved, except that when my wife went up later to give a little comfort to the sufferer he said that he rather missed his bear! So that will be collected in the morning, as they are not a bit frowned upon, and most of the boys in his dorm have got something in bed! I think he was a bit jealous of them.

Joc has just sent over your husband's most helpful letter. I hope that there are enough boys in the house to get him used to the idea of being one of a number if he does tend to want to be the centre, and yet not too many to make him feel lost. The oldest boy is only 9 ½ but at the moment we have got rather a good lot, in that one or two are a long way up the school, and one or two are very good athletes, so however good a newcomer may be, he won't find himself the king pin for a few terms!

He was delighted to find your letter which came over from the School House this evening. His address incidentally is as above. I will write again in a few days time and will then be able to give you more news. We are so delighted to have him allotted here, as I had been hearing about him from a cousin at Sedbergh, and it was even nicer to be able to meet in the holidays instead of on this pretty hectic first night.

[signed] Yours sincerely
R St.J Yates

The letter also refers to the fact that at this period the Dragon ran at least one small house for children of pre-prep-school age. Some may have been younger brothers of boarders staying on in England while their parents were far away. Junior level classes were available to them as well. The reference to Bernard Gadney's son was thoughtful and as England scrum half in the immediate post-war years he was indeed known to several Bruce Lockhart family members.

I started out my Dragon school career in Lower 5 (for Classics) and E1 in English, Maths and French. I make only the smallest references to classwork in my first year, but in November 1949 I reported my timetable for that first term as well as other news,

On Friday instead of prep we had a story called the timber box ~ instead of latin on Saturday we had a mowgli story ~~called~~ for Litritchure ~ on Monday we had Ricka tika tavi ~ I went to Iolanthe yesterday, it was lovely and very funny ~ every [body] thought Lord Chancellor was the best ~ I wish you were there to see it ~ Has Sandy received the marbles yet ~ Tell Daddy I can nearly do it I can punt 2b game post w[h]ich are the 3rd highest ~ drop kick [9?] goal post which is second smallest ~ do you remember a person called Saunders who was at Rugby [?] well he [his son?] was my pater at the beginning of term ~ I hope you are well love from James xxxxx

My time table

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wensday</i>
<i>Latin</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>French</i>
<i>P.T.</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Latin</i>
<i>Maths</i>	<i>Maths</i>	<i>Maths</i>
<i>Geography</i>	<i>Essay</i>	<i>Latin</i>
<i>Lunch</i>	<i>lunch</i>	<i>lunch</i>

<i>Singing</i>	<i>nature</i>	<i>games</i>
<i>Grammer</i>	<i>history</i>	<i>games</i>
<i>Litricture</i>	<i>handicrafts</i>	<i>games</i>
<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
<i>Latin</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Latin</i>
<i>Latin</i>	<i>maths</i>	<i>Latin</i>
<i>French</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Divinity</i>
<i>Poetry</i>	<i>forgotten</i>	<i>Art</i>
<hr/> <i>Lunch</i>	<hr/> <i>lunch</i>	<hr/> <i>lunch</i>
<i>Divinity</i>	-	-
<i>Maths</i>	<i>forgotten</i>	<i>games</i>

My letters home show a new schoolboy slowly getting accustomed to boarding life - getting the measure of my surroundings, burrowing here and there and looking around to learn where danger comes from and where comfort is to be found. My only reference to staff in that first year is to their presence at an excellent party at the end of the half term weekend.

after that there was a party ~ it was great fun and we had races and games and mr. mendle did some cungering tricks ~ there was delishos food to eat such as jellys, cakes and ice-creams and rolls ~ there were four different teams, spades hearts, diamonds and clubs ~ I were a club ~ the two winning teams had tea first ~ I were one of the loosing teams ~ diamonds and spades were the winning teams and the clubs and hearts were the loosing teams ~ M.r [sic] Britton took clubs mr taylor diamonds Mr Michell took hearts and I have forgotten who took spades. We had three songs to finish off the party with. I have forgotten the first two songs ~ the last one was 'John Browns Body' which I liked very much ~ it reminded me very much of cub/bljng. The whole weekend was great fun.

I remember these parties and party games well. From the entertainments and food to the games and singing they were not only very happy occasions but also immensely important tribal events - or 'bonding' activities in 2011 parlance. Interesting, too, how the sing-song reminded me of similar bonding around the camp fire at Cubs at the BFES school to which Sandy and I went in Germany.

I do not seem to have been put out by distance from my parents even in my first term. My letters of mid October 1949 show me responding calmly to their questions about my preferences for travel to Germany, *Thank you very very much for your letter. I would prefare to go by ship and train but I don't realy mind*, or putting them efficiently in the picture with respect to school affairs, *Joc said that bofa/rders can go out for Sunday night at half term and Monday morning. I am going to take a notice to granny to fill in.* It is interesting that one month into school I was already referring to the headmaster as Joc, and, as I told my parents, *we call mister Yates Yato for short or a nick name ~ every Sunday we have ice cream for lunch.* There is also a reference to Maty, with respect to receipt at the end of October of a parcel from home, *Maty sais thank you very, very much for the pullover ~ it got opened but nothing stolen wich was all right.* I think 'Maty' was short for matron - who may or may not have been Mrs (or Ma) Yates, I do not remember.

In sum, it seems I was settling in comfortably to Dragon life. At half term I had enjoyed Iolanthe very much, and gone out to Belbroughton Road for meals, *On*

saturday afternoon at 2.15 I saw the play ~ it was very nice and very well acted ~ I think the best actor was the Lord chancellor who was Hugh Peers ~ every-body said he was the best including Granny and grandfather. after the play I went out to tea with granny and grandfather and came back to straddlings at 7.0 ~ On Sunday 10.45 we had the ordinary school service after that I went out to granny and grandfather again. I was reading Arthur Ransome's *The Big Six*, ice cream was on the agenda, and I had treated myself to a new dinky toy. All was well.

In my second term I was promoted across the board from my starting forms. Thus I was moved to Middle 5 for Classics, D3 for English and Maths and to D1 for French. The latter was possibly a bridge too far and probably reflects some first steps in French grammar and verbs taken at home with my father and grandfather BL. I will not comment further on my progress in geography which was a favourite subject and in which 'by some fluke' I was almost without exception in the top three places in form and exams. I enjoyed all aspects of the subject and was rewarded with a stream of reports ranging from 'most satisfactory' to excellent' through my school career - until (for some reason) my very last term.

My first year end of term reports reflect the strong beginning followed by some doubt,

Classics

Dec 49 Low 3 v. good terms work keen and intelligent UPT

Mar 50 M5 v.fair progress on the whole shows promise CPW

July 50 Mid 5 shows intelligence and ability. More consistent work needed to improve form position 6th in exam

English

Dec 49 E1 v. good his essays are vivid and history and spelling excellent UPT

Mar 50 D3 enthusiastic and promising worker JBB

July 50 D3 intelligent and capable good exams (came 2^d, 4 in History) JBB

Maths

Dec 49 E1 a most satisfactory term UPT

Mar 50 D3 a steady term's work JBNG

July 50 D3 useful performance in exam (came 1); variable in class

French

Dec 49 E1 v. satisfactory progress GDS

Mar 50 D1 much improved of late CD

July 50 D1 has made steady progress CD (came 10)

The evidence is, however, that in my second to fourth terms I was becoming overconfident and rather too self satisfied. School-work seemed to have come easily and I became lazy. The finish to my first academic year was poor, linked no doubt to a nine-year old's behavioural growing up problems, and I feel sure I deserved the warnings about 'variable' performance and calls for 'more consistent work'. Perhaps for those combined reasons, school work does not appear in letters home at all during that period.

In fact, there are few insights into Dragon life in the letters of that period. I got into swimming that summer, *I past my clothes test on Saturday ~ It's when you jump in with your clothes on and swim across the river and back ~ I now get a shilling from Mr Woodhouse my formmaster ~ I can swim in the relay races now I've done my clothes test ~ it will be good fun.* Swimming was to become a major

interest and source of pleasure in the summer terms. Otherwise, my comments on games were not obsessive that year. One curious observation in the summer term of 1950, however, is about 'collections' (for charity, taken at school services I assume), *We have our first collection for five months.* In other words the last collection was early in January of that year - perhaps a sign of continuing hard times in the post-war period.

*

I spent my second year, from September 1950 to July 1951, in Middle 3 and got good reports for the first two terms

Dec 50 Mid 3 Has worked well and makes good progress (4th in exam)

Mar 51 Mid 3 useful and enthusiastic term's work. Good (2nd in exam) JDB

Jul 51 Mid 2 a good standard has been reached but he must go harder in future if he is to do himself real justice MWAG (8th in exam)

In the summer my promotion to Middle 2 did not go so well, as Gov reported.

In English I spent the year in C2 and seemed to make good progress, according to, CJB

Dec 50 C2 His work has much improved CJB - 7 in exam

Mar 51 C2 coming on well CJB (=9th)

Jul 51 C2 always works with enthusiasm and intelligence. A most successful term CJB (1st in class, 4th in exam, 8th in history)

My record in maths was perhaps typical of the whole year. I started off badly, pulled my self together under C.P. Woodhouse and improved my performance; and as a result I was promoted, but had difficulties coping, as Ticks Hicks observed,

Dec 50 C3 very fair perhaps a little too easily satisfied He should aim higher CPW

Mar 51 C3 made very useful progress this term. (3rd in exam) CPW

Jul 51 C2 has found the work rather difficult but has kept up FEH (15th)

All through my Dragon years I was close to achieving a respectable academic career - and the staff were absolutely right to push and test me. Unfortunately, however, I lacked consistency and never quite broke through to the heights.

The winter term of 1950 brought another Gilbert and Sullivan, Mikado, some first heavy snow - with a fireworks display in the snow, which obviously thrilled me. The next two terms I was swept along by cheerful sing songs, house suppers, obstacle races and competitions and picnics in the summer. Several of these were half term events, for boarders only, as I explained in a February letter home, *It is the half term week-end. About 40 boys are going out ~ not many compared to summer term. That Saturday the whole school goes out ~ day boys are not allowed on the premises. Boys who [have] got parents or friends go out or who go out with another boy. The rest go out with Yatto and Jacko for picnics[,] which are not many.*

Easter fell, exceptionally, during term time which led to a halt to work and numerous festivities (described in Chapter 3); 'flu and illness had raised its head - although I escaped the first round - so references in letters home to schoolwork are rather few and far between. I was digging in.

*

Reports exist for only two of the three terms of my middle year at the Dragon, my third year from September 1951 to July 1952. Letters home starting from January 1952, however, represent a fuller and more consistent record of school life, coinciding with the move of both my parents to Washington DC.

My form was Upper 5, with Ticks Hicks. In classics I was at the bottom of the class and struggling.

Dec 51 report missing

Mar 52 UP 5 18th has found the work difficult but has made some headway FEH

July 52 16th has found the going rather difficult at times but has kept up well

I was in B1 for English and not doing very well there either,

Dec 51 report missing

Mar 52 B1 15th v. fair. Compositions have possibilities, but are too undisciplined CHJ

Jul 52 history coming on (7); English (=10) shows some feeling but compositions still rather disorganised CHJ

Plum Plummer, taking me in B3, for Maths was reasonably pleased with my progress,

Dec 51 report missing

Mar 52 B3 11th tried hard and made good progress LCP

July 52 mostly good work and progress LCP

but my showing in French in B2 was mixed,

Dec 51 report missing

Mar 52 B2 =11th not a strong subject. Fair progress

July 52 much steadier work (6th) and progress this term CLT

My father visited the Dragon, for the first time I think, in October 1951, on his way to Washington. No doubt he saw Joc, but I have no idea how the interview about my and Sandy's affairs went. A brief round up letter after his visit at least contains references to school work, *I have not yet been chucked out of the Gondoliers. We have finished the first act. In English we've been learning the kings and queens of England and their dates.*

I was taking an increasingly active part in school life in my middle year. I took part in the junior chorus in the Gondoliers, enjoyed it and felt safe being on stage and singing in company, and I liked the dance (the Fandango Bolero) involved. I doubt participation took up much time or much effort was required to learn the words to the songs.

More extensive mentions of lessons, however, start the following spring term after both parents had gone to USA and I was rising eleven. I have the impression that I was trying a bit harder in forms; and I certainly seem to have taken an interest in science for the first time. Several letters report studies in train, *In the Science club I have completed 8-22 experiments. Such as constructing this [sketch of wiring diagram] It is great fun... In science I can bend a fuse wire from the mains (I'm not going to try again ~~now although~~ ~ I only did it for the sake of passing it).*

In February 1952, I was tackling the first of the 11 Plus exams we took, *On Wednesday a [= I] did the Intelligence paper 11+. I have now got the English Essay*

and Maths paper to do. On 3 March I had just finished the S.E. [= scientific experiments] and got a star. Shall I make a crystal set which cost 4/6 or not. I was enjoying it; and other classes too. In English history, for example we had to write an essay on Crecy ~ We had to be a person fighting. I was the 30th archer from the Front of the Black Prince's left Flank. We haven't had the results yet.

With irony I reported my approval of geography lessons something nearer to home than the remote dominions which so fascinated teachers of geography and empire, *In Geog for the first time on [=in] 10 years has the master done any part of Europe. We are doing Spain.* That was rather modern of me. In English, *We have been learning a piece out of chaucer's Canterbury's tales* and in late March, *we are roaring through Hamlet ~ I am Horatio. It is very good.* Our Greek was being put to the test by an expert, *Yesterday a Don (of ? [college omitted]) came to here [=hear] all the forms which were learning Greek.* Later in March I had enjoyed *the adventures of Ulysses in Latin*, and *We had a latin exam ~ I got 62%*

Interesting to me now is how in mid-Dragon career my notes on classwork, school matches, hobbies and activities of all sorts run through my letters in a stream of consciousness. It is as if to me they were all one thing - indivisible and indistinguishable parts of the normal round at school, and of course all part of growing up. An extract from my letter of 3 March 1952 makes a good example,

...On Tuesday we had lovely pancakes. I had a third. In Geog Mr Braddy told us exactly how a bull fight was. His sister lives above Logie in their flat in Tunbridge [my Uncle Logie Bruce Lockhart, then a schoolmaster at Tonbridge].

On Friday there was a half Holl which was a great surprise to everyone. That afternoon I scored 3 goals. There was a grammar test as usual on Saturday. It was a pretty frightful one.

In our dorm last night we had a midnight feast ~ only it was really about 10.15.

The first eleven played a match and beat our opponents 6-1 ~ I only watched a bit of it because of games. Yatto was marking me because he was centre half.

This week we take the 11+ Arithmetic and English. We have been practising the sort of questions which we are likely to get.

We had no entertainment on Saturday but a man (a friend of Jock's) did conjuring tricks to the elder boys. [Mr. Hornby]. He had 2 watches. One the diameter was ½ " and the other had a dial with the Days of Week, Moon, Date. Seconds, minutes and Hour hands, of which all were luminous.

In science I can bend a fuse wire from the mains (I'm not going to try again ~~now although~~ ~ I only did it for the sake of passing it). We play playground hockey ~ it is with a tennis ball. No windows have been broken yet! Amazing!

Two dogs, one called Jooley the other called Fleasich (flees ich [= fleas itch]) come down to the school and play around the field.

What a fascinating list of things around which my school life revolved; furthermore, the list does not have the stamp of one written in any way to satisfy parents. It is a simple account of a mix of things which I was addressing with equal emphasis, all jumbled up in no particular order whether 11+ exams, school dogs, curious watches, extra helpings of pancakes, the dangers of scientific experiment or school playground hockey, you name it. It is remarkably rich fare for an eleven year old schoolboy - and a reflection of the genius of the Dragon.

Through the next two terms my letters continue with a constant background noise of outside events, local and national, marking the progress of life through the school year. In February 1952, for example, *The papers were all full with news of the*

King's death and pictures from the family album. There was a sweet one of George VI and Prince Charles.

Queen Elizabeth drove through Oxford yesterday at 12.0 ~ I did not go but practised the Clarinet.

It is all very matter of fact; in form we are roaring through Hamlet ~ I am Horatio. There seemed to be time for everything. Last night I read a very detailed article (Magazine) on Captain Carlsen with the Flying Enterprise - a US ship which was wrecked in a storm in the Channel in December 1951. In early February, Yesterday we had a terrible Grammar test ~ 25 latin questions and 24 greek ones. It was my year for tests. The following week we take the 11+ Arithmetic and English. We have been practising the sort of questions which we are likely to get; and at the beginning of March There was a grammar test as usual on Saturday. It was a pretty frightful one.

I was deploying Greek words, even sentences, in my letters and datelines in Latin. Work and play was still mixed up through March, I have just finished the 11+ ~ It was the English and the Maths. The maths were easy but there was a very short time.... Wednesday there was a free half. A hockey match was on we won 6-1. I hit balls about on the field. Friday after noon there was a spelling test ~ I made 7 mistakes out of 75.

More science and more experimentation, I joined the Science Club. It is very interesting. I have completed 8 out of 20 simple Electric Experiments. My letters went on to a battery of matters scientific such as, In Science (form work) we were all given electric shocks which felt very ticklish; and a week or two later, In the science room I have got rather stuck with an experiment like this Build [sketch] Now add another resistor [sketch] So that the conector only brightens one bulb. The subject was becoming a hobby, Have you heard that tomorrow there will be a solar Eclipse in Khartoum and scientists from America, UK, Australia and other islands are going there to see it or news from the Science Room, On wendsday it was Gurt (Mr summerhof our science master) birthday. We gave him a present between us. He made a cycloscope which shows what sound waves look like. It is very interesting and full of wires ~ He showed us how a T.V. set works (Not in Science Club but a form period)... G. Sumerhoff is now building another radio controlled boat. It is much smaller than the other.

Curiously, but in the way these things can happen, this burst of enthusiasm for science never progressed into a sustained interest either at school or at home.

Work and play got mixed up in my letters home again. That term I played in a draughts competition - while the school chess 6, played St Edwards ~ One of my friends who is in the team beat his opponent ~ we won altogether 4 matches [and lost] 2 matches! Even if against Teddy's Under-14s, that would be pretty good. There were soccer matches too and the usual round of films and birthdays - with Lots of icing and marzipan ~ not harmond [sic] icing but sugar icing. And in between, We had a horrid history test from [illeg] to Edward III ~ 1189 and 1344. We haven't had results yet.

Then there was a service memory [= memorial service] for the King. I listened to the Burial Service on the radiogram. There were lovely descriptions of the gun carriage and the Guard of Honour. Do you know why the Navy carry the gun carriage? Because the hill to Windsor castle was covered in ice the horses slipped ~ they were carrying Queen Victoria's body in 1901 and could not climb the hill ~ so the navy guard of honour released the horses and pulled it up which gave [them] the privilege of always carrying it. It seems a far cry from full television coverage.

In the Easter holidays my father in Washington was a bit concerned about my

end of Spring Term reports. Words such as 'undisciplined' might have unnerved him. [For ease of reference here, Joc actually wrote *James does well & is always cheerful* and Hum's comment as Headmaster was, *the field is open for his best endeavour which might improve his positions.*]

My father asked my grandfather at Sedbergh, what he thought: Was I slacking? Should he say something? My father liked to be proactive, but my grandfather gave him some sensible advice, in a letter of 13 April 1952,

I had some chat with your two about reports before you wrote. And I don't think there is much more to be said. Remember that I read these reports in the first place not as a grandfather but as a headmaster very accustomed to reading reports & reading them between the lines.

Last term a young bright boy (arrived here recently from Lynams) got some pretty severe criticism: 'He must think that a certain flair for bright expression can take the place of solid work'. Very effective in a superficial way but doesn't get down to it' etc etc. - from all the unimaginative masters.

I teach the child myself & find his work 90% quite brilliant work, beautifully set out, imaginative, with occasional crashes when concentration has suddenly dropped. So as HM I write on his report 'the boy is doing splendidly & suffering only from the strain of trying over-anxiously to do well at everything. The last thing we must do is to nag at him'.

The housemaster came round to thank me and said he didn't dare to say it but it was true. The boy was wearing himself out over trying.

Now I suspect that this is a little true of Jamie. He strikes me as intensely anxious to learn everything, anything all the time. He is 18/19 in classics I know but he was 2nd in the form below & only two were promoted from below into that form this term. He's been doing Greek for about 2 terms & probably the other 17 have a term or two more. So how can he expect to beat them?

The only criticisms in his report are

Classic 'finds the work difficult, but...

French 'not a strong subject.'

English 'comps promising (or some such word) but undisciplined (& so they ought to be at that age)

And then Joc's [actually Hum's] pretty meaningless remark carefully suggesting that he might do better but carefully avoiding saying so.

No! I reckon the child has moved up & has his work cut out to cope - always a tricky situation for the young who love success.

I don't see any point in adding to the distress by saying you don't think he's doing his best when you haven't any idea if it's true & have, as I think, a strong suspicion that he does try very hard.

Sandy is of course very pleased with his success & takes his pat on the back with embarrassed humour! He is incidentally much more intelligent than I thought he was when I last saw him and I should be very surprised if he doesn't continue to go ahead.

But don't worry James or at last not until you have very clear evidence that he's slacking off. I think he's much more likely to suffer from strain than from limpness.

Hooray for grandparents, including headmagisterial ones.

The summer term brought another round of grammar tests, history, Latin and revision for Term exams along with the usual combination of work and play such as

the Ned Morley competition for Maths, another General Knowledge exam and picnic expeditions on the Thames at the end of May and the end of June. On 20 July I reported some exam results, *In the geog exam I was 1 of my set with 70% ~ I got 61% in the Greek, 63% in the English, 51% in the science, 63% Latin....* and there was also *a general knowledge paper yesterday out of 205. I think I got 101 marks;* but most of that letter was about swimming relays, including news of some relief, *We do not do any more afternoon work now. We have sports instead.*

But the detail of work, its method, our books, has mostly slipped away. I recall the little green coloured Caesar's Gallic Wars, the incomprehensible text of Chaucer, a small pale blue French grammar (was it Poole?) and lists of Greek irregular verbs spread across two pages. I loved the word 'aorist' - and rather enjoyed the use of the imperfect tense. Snatches of a few rhymes come back, such as 'a, ab absque, coram de, palam, clam, cum, ex and e', sine, tenus, pro and prae...' and French plurals in x, '...genoux, hiboux, cailloux, choux...'? And all of these things I see in the dark rooms of the huts. I have no recollection at all of being taught in New Hall; in 3A over the science room in 2a in Old hall first on the left - and otherwise in the huts?

*

Unfortunately the collection of reports on my fourth year, September 1952 to July 1953, is again missing one report, namely for Spring Term 1953. Yatto's reports for the year, however, tell the story pretty clearly - satisfactory progress but 'without reaching the heights'. It seems I had found my natural level of ability or limit of capability.

In Classics I was in Upper 3A under Yatto

Dec 52 UP 3A has worked quite well (17) and made satisfactory progress RSJY
Mar 53 report missing
July 53 UP 3A 11th his work reaches a reasonably good standard without approaching the heights! Much useful progress RSJY

In English I was with Jacko (yet again) who knew my work pretty well already. The reports show the same levelling off and a fair comment in July/

Dec 52 B1 exam 2^d, class 14 - should have managed a higher place this year. Some good work but not enough! CHJ
Mar 53 report missing
July 53 B1 a moderate term's work (14, history 8th) he has ability and knows the weaknesses CHJ

I was in B2 for maths and surprisingly good reports from C P Woodhouse,

Dec 52 B2 1st and 2^d in class; a good term's work and an excellent exam. With more attention to detail he can do better still CPW
Mar 53 report missing
July 53 5th in exam, 2^d in class A good term's work. Capable and promising

I have to say that my performance in Maths puzzles me. I thought I never really had a grip; that I neither understood the problems or principles in play - in which case did the work quite quickly and easily - or else I was lost, could not grasp the issues and was left floundering, as I think must have happened when I was

promoted to a level just a bit too high for me.

I was in B1 for French with Dodd in B1 where my performance was yet again careless. (This happened to me in Cambridge Tripos Part I when I got over 80% in essay and composition papers paper in French but only 25% in a not difficult translation; my tutor had been invited to find out whether the lapse had been attributable to illness.)

Dec 52 B1 Keen but very careless, hence his low place (=11) CD

Mar 53 report missing

July 53 13th Some better work but still very careless CD

There are only a few references to school work in my letters of the autumn term, which I seemed to find rather hard going. A litany of trouble began in October 1952, *Yatto makes us sweat a lot. I don't know where I am but I am bottom in French.* That month there was another paternal visit - it was not a success. As described elsewhere, we did not play rigger, and The George, his chosen spot to take us out for a slap up tea was closed.

I was rather depressed by something - possibly that visit - when I wrote lugubriously to my mother, the following week, *I am not getting on too well in form but I think I may be higher next week.² I think I have dropped in maths. We are doing something I just don't understand... We had a grammar Test yesterday ~ it was horrible ~ on the one before I got 59 marks which is a record.* A fortnight later, there was a difficult Latin test *I scraped through a Yatto test 14/20 - he except[s] [= accepts] 14;* but at least, *I got full marks in a geog test on Friday.*

At the turn of the month, I was in trouble with Dodd in French, *I had a real smacker of an impot from Dodd, 350 words. My friend had one of 950.* In early November Yatto was lashing out with punishment for bad work in Classics too, *Yatto has been setting lots of impots ~ I have done 6 from him ~ 1 in maths 2 in French ~ It is quite a full time [job?] ~ if I'm set writing Impots I'm learning something which I ought to have done in prep. Could you give me the date of the founding of the states around the Lincoln Memorial.*

On 14 December, however, I was able to list my Term exam results, which were not actually so bad after all.

<i>Exam</i>	<i>my place</i>	<i>highest in form</i>	<i>lowest in form</i>
		<i>[%]</i>	<i>[%]</i>
<i>Latin</i>	<i>15/19</i>	<i>92%</i>	<i>64%</i>
<i>English</i>	<i>2/17</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>History</i>	<i>9/17</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Geog</i>	<i>2/17</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Maths</i>	<i>1/17</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>French</i>	<i>11/17</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>My ave (without Greek)</i>		<i>70%</i>	
<i>Last years's ave</i>		<i>63%</i>	

The following term my references to my schoolwork seem a little brighter (maybe helped by good doses of skating). In January I had a go at competing in the Mobile history essay; the subject I chose was King John - intrigued I rather think by A.A. Milne's proposition that King John was not a Good Man which seemed to make him potentially more interesting.

I was also amused as well as frustrated by an art task, *We did Art yesterday and*

had to paint a room which Van Gogh painted. The colours are hideous. The wood of the chairs is painted yellow, sheets are yellow grey, walls violet, door mauve, the washstand red. A blue and orange quilt over the bed. Just mad I call it.

In February I had some more cheerful comments on other subjects too, *I have been doing all about our Colonys in America. Daddy had told us quite a bit about before hand so I was up on the other boys in the subject.* Another history task was harder though, *We had to write a poem on the Duke of Marlborough. It was rather difficult;* and there was an unhappy incident the same day, *One of the boys in my form was caught writing a letter in prep. It was torn up! I think that it was a bit thick.* I am not quite sure what happened to my 8 February fortnightly report – its supposed loss sounds a bit like an excuse to hide a critical remark?, because the class positions were not too awful?

Sorry about my report but I lost it before I had time to post it. My places were

*=14/ 18 Latin
9/16 English
2/17 maths
9/17 French*

I obviously did not like the fortnightly grammar tests at all. On 15 February I wrote, *There was a grammar test yesterday but it was not too easy. My birthday is on a grammar test day Ugh!!* It turned out to be not so bad, *There was new type of grammar test yesterday.* On 1 March I had to report a stinker of a grammar test, *We had a terrible grammar paper this week. I don't know my results yet and I don't really wish to know them.* Grammar was ever my bugbear – prey, I fear, to my lack of consistent accuracy. And the next week I had another impot which I had to do rather than attending an impromptu debate. But then there was some small relief, *We had to write Xmas day in Pepys' style. It was good fun,* and a nice break from the bugbear, *In our last week of Greek we have been doing Greek history instead of Grammar.*

But I think school work became tougher going that year as the staff put on the pressure for final entrance exams to the next stage of schooling. At the end of that spring term prep was increased, *I now do 1 ½ hrs in prep. In Science we learnt all about nerves and mussels [sic]. A propos,* biology was a new departure and probably more testing than physics and electrical mechanics.

The winter may have been quite tough going physically – Sandy had had a bad case of septicaemia and I had constant and uncomfortable cracked lips and chaps in the cold. The school year had its usual round of distractions; but I was involved in neither the Gilbert and Sullivan, *Patience*, in November nor the *Merchant of Venice* in the summer.

However, there may have been a small feeling of increased well-being in the background at the turn of the year. On Poppy Day boys were beginning to lash out at the time of the 11 November Remembrance Service, *today we have a memorial service ~ Poppys ~ some people have had ideas of buying 2/6 ones to go on car and then stick them in as a buttonhole.* The end of the winter term brought the usual Christmas celebrations, 'community carols and Christmas pud and Chicken for lunch'. But the most important and heartening news of all came at the beginning of February, *On Wed (I think) sweets came off ration. Everyone was trooping down to N.P. [North Parade].*

Outside events noted in my letters that winter included the great affair of the hanging on 28 January 1953 of Derek Bentley. Not long afterwards I had noticed

the destruction by fire of the Empress of Canada in dock in Liverpool on 25 January. She was the ship by which Sandy and I had sailed to Canada the previous July, so naturally I was shocked - and apparently I subscribed to a conspiracy theory. *No one bothered about the Empress of Canada being burnt but after the Ist QE fire everyone was talking about it. American communist (the main theory) sabotaged the Empress and tried to do the same. That is rather my idea also. Last night the Princess Victoria went down in a gale.* It seems that discussion of Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 also reached junior level son Bardwell Road; I asked my father, *What do you think will happen about peace treaties with USSR after Stalin's death.*

At the end of the spring term there was a full evening of celebrations for the boarders, including a Jazz club, the latest film made by the School Cine Club, poems by masters and another performance by the staff of their popular Trial by Jury. In the summer I recall all sorts of enjoyable activities in our classroom above the science room. I became the class's honorary draughtsman, drawing cartoons for the form's newspaper/comic, gloats, charts of stars and black marks, endless charts of swimming, diving and sporting performances. The outstanding event of the year, however, was the coronation in June of Queen Elizabeth II and the memorable and patriotic celebrations at school

This week has been most eventfull [sic]. On Monday we had no prep. We helped put up decorations and stalls for the Fête. The next morning we woke up full of excitement. At breakfast we found propelling pencils at our seats. I am writing with mine now; so are a lot of people. The television started at 10.15 but I played soft ball with 3 other boys. I went up at 10.45 and saw a bit of the procession. It was very majestic ~ We watched the service and followed it in our books until 1.15. My eyes watered from watching it. We had chicken and stuffing for lunch which was enjoyed by everyone. After lunch I went along to the side show I was doing and put up skittles. Then I went away and roll[ed] up to the other side shows. Mummy went to watch the TV ~ Simon and Mrs Lanzon came and Si went to the Emmett railway which was pulled by a tractor in disguise for an engine. In the driver's place there were two dials one saying Gin the other saying Tonic [sketch - showing Dials and Danger Marks] ~ I thought it was rather a funny joke.

Among the side shows there were: aunt Sally, roll a penny, kill the rat, 3 skittle alleys, 2 coconut shies, hoopla, lucky dip, ball in bucket, burst the balloon, Hit the Pip. You payed [sic] a penny for all of them and won a prize which were all sorts of things. There was a putting course with obstacles which I won 6d off. On the hitting a golf ball (one of the holey ones) I passed the grown up line and won 6d again. There was a grand balloon race where you had your balloon blown up as much as you wished with hydrogen. They had a ticket tied on them saying [sketch of ticket with own name, Dragon School Address and note 'Please return and write place where found'] ~ The prize for the furthest was a guinea. One boys got to outside Salisbury. He is winning so far. There were many raffles. The first prize for one being a carton of fruit about 2'6" by 8". A boy won it. At 6 o'clock Mummy and the Lanzons went back.

The raffle prizes were given out. At 8 o'clock we went up into the New Hall and had dances and games. At 10.15 a crocodile headed by a band (in which I was playing)[,] playing combs with tissue paper around them[, and singing horns, with Boys carrying torches, in single file hand to hand we marched down the field to the fireworks. There was a first class display of all sorts of fireworks. It was then about 11.20. The rain started falling and we became very cold. Then we ran

off to the Bonfire which was tremendous [sic]. The flames roared into the sky drying everyone. The old chairs and broken desks flew to ashes in the boiling heat. We sang Auld lang syne and God Save the Queen. Then with a hot sausage on a stick we zoomed into bed and fell asleep. All dreaming about the glorious day we will remember all our lives...

Everyone was in a cheery mood, and I could end my letter with, *I think I have done better in form this last fortnight.*

*

I finished my Dragon career in Upper 2A. In classics I started out very well but something went wrong with my Greek which I had thought of as my best subject and always enjoyed. It was another case of careless I fear.

Dec 53 U2A 1 in exam and 2 in class. A very steady term's work, ending with a very good Greek exam RIK (Counter-marked: Well done. JL)
Mar 54 = 4th after some very promising work he finished the term very poorly. He must make a really determined effort to recover his best standard
July 54 8th he has done very well and I'm sorry he didn't achieve greater success

I was in A1A in English and according to Bruno, whom I liked, I was doing reasonably well

Dec 53 A1A A v. f. term's work and a creditable exam. I hope he may be higher next term JBB
Mar 54 A1A =6 a good term's work. He is making steady improvement JBB
July 54 A1A V. promising (5 in class, 1st in exam) he writes with imagination & will do well in this subject. Best thanks for Lady Macduff. (8th in history exam)

In Maths I was promoted for my last year - but sad to say it was more than I could handle. Wilkinson tried, but I was 'not getting it' as we say these days (see earlier comments on Maths) and remained firmly at the bottom of the form.

Dec 53 A1 struggling bravely (16th) and making some progress WACW
Mar 54 A1 has worked hard (16th) and has made progress
July 54 A1 has tried hard (16th) in a subject which he finds difficult WACW

In French it was Yatto who once again tried to keep me on the straight and narrow but although I improved a bit from a sloppy start, my performance remained only average.

Dec 53 A2 Possibilities (5 in class, 10 in exam) but still too content with the second rate RSY
Mar 54 A2 very fair work and progress (6 in class)
July 54 A2 a very satisfactory term's work RSJY (4th in class, 9 in exam)

I refer to my promotion in maths in my first letter home, *In Maths I am being tried in the top form. We are doing trigonometry. It is very good fun but rather tricky.* And on the 18th October, after receiving my second fortnightly reports, I was not feeling confident about my maths, and seemed to be struggling a bit in other ways too, *I don't think I will be 2nd again in form for French. In English I forgot to give in one prep which lost 40 something marks, otherwise I might have been fairly high for I did well on the other preps. In maths I am bottom or second bottom - I don't know.*

Reports at half term brought another mixed bag of results, *This fortnight we have got reports ~ I am 2nd in Latin I know, but I don't think I will be high in French or English and I am pretty sure I'm bottom in Maths.*

In the spring term there are fewer comments in my letters on work - perhaps I was just knuckling down and trying hard. At the start of the summer term the focus was of course on scholarship exams. I was now down to try for Sedbergh (where my grandfather Bruce Lockhart was about to retire from the headmastership.)

I missed a couple of weeks in January, but from then on I think work progressed quite smoothly. There was less deflection of attention by flu and skating in my last year; and I had the advantage of being sent to board at the Thompson home for my last term. I went with Chris Waddilove, whom I knew well (being in the same form and both on the rugger XV, etc), but we had not been close pals until then, and he was a quiet boy, so we did not draw each other into endless ragging and other idle pursuits but worked quite hard. And no doubt Ma and Pa Thompson kept a beady eye on us all. She was an Old Dragon (Penelope Stradling), and he was a professor of chemistry (who taught Margaret Thatcher).

In May, art and woodwork ceased until the scholarship exams were over., and the run up of preparations and revision began. At the end of May, *We spent most of the week of classics doing scholarship papers, all kinds of latin and Greek papers. It is very useful for examination craft. In maths we have done all we need to do and 'Wilky' says we won't learn anything more in the last few days.*

On 22 May, I was worrying on behalf of colleagues about, *the horrible railway strike. I'm wondering whether those who go for schols to day and to-morrow will get to their destinations.* The summer play, Macbeth, in which I was playing Lady Macduff, was under way but not a distraction until after the exam season. The term went on to mid June with lots of cricket, but swimming and tennis came later I was able to tackle my prep happily and went off to Sedbergh in good heart.

Unfortunately I barely commented on the exams at Sedbergh, more on other aspects of the short stay such as staying in the San, buying Kendal Mint Cake and climbing Winder in our spare time. I remember the heat and sun; and trying to walk up the shiny moorland grass of Winder in leather-soled black school walking shoes. I remember the interview on the shady late afternoon lawn of school house, in deck chairs, with three (or was it two) masters, one of whom was Ken Bishop, my grandfather having introduced us and then gone inside.

On the scholarship exams at Sedbergh School I wrote,

I am afraid I failed to get anything at Sedbergh, but as Joc said I wasn't really expected to get anything. I had a wonderful time there. We had a wizard journey up there and the train arrived just before time. We met another chap called Collard on the train who we made friends with. The journey was very good because we had a compartment to ourselves the whole way.... On wed morning we went into school prayers ~ the singing sounded very funny compared with our 'squeak-squeak' singing... After the exams on Wed, J.A.C. and I took Penny

down to Birks Mill... That evening I had my music and other interview. I had to read some French and English and answer all sorts of questions...

Not a very enlightening report. I wrote in fact more about the return to school

We arrived at Euston about 5 mins late. We caught the underground to Paddington, changing at King's X However we were 5 mins late for the 4.45. So having rung up Joc we had some tea and then caught the 6.5. No one met us at Oxford so we walked back from the station.

On Friday we got the whole morning off so we went on the river (that is J.A.C. and I) and we went up to marston Ferry and then to the By Pass bridge.

We had jolly good fun ~ In the afternoon we did very little in form and at Prep JAC and I scored for the masters match.

The remark about Joc's expectations is interesting. It was clever of Joc to ease the pressure on me at school. At home it had been an unhappy start to the summer with my mother's loss in April (aged 38, which was perhaps older in those days than now) of the child born. What with that and my father's new job in the Foreign Office in London and his puzzle over whether to change career or not still unresolved, there was a great deal on their minds that term. That may be why I do not recall any enormous pressure of expectations about the scholarship exams from home either. Perhaps for my parents the important thing was my entry into Sedbergh confirmed. This was also a source of pleasure in the wider Bruce Lockhart family at the time of my grandfather's retirement and the unexpected appointment, unpopular in the senior common room, of his 34-year old house tutor, Michael Thornley, as headmaster. And for me, there was still everything to play for.

There were a handful of events in my last year. I enjoyed taking part in the more senior chorus as a pirate and policeman in the Pirates of Penzance; and then a small part as Lady Macduff in the summer Shakespeare. There were the usual winter games and entertainments and river sports and picnics in the summer. I played my clarinet in the orchestra and in concerts, read in services and so on; and there was tennis as well as cricket for fun. I recall the swimming relays and athletics but not as being as time consuming an occupation as they were the previous summer. Perhaps I spent more time enjoying being able just to mess about with friends, roaming the school ground and down by the river after the scholarship exams and before the last Dragon days.

I remember the summer of 1954 as halcyon days. My last letter home, on 18 July, four days before the end of term, has the same hallmarks of multiple activities, work and play, and friendly familistic atmosphere which stamped my letters of 1952 - reminding me today that the magic of Dragon education lay in its success in combining fun, games and serious classwork indistinguishably into the happy process of growing up,

... We have had a jolly good week in sports. Our 2a teams (2) have got in the finals for everything and I broke my hop step and jump record by 1 ft 9 ins. Winning the shield however is going to be pretty difficult.

We have had a few exams too. I have not done terribly well ~ [but] not below 9 except in science when I was top with 86%. I think I was 3rd in the school.

Last Sunday river expedition was simply wizard. We rowed up to Easham and then had tea, strawberries and pop and cakes ~ we bathed and then rowed back. There were no unusual happenings, drownings, blisters, broken legs, 2in cuts and crab catchings. Altogether we had great fun.

*Looking forward like any thing to the holls. We have started packing,
Lots and lots and lots of love from*

Jamie

THE ART OF WRITING LETTERS FROM SCHOOL

Jamie, as we shall see below, has thought about this a good deal. Alan would like to write as a preface that letters are a peculiar art form in themselves, and this is exacerbated when writing from a boarding school. The result is that the writer will often not write about the most important, but unspeakable things. This may partly account for one of the largest absences in the letters, which is any sense of real misery, particularly loneliness. This may well be accounted for by a particular taboo on showing misery which George Orwell describes. ‘To write home and ask your parents to take you away would have been even less thinkable, since to do so would have been to admit yourself unhappy and unpopular, which a boy will never do. Boys are Erewhonians: they think that misfortune is disgraceful and must be concealed at all costs.’¹

On the other hand, it was not an absolute taboo since many of the letters in the book by Brendon on 'Preparatory Schools' are filled with heart-wrenching loneliness and cries of misery, asking for parents to come and take the child away. This also happened in my own family, for my younger sister Anne, when she first went to a boarding school in 1954, at about the age I was sent to the Dragon, wrote to my mother full of grief, as described in a letter of 18th October 1954. *I had a sad little letter from Annie “I cried half the night because I was homesick. Mummy when are you coming back?”* My mother’s reactions must have been those of many other mothers. *Of course I wanted to leap into the first train and remove her at once and tell her she need never go to school again, but restrained myself. I think they really are happy, but of course it will be hard on them at times, but they must learn to fight their little battles - I fear I’ve fought too many for them up to now.*

There is nothing like this desperate plea in any of my surviving letters. There are descriptions of illness, but none of bullying, loneliness or other miseries. There are quite frequent references to the number of days to the end of term and the cheerful prospects of the holidays, but certainly in my last couple of years there is evidence in my mother’s letters that I looked forward to going back to school.

On 7th April 1952 I wrote *I hope you are all well out there and I think of you very often.* This was the closest to saying I was missing my parents, apart from indirect references to how much I was looking forward to seeing them again in the holidays. On 12th October 1952 when I was anticipating my trip to Assam, I wrote *it is only about another 6 weeks till the end of the term and it goes quite quickly.* On 3rd May 1954 I noted that *I am having jolly good fun* in my new dormitory, and the following year 2nd February 1955 I reported that *We have had a wizard time except for the cold as I have lost my gloves.* My absence of a signs of self-pity is perhaps worth noting. Even when I was sick or disappointed I seem philosophical - a characteristic noted by my grandfather and grandmother. For example on 23rd August 1953 I wrote *I am probably not going up to scotland as I have to have four teeth out soon... I have had an anesthetic and I had four teeth. I was a bit sick but I am alright now except for a horse throat and my cheek has swollen. Lots of love Alan*

¹ Orwell, Essays, 433

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Addressing an adult, especially when one is still learning to control language, can lead into a kind of writing which conceals as much as it shows. How much of my own views and voice comes out of the letters, especially those written within the scrutiny of the Dragon? I don't notice much difference in my letters from home and from school to my parents, but to take this further it is worth comparing my letters to those of other little children away at boarding school for the first time and of the same age.

Here I am fortunate in having an almost equal collection of schoolboy letters written by my uncles Billy and Richard in between 1929-1933 from Stratton Park, their preparatory school. They were writing twenty years earlier, from a different school but the recipients overlapped in that their letters were to my grandparents, and even occasionally to my mother (their younger sister).

In comparison to their letters, mine seem fairly free, even chaotic. There are frequent crossings out, many spelling mistakes uncorrected, numerous drawings, a wide range of topics are covered. The voice in the letters seems to be, in so far as letters are ever so, the authentic voice of an eleven or twelve year old addressing adults.

The letters of my uncles from school are formal, very well written in terms of hand-writing, sometimes employing adult words and grammar beyond a twelve year old, with very few spelling mistakes or amendments. There are no drawings. They are carefully crafted 'display' pieces. My uncles' letters are solicitous and wary, rather solemn, and often seek for something from the recipient – some sign of love in appreciation or gifts.

Richard explains the reason why the letters from both the brothers, at first sight, seemed two or three years more mature than mine. He writes: 'I fashioned my letters, written on Sunday afternoons, closely supervised and carefully formed. They contained the trivia of our world, little happenings, many on the field of play and the names of friends and glances at the staff... And sometimes the assurance that parents needed. "I am awfully happy at Stratton Park." The censor over my shoulder would like that.'

This is very different from my memory of letter writing at the Dragon, and the evidence of my letters suggests that we were allowed to send the most atrociously spelt and badly written letters home and did not need to re-assure our parents. There may have been some mild censorship, perhaps particularly in our first two years when we might be most critical or miserable or both. Thus Julian Hunt, my exact contemporary, told me in an interview that in his first house 'on Sundays we would write letters home and the housemaster would inspect them; I was writing about how terrible the boys were and he took my letter, crumpled it up, and asked me why I felt this, and whether it was my own fault that they were nasty to me; a rather severe form of therapy – Dragon style'.

I don't remember anything similar, though I expect if I had been very critical and my parents had brought this up, I would have been more closely supervised. As it was, my letters seem to have been left in their rather shambolic form, as can be seen in those reproduced below – until they became tidy and grammatical in my last year or so.

The difference in the censorship of the letters reflects the difference in the size of the school. The Dragon had about 400 boys at the time, at least half of them boarders. Stratton Park only had about fifty boys, so supervision could be stricter. It

¹ Richard Rhodes James, *The Road from Mandala* (2007), 37-38

also reflected the difference in the nature and goals of the school, which in turn reflected the headmaster's personality, as did other aspects of the school.

*

Jamie writes that the art of schoolboy letters home is a very complex affair, affected by many issues such as practical context of writing, the litany and rhythms of reporting, the choice of subjects or of a satisfying style and language. Efforts to find ways to express empathy, share thoughts and feelings (whether of good cheer or disguised messages of homesickness) were to an extent governed by time available to write, parental expectations and, quite simply what else we might have on our mind. A fixed 'letter prep' is no doubt a necessary thing but it makes for a difficult introduction to what letters are really all about. We must start with the basics.

Letter prep, week in, week out, had a rhythm of its own. It is surprising that this itself did not have a deadening effect on our efforts. Letter prep began - no doubt with issue of appropriate paper (lined or not, airmail or normal, even Hum's special supply of postcards for a quick note of acknowledgement) and spare writing implements - *at 9.15 a.m. after breakfast* on a Sunday morning. The period might be curtailed if the boarders were going to Christchurch Cathedral or Pip and Jim for the morning service. It seems that some latitude in the hour was allowed in later years, because in February and March 1954 I mentioned that I was writing the letters in bed at 6.45 in the morning, before an early morning plunge.

Then came the matter of potential content, the litany of the school diary. What had happened last week? And the need for some perfunctory questions about the recent activities and well-being of dogs, sisters, parents or such other as there might be at home. Next, question, what did the parents want to hear about? Well, it was hard to tell. There was not much to say in the first year about your own messy game of football or rugby, but school match scores might in some way represent your own endeavours.

Then there was the possibility of a space filler. My favourite device in about year two was the joke or (even better) a sketched cartoon. These might be things which amused me or which I thought might amuse my parents or, perhaps things which I thought would show my own grown-upness. My father, and his family, had long been great readers of volumes of old pre-war *Punch* for light entertainment; so *Punch*-type jokes were a pretty fair bet on all scores - space fillers, funny and pleasing to parents. The space issue also cross-related to the bottom of the page quandary, namely that if I turn over now I have to continue a respectable distance down the next side. (The first immediate step is to increase the size of your handwriting.)

Handwriting was an issue, but I do not remember any Dragon staff encouraging or correcting. Mine was very changeable from tidy (and small) to haphazard and scrappy. Sandy had trouble keeping his writing tidy and well aligned, thus preferring lined paper to the aerogrammes or airmail letter forms - as he explained to deter parental criticism, *If I really write a neat letter I have to do it on lines and that means having an ordanory envelop [sic]*

The final decision to be taken, of course, was how to bring a letter to a justifiable close. One way was by promises, as in December 1952, *I am sorry that I am not write a long letter but it will [be] 2 air letters next time*. But there is a touch of irony as well as ennui in Sandy's letter 4 December 1955, *This week has been very boaring and on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday we worked. So don't say we don't work... Next week will be more intresting so I will write a longer letter. All the Exams start on Monday and the[re] will be a tiny bit*

more life going on... Sorry it is such a short letter but nothing has been going on

More succinct was the line he took in October 1954, *The tea bells just gone so goodbye for now*, but the excuses become richer in Sandy's last term; in January 1956, *There is nothing interesting to say because nothing interesting happening but [I] expect something 'D' or interesting will happen next week so and I will tell you all about it. I think it is nearly tea time so I better go. So I am going to stop writing anyway[,] I could not of said anything else. Lots of love from Sandy*

February 1956 was Common Entrance, a nerve racking time for all, *C.E.E. is tomorrow and I will be very very pleased to get it over with. Tonight is an early night, that means we have to go to bed early. I am afraid there is nothing else to say. Have you got the B.B shot yet?* And at the start of March 1956, his last month at the Dragon, Sandy brought things to a crisp close,

Last night there was a debate ~ the motion it was 'that cars are a curse not a luxury'. It lost. The bell has gone so I must go. Lots of love from Sandy

Sandy used slang more than I did. His style was more direct, whereas mine was considered and rather cautious. The slang he used could be very expressive and fit in effectively, as in his use of the term 'awful' in a variety of contexts. For example, *Yesterday the[re] was a ice hockey match between the boys and the staff. Joc played and so did a new Austrian master play called Seckfried. He is very good indeed because he played an awfull lot in Austria.* Or in February 1952, in thanking for a supply of Christmas cards with crests on them, *Thank you very mutch for the letters and Post cards ~ and the Crests were simply magnificent and an awfull lot.*

My mother had been unwell with a flu bug that summer, *It must have been awfull for you in bed ~ did Daddy fly back and have cought [= caught] it as he had it coming over to England?* And then in October the term 'awful' came in handy for something totally different, *for breakfast we had actually mixed together on the same plate backed [= baked] appel and fried backen [= bacon] which was very nice but looked awfull.*

Finally that November, before moving on to other perhaps more fashionable slang, Sandy used the term to describe a nasty experience himself *Yesterday I went to the Radcliff and we had to wait an awfull long time when we got going I had a p[ri]ck in my blood vain and he took out a lot of blood and he took an x-ray and then another prick in my arm...* The strength of this slang use of the word 'awful' is actually increased by its wide applicability.

Even more imaginative and effective was his use of the word 'sonic', begun in January 1953. Shooting, a new sport he was trying out, was simply supersonic, or in Sandy's own words, *Sottin is simply supper sonic.* The word *sonic* became a great favourite, and its cumulative effect could be sensational.

In Sandy's letters skating, hockey, shooting, bicycling and boating were all *sonic fun*; songs and games were *sonic* or *super sonic*, and as for the Royal Tournament in June 1955, *it was all absoloutly sonic.* Ice hockey in February 1956 was *super sonic smashing fun*, while Henley Regatta in July 1955 was *spifing sonic, marvelous wonderful.* With increased fluency in style and maturity of content, the slang in Sandy's letters gradually becomes ironic, as when he says in October 1955 that our mother's plan for *the half term weekend is an absoloutly prang-on wizard, corking super-sonic smasho idea.*

By his third year Sandy was using slang increasingly freely and quite unselfconsciously. In October 1953 for example, he had had a *smashing, bang-on, scrumptious time.* The holidays of April 1954 had brought a *spiving wisong Easter* [transl: spiffing, whizz-on] and he had met a friend of our parents, a larger than life RAF officer, who was a *korking sonic giser bill*

(geezer is London slang for an older person, solid and reliable - perhaps with a Kaiser Bill overtone here?)

Slang had its own life and traditions at the Dragon (too extensive to discuss here) and private languages, shorthands or codes were commonly used for longer or shorter periods of time. Sandy had a good feeling for it all, and could invent his own terms, as in *My bike arrived on Thursday Tartor-toon*.

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I see our letters from the Dragon developing in broadly four stages. We started with what you might call the Primitive, the first steps in communication. These early letters tend to be lists or spontaneous thoughts offered in a haphazard way. But parents can see through the filters all right and recognise the genuine feelings of affection even if expressed in generalities. My early letters, it seems, came with a comforting refrain, *a nice time*. I used it right at the start of my very first letter home in September 1949, no doubt not knowing what else to say. *I hope you are having a nice time. Thank you for the letter ~ we have staret [sic] to learn to play ruga [sic] yester-day ~ I like it very much*. That day I wrote to Sandy too (in capitals because he could not read) *I HOPE YOU ARE HAVING A NICE TIME IN BAD SALZUFLEN ~ YOU WILL LIKE THE DRAGON SCHOOL VERY MUCH ~ I DO ~ THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER*

Three weeks later I wrote, *I hope you are having a nice time in Germany ~ I am having a nice [time] here ~ How are Butch and Amber [dogs] ~ what have you been doing ~ thank you very much for the photos ~ I like them very much ~ every Sunday I go to granny ~ well nearly every Sunday...* and the theme was repeated in my letter at the end of the month, *I hope you are having a nice time in Germany ~ I am having a nice time ~ I am in the sickroom w[h]ich is a pity because I can't go to granny this Sunday*. It seems slightly strange that I should have been having a nice time in the sick room but that is not the point. The point is that all is well, the sickness is not too serious and the only thing troubling me is missing my Sunday lunch at Belbroughton Road with grandparents Hone.

Two weeks later it is the same thing again, *I hope you are having a nice time. On Friday instead of prep we had a story called the timber box*. And with a few variations the 'nice time' theme continues until May 1950, *I hope you are well and having a nice time in Germany. I am having a nice time here. We have started bikes now. It is so wet & nasty that we cannot ride them on the field which is a pity. We haven't started swimming yet ~ half term is on July 1st*

In a sense I was writing in code, one which my parents could decypher perfectly well. Other news sandwiched between the 'nice times', as were basic enquiries about life at home, as in May 1950, my third term, *How is Sandy [?] tell him I think [h]is writing is better than last term but [he] still makes spelling mistakes ~ can he read properly now? Does he still go to cubs in Salzuflen [?] How are you getting on with your riding and Dad with his golfing [?]* What was important for both sides was the establishment of a living connection in writing - a previously untested proposition. And then after roughly a year, things began to change.

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The second stage of letter writing I would call the chameleon stage. Here the correspondence moves from primitive lists of events and enquiries of a rather abstract nature to specifics. The prep school boy does this by beginning to think more about his parents as he writes - and as a result starts to echo their interests, and adapting his writings to the colour of their writings in the search or common ground.

It is clear from my and Sandy's letters that this common ground can be found in many places, domestic, social, sporting and cultural interests, or any outside events which can be shared: a Varsity Boat Race, a Scotland XV rugger match, a dog show at home or films at school. Out of the interaction of enquiries and responses arises a real process of sharing.

Here is Sandy, something of an expert, ready to share his views on cricket in the Parks in summer of 1952, *I think that Oxford cricet team this year is very poor and I am shor the [= that] Cambrige [sic] will win.* And here are typical enquiries about sporting activities at home. In January 1950, I was asking about my mother's riding, *There has been no games except indoor voluntary games ~ there has been cold weather most of the time ~ I am keeping my diary ~ How are Marius [my mother's large show-jumper] and the other horses [?]? What have you been doing [?]?* It was the same again in July that year, *What have you been doing after that horse show [?]? I'm sorry Marius ran out ~ I think he wants a spanking ~ Is Daddy going in for any more competitions [golf or tennis] this month or not [?];* and in October 1952 Sandy was asking about my father's golf, *Is Daddy going in for any more big cubs [= comps].*

By the middle of my second year, the exchanges become a little more grown-up. In February 1951, I said to my parents, *I wrote a letter last Sunday ~ I expect you've got it now ~ I didn't know you were staying the night in Holland until Monday when the post card arrived.* And later that month I described the half-term procedures, *You remember my clock which granny sent to be mended in October, [it] has now come back. We don't have reports this weekend. It is the half term week-end. About 40 boys are going out ~ not many compared to summer term. That Saturday the whole school goes out ~ day boys are not allowed on the premises. Boys who [have] got parents or friends go out or who go out with another boy. The rest go out with Yatto and Jacko for picnics[,] which are not many.* At the end of his second year Sandy was making similarly detached comments too, *I have just started since I am doing Cemestary [chemistry]. Mr Summerhof is very very brainy much more than I thought him befor [sic] ~ he has showed us 3 or 4 Experiments - all very clever ones.*

By this stage some first mentions of practical things which parents would recognize also show growing self-awareness. In December 1950 I could see some practical advantage from particular school work, *On friday in geog we learnt all the map signs which is useful;* or interest in the type and fittings of a new car to be bought at home. After an away match in October 1955 Sandy asked, *The car I went in had a wirless in it. I suppose the M[sorris] Oxford will have 1 wirless in (will it?).*

News of close relatives could be another means of establishing common ground. In the summer of 1952 we had stayed with Rab and Pip Bruce Lockhart and their children Karen, Kim and Malcolm in Canada. They came through England on their way to New Zealand in summer of 1954, *I'm glad K, K and M enjoyed themselves at London. We saw [Uncle] Rab here at Oxford.* Our grandfather BL, also visited Oxford a couple of times, *Dear Man came down on Tuesday to a Headmaster's meeting (or something of that sort) and saw us,* and bachelor uncle Robin Hone, and our former nanny Ada, were frequent visitors at Belbroughton Road. In March 1952 Ada had had a bad journey, *Ada is now in Oxford with granny. She missed her 4.35 train because of going to the wrong station. She then went on the 7.10, and arrived here at about 10 o'clock.* And in March 1952 I could report that the sister of one of my masters lived above Uncle Logie and Auntie Jo in Tonbridge, *In Geog Mr Braddy told us exactly how a bull fight was. His sister lives above Logie in their flat in Tunbridge.* Being able to pass on the news made us feel part of the family and

rather grown up.

The letters become more like living conversations at home, such as recommending a film to be seen. When my father was back in England in October 1953 Sandy had some advice, *I hope you are having a nice time in London. If you take my superb advice, I should go and see Shane before it leaves.*

A propos, this curious use of 'take my advice' which Alan quotes too with reference to "*The Horror of St Trinians*" may have been an ironical reference to language used by masters when persuading boys to do things or stop doing them.

Thus common interests with parents come to replace the egocentric interests of the primitive stage. As described elsewhere Sandy's and my letters home contain innumerable comments on Old Dragon sportsmen, the record of university teams or performances of international teams. These sporting subjects are very good ground for chameleons.

Jokes at this second stage of letter writing are not very sophisticated. Mine were derivative and ones which confidently expected to appeal to parents' known tastes, as when I wrote in a letter of February 1952, *I just learnt a new poem*

*I would take my newest ball
And build a mighty tee;
Waggle once or not at all
And bang it out to sea...*

Or copied out cartoons, complete with title and sketch, perhaps from a 'Laughter Book' or an old copy of Punch,

'KEEPING ON THE SAFE SIDE'

[drawing of a large cat looking at a small mouse]

*Cat (very conservative)
and what are your views on government?
Mouse (scared because he is labour)
Same as yours!*

All kind of jokes, anecdotes, riddles and puzzles, from books, magazines, friends or adults, were similarly carefully chosen to share with parents. Sandy's and my letters contain between them several dozen - ruffling a master's tie, telling North without a compass, making a half crown out of a penny, bad poems (Mrs Knight had a fright in the middle of the night...), drawings to identify a giraffe passing a window or a Mexican on a bicycle. The list is endless, and many will be familiar to boys and parents still today. Riddles, of course, were very popular in those days before media entertainment. In later years, of course, we may have preferred not to share with our parents some of the things we thought were funny, but in those innocent early days, jokes were included simply because they had made us laugh. [What we are talking about here is straight prep school humour - such as writing *PTO* a few times at and near the bottom of the page but nothing on the back except, *Monkey look for Nuts ha ha ha, he he he!* This was a kind of humour which Sandy and I happily shared with our parents and even grandparents, as opposed to more scatological prep school humour, which included subjects such as old ladies stuck in lavatories and what made the lobster blush.

I rather like Sandy's W.G. Grace stories told in July 1952,

last night I read a small story about W.G. Grace ~ The score was 120 runs for 7 wickets and a fast bowler was told to hit no 7 on the pons [= bonce] and he was carried off[] ~ no 8 fa[il]nted in the site of the blood ~ no 9 was winded by the bowler and no 10 refused to bat aganst such a dangeurs bowler ~ and no 11 had no boody to bat with (Ha ha).

And I read another one about W.G. Grace now bating ~ he hite a six sailing over the top of the pavilion and down a steep hill. Next day the captain of Workshar [= Warwickshire] said to W.G. Grace you owe me 4/6 ~ W.G. Grace said why. He said to fech the ball back that you hit into the road.

They have a certain surreal quality about them.

One further point about our letters from the earlier years is that they could be rich in thought or enormously vivid even if limited in vocabulary, as in Sandy's account of a film, *Thank you very mutch for your letters. The film was jolly exiting and your back shiverd in some parts and some parts it was very sad.*

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In a transitional or third stage of letter writing feelings of closeness and an empathy underpin the development of a new and richer kind of communication, reflecting of course the dawning of self awareness. For Sandy and me this occurred in the middle years, say, around the age of eleven and a half.

I believe for instance that I actually was thinking of my parents when I began a letter with what seems an ordinary hum drum question such as in January 1954, *I hope Daddy had a nice time in Switzerland although it was 'perishing cold' and I hope Daddy hasn't caught a cold like I seem to have got.* A common cold is common enough but is the thought that counts. But expression of sympathy of a different kind was called for that April with the sad infant death of a baby sister. We had been sent to Sedbergh before my mother went into the nursing home, and I wrote to her there when we had been given the news, *It is a great pity about the baby but we're very glad that you are none the worse for it, and after all the discomforts of not being up-and-about, and all the knitting;* and Sandy wrote too, *I do hope you are better; it is very very sad about the baby.* And when my father took my mother off to Copenhagen for a restorative holiday, just as we were returning to school, my mind was on their welfare, *We had a really lovely holiday and enjoyed it all immensely. I do hope you will enjoy yourselves in Copenhagen and I think you deserve the change.*

My parents continued on holiday in favourite places in England to try to build up my mother's fitness. I could picture what they were doing, *I'm very glad Daddy's back is better now and I hope when he is at Rye he can play a bit of golf. A very happy, happy, happy birthday birthday to Daddy,* and later in the month at Sedbergh, *I hope you had a lovely time at Sedbergh and enjoyed your walks in the lovely hill air. I hope you will also have a very good holiday in Rye. Is Daddy playing well at golf and winning his games and enjoying himself?* - and later that month see their return home in my mind's eye, *I do hope you enjoyed your holiday at Rye and I'm glad the house and garden looks nice now....*

With a real exchange of thoughts and experiences at this third stage of letter writing, language also progresses - even in everyday matters such as accounts of rugger matches. My style becomes richer and the language rather technical, *On Wednesday I played in my rugger match. They were all quite a bit bigger than us. We got knocked about quite a bit. The game was great fun. We lost 10-9. A penalty goal nearly levelled us last minute. And in November 1954, On Saturday (yesterday) I played another 1st XV match ~ against Magdelene College School. They were slightly bigger than us on average but we simply massacred them 30-0. I scored 2 tries. I played fairly well. There was hardly any tackling to do. Once there [= their] man got through but was tackled by our wing corner flagging.*

Self awareness shows itself in a myriad of ways in letters, in the first place by use

of more grown up terms and phrases. Here are some examples from letters written in October 1953: an account of the journey back from an expedition to Bristol, *By the time we left it it was dark. Our driver in my opinion was a road hog, He drove down the middle of the road pushing lorries on the grass at the side and giving death scares to little cars. We arrived very let [= late] having to stop for sick chaps twice. But we had a first rate holiday;* some meatier comments on a game of rugger watched, *Yesterday I watched the O.Ds playing St Edwards School XV. The ODs fly half played well and their [= there] was a lot of dummying. The scrums were rather inefficient at hooking the ball and one player sat down when he hooked. Silly!! The O.Ds won in the end;* or a rather adult view on Swiss national characteristics, *On Tuesday we had a lecture on Switzerland. It was done with a film (in colour) which was well taken. It shows how very hard working (manual) the Swiss are.*

The transition to self-awareness is also evident in accounts in letters of our imagined worlds – of books, plays or films enjoyed. In early stages of letter-writing these accounts could be perfunctory and often space fillers, but in later years we really wanted to share the experiences. Sandy's wonderful account in March 1953 of a film about missionaries in Africa and the story of a cripple due to be sacrificed, is an example, ...*The person who had to be sacrificed was a cripple. But while they were waiting for the full moon to sacrifice him he escaped and hobbled away for miles and miles over rivers where [= where] crocodiles were and many other Adventures til at last he came to a missionry place where he was taught about Christ and Cristianerty and the Proper way to live.*

Whereas earlier letters tended to be egocentric, these later letters come quickly to points which are more relevant to the recipient more, as when Sandy was thanking our mother in February 1955 for *a jolly jolly good tea and wizard fun at Port Medow. I do hope that you did not loose your gumboots*

Responding to mother's letter in October 1953, I was more aware than in earlier years of what was on her mind (obtaining furniture at an auction and from the clearance of my deceased great aunts' house), *Thank you for the letters we had had this week. I am glad you had a nice time at Sedbergh. I am glad you did well in the Auction Sale. Have the Westwick things come yet? I expect they will make a great difference to the house when they are all set up (or layed [= laid] down).*

Direct solicitous enquiries feature more, as in Sandy's letter of summer 1955, *I do hope you all are very well. I am glad Shara [= baby sister Sarah] and Jeb [wolfhound puppy] have put on weight ~ talking on weight I suppose daddy lost his bet about weight finishing October F;* or again that summer when reporting my mother being ill, with eight month old Sally in tow, on a visit to Oxford; you can hear him working it out, *Mummy has been in bed for Monday Tuesday, Wed Thurs, Friday. I hope she will be well.*

Solicitous comments about each other figure increasingly too, as in a letter of Sandy's from Sedbergh in the 1952 Christmas holiday, *It is sad to say that Jamie is in bed with a cold and feels dizzy and has got as temperature. That means he is missing a Party at Winder house today for me and him. Dear bought me a lovely pair of bedroom slippers and Jamie a pair of gim shoes,*

And a nice incident is recorded in Sandy's letter at the start of term in January 1955. So excited was he to be going off skating with his pals that he quite forgot to return to Belbroughton Road as promised to say goodbye to our mother, *I am very sorry I did not come round to say goodbye but there was skating ~ I had a marvellous holiday, really wizard and such fun. I do hope you don't mind about not saying good bye I am very very sorry.*

And as you would expect, letters reveal a new awareness of the cost of life, as in May 1954, *The Boat club now has started which I joined. That means you can use any of 2 punts, 2 double oared, canvas canoes, or two rowing boats for the whole term whenever you like. It is well worth the 2/- as it would cost you 2/6 an hour at Tim's Boathouse!!*

There are of course also signs of language change through this period. Writing from Sedbergh in April 1954, for example, Sandy was using a phrase my father liked to use – in other words identification by copy cat, *Yesterday Jenny Jamie and I went half way up windor [= Winder] and built a dam the best one we have ever made in all my Sam.* But in February 1956 he turned his own phrase rather than borrowing one when reporting a visit to a pantomime, *There were three clowns who were the funniest thing I have seen for years.* This is all good, mature correspondence.

At this formative stage of a proper exchange, however, there is a risk of the correspondence becoming stuck in unhappy deviations. If in the early years letters home started as egocentric records or reflections on subjects often foreign to parents' interests and concerns, an improved exchange could also rather easily become too wrapped up in parental hopes, worries and expectations. The result could be a level of intensity approaching conflict as Sandy experienced in a series of skirmishes (between autumn 1952 and the end of 1954) on the subjects of ghosts, dancing, films or other pastimes less understood by my father.

Sandy could laugh it off sometimes, but at other times was upset or angry. He held his own very well indeed against the ingrained preference of my father (former pupil and master at Rugby School) for the Victorian style of muscular education favoured by Arnold and Vaughan. The fact that my father was at this period starting to contemplate a possible return to schoolmastering may have whetted his pen.

An exchange on the subject of ghosts and manliness began in November 1952. Sandy was genuinely terrified of ghosts, strange dark corners were avoided, night lights kept on at home and so forth. The arguments were light hearted at first but soon came to the issue of whether Sandy was or was not 'a tough guy'. Sandy had written, *Yesterday Mr Denison smith read us the story of Scruge and the Christmas currol [sic] it has gosts in but very exiting ~ it is by Charles dixens ~ I did not have nightmares or dremes [sic].* A reply apparently chided him for being frightened of ghosts, was he a man or a mouse? Sandy returned to the fray, *Yesterday evening the[re] was a debat and the motion was that Are gosts true. I did not go because I know that I would have herd some absolutely terrible stories and I do believe in gosts know [= now] and they are not things Shekspere just puts in his plays to make more Exciting.*

At the end of November Sandy responded again, *Daddy your letter it gave man or mouse ~ I am a tough guy but I still believe in gosts whatever you say.* And in December he fired off some proof,

Daddy. I was told by my English master that in a house near Wales that every child the [= that] slept in a room in that house at night cam[e] an old lady who was a nurse but died on their bed and it was the Gost of that nurse ~ And in another hoose he said that when james II of England was ruling Juge Jeffers hung a man on to his chimaly [sic]. And now a old lady lives their [with] four dogs ~ and all the dogs when their were slipping by the fire at night now all of them loked up in the Ralters of the hose and their heads and eyes all followed something going across the ralters and that was the gost of the [man] who was hung by the Chimaly. And our English master is Either not a liaer or a fib[b]er [=

neither a liar.../ so the[re] must be gots.

Battle was continued on other fronts in the winter of 1954. My father had frequently complained, in jocular or less jocular fashion depending on his mood, about the amount of time we wasted on what he considered useless occupations such as watching films at the Dragon. And in January 1954 he must have criticised Sandy's accounts of films as well. This got Sandy's back up, *Don't worry because next Sunday I won't give an account of it because Dad grumbled about my bad accounts.*

Another useless occupation in my father's view were the boarders' dancing lessons. He must have asked whether dancing lessons took the place of prep. Sandy replied in January 1954, *The[re] was a dance last night. It was great fun. This is to Daddy especially) The dance was not instead of prep it was just if you wanted to dance rather than mucking about ~... It was spillin fun ~ don't forget it was not instead of Prep.*

To this onslaught, Sandy fired a return shot, threatening to deny my father access to news as a punishment: *The[re] is a film on to-night. About some boody's adventures ~ Don't worry because next Sunday I won't give an account of it because Dad grumbled about my bad accounts. Jamie is a preafet and is in first game soccer but that wont intrest you at all... A propos, one would have thought that prep school boys would regard dancing as 'fleb' - but on the contrary we loved it. Perhaps it was an irresistible combination of music, exercise and sport but in any case it was sold to us very well by Joc who encouraged it and the staff who ran it.*

Then there was also the business of the few visits my father made to the Dragon - essentially only to watch us play games. He had little spare time on account of his programme of travel and frequent need to work at weekends but the problem was that there could be no guarantee that Sandy or I, at whatever stage, would be playing at the Dragon (away matches) or at all on any given Saturday afternoon. We learnt to try to warn him. Sandy explained to my mother in October 1952, *We could not play games yesterday because the[re] were 4 matches on ~ Daddy thought it was a newsens [= nuisance] but he wached the first XV and said it was good ruger. But I went straight to the nub of the matter, Daddy came down yesterday and we watched the matches. Daddy did not think much of the games but he thought first were good. The worst thing was that we did not play.* The visit seemed to get worse, *We went down town in a bus and tried to have tea at the George but it was not open. So we went to Elistons and had baked beans on toast and (English) marshmallows. We went back and played hearts with Granny. We then went back to school where Daddy was going to have a drink with Mr Wiley.*

Sandy and I were stung by it and very careful in future to give advance warning of possible competing events (such as expeditions) or our own away matches. Sandy was still alert to the problem in October 1955, *It is a good also a jolly 'D' idea that Daddy comes up twice but the second time you better make dead sure I'm playing and not in an away match or you will be wasting your time.*

Then there could be the matter of pressures from parental expectations. A schoolboy's lot was not always a happy one. We often resorted to excuses in advance to ward off exaggerated expectations, such as Sandy did in September 1953, neatly deflecting attention from the subject, *My Repport will not be good this week because I am rusty after the holidays though the second one will be mutch better I think - I hope you are not having to work to[of] hard in your office.*

It was a normal defence mechanism. In February 1952, for example, I wrote, *Last week was Greek week. I have been catching up. We have reports this week. I don't*

think mine will [be] very good; and in April 1952, The weather is very nice but today it has rained for a bit. Our Reports have come and they are not very good. In November 1953, I issued another warning, This fortnight we have got reports ~ I am 2nd in Latin I know but I don't think I will be high in French or English and I am pretty sure I'm bottom in Maths. And in October 1953 Sandy had to re-introduce the rustiness problem, Hope you are having a nice time in Germany and had a nice younge [= journey] over there. My report will be very very bad but its only because I am in a two higher sets and I am rusty since the holidays but my second one will be a lot better so don't worry...

More serious parental worries, mostly about Sandy, are revealed in a series of letters written by my father when he remained by himself in Washington for three months between April and July 1953 to wrap up his job while my mother returned to UK ahead of him to house hunt. At this time my father was worried about his future, his financial affairs and a possible change of career; and the absence of my mother's influence may also have been relevant.

First there was concern on the part of both parents about Sandy's health, my father writing in May 1953, *Thank you for your letter. Do you have the impression that Sandy is permanently unhappy, or was that merely a temporary combination of liver and cold weather on his part?* And soon afterwards he could write, *I'm so glad about Sandy. I quite agree it's a good thing for them to x-ray him regularly*

At the same date my father was apparently not unduly concerned about my mother's reports to him about behavioural problems in the Easter holidays 1953, *Boys go through phases, and I don't think you need worry too much about Sandy. I will write to Jamie. I'm afraid he's horribly like I was at his age & looking back I can see I was pretty horrid up to the age of about 13 & then I became quite nice - for ten years or so!* That latter comment was, I guess, meant to make my mother laugh and stop worrying.

But Sandy's work continued to come in for paternal criticism, while mine was a source of worry or satisfaction on another score - family finances. *Yes the reports are better and I'm specially pleased about J's. I can't see that Sandy's spelling has improved - in fact I think his last letter was the worst for a long time.*

My father wrote about family finances (partly in the context of my mother's house hunting) in almost every letter, as in early July, *The Dragon bills were awful weren't they? Still, Darling, I don't think we have any alternative. If J gets a scholarship & then Insurance falls due in 1954 we will soon get into cheaper times.*

I was a year away from my entrance exams (down for Rugby School) and in due course came under some mild pressure of expectations. Sandy, however, continued to come in for criticism. In May 1953 it was on his music, *I'm glad about J's clarinet. I think it's a very good thing to do with his money. It's very clever of the Dragons to get them interested in friendly uninhibited music. Can Sandy sing in tune yet? Has he got any better on the piano? Tell me what you think about his development.*

Less fair were ruminations on the subject of manliness and Sandy's lack of self-confidence written when my father was on tour in Scandinavia in October 1954. From Helsinki he wrote to my mother who had been visiting Oxford, *I wonder if you saw our small one playing ruggar - and if he showed any sign at all of becoming a man and not a mouse. I'd like to see some signs of toughness and the tears come not quite so easily, sweet person though he is!* And a week later he responded from Copenhagen to an apparently at least partially comforting reply to his first letter, *I am delighted about Sandy's ruggar. It will give him a bit of self confidence: it will be very good for him if he gets into the 1st XV next winter. He pretends to be a tough guy but he is terribly conscious that he is not; if he suddenly began to think he is*

quite tough it will be very good for his self confidence...

These are tricky issues but I think my father had difficulty seeing that Sandy had in fact plenty of self-confidence except when his health was poorly.

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Finally, between the age of eleven and twelve (as experienced by Sandy and me) a growing sense of self-awareness allows the schoolboy to enter into real involvement with his parents through their correspondence. At this 'involved' stage he is able to participate at last in an exchange as an observer of both himself and his parents, and of their relationship - and before long this genuine exchange expands into deeper thoughts and wider themes, spiced with humour and irony as well as affection. Our letters tell us that the schoolboy is rapidly growing up

From around March 1952 my letters were full of irony; perhaps I was trying out a new discovery to see what effects if any it had. My taste in humour was changing, with developing interest in the arts of irony, satire, self-mockery, exaggeration. While retaining a love of straight jokes, pranks, slapstick, and other forms of prep-school humour, we grew into enjoying those other elements of English middle class humour which arise from inspecting our own and other peoples' actions from a more detached viewpoint.

On 3 March I was writing for instance, *On Tuesday we had lovely pancakes. I had a third*; and a few days later, *On Monday it rained nearly all the day. We waited for the science [room] to open but all I waited for was getting wet.* The following week I reported, *On Friday there was a half Holl which was a great surprise to everyone. That afternoon I scored 3 goals. There was a grammar test as usual on Saturday. It was a pretty frightful one.* And in the same letter I also reported with irony a surprise in geography lessons, ... *In Geog for the first time on [= in] 10 years has the master done any part of Europe. We are doing Spain.*

Those remarks, at the age of exactly eleven, have quite a self-aware ring to them. As I went on into my last year, more grown up concepts and explanations are introduced, such as *Mrs Senior said that the clarinet she had is 'afraid' and that the seller was a 'bogus bogie' (my language) so I'm using the school clarinet now. I am doing a piece from the water music.* More jokes are included, such as giving my address as *Habitational Department, Education Unit, Bardwell Rd Oxford* [i.e.= School House, Dragon School]; and humorous touches are added, for instance a PS with a comment on singing in Christchurch Cathedral, *In the congregation at the church I can sing as loudly as I like without others hearing my mistakes for either they are bellowing one or looking at a 3ft marrow which adorns naked babies over their heads.*

And I can almost hear Sandy laughing (both at himself and at how our father, recognised chauvinist, would react) as he wrote at the tail of his last letter from the Dragon in March 1956, *Yesterday afternoon I played for the 2nd XI v the lady staff ~ it was great fun and v Funny. I will tell you all on Tuesday.*

By this stage we were happily adopting an ironic tone as often as it pleased us, such as on my postcard signalling safe return to school in April 1954, *Back to the slaughter house but well prepared after the wonderful lunch Dad gave us*; or one week later when I *read in the service but I had a horribly horse [- hoarse] voice, I could hardly hear myself. I bought a new B [boiler?] suit yesterday according to your wishes...*

Finally, there is the matter of what we left out of our letters. It is another complex subject and central to the business of being a boarder. Of course we hid things from our parents, and certainly there were some subjects which I would not touch on in

letters home. I was naturally circumspect – but I have to say that I do not recall the detail of information or news which I consciously withheld.

Sandy on the other hand was more open – and began his very first letter from school with great frankness, *We had a horobel crossing ~ I were sike [= sick] 11 Times*. This brave recollection (written a few days after the event) was much quoted in the family. But real and current unhappiness is reflected in that letter from sickroom in October 1953, *Yesterday was a simply horrid horrid miserable day ~ I had to lie in bed not reading or doing anything except [sic] lying down ~ I had one more person with me but we could not talk because we were too sick ~ just steyed there ~ I keep on thinging [= thinking] about you and Jeb and wondering what you are doing at Sedburgh*

One reason for some omissions from our letters at the time may simply have been the long distance nature of the relationship; since you cannot get any close support (or physical support – a hug) there is little point in turning for help in letters. In general I made light of difficulties, problems, sickness or unhappiness, knowing from a very early age, that it was not the done thing; and that parents had to be shown that we knew what was the done thing or not. It was a matter of upbringing, but where exactly did I learn all that? Was it stressed to me at home, or perhaps in the three months spent with my Bruce Lockhart grandparents at Sedbergh in the summer term before going to the Dragon? Or did we learn from other boys?

But these fundamental questions apply to the whole of prep school life. Life at the Dragon was fun, but even with letters to hand to provide a few insights, it remains a mystery to me today.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quiet room and library in School House where we borrowed books and, possibly, learnt to appreciate music.



LEARNING IN CLASS

Unfortunately I have not as yet been able to find any lists of the set books from which we were taught, any syllabi, or other evidence of the approach to our education. The one piece of evidence, which brings back a few fragments of memory, is an account of how we were taught science by Gerd Sommerhoff, which he briefly describes in his book 'In and Out of Consciousness'. Gerd's description here has more than a local interest, since it was on the basis of what he pioneered in the Dragon that the vastly influential Nuffield Foundation Science Teaching Project was later constructed.

When he was a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Gerd looked back on this period at the Dragon as follows. 'I can best describe the morning periods as a miniature edition of the popular Christmas lectures at the Royal Institution, whereas the afternoon sessions with the Science Club might be described as scouting in the world of science and technology.' He describes the teaching in some detail, especially in biology, for instance describing something which I still remember. 'Thus the first piece of equipment I had built was a micro-projector capable of projecting live specimen.' I still remember the tiny creatures coming up wriggling on the screen.¹

Equally important were 'the daily meetings of the Science Club (where) everything was strictly organised and the boys did all the work themselves. Here they were offered about a dozen courses of self-instruction, each consisting of 15-20 graded experiments which were described on index cards. If the explanation could not be given on the card, a reference would be given to the appropriate textbook. You could not pass to the next experiment until you had successfully completed the last and showed that you had understood it. These courses covered (often in more than one part) such topics as mechanics, chemistry, optics, electricity, magnetism, and engine types... Alongside these structure activities the boys also built model aircraft and the odd model boat.'²

I was a member of this club, whose activities were described in detail each term, though I only distinguished myself once in my last Christmas term (1954). During this term 'thirty-three stars were earned by boys for completing successfully either a set schedule of experiments, a working model aeroplane, or a (valve) wireless set'. I was one of the winners of a star and report in a letter to my father on 2nd November that 'I am in the science club and at the moment I am making a one valve wireless set.'

Jamie comments on the subject in general. 'I remember all kinds of little things from his classes. Crystal radios that worked were exciting; lighting up light bulbs on simple circuits - did we even make simple lamps you could take away? Making sparks fly off wheels; some chemistry experiments with smoke, phosphorescence and blue lights? Then the fabulous radio controlled planes, motor torpedo boat and so on. I recall a sense of amazement and fun.'

*

Another way to try to recapture a little of what we were being taught in class is to examine some of the sample exam papers which were printed from time to time in

¹ Sommerhoff, *Consciousness*, 84-5

² Sommerhoff, *Consciousness*, 86

the 'Draconian'. During my five years a small sample were printed in the first two Summer 'Draconian's.

In 1951 the sample published papers were:

Latin - Upper 5
Mathematics - A1
English - C1 and C2
French - D2, D3, D4, D5
Biology - Lowers

In 1952 the papers were:

History - A1A, A1B
History - D1, D2, D3
English - A3 and B1
French- A1 and A2
Geography - various sets have different questions
Science
Biology - Lowers

I will give just one example of each subject, starting with the core subject of Latin. The school, like other preparatory schools, taught Latin from the first day and there were special prizes for outstanding work in this field, A.E.L's Latin Prose Prize, Prize for Latin Prose. The classes were arranged around proficiency in Latin, with Upper 1, IIA, IIB, IIIA, IIIB, IVA, IVB, V, VI, VII in the Upper School. Then there were seven classes in the Middle School and six classes in the Junior School.

The one Latin paper I have during my time is for Upper 5, that is the eighth class from the top of the school. I skipped this class during my last year, moving into Upper IVA and then quickly up into Upper IIB. So presumably I would have found this paper relatively easy at that time, especially as I won a prize for Latin in my last year. Here is the paper.

Latin

Section A: Translate into Latin:

1. Haven't you already sent three messengers to Rome?
2. The journey was so long and difficult that the soldiers all died.
3. A brave soldier says that he does not fear the enemy.
4. I have often asked the boys to be silent.
5. I told my friends why I had not come.
6. The Romans captured the city and remained there.
7. A certain schoolmaster decided to go into the country with six boys. When they had finished (*conficio*) their work, they set out at the seventh hour. They carried food with them, but they hoped to find water in a little spring (*fons*). The wise master told them not to wander far from the road, but suddenly a cry was heard. One of the boys, who had not obeyed him, had fallen. His foot was severely hurt (*use vulnero*), but the others were able to carry him home.

Section B. Translate into English:

Scaena - In Ludo

(Discipuli in sellis non sedent: inrat magister.)

Discipuli: Salve, magister!

Magister: Salvete, discipuli! Adestine omnes?

Robertus: Johannis abest. E. collo inflato laborat.

Magister: O puerum miserrimum! Ille non saepe abest. Is quis saepe abest nihil potest discere. Nunc animam attendite omnes et libros aperite! (Caballus per fenestram spectat.) Quis vult recitare?

Christopherus: Licetne mihi, magister?

Robertus (interpellans): Tu heri recitavisti. Hodie me oportet recitare.

Magister: Noli ingerpellare, Caballe. (*Caballus iterum per fenestram spectat.*)

Paulus (e libro recitans): Olim homo quidam in horto suo sedebat...

Caballus (interpellans): In horto tuo...

Magister: Tace, Caballe! Non est 'in horto tuo.' Specta librum! Est 'in horto suo.'

Paulus (pergens): ... qui vinum bibetat, cibumque edebat...

Caballus (interpellans): Nunc est...

Magister: Non 'nunc est,' sed 'olim edebat'. Tu animum non attendis sed per fenestram spectas. Librum specat et noli itgerum interpellare. Si iterum interpellabis, te virgis caedam. Perge recitare, Paule!

Here, having given about half of the Latin part to be translated, we will leave this exam since many readers will not be Latin scholars. But I must say that nearly sixty years later, though I get the drift and can translate bits, much of it is lost to me. I tremble to think what a Latin paper for Upper 1, all of whom were hoping for scholarships to places like Eton and Winchester, would look like and who were taught by L.A.Wilding, author of one of the standard Latin textbooks for schools.

Let us now move to the other foreign language we were all taught, namely French, which again was taught from the first term. Let us here move into the top two sets, A1 and A2 (there being approximately six sets in each of the A-E grades). I personally ended up as equal third in set A4, and though again I was awarded a prize for my work in French, so this paper would be a bit above my level in the last year.

French

Qn. 1 Lisez, puis répondez aux question qui suivent:

Shelley à Eton

La chasse à Shelley, en meute (packs) organisée, devint un des grand jeux d'Eton. Quelques chasseurs découvraient l'être singulier lisant un poète au bord de la rivière et donnaient aussitôt de la voix. Les cheveux au vent, à travers, les prairies, les rues de la ville les cloîtres du college, Shelley prenait la fuite. Enfin cerné contre un mur, pressé comme un sanglier aux abois, il poussiat un cri perçant. A' coups de balles trempée dans la boue, le people d'élèves le clouiat au mur. Une voix criait: 'Shelley!' - 'Shelley!' reprenait une autre voix.

- (1) Qui était Shelley? Nommez un de ses oeuvres.
- (2) Qui était les chasseurs?
- (3) Comment Shelley était-il 'singulier'?
- (4) Que pensez-vous de lui?
- (5) De quelle rivière parle-t-on?
- (6) Quand les chiens de chasse donnent-ils de la voix?
- (7) Comment étaient les cheveux du jeune poète?
- (8) Que'st-ce qu'un sanglier? Les chasse-t-on en Angleterre?

(9) Qu'est qu'on jetait au jeune misérable?

(10) Quel chapeau porte un Etonian?

Qn. 2. Donnez des synonymes pour:

Un être, au bord de, une rivière, la rue. Donner de la voix, Une prairie, découvrir, prendre la fuite, Pousser un cri, aussitôt.

Qn. 3. Au féminin: un chasseur (deux formes).

Le contraire de: singulier (deux sens). A travers les prairies. Un autre voix. Enfin.

Qn. 4. Ecrivez les cinq temps primitifs des verbes: être, devenir, découvrir, prendre.

Qn. 5. Traduisez les deux phrases commençant: Enfin cerné.... Et, A' coupes de balles...'

Qn. 6. Completez:

Une balle trempée dans la boue devient bou ---

On cloue deux morceaux de bois avec un --- et des ---.

Une poète écrit des --- ou de la ---.

Les cheveux au vent veut dire 'tête ... ou ... - tête.'

Qn 7. Mettez aux temps convenables:

Il (entrer) pendant que je (travailler). (Vouloir) vous asseoir.

Il faut que je l'(apprendre). (Vouloir) - vous vous lever?

Il le (faire) s'il le (pouvoir). Croyez-vous qu'il (pleuvoir).

J'espère qu'il ne (pleuvoir) cet après-midi. Qui'il (faire) beau!

Qn. 8. Devinette (Riddle.)

Cinq voyelles, une consonne,

Voilà ce qui forme mon nom.

Et je porte sur ma personne

De quoi l'écrire sans crayon.

Qu'est-ce que je suis? Qu'est-ce que je porte sur ma personne?

Qn 9. Ecrivez le metier correct après le nom:

Noms: Marie Antoinette, Alexandre Dumas, Pétain, Rodin, Richelieu, Watteau, Joséphine, Pasteur, Napoléon, de Gaulle.

Métiers: Auteur, Maréchal, Peintre, Empereur, Impératrice, General, Chimiste, Sculpteur, Cardinal, Reine.

What particularly strikes me reading this paper is that, apart from the linguistic competence required, it also required other things - a knowledge of the life of Shelley, the customs of Eton, the history of France and some ability with riddles. It overlapped quite considerably with the General Paper and other subjects.

Mathematics

Another core subject was Mathematics. This was my best subject and during my in my last year I was in the second to top set, A2, ending up as the top of the set. In theory, therefore, my mathematics was up to the standard of the paper for A1 below.

A1

1. Find the value of the following as shortly as possible:

- (1) $201 \times 57 - 57 - 201 \times 17 + 17$.
- (2) Cost of 99 things at $13\frac{1}{4}$ each.
- (3) Difference between $6\frac{1}{4}\%$ of 16 guineas and $6\frac{1}{4}\%$ of £16.
- (4) Express 1,056 yards per $1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes in m.p.h.
- (5) $2\frac{3}{8} \times \left(\frac{1}{6} - \frac{0.9}{7.2} \right)$

2. Factors of: (1) $2x^2 - 6x - 20$. (2) $a^2 + b^2 - 2ab - 4c^2$.
 (3) $12x^2 - 25xy + 12y^2$. (4) $x^4 - 1 - 4(x - 1)$. (5) $x^2 - 24$.

3. A beginner expands the brackets $(x+4)(x+15)$ and makes the answer $x+4x+15$. Is there any value of x for which this could be true?

4. The weight of the weekly meat ration is increased by 5% and the price per lb. is increased by 10%; by how much per cent. is the weekly expenditure on meat increased?

5. The circumference of a circle is πC ins. and its area is πA sq. ins. Prove $C^2 = 4A$. If $A^2 = 4C$, find radius.

6. ABC is a triangle inscribed in a circle. X and Y are the mid-points of the minor arcs AB and AC. XY cuts AB at P and AC at Q. Prove triangle APQ isosceles.

7. Draw a square of side 4 ins. Construct a regular octagon whose alternate sides lie along the sides of the square.

8. AB, PQ are diameters of a circle. AB is produced to D so that $BD = AB$. QB produced cuts PD in R. Prove $PR = RD$. (Join AP and PB).

9. Evaluate

$$3 \sqrt{\frac{562 \times 0.4607}{642.1}}$$

10. A man does a journey of 240 miles at a certain speed; if he increases his speed by 4 m.p.h. he will save 50 minutes. Find original speed.

J.A.L.C.

The final central part of our teaching was in a set which taught both History and English. In this combined class I ended up in my last year in class A3, most of the year being about fourth in the Class. Thus the History paper for classes A1A and A1B would be a little above my level, though later it was History which I studied at University.

History

Qn. 1. To what do the following phrases refer?

- (a) The 7n Years War, (b) The 9 Days Queen, (c) The 11 Years Tyranny, (d) The 19 Long Winters, (e) The 100 Days, (f) The '45.

Qn. 2. What historical personages met violent ends in these years?

- (a) 1170, (b) 1381, (c) 1403, (d), 1556, (e) 1649, (f) 1759, (g) 1885.

Qn.3. With what one historical figure do you chiefly connect the following?

- (a) The Mad Parliament
- (b) The Rump Parliament
- (c) Virginian Tobacco
- (d) Home Rule
- (e) The capture of Calais
- (f) The loss of Calais
- (g) The Harrying of the North
- (h) The Bloody Assize
- (i) The Coway Stakes
- (j) The Angevin Empire
- (k) The First Act of Supremacy
- (l) The battle of Brunanburh

Qn. 4. From each of the following sets, pick out and write down *the odd one*, stating very briefly what the other three have in common, to show how your choice is made.

- (a) 1215, 1314, 1415, 1513.
- (b) Richard I, Richard II, Richard III, Edward III.
- (c) Marlborough, Wellington, Roberts, Blake.
- (d) Habeas Corpus, Pactum Serva, Mortmain, Praemunire.
- (e) Naseby, Bannockburn, Bosworth, Culloden.
- (f) Matilda of Anjou, Mary Queen of Scots, Sophia of Hanover, Katherine Howard.
- (g) Sluys, The Nile, The Boyne, Quiberon Bay
- (h) Tinchebrai, Trpoyes, Versailles, Bretigny.
- (i) William III, Edward I, James I, George I.
- (j) Limoges, Glencoe, Cawnpore, Plassey
- (k) Peel, Melbourne, Pitt, Walpole
- (l) The New Forest, the Field of the Cloth of Gold, The Tower of London, Berkley Castle.
- (m) 1066, 1399, 1588, 126898.

Qn. 5. *Either* trace the development of English trade from Plantagenet times, with particular reference to the effect on foreign wars and policy; *or* explain the evolution of our government from the Feudal System to the present day, giving a general outline of changes in class and power.

Qn. 6. Compose a dialogue between any two historical characters, who were *not* contemporary, in which they justify to each other their own beliefs and actions.

Qn. 7. Write a paragraph about *three* of the following.

- The Protestant Reformation
- The House of Lancaster
- Elizabethan successes at sea

The Peninsular War (in Spain)
The Boer War
The Indian Mutiny
The War of American Independence
The main battles of the 100 Years' War

It would be a nightmare to have to do this paper now, despite having an M.A. and D.Phil. in history from Oxford. It shows that we were expected not only to know many key facts about English history from the medieval period to the nineteenth century, but also to be able to summarize and explain quite complex historical developments and arguments in short essays. Impressive.

English

In the other half of a joint class, we did English. This later became my favourite subject at my public school, where I received a distinction at S level. Let me take the paper for A3 and B1, which was exactly the level I ended up in (A3) in my last year.

Qn. 1. 'Falling Asleep' Write a paragraphs beginning with the following words, to give the feeling and impressions of someone alone in bed dropping off to sleep, and to describe all the sounds he hears.

'Voices moving about me in the quiet house; thud of feet and a muffled shutting of doors: everyone yawning. Only the clocks alert...'

Qn.2 Write an essay describing your impressions of:

- (1) A Circus; *or*
- (2) Listening to a Symphony Orchestra; *or*
- (3) A sailing race in a still breeze.

Remember imagination can often be better than mere facts.

Qn. 3

From shadows of rich oaks outpeer
The moss-green bastions of the weir,
Where the quick dipper forages
In elver-peopled crevices,
And a small runlet trickling down the sluice
Gossamer music tires not to unloose.
(*by Edmund Blunden*)

From the above lines:

- (1) Give the Subject and the Verb of the two main sentences.
- (2) Write down: 2 Adverbial phrase; 2 Adjectival phrases; 1 Adverbial clause.
- (3) What is the ordinary meaning of gossamer?
- (4) Now write a careful paraphrase of these lines in clear, good prose. (An elver is a young eel).

Qn. 4. Name your two favourite authors. Explain why you like them, and compare their works.

Qn. 5. The following are quotations from famous poems. Give the name author of each one, as well as answering the questions.

- (2) 'Then he said "Goodnight" and with muffled oar, Silently rowed...'
Who was he?

- (2) 'So --- broke silence with "Yet there is time"' Who broke silence?
- (3) 'Her hair was long, her food was light
And her eyes were wild...' Who was she?
- (4) 'But we left him alone with his glory.' Who was left?
- (5) 'He was not of an age, but for all time.' Who wrote this, and about whom?
- (6) 'I chatter over stony ways, In little sharps and trebles...' Who chatters?
- (7) 'Did he who made the lamb make thee?' Who is 'thee'?
- (8) 'The mirror cracked from side to side,
"The curse is come upon me" cried ---' Who cried?
- (9) 'So let each Cavalier who loves humour and me
Come follow ---' What should he follow?
- (10) '....I have ventured
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders
This many summers in a sea of glory.' Who is 'I'?
- (11) 'He hold him with his skinny hand
- (12) "There was a ship," quoth he.' Who holds whom?

Geography

Geography was treated in a slightly different way to these core subjects, being taught in classes of twice the size and differently composed. But as someone who would later become an anthropologist, and who already had a little impression of distant lands (India), it is worth giving one exam in this subject.

The exam in 1952 was divided into two parts. The first was done by all the sets, the second was divided into two. One was for all the sets from A1A to C2, the other for C3 to D5. I shall give the version for the top half of the school.

Geography (question 1 was for all the school, questions 2-4 for the top half)

Qn. 1. On the map of the British Isles, which has been given you, mark and name the following:

- (a) Cambrian Mountains, Cotswold Hills, Pennine Chain, North Downs, Southern Uplands, Cheviot Hills
- (b) Severn, Thames, Tees, Tamar, Great Ouse, Trent, Shannon
- (c) Bristol Channel, Solent, the Wash, Straits of Dover, Dogger Bank, Cardigan Bay.
- (d) Bristol, Hull, East Anglia, Southampton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Leeds, Manchester, Belfast, Dublin, Edinburgh.

Qn. 2. Draw a sketch map of *one* of the following areas and describe its main industries: South Wales, Central Lowlands, Liverpool, South Africa

Or

Write an account of wool growing in Australia.

Qn. 3. Write what you know about the contribution given to mankind by *one* of the following: Ferdinand de Lesseps, Captain Cook, Vasco da Gama, Livingstone.

Or

What do you know about the following:

- (d) The Prime Meridian
- (e) The Pole Star
- (f) How it is proved that there are approximately 69.4 miles to a degree of Latitude.

Qn. 4. Write what you know about *two* of the following: Fjords, U-shaped valleys, fold and block mountains, monsoons, the source of a river, a Mediterranean climate

Or

Describe geographically a journey down the Nile from Lake Victoria to the sea.

Divinity

The Divinity exam for July 1953 for the middling boys, around my level (Middles 2-7 and Lovers 1-2) gives some idea of what we were covering.

1. Write a short account of **EITHER:** David's victory over Goliath, **OR:** Saul and the Witch of Endor.

2. Name the person or persons to whom **EACH** of the following quotations refers, and write a few lines about **ONE** of them:-

(a) "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

(b) "They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."

(c) "And the King said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the King."

(d) My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins."

3. Describe carefully in your own words **EITHER:** The Healing of the daughter of Jairus, **OR:** The feeding of the Five Thousand.

4. Write out our Lord's parable of the Sower and explain the meaning of it.

5. **EITHER:**

Give the names of the Twelve Apostles and write briefly what you know about **ONE** of them.

OR:

Write out accurately in the words of the Bible our Lord's Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount.

What is absent here is as indicative as what is present. Apart from direct lessons drawn from Jesus' teachings, there is little on ethics. Nor is there anything of a vaguely comparative religion practice. This was a Christian bible-centred course, as one might expect.

Science

We were taught a certain amount of science and particularly biology. One 'Science' exam, which seems to have been aimed at the top half of the School, from A1 down to M3.

Science

1. Give the names and phylum of a one-celled animal and draw a simple

- picture of it. State briefly how it eats and how it multiplies.
2. Give a list of five different kinds of chemicals or particles which are carried by the blood and state very briefly the main purpose of each.
 3. Draw a simple diagram of a Hydra: name its phylum and describe briefly how it eats, multiplies and moves about.
 4. Draw a simple diagram of an eye and label as many parts as you can.
 5. Name the phylum and class of: a flea, a waterflea, a prehistoric dragon, a modern Dragon.
 6. (a) How does a high musical note differ from a low one?
(b) If we hear the thunder twenty seconds after we have seen the lightning, how far away is the thunderstorm.

[The following questions need not be done by U7, M1, M2, and M3]

7. How does the human eye focus on a distant object? What is wrong if you are near-sighted? What type of glasses will you have to wear?
8. What part do egg-cells and sperm-cells play in the reproduction of animals?
9. Choose one of the following
10. (a) Give a simplified diagram of a wireless valve and explain very briefly how it works
11. Illustrate the four strokes of a petrol engine with four simple drawings and add a few explanatory notes
12. Give a diagram of a cathode-ray tube and explain briefly how it works
13. Illustrate with simple diagrams how a steam-engine works.

This seems quite a broad spectrum and reflects the teaching of the science master, Gerd Sommerhoff who, on the basis of his Dragon experience, would later design much of the Nuffield Science course which was used by many schools from the 1970's.

People would receive prizes at the end of term for their work in various subjects. Taking my last summer, there were a number of Form Prizes in my class 2B. It looks as if all leavers in the Class were given a prize, mine being for Latin, Divinity and French. Special prizes for academic subjects were: Moberly Essay Prize; The Betty Hodgkin Prize for Appreciation of English; The Gerald Hunt Prize for Scripture; The Ned Morphew Prize for Arithmetic; A.E.L's Latin Prose Prize; Prize for Latin Verse; The Gerald Meister Prize for Mathematics; The William Stradling Prize for Science; The Billy Collier Prize for Science; The Martin Collier Prize for Biology; The School Prize for French; Mrs Haldane's Prize for Geography; The Frank Sidgwick Prize for English Literature; the C.R.L. Fletcher Prize for History. Needless to say, I did not win any of these.

*

How do I assess my formal life at the school? Several impressions are worth noting. Firstly, a lot of people beyond the school matron were aware of how I went around frowning and looking anxious and hoped I would cheer up - which I did towards the end. So my long held view that I moved from Inferno, through Purgatorio to Paradiso, seems to have some substance. By the end I really did not want to leave and loved my last year with Iolanthe, school colours, being a prefect etc.

Secondly, my effort and attention took a definite dip in about my second to third year, after my mother had gone to India again, and then began to pick up again after

she returned in 1954. In particular, after my trip to India my writing in English seems to have improved.

Thirdly, my best subject seems to have been Mathematics. As more or less top of A2, I was in the top tenth of the final year. My Latin was not as bad as I remember and I even got a prize for it and was warmly praised for it and on 3rd April my mother wrote to my father 'His school report has come and is very good, 1st in Classics! This, he says isn't really up to much as its an un-brainy set, but he seems to be doing well all round.' Likewise my French improved, and I got a prize in this subject too. The prize for the General Paper is a great surprise, and also the fact that I apparently did very well in the Common Entrance Exams.

I remember most of the physical classrooms I was in. I started with Mrs Owens and Miss Mumford in the right-hand classroom on the ground floor in the New Hall. I think I then moved to the other end of the same building for a while. So I suspect these were the classes for the Lower School. Then when I went up to the Middle School we went into the Old Hall. Here I started on the left hand end looking up towards the stage. Then with 'Oof' we were in the top right-hand classroom which I seem to remember enjoying. ('Oof' was the nickname of F.R. Wylie). He used to come into the classroom in the coldest of weather and say 'Oof' there is a dreadful fog in here, please open the windows. This memory is corroborated by a note on the unseasonably warm weather of the Christmas term 1953 in the 'Term Notes', namely that 'Even North side classroom windows were flung wide throughout, so that classroom four for once looked no different from the rest'.

Then when I went to Upper School we went to the huts round the playground, probably starting in Upper IVA in one facing the Museum, and then in 2B I distinctly remember being in one which has now been covered over with new buildings, but at the far end. The Science class was held near where the new swimming pool is built, and woodwork under the Museum. A sudden memory of the desks is brought back by Naomi Mitchison's description: 'The desks of course were copiously carved with initials and the soft wood gouged out for railways. Some were good enough to run small marbles along.'¹ The desks became palimpsests of previous generations, engraved totemic objects to which we added our initials or wisdom. I gather that only recently, and regretfully, have the last of these old desks been replaced.

On the whole I am quite impressed by the reports - not by my own achievements, which were about middling - I was not 'brainy' as Jake Mermagen remembers, and hence my later career as an academic was not predicted. But rather by the care which the teachers took. The fortnightly reports were thorough and the comments in termly reports both encouraging and often perceptive. We took exams twice a year and there was quite a broad range of subjects taken. It gives the impression that this was an academically-minded school, and the results of the debates, reported elsewhere, suggest that achievement in formal learning was valued as highly as sporting abilities in many ways.

Other things I don't remember were how much 'prep' we did and when, but I don't remember it being a particular burden. Nor did we take a mountain of work home in the holidays. The voluntary diaries and paintings and other things boys were encouraged to do in their holidays are all I remember. We were given frequent extra holidays for skating or when boys won scholarships, and work was put in its place alongside music, plays, films, games and other things. It seems to have been a

¹ Mitchison, *Small Talk*, 60

balanced school.

Nor do I personally remember being driven on by fear of punishment. There is no mention anywhere at all of the 'stripes' which led to canings for Roald Dahl and his friends. I do not remember bad marks - but nor do I remember an elaborate system of stars or good marks. To this Jamie adds 'It was quite a public business - and it mattered, not only for your self but others (clever device that). And there was some competition in it - not only within the form but between forms, or houses or something? I think in my penultimate year I kept for the class a chart of Red Marks (don't recall whether I charted Black Marks).'

We seem to have been encouraged a long by a string of often really first-class teachers who tried their hardest. I do not remember, as Julian Hunt does, flying board rubbers or any physical punishments, whether a cuff round the ear or anything else. For me, there were real attempts to inculcate a sense of intellectual excitement as an end in itself.

Jamie's adds that 'I can only comment on the fact that I was brought forward well, and believe that the teaching was for the greatest part excellent. Some masters either through their warmth of personality (by pull), or disciplined approach (by push), were better than others. The master's force of character was very important - for me anyway. Perhaps one in ten was not up to the mark?'

At the time of course we had nothing to judge them by, having known no other system or personalities (other than at pre-prep schools - where there could be no valid comparison). But I think we sensed from parents, grandparents and relatives and friends of our parents that the Dragon School was very good indeed, and that we were lucky to be there. I don't think I had enough independence of spirit to risk (even internally) criticizing masters' teaching abilities. In short, I accepted most of what I got, and most of what I got was very high quality teaching.'

I won a prize in my third year for 'Recitation'. I need to look at this further, for I suspect that my love of poetry started at the Dragon. I was taught by the editor of 'The Dragon Book of Verse', which I still possess, and I learnt to love a number of the poems there - Chesterton, Pope and others. I don't think we saw the jokes in the book, including the strange Freudian inclusion of a weak poem starting 'My ball is in a bunch of fern, a jolly place to be' and then referring to an elderly male who was 'waving his stick at me'. Hardly very subtle.

So, on the whole, I could not have had a better and more rounded kind of education. Small classes, excellent teachers, an esteem for academic things but a realization of how they should be part of a broader liberal education. It was a very suitable start for a process which would lead on smoothly to a boarding school and then, hopefully, to University and a successful career in the middle class as a doctor, lawyer, academic, civil servant or even city type.

*

The 'Education of Henry Adams' makes me yearn to do something similar. The growth of what I knew and how I thought can be studied in a special way because many of my letters survive for the age 7-13. There are also formal reports and none of my own essays or compositions. There is the odd comment of my mother about my failure (or occasionally success) in developing some skill or other.

The letters I wrote are both revealing and opaque. They are revealing of the slow and definite maturity in style, observation, logic and so on as one would expect over this crucial learning period, the foundation of all others. Yet I was still pretty naïve and jejeune when I compare myself to much of the writing of my contemporaries in the 'Draconian', or what Beatrice Webb quotes in 'My Apprenticeship' for this age,

or even my sister Fiona's diaries, though two years younger than me. My mother clearly felt I was a slow learner and not very bright, though she had very high expectations for me.

It is clear from the letters that only rather outward and public 'facts' were permissible in letters. I seldom expressed my own ideas, except very conventional signs of loyalty or disappointment or admiration for some outstanding event. I even less frequently expressed any emotions, feelings and so on about what was happening to me in my formal, class, education. I did not write much or at all about any intellectual matters - books I was enjoying, poems I was learning, enthusiasm for languages, mathematics or anything. There is a little about making things in science, but otherwise very little.

*

One particular skill or ability which seems, like music, to be a gift one either has or does not have, is mathematical ability. Here my assessment of myself is confused. I think my father was a good mathematician - certainly as an engineer and in my mother's letters he is represented thus, especially in comparison to herself - represented by my mother as absolutely hopeless. I think my mother's feelings of inability and the accentuation of the arts and humanities against the sciences through her and my other relatives (Richard and Robert studying history at Oxford), meant that I never thought seriously about the sciences.

I must have done a little science, and see that I was even mentioned in the 'Draconian' as distinguishing myself in some way in Gerd Sommerhoff's class and my school reports speak highly of my science. But on the whole very early on I seem to have been streamed into arts and certainly never did any science at all after the Dragon. But I continued to do maths up to 'O' level, thus from six to sixteen. The reports on my ability surprise me since, at times, I was pronounced to have some gift in mathematics. I do not remember ever enjoying or feeling an aptitude for arithmetic, algebra or geometry. From memory it all seemed dead and artificial. Yet it seems that this is a later impression and there were times when I came top of the class in this subject.

Another surprise is in relation to languages and especially Latin. I have always thought of myself as pretty hopeless at languages, though here my mother, who enjoyed languages and in middle life made important translations from Assamese and Gaelic, which she taught herself, may have pushed me in a different direction.

Though I was proud of being Scottish and was withering about the English sassenach's and identified with my father on this, I never made any effort to learn a Celtic language or indeed (until I learnt Gurung in my later life as part of my fieldwork) any other language other than compulsory French and Latin. Thus I learnt no Germanic or other language.

In my memory, I struggled inadequately with French and even more so with Latin and was always hopeless at both. I remember the strain and the tedium of Latin in particular and can still remember the lightning flash of my first Latin lesson with Miss Mumford, in the ground floor on the right in the new hall. I found it tedious and despite being in a school famed for its Latin with many top scholarships requiring Latin, I progressed dismally, though scraping through the Common Entrance. Later I failed Latin at 'O' level, (with foreign texts) at 'A' level, and on my first attempt at University. So I think of myself as having 'little Latin and less French'.

It was only on my first trip to France at 17 that I saw some point in learning a

foreign language. As with much of my learning, unless I could see the knowledge as a means to something, I found it dry. I never got to love Latin literature. And though I found learning a little Greek at some point (when?) I never took to it.

So my general image is that I was hopeless at languages until, with a reasonable ear and seeing a point to it, I learnt some of a Tibeto-Burman tonal language when I was doing fieldwork. This drove out almost all remnants of French from my mind and I've often thought I have a tiny area where I can store only one language.

Yet my grandfather noted (and I have the prize to prove it) that I won a school prize in Latin and that at one point I was top of the (admittedly lowish) class in Latin. And as with mathematics there are indications that I could have been reasonable at languages. I may have had some ability, especially as when I was a small infant in India I think I was told that I was bilingual in English and Urdu - though I soon lost the latter.

I think the moral of both maths and languages is that natural aptitude or ability is pretty evenly distributed. If my imagination had been gripped, if, as a rather practical child, I had seen what one could do with these hard-won skills, then I would have and could have become reasonably proficient. I could see easily enough the value of learning to read - although it took a little effort to get me over the barrier - for how else could I read *Biggles* or *Robin Hood*?

Reading was worth the effort and so the subjects around it, English and History, are the ones which I developed, particularly at Sedbergh. But again perhaps I have read backwards to the Dragon, for my reports on these subjects are not particularly good and it may be that at this stage I was not at all tending in this direction.

Writing was clearly important and, among other things, the weekly letter to my parents pushed me to improve my skills, though my spelling and level and content remained pretty backward throughout my time at the Dragon. Only very much later, really from my later thirties, did I experience the real pleasures of writing freely, when one suddenly finds one's mind taking over and the pen skimming across the pages, making new discoveries and enjoying the occasional delightful expression. But writing was the way I communicated with the most important person in my life at that time, my mother, and her excellent style and vivid descriptions were a constant inspiration.

*

The influence of my mother on my reading and writing is worth stressing. My mother had wanted to be a writer from her teens and is clear from her published books and more extensive unpublished materials that she was, indeed, a remarkably good writer. She was observant, had a subtle sense of humour, a very good control of language and the gift of rhythm, as well as a mystical streak that led her into challenging areas. She had a first-rate mind and if she had taken up the Open Scholarship she was offered to Oxford she would, despite numerous obstacles, probably have been a household name, like Iris Murdoch, A.S. Byatt or others.

As it was, much of the energy and hope was knocked out of her. For long periods she did little writing, especially in the busiest period between about 1938 and 1965, in other words throughout my first 25 years. It is precisely in those years that nearly all her writing talent was put into letter writing, which she clearly saw as an alternative to keeping diaries and as perhaps leading to some publication.

Fortunately I have many of these letters, written to me, my father, my sisters and to her parents. They contain many gems which may turn my somewhat pedestrian anthropologist's account of a childhood into something special - a sort of mild version of Saki, whose background, I discover, was very similar to my own family's,

that is Burma and Britain.

Anyway, the important thing is that almost every week, from the time I went to the Dragon at eight, I received letters from my mother. She put her life into these. Unfortunately I only have a selection of her letters to me at the Dragon, for there must have been many more. I do have a fairly full sets of her letters to my father when they were apart, which was basically for about three out of the seven years covered in this work. I certainly have enough – and even more for the Dragon when I kept them more carefully, to show what kind of education she was indirectly giving me.

My mother was putting before me a caustic, intrigued and richly imaginative view of life, in tension with parts of my value system in the Dragon and the upper class and imperial messages I was receiving. She was also weekly giving me a vividly described world of Assam which was real and written by someone I knew and loved, a place of which I still had some memories.

I don't think I ever consciously tried to copy or emulate my mother's style or contents, but by treating me as an intelligent and mature reader, interested in a wider world, someone to share her amusement (and pain) at life, she helped me to grow up and to appreciate that words are more than squiggles on paper. They are conjuring devices – a few pen strokes and a disliked relative is squirming skewered on the page, or a giant storm or fierce animal is conjured up.

My mother's example through the years, her encouragement of my jejeune efforts and evident delight as I came closer to sharing her love of poetry, history, literature and philosophy, were an immensely important influence on me. My mother walked ahead, but slowly and carefully enough to lead me on and with promises of what lay ahead. She formally taught my sisters in Assam, but informally guided me. I just had to follow her, and I am following her still in starting to write the autobiography not only of myself but of her through her writings.

One topic which was taught with history, English and another main subject was Geography. Geography, to a certain extent, also encompassed the closest I got to economics, anthropology and sociology, so it was potentially an important subject. I think I enjoyed it, for it helped me to place India and Assam and the Red Indians and other important things in space. I learnt about trade and tea and interesting things. I don't remember at present any particular globes or wall maps, but I think they were there and were, I suspect, duly coloured mainly pink to show where our great British Empire lay. My school reports mention that I was keen on geography and this may dimly have laid some seeds for my later choice of anthropology.

*

The other subject regularly taught us was Divinity. My memory of divinity lessons is slight and before I looked at my reports I was not sure whether we did the subject. But the reports show we did and that I was quite keen and even won a prize, I think, for the subject. 'To-day, and for the past twenty years, Dragons have had their own Chaplain, but, unlike many other Prep. Schools, they still do not have their own Chapel.'

The author quotes at some length thoughts written down around the time of first World War by Hugh Sidgwick. This starts as follows: 'In a normal Preparatory School, especially of the more fashionable type, nothing would be more obvious and natural than for a War Memorial to take the form of a Chapel.... But we are not an ordinary school, and our tradition has always been cast in the opposite extreme. Routine, orthodoxy, ritual, unreasoning compliance with *comme il faut* – all these we have deliberately avoided. ... freedom and sincerity and spontaneity and

genuineness, and mistrust of the second-rate and the second-hand, are things worth a good deal of risk to obtain. And it is my belief that the best part of our school tradition is marked with just these characteristics.¹

The whole question of divinity of course overlaps with the field of religion, and specifically Christianity, and is one I shall explore at greater length since it has been an important thread in my life, particularly in the period at Sedbergh and Oxford. But even at the Dragon the visits to Swanage and to church are worth pausing on.

What strikes me as somewhat strange now is the rather ambivalent attitude towards religion in the Dragon. Of course there were morning prayers, with our own special 'Dragon Hymn Book' passed out each morning. And we went to weekly services somewhere in the School, with sermons which are sometimes printed in the 'Draconian'. The content of some of these sermons is examined in a later chapter. There were also some special visits to City churches which I shall mention.

Jamie comments on this. 'I followed divinity teachings and made reasonable efforts to understand because it was part of what was done in the family, rather than out of any great enthusiasm, or mystical longings or whatever. Church was not an uncomfortable place, nor for a sub-teenager particularly interesting. I think I was impressed by Christchurch cathedral, and recall being taken in holidays to see Salisbury (highest spire), Romney or Winchester and some others. But I don't think it occurred to me to miss a dedicated school chapel. I accepted that things might be done differently in different places.

My mother took us (at prep school age) to church now and then but not regularly; we went with both sets of grandparents however during holidays, and religion could occasionally be discussed without any inhibitions or embarrassments. All rather of matter of fact. Occasional divine service attendance was part of the semi-military life we led in Germany (my father liaised between the Control Commission of Germany and the British Army). But in the month in Virginia, USA in 1952 we did not go either to a local church or to the Embassy church, so far as I can remember. So we made appearances at different churches, with equanimity, but not all that often.'

*

As an anticipation of Jamie's more personal comments in a subsequent chapter, here are a couple of reflections he made on the basis of the above account. As to the general atmosphere of the school, in today's terminology the Dragon would of course be thought of as academically minded; but greatly to the school's credit, it was not exclusively so. We ordinary mortals admired the brainy ones and were proud of their achievements. Nor do I recall any one being denigrated for being a swot. It was entirely acceptable to try hard at classwork just as in any other walk of school life.

Another important factor was the high day-boy quotient. Perhaps not enough attention has been given to this vital ingredient. A fair proportion of dayboys came from academically-minded families and their influence, introduced at peer level, represented a constant fresh input to the school and helped prevent the boarder element from becoming introverted in character and parochial in outlook. Parents also spoke at speechdays, gave lectures or sermons, thus valuably contributing further to the integration of the Dragon with the university, and town, of Oxford.

The breadth of learning, with matching high expectations, under the liberal and rounded Dragon system is reflected in the General Knowledge papers. This is discussed elsewhere, but the examination papers of the main subjects show some of

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 84-5

the other secrets of the Dragon method, such as a constant sense of difference and fun. The amusing and original subject matter of the Latin and French translations demonstrates how the Dragon could make learning entertaining. The exam papers show that for the less able, knowledge could be acquired not only be learnt by rote but also by osmosis – almost while you weren't looking. And for the very able intellectual was on offer if you wanted it – Alan's French paper strikes me as being very sophisticated. The Dragon approach was very grown up.

LOCAL AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

One fruitful approach in order to cover the range of our knowledge in all sorts of fields is to examine the extremely long and detailed 'General Knowledge' papers which were set each summer and printed in the 'Draconian'. There are therefore five of these for my time at the Dragon.

In a letter of 18th July 1954 to my mother I wrote *I am enclosing our General Knowledge papers this years and last years. In paper 1 (last year's) Questions nos 17 is personal and you would not know it. This year nos 6 you might not know and nos 9. Please will you [keep the] papers as I collect them.*

Whether I kept the papers so that I could prepare myself for the contest, or as a first sign of my hoarding, I am not sure. The papers were certainly long and difficult and prizes were awarded for the top entries. The 'Draconian' reprinted both the questions and, a few pages later, the answers. As in some other schools at the time, the parents were encouraged to pit their wits against their children.

I had always thought that I was no match for the brilliant young Eton and Winchester scholars who won the competitions, and this was indeed generally true. Yet I was amazed to find that in my final summer term in 1955 I have a signed prize for the General Paper awarded to me. It appears that I was not in the top twenty or so named in the 'Draconian', but since none of them were in my class it may be that I was top of 2B or near to it. So I do not know what my score was or how far down the entries I was. All I have is the prize.

Let me start by examining the structure of this last year paper and give the questions and answers. (Incidentally the possible total was 254 and my friend Philip Steadman won with 174). I shall add a rough title to each section to indicate what it seems to be about. I shall also give the answers as the 'Draconian' did, a few pages on.

Grammar (20 points)

Give *Nour*: from happy; tidy; merry; busy; gay.

Plural of: life, strive; house; mouse; spouse.

Past of: I – drink; think; wink; shrink; blink.

Opposite of: fast; last; early; clever; many

School slang and gadgets (12 points)

What is: an Atco; a Bounty; a gloat; a Walls; an Osmiroid; a Beano; a tich frater; a running middle; Mars; a Platignum; a trash; a bish?

School knowledge (12 points)

What is: a Barsorny? Who takes Lower VI? Who takes Lovers in Biology? Who takes Junior Handicrafts? Who captains the Cricket XI? Who is Housemaster of Stradlings? What is taught by Spiv? Name one of the Staff dogs. Give full name of

Gunga. Name the river at the foot of the field. Whose boathouse is close to the field? What College is close to the field?

General knowledge (15 points)

How many *legs* has: a biped; a centaur; a tripod; a spider; a titmouse?

Feet has: a mermaid; a cricket pitch; an alexandrine; the crew of an VIII; a shrimp?

Eyes has or had: Argus; a needle; a Cyclops; Cerberus; an ounce?

Clothing (20 points)

On what part of your body would you wear, or have worn a: sombrero; clog; singlet; biretta; boater, Kirby-grip; tarboosh; cuirass; ruff; panama; shako; toupee; ushmak; busby; Glengarry; fillet; greaves; pumps; gives; derbies?

Current Shakespeare Play (20 points)

Give Christian names and occupations of: Starveling; Flute; Bottom; Snout.

Name: Helena's father; Hermia's father; Titania's husband; Peaseblossom's parents.

What did Bottom prefer to new nuts? What food did he say had no fellow? What music did he call for? What bird did he describe 'with little quill'?

What was Puck's other name? Give two names for the flower which charmed Titania and Lysander.

Places and Things (especially round Oxford) (15 points)

What is or was: The Victory; The Parthenon; The Broad; The Jacquerie; The Pelican; The Pharos; The Bodleian; The Rocket; The Fram; The Leviathan; The Mall; The Clink; The Radcliffe; The Oval; The Randolph.

Famous People (15 points)

What name do you generally associate with: Eve; Hare; Watson; Costello; Cavell; Huntley; Thisbe; Jonathan; Sullivan; Botting; Hengist; Juliet; Mears; Dido; Beaumont.

Famous authors (20 points)

What famous author: swam the Hellespont; was 'dull in a new way'; wrote a poem on his blindness; played a flue round Europe; was banished to the Black Sea; distributed stamps; was named 'Tusitalia'; was only 5 foot tall but a good boxer; was 'sent down' from Oxford; enlisted under the name of Silas Tomkyn Cumberbache; was an Inspector of Schools; worked in a blacking factory; was a super-tramp; was a hump-back; invented the pillar box; sailed before the mast; left his wife his second-best bed; was a Controller of Customs; was once a bricklayer; had infantile paralysis when young?

Sport (3 points each, 18 total)

Here are some Headlines from the Sporting Pages of 'The Daily Crackers'. Give them as they should be:

Compton brakes course record on centre court at Henley.

Harlequins pip Thames by a Canvas at St. Andrews.

Stanley Matthews serves two doubles in the Open Championship at Old Trafford.

Leander defeat Richmond in the Cup Final at Wimbledon.

Trabert hits century in the 7-a-sides at Wembley.

Thomson nets thrice against the South Africans at Twickenham

Geography and places (12 points)

What mount, mountain, or mountains: was home of the Gods; was home of a Poet; was climbed this year; suggests a Musketeer; suggest geography; are mentioned in Pilgrim's Progress; are 'icy'; was the scene of a King's defeat and death; is a Post Office; is a tree; was piled on Ossa; was seen in the New Hall last autumn?

Language (20 points)

What are you if you are: bandy; batey; batty; boozy; cagey; canny; catty; cocky; crabby; foxy; grubby; loopy; potty; sloppy; scruffy; stocky; testy; touchy; tubby; windy?

Famous people (15 points)

Who lives, lived, or might have lived at these addresses: The Castle, Elsinore; The House of Shaws, near Cramond; Lambeth Palace, London; The Palace, Camelot; the Tub, Athens; St. Patrick's Deanery, Dublin; The Cave, Pelion; The Castle, Dunsinane; The Pleasure Dome, Xanadu; The Spy Glass Inn, Bristol; 4 Garford Road, Oxford; The Boar's Head, Eastcheap, London; Tree Top, Never Never Land; 60A Half Moon Street, London; Headmaster's House, Dotheboys Hall, Yorks?

Poetry (20 points)

Who, or what, in Dragon Book of Verse: was sent with broom before; sank like lead into the sea; spoke out loud and bold; lies full fathom five; died in the odour of sanctity; sings on the orchard bough; was extremely hungaree; comes silent flooding in; galloped into Aix and stood; shot like a streamer; felt his heart new opened; shook his heavy head; keels the pot; plunged headlong in the tide; was left alone with his glory; was lost evermore in the main; falls like a thunderbolt; at Heaven's gate sings; said he could not rest from travel; swam the Eske river?

School names (20 points)

What boys' surnames are suggested by these clues?

A relative of Karl and Groucho?

Curates, Rectors, Vicars, etc.

Voc. Case of Mr. Sheep.

Explorer or Novelist.

Hard to keep on a tightrope.

Burton's on it.

Looks like a rumpus in the Courts.

Three sisters told me I'd be king.

Spill the beans, hatchet.

Thisbe thus described her deceased lover's nose.

Keep on extracting the tares.

A bog.

Panky!

Do in the Irishman.

Not a heavy better.

Often goes with Mum.

Genuine affection.

Whittington, Deadye, or Kitcat.

On Wye or with Cromarty.

Opposite of define?

The answers are as follows:

Grammar: happiness, tidiness, merriment, business, gaiety; lives, strifes (or none); houses, mice; spouses; drank, thought, winked, shrank, blinked; slow, first, late, stupid, few.

School slang and gadgets: mower, kind of sweet, end of Term 'calendar', ice-cream, pen, 'Trash', small brother, dive, sweet, pen, boys' paper, mistake (Dragonese)

School knowledge: handicraft, Mrs. Owen, Miss Blaikie, Miss Barwell, M.Evers, R.St.J.Y, geography, dogs - Tess, Boz, Bess, Tilly, Flic, Gunga Din, Cherwell, Timms, L.M.H.

General knowledge: 2, 4, 3, 8, 2, 0, 66, 6, 18, 10, 100, 1, 1, 6, 2 (kind of lynx)

Clothing: head, foot, trunk, head, head, head/hair, head, trunk, neck, head, head, head, face, head, head, head, legs, feet, wrists, wrists.

Shakespeare play: Robin - tailor, Francis - bellows-mender, Nick - weaver, Tom, tinker, Nedar, Egeus, Oberon, - Squash/Peascod, dried peas, hay, tongs and bones, wren, Robin Goodfellow, pansy and love-in-idleness.

Places and things: ship (Nelson's), Greek temple, Oxford street, ship (Drake's), French Peasant rising, Egyptian lighthouse, Oxford library, early locomotive, ship (Nansen's), London street, prison, Oxford infirmary, cricket ground, Oxford hotel, sea-monster (Dorm?).

Famous People: Adam, Burke, Holmes, Abbot, Elliston, Palmer, Pyramus, David, Gilbert, Hillard (text book), Horsa, Romeo, Carter (text book), Aeneas, Fletcher.

Famous Authors: Byron, Gray (said by Dr. Johnson), Milton, Goldsmith, Ovid, Wordsworth, Stevenson, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, Dickens, W.H. Davies, Pope, Trollope, Masfield, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Ben Jonson, Scott.

Sport: Compton - century - Africans - Old Trafford; Harlequins - Richmond - sevens - Twickenham; Matthews - nets - Cup final - Wembley; Leander - Thames - canvas - Henley; Trabert - doubles - Centre Court - Wimbledon; Thomson - record - Championship - St Andrews.

Geography and places: Olympus, Rydal, Kanchenjunga, Athos, Atlas, Delectable, Greenland's, Gilboa, Pleasant, Ash, Pelion, Ararat (in 'Iolanthe').

Language: bow-legged, angry, dotty, addicted to drink, secretive, cautious, spiteful, conceited, ill-tempered, cunning, unclean, dotty, loopy, not thorough, unkempt and grubby, thick set, irritable, prone to offence, fat, nervous.

Famous people: Hamlet, Ebenezer Balfour (Kidnapped), Archbishop of Canterbury, King Arthur, Diogenes, Swift, Chiron (or pupils), Macbeth, Kubla Khan, Long John Silver, E.L.F, Mrs Quickly/Pistol/Falstaff, Peter Pan/Wendy, Bulldog Drummond, Mr. Squeers.

Poetry: Puck, Albatross, Chapman (Keats), Thy father, Jackdaw of Rheims, chaffinch (Browning), Gorging Jack, the main (Clough), Roland, Excalibur, Wolsey, eldest oyster, Greasy Joan, Horatius, Sir John Moore, The Revenge, the eagle (Tennyson), the lark, Ulysses, Lochinvar.

School Names: Marks, Oram, Scott, Balance, Trent, Barrow, Macbeth, Axtell, Cherry, Wheadon, Marsh, Hankey, Kilpatrick, Pennybacker, Dadd, Truelove, Dick, Ross, de Wet.

The difficulty of preparing for this test was increased by the fact that each year the questions were very different. For instances, alongside the questions on the

Shakespeare play of Macbeth and some grammar and concealed master's names, here are a few further sets of questions and answers which show the range of what we might be expected to know.

Meaning of phrases:

Explain: Black mamba; blue Peter; white elephant; purple emperor; Red Biddy; yellow Jack; Brown Bess; green room; pink-eye; grey matter.

Poetry and rhymes:

What was Polly asked to put on? What lay in the house that Jack built? Where did the Man in the Moon ask his way to? Who set off with his opera hat? What was the queen eating in the parlour? Out of what did old Mrs. Slipper-Slopper jump? What did Jack break? Over what was Jack to be nimble and jump? Who lies in bed till 8 or 9? Who pulled pussy from the well? What were one a penny, two a penny? What did 24 tailors go out to catch? When was Solomon Grundy born? Where did Mary's lamb follow her? What did Yankee Doodle call his feather?

Geography:

To what country would you go to sea: The Taj Mahal; The Grand Canyon; Kathmandu; The Hanging Gardens of Mark Anthony; The Golden Gate; the Golden Horn; The Blarney Stone; the Lhotse Face; The Devil's Beef Tub; The Devil's Punch Bowl; Medicine Hat; Wagga Wagga?

History:

What English monarch: was called silly; was called bluff; was called merry; was called farmer; never smiled again; was presented with tennis balls; sometimes counsel took and sometimes tea; first ate a potato; was detained in Austria; first travelled in a train; strongly objected to smoking; first travelled to Rome; was an expert hedger and ditcher; was shot in the eye; was shot in the New Forest?

Music:

How would you play these musical instruments: Tympani; harmonica; triangle; zither; hautboy; dulcimer; shawm; virginals; tom-tom; xylophone; psalter; tuba; sackbut; viola; lyre?

Literature:

Who: turned into a door knocker; asked for more; freed the Cham from gnats; threw a sword into a lake; decreed a pleasure dome; fell into a ravine with a professor; had a duck for a house-keeper; had one leg and a parrot; was a skeely skipper; balanced an eel on his nose; is come out of the West; blows his nail; raised his eyes and prayed where he did sit; used his pocket handkerchie; to the dark tower came?

General:

How many: men in a racing eight; gallons in a Stetson; dollars disbursed by Sweno; cooks spoil the broth; cohorts in a legion; pillars of wisdom; ships sighted approaching the Azores; ears were mentioned by Macbeth; wise men of Gotham; love-sick maidens we; times did the brindled cat mew; men on the dead man's chest; miles to Babylon; bean rows in Innisfree; muses?

Those who wish to see the answers, will find them in the 'Draconian' (p.12235)

for Summer 1954 (there is a copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford). The winner, R. Jeffery, got over four out of five of the answers right - and appropriately won the top scholarship to Eton.

It is tempting to make extracts from earlier papers, which show that each year they were very different, but each required a high level of general knowledge in literature, history, geography, sport, music, poetry, local school knowledge and other fields to compete effectively. I am amazed to think that little boys (and the occasional girl) of eleven or twelve were expected to have picked up so much, some of it in class, but much of it through observation, listening carefully to adults, and then memorizing a complex set of facts which they could quickly mobilize in a long examination. It is not surprising that Peter Snow should describe the boys as having 'the bodies of children but the minds of adults'. I suspect that I have never known as much again in my life as I did when I was thirteen.

*

Jamie comments on the General Knowledge paper as follows. The education we received was not only broad by general prep school standards but it also had a rather distinct character of its own, and with respect to the annual General Knowledge papers a rather sophisticated, Oxford flavour to it. The point was to encourage boys to observe, listen, pay attention to everything going on around them, to ask questions and to understand, not just drift along as Johnny Head in Air. As pointed out by Alan, the main point was to teach the vital processes of noting, choosing, memorising and mobilizing sets of complex facts. But in some ways the questions themselves strike an odd note today -- as if the school attached importance to the notion that there were some things that a gentleman ought to be familiar with, for example, the Mall, Oval, the Randolph, alpinism, imperial garb. Is there also a hint of crossword mentality, or an element of cleverness rather than wisdom, about them? I do not think so, but the collection of such knowledge by the age of say twelve would certainly be beyond most ordinary prep school pupils. A propos, I wonder whether dayboys did better than boarders because of more exposure to grown ups and grown up conversation about their surroundings and current affairs.

In personal terms, I think I thoroughly enjoyed such tests, as I did other tests undertaken by the whole school, spelling tests, 'go find' games, and the Eleven Plus too. Perhaps this was because these were challenges where there was less risk of harsh reports, inferior marks, cutting feedback or carping comments. I was sensitive to criticism, and with papers of these sorts we were safe from it.

In July 1952, *There was a general knowledge paper yesterday out of 205. I think I got 101 marks.* This seems a respectable mark at the end of my third year. Sandy gives his view too, *And we had the general knolage Exam Yesterday ~ all was hard ~ the whole school did it and it was out of 250 marks ~ every boddy in the school did it the top form and the bottom form.*

*

Complementing the above, from time to time there were elaborate treasure hunts of a kind. The range complements well the General Knowledge paper - it is a kind of General Knowledge paper with objects attached. It would be interesting to find some more lists.

Obviously the boys were divided into teams and given a list of things to find or to find out, and then pool them with their team. I suspect this was only done

sporadically, as in the very cold spring of 1955, when outdoor games of other kinds (or skating) were deemed impossible. Sandy retained one of the lists and noted that he had marked with a tick when he found something (marked with an asterisk * below). Here is his list.

LET'S FIND.... 26 February, 1955

1. The number of this morning's hymn. *
2. A bowler hat.
3. A potato. *
4. The number of Bruno's House in Norham Road*
5. What has just gone up by one per cent?*
6. The smallest possible conker.
7. The name of the present Vicar of St. Andrew's Church. *
8. The largest possible blown up balloon.
9. A programme of 'Listen to the Wind'.
10. All the Christian names of Mr. Currey.
11. A silver threepenny bit.
12. Whom should the Staff play at hockey on March 24th?
13. An Oxford bus ticket. *
14. A bicycle trouser clip. *
15. A recognisable photograph or drawing of a member of the Staff.
16. A kirby grip. *
17. The date of this year's Boat Race *
18. The name of the Mayor of Oxford. *
19. An Old Etonian tie.
20. A Christmas cracker. *
21. A golf ball. *
22. The number of soccer colours announced from the platform this term.
23. The name of the captain of this year's Oxford University hockey team.
24. The name of the maker of the new brake's engine. *
25. A Wychwood girl's autograph. *
26. The number of lamp-posts on the East side of Charlbury Road. *
27. What was the School House telephone number in 1952?*
28. A ticket of admission to last term's Iolanthe.
29. The highest number of any house in Park Town. *
30. The registration number of the Bursar's car.
31. The exact number of girls in the Big School this term.
32. Who will open the next Olympic Games?*
33. A sheet (dated) of a January daily paper. *
34. A brazil nut.
35. A remembrance Day poppy. *
36. 36. The number of the nearest pillar box which as an 8 p.m. collection. *
37. Edward Hornby's London address.
38. The name of the Warden of St. Edward's School. *
39. A set of poker dice.
40. A Coronation pencil.
41. The number of courts at Norham Gardens tennis club.
42. A picture postcard of an Oxford College. *
43. What is R.I.K's address in Oxford?
44. The name of the lady who plays the piano for dancing.

45. Who is Mrs. Fernald?*
46. Where was tomorrow's preacher once Headmaster?
47. Today's half-time score in the Scotland v Ireland rugby match.
48. Whom did the Queen honour last night?*
49. The largest possible icicle.*
50. Something which nobody else has got.*

RULES

No Trespassing. New Buildings and Lodge out of bounds. No one is to cross the Banbury Road. No disturbing of private citizens. No one to go upstairs in the School House. Members of the Staff may only give help *five* times during the afternoon.

HAVE REALLY GOOD MANNERS THROUGHOUT.

Group leaders to be ready in their own classrooms with their final sheet of answers and their goods at 4 o'clock sharp.

N.B. Remember to return anything which you may have borrowed.

There must have been some amused (or irritated) Wychwood girl's, Mr. Currey, piano teachers and others, and a dripping mass of icicle's, bus tickets, trouser clips and burst balloons in the classrooms.

But it was obviously fun and again shows that Dragon boys were mean to retain not only objects - tickets to Iolanthe or poppies or silver threepenny bits, but also to know quite a bit about local adult affairs: what had gone up one per cent, who would open the next Olympic Games, the name of the vicar of St. Andrew's. The objects and information were quirky, but just possible. And clearly there must have been much rushing about and fun. This all took place in my last winter term, but I do not recall the event.

HOW ALAN WAS TAUGHT

I believed that I did not have any of my class notebooks for the Dragon and that it would be impossible to say what or how I was. I have, however, discovered, that one set of class books, covering a year in geography, have survived. I had for long assigned them to my time at Sedbergh School, where I have other work books, partly because at first glance they seemed rather sophisticated in both content and style.¹

Yet on examining a volume, on the outside of which I have placed a coloured label stating 'A. Macfarlane Geography, Volumes 1-3', in which there are three separate exercise books, Sellotaped together. These are definitely of the Dragon period, covering the three terms Christmas 1953 to Summer 1954, when I was aged eleven and three quarters through to twelve and a half.

Geography was a second-level subject at the Dragon. It was not one of the four key disciplines covered in the fortnightly reports and it was examined in a rather different way. Even in the termly reports Geography was inserted in a rather abrupt

¹ A.L.Rowse in his *A Cornish Childhood* (1947), 117-120, describes a similar chance find of a writing book of his elementary school, kept by a teacher. His conclusion is similar to mine: 'from it I see that we were altogether better taught than I had remembered'.

way between major subjects for half my time at the Dragon before it received its own separate place. The classes were often larger than in other subjects and seem to have been combined at certain points.

Geography was not one of my better subjects, though perhaps not my worst. I ended up at the Dragon in sets A3/A4, equal tenth in class and twelfth in exams out of 34 with the comment 'Very good'. This was slightly lower than English, History and French and a good deal lower than mathematics. During the three terms from which the work-books survive, the termly reports on marks were as follows.

Winter 1953: Set B2, B3. Out of 36 pupils in the class, I was placed thirteenth in class marks and tenth by exams. The comment of J.F.T.Copleston, who taught me throughout these three terms, was 'Good'.

March 1954: Set B1. I was fourteenth in term marks out of a class of 17 and 'keen and interested'.

July 1954: Set B1. I was thirteenth out of 16 in class marks and equal tenth in exams and Copleston commented 'Much improved: a better understanding of the subject'

It seems, from the evidence of the books I will now examine, as well as the comments above, that geography was a subject I enjoyed. My experience of coming back from and then re-visiting Assam, along with my mother's letters and family reminiscences, may have enthused me, although we hardly touched Asia in this year of teaching. It was the subject closest to my future career as an anthropologist. It was clearly important if I was ever to follow my ancestors and worked abroad. So what evidence is there of how and I learnt in this accidental survival?

The first volume is a green soft-covered book which I have titled 'Geography, Book 1, Winter 1953 and Easter 1954.' The second, 'Book II, Summer 1954' It also has 'B1' written on it, which is the set I was in, and 'Nos 6', whatever that refers to. The third is 'Geog Book (continued)'. Each volume is about 40 pages long and includes numerous maps, diagrams, lists etc.

The first volume starts with model answers for short geographical questions; Glaciers, Relief Rain and Rain Shadows, Deltas and Fiords. This is a cyclostyled sheet with brief descriptions of each of these and four diagrams, which I obviously coloured in, of a glacier, relief rain and a fiord.

There were two pages consisting of 3 cyclostyled maps of South America. These I had filled in with vegetation, rainfall and temperature.

A double page spread consisted of a world map and a table showing vegetation, animal life and climate. I filled in the major features of these in Tundra, Coniferous forests, Steppes and Prairies, Mediterranean, Desert, Savannah, Equatorial Forests. I then described features of equatorial forests and savannah grasslands for a page.

The following page concerned Brazil, its industries and a detailed map. [For this I received 9/10 and the comment 'Very Good. All the main features stand out clearly. You must however draw your map outline in pencil.']

[An inserted piece of carbon paper explains how I must have drawn some of my maps]

For a page I describe timber, brazil nuts and coffee and point out that Brazil grows 4/5 of world's coffee - with a picture of coffee cups. [Comment: Excellent Notes - Keep up the Good work!]

Another very detailed page of three maps of parts of Brazil, showing where crops are grown and rainfall occupy a page, and then a diagram in detail of how coffee is grown [V.G.]

Similar treatment is given to Argentina, and a further page describes the rainfall

on the Andes.

We now move on to volcanoes, with three diagrams of how a volcano works, for which I only received 5/10, having left out the naming of magma etc.

We return to two pages of cyclostyled maps of South America, with various products and places written in.

That was the end of the work for the Winter Term.

*

In Easter Term 1954 I started with North American exploration, where I listed the names and dates of major explorations from Eric the Red through to the Alaska purchase.

This was followed by a cyclostyled map of 'N.America: Physical Features', which I filled in. ['Good'. 9/10] I then described some of the physical divisions, including the Canadian shield, in my own words, including the minerals in them. The next two pages did the same for climate.

There are then two pages which consist of four diagrams of a valley glacier and its features: a cirque, movement of glaciers, erosion by glaciers, moraines.

There is then 'Prep' 11th March 1954. 'The Wheat Farmer's Year'. This consists of a page and a half of writing.

Above the second half of the essay there is a description of 'Tundra'.

The following page shows in three diagrams and text the three stages of lumbering ['Good'] and the following page a detailed diagram of a saw mill.

The next page describes coniferous forests and the apples of Nova Scotia.

Then a whole page is devoted to a diagram with annotations to explain 'Why the Grand Banks are the World's Greatest Fishing Grounds' ['Good: A neat diagram'].

Inserted loosely here is a cyclostyled description (obviously given to us) of Tundra, Savannah Grasslands and Hot Deserts, with a world map to show the main location of these.

The next two pages are a cyclostyled map of the 'Dominion of Canada' on which I have drawn the main territories and states and cities.

I then draw a diagram to show how Greenwich is the centre of time.

There is then a rather strange drawing of a combine harvester.

The next page shows the prairie farmers year, with diagrams of the stages.

Three pages are devoted to a 'Prep' I did on Newfoundland. We were given some suggestions for this, 'Prep Hints'.

1. World position - position in relation to Canada.
2. Latitude - N.France
3. Climate (Damp, foggy cloudy summers, cold winters)
4. Vegetation
5. Occupations of the people; and why they carry on these industries
6. Marketing of products.
7. Conclusion

The essay I produced is as follows. (with Copleston's comments, as he wrote them, in red)

Prep

~~New~~ Newfoundland ~~is~~ lies about 45 **LONGITUDE** west and 48 **LATITUDE** north. It is ~~fogg~~ usually foggy. **This** is caused by the Labrador ~~and current~~ **e**Current and the Gulf ~~s~~**S**tream meeting, one a hot and one a cold ~~sum~~

winter and cloudy summer. There are ~~timber~~ **CONIFEROUS** forests and nearly everything is made of wood, **including** boats, houses, crates, ~~and~~ furniture.

The main ~~occu-~~~~The m~~ is fishing. Some of the inhabitants only fish around the coast while others go out in big schooners and fish on the Grand Banks. The **G**rand **B**anks are the best fishing ground in the world and the main fish are cod. This is so because a continental shelf was formed by the iceberghs ~~metting~~ melting. [This sentence has two red ticks against it.] Then plankton ~~um~~ grows on the shallow water and the fish thrive.

~~They are mostly~~ **The inhabitants of Newfoundland are** a hardy race and they live a hardy life. When the fish and then their liver is taken out sepearately. After this they are stored in crates.

ICEBERGS PLANKTON SEPARATELY

7/20 POOR. YOU MUST PLAN YOUR WORK CAREFULLY AND TAKE CARE TO EXPRSS YOURSELF CLEARLY AND ACCURATELY.

- 1. YOU SHALD HAVE MENTIONED MORE ABOUT THE LUMBER INDUSTRY.**
- 2. YOU FAILED TO WRITE ABOUT THE VALUABLE COPPER, LEAD AND ZINC MINES AS WELL AS THE IRON ORE OF BELL ISLAND WHICH IS SMELTED WITH CAPE BRETON ISLAND'S COAL.**
- 3. CORNER BROOK AND GRAND FALLS POSSESS SOME OF THE LARGEST WOOD-PULP MILLS IN THE WORLD UTILISING CHEAP HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER.**
- 4. NEWFOUNDLAND IS AN IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL JUNCTION. E.G.GANDER.**

I then wrote an essay on 'Lumbering', which again has interesting features and spelling and a few diagrams.

There follows another essay on 'The Tundra', which is better [18/20 'Good: A clear and concise account'], thought the spelling is still pretty bad.

Then there is a 'Prep' on 'A Valley Glacier', for which I got 15 and a half.

The following page is devoted to a Test, with single word answers to 25 questions. I got 15 and a half right (giving three versions of the spelling of Mississippi)

There is then a two page essay on the 'Growing of Coffee in Brazil'. This illustrates both my style, and the further efforts of Mr. Copleston to improve my work.

The **G**rowing of **C**offee in Brazil

Coffee is grown in the south East of Brazil. It is grown on ~~the sides~~ of Fazendas wich are small states (~~crossed out~~) **LARGE PLANTATIONS** owned by Eurapeans the hills. The ground is very fertile due to the fact that there used to be volcanoes. The colour is red and there used to be forests wich have fallen down and decayed. Also there is very good drainage. There is much sun and in the summer there is heavy rain caused by the South East Trades from November to February. There ~~is~~ are no severe frosts and this is ~~exem~~ extremely lucky as one severe frost would kill all the coffee bushes. [The passage from 'The colour red to ... coffee bushes' is sidelined in red with **GOOD**.] The young ones are sheltered by long huts covered ~~with~~ ~~with~~ with palm leaves. When they are eight~~een~~ months old they are

transplanted to the ~~hill~~ hillsides. In the summer the work on the fazenda is very hard as they have to weed and prune the land and bushes. The hot sun and heavy rainfall make all the plants grow quickly. At first, ~~they~~ the cherries are green but gradually they turn red then they are called coffee cherries. In the winter they are picked and put in sacks. As each tree will only produce about a one and a half pounds of coffee so they do not waste any. After that they are ~~the~~ taken to a fast flowing stream at the end they have their outer skin taken off. Then the pulp is taken off by the water. Then it is laid out to dry. The silver on a parchment inner skins are then removed, the coffee graded and sacked, sent to Sao Paulo and from there exported to Europe and N.America by way of Santos and Rio de Janeiro.

17/20 VERY GOOD INDEED.

The book ends with five pages of further tests and short answers to questions.

Stuck in the end is a cyclostyled map of the world showing 25 main features and where they are - the comment is 'v.g.'

*

Book II - Brown. Summer 1954

The book starts with my coloured map of North America with a few geographical features.

The next is a coloured diagram of 'The Importance of Maize (corn) in the U.S.A.'

The following page shows 'Work on a one mule cotton plantation', complete with a small sketch of a worker. ['Excellent']

The next page is a coloured diagram of 'Drilling for Oil' [Good]

Two pages are then devoted to New York, first an 'Excellent' map of the site of the city, then a 'v.g.' set of seven points about the city.

We then move to Chicago, with a cyclostyled page of main points about the city, and a map of Chicago. For this I only received 3/15 and the comment was 'A well carbon traced map. But how does it illustrate the importance of Chicago?'

We then move to California, with three pages of annotated coloured diagrams of its climate, products and how the irrigation system works. This is 'v.g.'

There is a page of notes with coloured diagrams of what happens in Los Angeles - 'Excellent Notes'.

The next page consists of notes on how to draw maps, how to show scales on maps.

Then three ways of finding north are given, followed by the definition of a contour.

We then move to Europe. There is a map and a page of description of the main physical geography, including main rivers and a further page of the relief and main towns listed.

I then traced a map of Europe and coloured in the countries and capital cities of certain countries, which earned me 18/20 and 'V.good'.

I then devoted two pages to France, showing its main geography and various products.

There is then a cyclostyled page, with two maps I have coloured in, on 'Monsoons'.

This is followed by two further similar pages on Rainfall and Erosion by Rivers.

A page lists the capitals of fifteen European countries.

I then list hot and cold currents, naming twenty six out of 30 'Good'. [There is a question mark against the 'Irmingher' current - if Mr Copleston had had Google he would have found that this is indeed a current - the Irmingher.]

Two pages of diagrams then explain the formation of depression, from above, from the side, and how it works.

A page shows what the signs and symbols for roads, railways are.

A page shows the globe with the main seasons and tropics.

We then move to Africa, with a map of the southern half filled in and a further rainfall map.

I then list 18 ports in Africa and colour in a map of Africa, colouring in pink the British possessions. For this I got v.g. and 24/25. [Worth scanning!]

A map of the distribution of population in southern Africa and the Natural Regions in the same area, receive ticks.

The following page has a list of about 30 rivers around the world.

There are then twenty single-word answers to various questions of a miscellaneous kind, for which I received 14 marks.

Half a page describes Continental and maritime climate, and then there is a further page of tests.

A one-page essay on the use of rivers was 'Good', and received 15/20.

This is followed by two further pages of geography tests.

A cyclostyled set of notes on coniferous and equatorial forest, and on continental and maritime climates is then glued in, followed by a page with some notes by me on 'Mediterranean' climate, and latitude and longitude.

I write an essay on Mediterranean climates and the kind of industries carried on in the coniferous and equatorial forests. The first part is crossed out with a note 'I asked you about a Maritime climate'. On the facing page is written 'Write out my notes on maritime and continental climates, please'.

There is then an essay of two pages on cotton, with some quite detailed comments by Mr Copleston and a mark of 14/20.

Another essay on 'The Maize Belt of North America' has detailed comments interspersed by the teacher, with the end comment 'You know a number of facts but you have expressed them in a muddled order. Try to follow some definite plan.' 12/20.

There is then a cyclostyled sheet with a map of British Columbia and spaces to fill in answers under the headings 'Use of rivers, climate, fishing, farming activities, most important minerals mined, and two industries of Vancouver and three of its chief exports. I get 8/15 'Poor' for my answers.

A cyclostyled map of England, with 15 cities marked in by me is the penultimate item, followed by a cyclostyled work map with ten places and features marked in.

*

This book is clearly not enough for the term's work, for there is then another 'Geog Book (Continued)'

It starts again with maps of Canada coloured in and with some details added by me - 9/10 'Good'.

Then another map of South Africa, showing various activities, 15/20.

Some notes on the Union of South Africa show its history, climate, population and capitals. For example, I note that the population in 1951 is twelve and a half million, of which two and a half million are European, eight and a half million 'Natives (Bantu)' and one and a half million 'Asian, Malay and Chinese' etc. I note briefly also that 'Native Problem - segregation of the black man.'

The various regions with their climate, relief and crops are then described.

A map of the 'confederate of Central Africa' is coloured in, 'A good map, but try next time to get everything in' 18/20.

A map and details of S.Rhodesia occupy a page.

Crops in the savannah occupy part of a page.

We then move to 'The Lancashire Industrial Area', with main activities, towns and zones, which I coloured in. This is 'v.g.' 14/15.

The next page consists of two tests, one of which I get 11/15 and the other 20/20 'V.G.work'.

Opposite is a rather elaborate map of England with coalfields marked in.

We then move on to tides, and a map of England's geology - but with no names.

A note on tidal wave approaches and tides is faced by a coloured map of the Thames basin which is 'Very good'.

The railway network of London in a diagram gets a tick, and opposites a short description with another map of 'The People Coming from Abroad'.

Then there is a page on the South Wales Coalfield with various details of exports, imports etc.

A two page map of some of the features of the lowlands of Scotland gains me 16/20.

The next page contains notes on the main activities and products of Scotland.

The next page has a diagram of a 'Depression', which Mr Copleston notes is 'Not quite finished', but shows it happening over a sketch of the Dragon School and is awarded 17/20.

The next page concerns diagrams and notes on the west riding woollen industry, with a figure of 'A slice out of the Yorks, Derby, Notts Ind area.'

The following page looks at some of the product (with small drawings) of Sheffield, Nottingham and Derby - including a picture of a Rolls Royce. This is 'Good'.

Two pages are devoted to an essay, illustrated with five diagrams, of "South Sea Isles". [Perhaps worth scanning.]

There is a page headed 'C.E.E. Spot Questions'. This gives suggestions of six general areas which might come up in Common Entrance, which I would be taking the following year.

A half-page essay on 'A depression' with a diagram gets me 7/10.

There is then a 'Prep', with a half page on the central lowlands of Scotland with a detailed map of the movement of commodities. This earns me a tick.

The next page gives a few notes on 'Prep' to be done. Another Prep is as follows: Ceylon use blue Stembridge P.172 Ch 14 read and answer questions 1.2. (P.175) [If this is Jasper Harry Stembridge, *The World: a general Regional Geography*, we were really up to date since it had only been published by Oxford Univ. Press in 1953].

The volume ends with two unmarked cyclostyled maps of the British Isles and the World which I may have used for tracings.

*

At the end of the school year I moved up into set A3/A4 where, in the first term, I was 15th out of 34 in term marks and 22nd in exams, with the comment by 'DP' [D.Parnwell] of 'Quite Good'. I have no further work books from this final year, but inserted into the previous years volumes is a geography exam for November 1954.

This was set for classes A.3, A.4, B.2, B.C, C.1, C.2 by my teacher, D.P.

I will transcribe this as an indication of what we were expected to be able to know from classes of children roughly from the age of ten to thirteen.

GEOGRAPHY

EXTRA MARKS WILL BE AWARDED FOR GOOD SKETCH MAPS, DIAGRAMS, AND NEATNESS.

Answer Question 1 and *four* others.

1. On the World Map mark in the position of the following, with the NUMBER only (Example: 1 - position of River Yangtze).

Rivers 1. Yangtze 2. Zambezi 3. Nile 4. Tigris

Mountains 5. Atlas 6. Urals 7. Himalayas 8. Appalachians

Capitals of Europe 9. Helsinki 10. Lisbon 11. Warsaw 12. Belgrade

Ocean Currents 13. Kuro Siwo 14. Gulf Stream 15. Peru 16. Benuela

And 17. Suez Canal 18. Kuwait 19. Iceland 20. Tropic of Cancer

2. What do you know about four of the following? (Not more than 10 lines on each): - Monsoons, Latitude and Longitude, Night and Day, a Depression, Dew, the Mistral, Erosion by Ice. [I have underlined Monsoons, Dew, the Mistral, Erosion by Ice.]

3. a) Describe carefully the development of a river from its source to its mouth, and b) select a river and explain its course, system of tributaries, type of mouth, and position of large town on its banks.

4. What do you know about the growth, harvesting, and use of hops?

5. Describe the experiences of a drop of water in the Atlantic Ocean, from the moment it is evaporated by the sun's heat, until it finds itself in a puddle on the Dragon School playground.

6. On a journey along the coasts of France make a list of the ports you see, and describe the different types you find.

7. Why was the Suez Canal built? Tell the story of its construction, and outline its history and geographical importance.

8. Construct a contoured map of an island, about seven miles long and five miles wide. Mark on it the following: -

The scale. Cliffs 300 ft. high in the ~North-West. A hill over 500 ft. high. A river flowing South-East. Two villages connected by a road. A railway crossing the river and joining the villages by a different route. A church with spire.

Also inserted loosely into the exercise books, though there is no date attached, are two cyclostyled world maps. They are clearly answers to tests, one showing twenty capital cities and their location, for which I received five marks, the other has another twenty rivers and eight sets of mountains. The combined score for all my answers was 27/30.

*

I am surprised and somewhat impressed by the range and depth of what we were expected to learnt at eleven and twelve, though I do not know how it would compare to the teaching of students nowadays. It seems to have been based on up-to-date textbooks and helpful cyclostyled notes supplied to us.

I am surprised and quite impressed by the maturity of my handwriting, though it is not, in essence, different from my letters at the time. I am particularly surprised to

find that I could draw quite good maps, diagrams, small sketches of appropriate objects. My art work here is better than the few traces I had previously discovered illustrating my letters of the period. I seem to have begun to understand scale, perspective, the techniques of simplifying down to the essence of a representation. This is not quite up to the standard of the illustration in Tufte's great works, but it is not bad. I don't think I improved much as the years went on. I would have been able to draw a usable map, cross-section or plan of a number of things on the basis of this knowledge. I also had a basic grasp of various aspects of climate, physical geography and manufacturing processes.

I am less impressed by my spelling, which starts off as pretty atrocious, though it has improved somewhat by the end of these nine months. Certain words, in particular 'wich', are consistently misspelt. My failure to work out my argument in advance, to plan the logic, is a fault which recurred throughout my schooling and into my years at University.

I am particularly impressed by the careful oversight paid by Mr. Copleston. Each attempt was carefully scrutinized, most spelling mistakes corrected and bad expressions improved. Arguments were made more concrete and the occasions when there was little plan to the argument pointed out. What I mistook is noted and omitted facts and arguments are written in. About two thirds of the comments are encouraging - good, very good, well written and so on. About one third have constructive comments about what was wrong.

In many preparatory schools about which I have read the system was based on a rather terrifying system of rewards and punishments. If one accumulated a number of black marks for pieces of work, one was punished. Even Paul Watkins refers to such a system at the Dragon in the 1970s when he writes that children were asked to recite their home work and 'Pa Winter had a system... Three red marks and he'd give you a chocolate bar... But three black marks and he would beat you.'¹ I do not remember anything like this and the notes in the geography volumes suggest that the whole system was not based on absolute good and bad marks, but on scores out of ten, twenty or thirty followed by a comment. It may have been different in more central school subjects like Latin or French, but I do not remember that it was.

There is also quite a bit of evidence of testing throughout the course, especially at the end of the Christmas and Summer terms. There is a fair amount of essay writing alongside diagrams and maps. The examination clearly attempted to move beyond the repetition of facts, to test our analytic and narrative skills. We were to trace the history of a drop of water (which reminds me of Carlo Levi's carbon atom - which did not end in a Dragon puddle, but in a footstep at the end of his essay), to imagine ourselves sailing down the coast of France, to design an imaginary island. It is all quite creative and at times humorous and quirky in a way which reflects the exams and general papers described in the previous chapter.

As for the contents of what we were to learn, the reader can see for themselves. In this year we covered the Americas fairly thoroughly, and also Africa. Within Europe we mainly concentrated on England but also a little on France and Europe more generally. In Asia and the Pacific we mainly noted currents, mountains, rivers and other such features. There was quite a concern with the production of various commodities - cotton, coffee, wood, coal mining and other commodities. There was a little on the population and ethnic composition and on some major cities. There seems, perhaps with unintentional irony, to have been a good deal about 'Depression', and it is appropriate that one of my illustrations of the process of this

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 10

phenomenon had the depression hanging over the Dragon School.

There is, of course, no questioning of the system. Apart from the note on the Colour Problem in South Africa, there is nothing on politics, colonialism, imperialism, exploitation of man or nature. I was only eleven and twelve, so I suppose it is not surprising. The questioning of the system, of why the map of Africa had so much pink on it, would come elsewhere or later.

*

I find it difficult to stand back from all this and to assess it. I am therefore particularly grateful that Jamie has made a start on such an assessment. Here is the informal report he wrote on my progress.

The range and depth of what we learnt at that age is quite exciting, I agree. I think Copleston's care and attention is a wonderful example of good school-mastering. And the structure of work in a progression through a year - with the explanations, tests and essays required, notes provided and various forms of repetition undertaken - seems to me just what our parents ordered! In one way, the subject matter treated would serve quite well as a basic primer or early introductory notes for a District Officer. Let me take that aspect first.

*

The programme is frankly a startling period piece in its emphasis on natural resources (location and climatic reasons) with the economic Imperial dimension (especially the Dominions - remember the young Queen Elizabeth's Empire tour) taken for granted. Some useful basic scientific aspects of geography and some elements of human geography are also explored.

Basic subjects begin with a look at physical features of climatic regions - desert, savannah, tundra, tropical forests - with rainfall, temperature and so on. This leads on naturally to location of resources, whether coal in Britain or mines in south Africa, coniferous forests in Canada, agricultural plantations in Brazil. The geographical background is exactly as delivered in contemporary atlases (in 'Oxford Atlas 1951', for example, see below)

Having found our natural resources and understood why they are there in that particular geographical zone, the next step is exploitation. Now we can turn to lumber, fish, wheat, etc, with considerable emphasis on methods of exploitation: irrigation, drilling, mining, fishing, farming, felling and milling.

Examples of locations are deliciously imperial and exotic at first, such as Newfoundland, Alaska, South Africa, etc - Welsh coal fields only come later. It is as if geography is by definition remote.

But future imperial servants must not forget people. Some coverage is given of human geography, with a look at populations, cities, even segregation. And we take quite a close look at what it means to be engaged in particular industries - with a year in the life of fisherman, lumberjack, wheat farmer etc.

Then our background information is widened with a little look at exploration (and perhaps imperial acquisitions) - with dates of course - and some basic history to give the boys the right background.

Then our outlook is deepened with a closer look at the means of efficient exploitation, the equipment required for harvesting, processing and (vital for empire) transporting raw, semi-manufactured and processed materials from lands of origin to centres of population (eg. lots of facts adduced here from the workings of a combine harvesters to lists of ports in Africa)

Then some scientific aspects are brought to bear, such as the principles of map making and scale, the operation of contours, annotation of maps (roads, rail),

longitude and latitude. And some notes provided to introduce principles concerning volcanoes, glaciers, rainfall, currents, icebergs, plankton – and such nasty things a district officer might meet on the way as tidal bores.

*

More interesting than subjects taught is the teaching process at work. At work most beautifully described is a very sophisticated and sympathetic process of teaching boys how to learn.

The process begins with explanations and outlines, summaries and examples. The actual subjects taken are quite limited – even in one year – because geography is only a Minor subject.

With the help of supporting pamphlets the master is working towards giving the pupils an understanding of information he has to offer them.

The boys' task is now to reduce and re-present the data in a useful and usable form for others. Practice is done through Tests. And thus the boys are taught the need to produce full but concise and above all clear summaries of the information they have been absorbing.

The point about geography as a subject is that it offers an early opportunity to learn how to present data in graphic not verbal form, drawn rather than written – and a chance to stress the importance of neat artwork etc. It is quite an art – as would be learning about the most useful ways to convert information to graphs, charts, pie charts etc. Sketching and mapping needs just as much sustained accuracy as writing – but is really no different. As in writing, relevant data must not be overlooked – Chicago as a significant industrial hub, final steps in coffee processing.

Jake Mermagen adds that 'I have memories of the massive progress I made in my last 4 terms, in particular the teaching of Kitson, Joc, Law (L.A. Wilding) and a newer arrival called Cuthbertson in Maths. I went from slightly above average to scholarship level ending 6th in upper I. I was never so well taught or inspired before or after. In fact it was downhill from that point on!'

CLASSWORK – JAMIE AND SANDY

I have rather few direct recollections of lessons and learning at prep school age. Sandy's and my letters home, however, help build a picture of what we thought about it all at the time – which was, unsurprisingly, not a lot. They also shed some indirect light on Dragon ideology and method, in particular on those secondary aspects of Dragon boy-staff interface which were a key ingredient in the Dragon magic and vital in particular for boarders whose parents lived far away and whose local guardians kept a low profile with respect to the school.

Some health warnings are needed. Letter references to lessons, teachers and the learning process are few and rather haphazard. Many are merely minor insertions between remarks on more important subjects – such as food and sports, films and expeditions. Nevertheless they are far more than mere provision of one or two necessary facts, mention of unusual events, the odd summary when things were going well and the occasional warning when they were not. They constitute a collage of snapshots which together say quite a lot about lessons and learning at the Dragon even if they do not represent a sufficiently stable stream of information to serve as a basis for an objective assessment of a boy's attitude to learning, which is after all why he was sent to school in the first place.

We must also make allowances for the schoolboy letter home factor in a number of respects. Letters are not a limpid vehicle for comment on lessons and learning.

My comments were, I sense now, brief and reluctant; Sandy was perhaps a little braver. We were all, perhaps in varying degrees, aware of how important to our parents was our progress at school, so it is hardly surprising that the few comments on this subject are not only rather hesitant but also very variable in tone – from despair and masked calls for help to reassurances, relief at a respectable result, pride or irony. In addition, remarks in letters on these topics must have been a delicate matter for the boarder and one requiring caution – you never know which master might be peeping over your shoulder as you write; and of course they could be tricky subjects at home. So we need to aim off a little.

The picture is a little unbalanced in the case of Sandy's and my letters on account of gaps in coverage through the second half of 1951 and the latter part of 1953 when my mother was based in Oxford before and after my father's posting to Washington DC; nevertheless it appears that references to school work are concentrated on the middle years of our Dragon career, with less comment in the first two and the last. This is probably to be expected, and matches development of self-awareness and maturity. One can imagine that a boy aged eight to nine thinks of lessons chiefly as something to be endured and that by the age of twelve to thirteen he has come to terms with them and that unless there was something special or curious to report, he might not be inclined to make much of it all in letters home.

So what was our life of learning really like? In brief, like everyone else, I got through and came out the other side. I sipped at the springs; I did what I was told. I came through the fuggy rooms in winter and the airless huts in summer, the freezing mornings (helped by early morning PT) and the drowsy afternoons. I managed to keep up concentration for a fair part of the time. I absorbed some things fast and fully, parked to some particular new subjects and interests and did not respond to or even rejected a few other things as dull, boring, unappealing or too much like hard work. But where the credit or the blame might lie is not easy to say.

I can only guess what my predispositions or natural bents were on arrival at the Dragon. Most of my family had done arts and humanities, classics and modern languages. The chief exception was my mother who did sciences at St Andrews and later joined Professor Witts' research team in haematology at the Nuffield Department of Medicine at the Radcliffe. Perhaps I had some small feeling for languages which helped with Latin, French and Greek. (I suspect that very high percentiles I achieved in Foreign Office language aptitude tests many years later were more a result of good teaching at school than evidence of a strong natural bent). The literary interests of my mother and her family, and a good strong diet of reading at home, may have helped on English and literature. Everyone likes geography, and not many respond automatically to Divinity. As to Maths, although I enjoyed the subject at first I doubt my mental equipment and feeling for logic were up to the later challenges; and perhaps the same applied to more advanced approaches to History.

*

It is hard to comment, but I suppose that maturity of style, observation and logic developed through a Dragon career grew as one-saw things for oneself and made up one's own mind – in itself a primary aim of the School. But it does sometimes seem odd that I got through to sitting scholarship entrance to a public school without having any clear memory of how it all happened.

Sidgwick is surely right about the value of the ultra liberal educational emphasis at the Dragons and the rejection by Joc and his predecessors of routine, orthodoxy, ritual and unreasoning compliance; and two aspects of the Dragon method strike

me as being of particular importance. One is the careful, intricate and sophisticated streaming of classes (also applied to formal school games) and sets according to ability. This is an advantage of the sheer size of the Dragon School and would be impossible to achieve in a small prep school of, say, only seventy or eighty boys. The second is the care taken to factor in a boarder's life at home – something more elusive and harder to allow for than more immediately visible differences in interests and talents, and which was achieved through a rich and complex, attentive, familistic interface with pupils on the part of the Dragon staff.

There is very little in the letters home about classrooms. Of the three I recall (described elsewhere), two were my forms of the last two years, and the other was a room, or rooms, in the hut on the southern wing of the playground. I do not remember working in any classes in New Hall, though no doubt I did. I have positive memories of Upper 2A off the Old Hall, but the happiest memories go back to my fourth year in Upper 3A, over the science lab and overlooking the playing fields – with its own private (external I think) staircase.

A number of aspects of lessons are touched on in the context of remarks about my progress through school, but a few other memories have been jogged by re-reading the letters. With respect to enjoyment at the time, for instance, it seems to me to be necessary to distinguish between parts or aspects of a subject and the subject as taught and tested as a whole. I clearly enjoyed some aspects of Latin, or science, more than others, I liked geometry more than algebra, and so on. This may have been a reflection of aptitude as much as of interest. I also wonder, but it is hard to say, how much likes and dislikes for subjects (or aspects of subjects) reflected my personal reactions to the member of staff teaching. The evidence is little and sometimes opaque. For instance I wrote in October 1953 at the start of my fourth year, in Upper 3A, that *Yatto makes us sweat a lot. I don't know where I am* [presumably as to position in the class]. I think the term 'makes us sweat a lot' contains affection and warm irony more than fear or nervous respect. The phrase may also have been used to reassure parents that I was working hard. And Sandy who wrote home more openly than I did, certainly shows affection as well as respect in references to some form masters.

*

Let us start at the beginning. Sandy and I usually, but not always, remembered to report briefly any changes in forms or sets early in each term, as Sandy did in September 1952, *I have moved up 3 forms for latin ~ 6 for English and French and 5 for Maths*. Sometimes, it seems, we had to be reminded. And in my very first term, in November 1949, I wrote out a whole timetable (see Chapter 4 above), while in later years, of course, as an experienced prep school boy I would have written all such information down in those wonderful Letts Schoolboy diaries.

Dragon magic was shown in flexibility and improvisation, innovation and expediency brought to lesson schedules as much as to other arenas of school life. Joc was awfully good at it – and I don't suppose we noticed; we merely took it happily for granted. Under Joc's regime there was nothing sacred about school work. It had to have its place in the things, and lessons were not allowed to become sacrosanct. There are many examples of these things in our correspondence, even aiming off for the fact that letters home tend to concentrate on the unusual with respect to lessons. We young Dragons were not simply chained to desks for good form. Lessons could be held in a house when repairs were being undertaken, surrendered for reading in the event of a thunderstorm (what boy can concentrate with lightning playing on the Dragon spire), postponed for days if not weeks in the

event of an mini ice age and endless opportunities for skating, and so on. We were alert to, and without doubt benefited from, these breaks from routine.

Thus, in November of my first term in 1949, *On Friday instead of prep we had a story called the timber box ~ instead of latin on Saturday we had a mowgli story called for Litritchure.* Illness was taken in its stride by Sandy's form in February 1952, *Mr Chity our form marster had a cold on Thursday till Saterdag so he did not take us for Latin ~ so we had another master to take us wile he was away.* In July 1954, however, a change of pace came for Sandy as a reward for good work done, *On Tuesday we had a latin Exam ~ out of 100 marks I got 82 ~ the form did it so well that on Wednesday Putty gave us 2 periods of reading Hucklebury Finn. It is a jolly good book and is very funny. He said he would read us the village cricket match soon.*

In January 1953, for instance, Upper 3A moved in to Stradlings, *The pipes in the huts bust so we had to have our lessons in Mr Yates house for 3 days. Now they have mended them and put in new ones.* And in March 1954 the system collapsed, *Yesterday Tuby was ill ~ (This is my maths master) ~ so we had a period playing o & x*

When Easter fell in term time as in March 1951 that was an obvious time for variations from ordinary routines, as described in Chapter 3 and in a heatwave in the summer of 1952 outside activities took happy precedence over prep, *On Monday we had no last ½ hour of prep and also the River was 65" ins [= degrees?]. On Tuesday we had no prep and there were inter-form matches...*

Such variations were another aspect of the great ability of the Dragon staff to mix up work and games, leisure, educational activities and games. This is often reflected in letters home, where crisp reports of events and doings leap from subject to subject, as in May 1952, *...On Saturday we had a grammar test, It was easier than usual, Swimming has not started yet. Nor bikes on the field.* It finished up as all one diet, and an enormously enjoyable one.

*

Alan's collection of papers and remarks on them give a very useful idea of Dragon teaching methods; remarks in letters home only give clues and impressions, some of which confirm or amend memories held for a long time, but give a further feel for what class room life was like

Classics was the business of the Form in which a boy was placed and covered, Latin, Greek and Grammar as well. I remember struggling with Latin. I don't think I was against it, but there was nothing that especially appealed about it. I suppose we worked so slowly through Caesar's Gallic Wars (little green, cloth-bound books) and other such texts that they never really came to life - although it seems there were some exceptions, in May 1952 for instance, *In trans (latin) we are doing the Adventures of Ulysses ~ it is great fun.* In that summer I wrote that *We had a latin exam ~ I got 62%* but in general there are few references to Latin beyond a few dates given in Latin form at the top of letters.

On the other hand I liked Greek. It had a kind of special magic of its own available only to initiates. I used the occasional Greek phrase (correctly) in letters, and taught Sandy the Greek alphabet too - at a time when I was inventing a transliteration of the alphabet into Greek script to serve as a code against an enemy. In my memory, I actually enjoyed the paradigms of verbs - written sideways across two full pages of the grammar book - with esoteric concepts such as aorists. It was somehow more fun than doing French or Latin Grammar. But memory may be playing tricks. In March 1953 I enjoyed the change when, *In our last week of Greek*

we have been doing Greek history instead of Grammar.

It seems we sometimes devoted intensive chunks of time in form to Greek, *Last week was Greek week. I have been catching up*, and I made reference in March 1952 to what sounds like some kind of external inspection or advice given on Greek lessons, *Yesterday a Don of [left blank] came to here [= hear] all the forms which were learning Greek.* In January 1953 in my fourth year, it seems that I was making progress in Greek, even if not in class behaviour, *I am in the same form as last term. We got a rocket the first period for talking while we were meant to be learning irregular Greek verbs, and he was out of the form room. I got full marks on the test though.*

Work in one's main form also included Grammar and General Knowledge. Grammar was not a happy subject in any language, and grammar tests generally a bugbear according to a number of nervous references to them in letters, for instance in March 1952, *yesterday we had a terrible Grammar test ~ 25 latin questions and 24 greek ones*, or in July of that year, *Yesterday we had a horrible grammar test. Greek & Latin and the day before History Test.* These regular tests were held by forms, hence the inclusion of Greek here, and I guess Latin grammar (and maybe French too) as well as English grammar was tested in this regular series of attacks on my dignity - but I am not sure. They were held at specific times on a school-wide basis (there are references to Saturday morning) and Sandy did not enjoy them at all either. In July 1952, however, his form master found a way to make grammar more fun, *Yesterday the[re] was a form mach in between our form and another form ~ it was not cricket but latin Grammer and both forms got 19 points each.*

*

I am not sure that I came to enjoy the process of writing for its own sake during the course of my Dragon career. My memory of English lessons is of preferring test questions on the basis of context and comment, summary and appreciation. My parents both wrote well and gave a certain amount of help and encouragement at home towards writing, and poetry. My mother in particular was a highly intelligent reader and listener, and often given to asking why had I written or said what I did.

And the emphasis on recitation and learning by heart (of poetry) clearly helped develop another basic skill. I thoroughly enjoyed poetry, not regarding it as something 'fleb', and we benefited from having our own and special Dragon Book of Verse. This *Vade mecum*, an attractive, dark (Dragon) blue, pocket sized book, compiled by Wilky Wilkinson was utterly Dragon. We became familiar with it, and were proud of it and it must have played a special part in introducing us to poetry - and I have much enjoyed it since.

Shakespeare cannot be easy for a prep school boy at first, but more surprising with hindsight is my comment, on my eleventh birthday, *We have been learning a piece out of chaucer's Canterbury's tales. It is very good.* Chaucer is hardly for beginners, but perhaps as with Greek I enjoyed the magic of an abstruse code.

Mentions in letters, however, tend to pick up odds and ends. In March 1952, I reported home, *In English we had to write an essay on Crecy ~ We had to be a person fighting. I was the 30th archer from the Front of the Black Prince's left Flank. We haven't had the results yet...* A nice challenge for boys; and in the next letter that month, *In English we are learning about heraldry. It is great fun. This last fortnight we have gone from Edward III to Edward IV.*

Some remarks show a certain primitiveness in approach, such as in May 1952, *In History we are doing the renaissance [sic] ~ about a man who invented helicopters in the 15th century. I read a book on columbus and also a book called romance of*

Heraldry. My mother evidently came back with queries on my reading, because the following month I was reporting the titles of other history books I had been tackling, *100 years war by Francis Best, Peasant's Revolt by Richard ?Amfuls and Money Money by Lusa Macintosh*.

In English classes we were introduced to the Shakespeare plays to be performed the following term or year. We took turns to read different parts, and I imagine that potential actors were identified through these readings. Thus, in March 1952, *In form we are roaring through Hamlet ~ I am Horatio*, and in July *We are going to read through Hamlet next week in form*.

From the little evidence there is in letters, the range of reading was wide. I am surprised today, for example, to find that I was familiar enough with Strewel Peter in November 1953 to be able to remark, *This evening we're having the schools latest film 'Strewell Peter' I saw part of it being filmed. I think they're doing all the stories*.

History lessons and tests went far beyond rehearsals of dates of Kings and Queens and dull and dry facts. We might even just sit back and listen, as in July 1952, *In History we are being read to ~ a book on Francis Drake*. I enjoyed a new subject on the agenda in February 1953 *In History I have been doing all about our Colonys in America. Daddy had told us quite a bit about before hand so I was up on the other boys on the subject*. My father had done a lot of reading on American history when posted to the USA in 1951, in particular on the War of 1812 with England - and the sacking of Washington!), and I evidently felt at home with and enthused by the subject.

That same month our instincts for creative writing were tested further in English, *We had to write Xmas day in Pepys' style. It was good fun....and in a later letter, We had to write a poem on the Duke of Marlborough. It was rather difficult*.

In January 1954 I tried my hand at a history essay competition, encouraged by my grandfather Hone as I recall, *Yesterday morning I went in for the Mobile essay 'King John'. I managed to get quite a lot of things from Green and Trevelyan's History books. There are 5 others in for the comp, but I would have to have it [= the Green and Trevelyan book] even if I wasn't entering for the competition in English*. It was nice of me to apologize to my parents for the expenditure, but I don't believe the acquisition of useful texts helped me to a prize or place in the end. And finally, after scholarship exams were over in June 1954, lessons became lighter, *I was lent a book of Ogden nash by our English master. Some of his short poems are terribly funny*; and in July I was composing Nash quips apparently of my own

Made up by me:-

*A woolly sheep is another name
For an animal which looks the same
Some fools like to call it a ram
But I really couldn't care a ---*

More important than poetry and Shakespeare perhaps was the grounding we received in English lessons in the arts of presentation, discussion and debate. I barely mention the subject, and neither of us was comfortable with it, but Sandy worked hard at his presentations.

Sandy writes little in his letters about work in his main classics forms, but he had a great liking and respect for one or two of his form masters - one was Mr Chitty, from whom praise was greatly valued, as in February 1952, *Mr chit saeys I am getting beter*; that was enough to report home. Sandy was also very willing to give

credit where it was due in September 1954 when reporting arrival in a new form (under CLT = Taylor?), *I am in A Blocke. My form master is about 55 and teaches in rather a funny way, but his funny way works.*

In his second term in History Sandy's form embarked on the French Revolution, *Yesterday Saterdag we were llearning [sic] about the French revaloution and napolion.* A year later, in February 1952, he was enjoying the subject in evening book reading, *One of the masters is reading a book in dorms about the French Revalushian ~ it is very intresting, The French King is Just going to be killed for going agenst Libaty [sic].* [Valuable beginnings, because later in life Sandy loved to read about the Napoleonic Wars and was a great fan of Wellington.] And that term he was reading Hamlet in class, but in July there was a respite from this heavy diet, *Our English master read us Captain Hoornblower for a whole perride [= period].*

*

I was nearly good at Maths, but something did not quite click. I think I could cope with arithmetic and I enjoyed algebra so long as I could understand it - it had a certain satisfying magic. Basic geometry, so long as I followed it, was pleasingly logical. The drawing side to it appealed in particular, and I liked the symbols and a little bit of hocus pocus about Sine, Cosine and Logarithms, and looking up values in a handbook; and the remarkable fact that $2\pi r$ and πr^2 was true and actually worked. But then trigonometry became more advanced, and I became lost, and once lost, I regret my system tended to shut down. Thus in my third year I was proceeding reasonably well, I joined in the Ned Morley Exam, and in October I could report home about being in new sets and *In Maths I am fairly high I think,* but it did not last through to the end of my Dragon years/

In September 1953, at the start of his fourth year, Sandy was struggling too; he was *in EA Maths witch a master talks [= takes] which maks us do sums witch I haven't a notion of how to do them.* But our letters (unsurprisingly) contain nothing about methods of teaching Maths.

It was rather the same for French. French did not provide the same spark as Greek. It seemed to me to be hard work, with a lot of uncomfortable emphasis on grammar and accuracy, and I doubt I grasped much idea of its being a useful living language. In addition, the Bruce Lockhart family were all good French speakers, my father liked to pull Sandy and me into fleeting French lessons with some prep at home every now and then. My Bruce Lockhart grandfather had written an illustrated French vocabulary and was well known for devising a system of teaching French which was well known and respected at the period. So there may have been elements of anxiousness about reactions at home to progress in French for me too.

When I reached Upper 3A in October 1952 I reported that I was in set B2 with Mr Dodd and *bottom in French;* and it seems I was being careless again and Dodd was ready to take action, *I had a real smacker of an impot from Dodd, 350 words. My friend had one of 950.* Sandy, on his side, faced a typical problem for a schoolboy in his second term (March 1951) when a new text book took a quantum leap, *In French we are now on a new book ~ it is harder than the other won [=one].*

*

Minor subjects come in for even less comment in letters. Geography I enjoyed and I had some success in the subject. It seems I was also critical of the constant emphasis on geography and economics of the empire; in March 1952 I reported home that *In Geog for the first time on [=in] 10 years has the master done any part of Europe. We are doing Spain.* There were, however, quite a number of lectures and slide shows which covered various aspects of geography and helped bring the

subject to life, as in March 1951 on New Zealand (see Chapter 11, Oral culture). The master in charge apparently knew my uncle Logie Bruce Lockhart at Tonbridge, which made him approachable and seem easy going. Such things lend a subject an agreeable and positive atmosphere for a boy.

Sandy was comfortable with geography too and in February 1952 was enjoying himself, *In Geoghalhy we are leaf[r]ning about New Zeland*. In July that year he could report, *We had the Goeg exam on Wednesday ~ it was an easy Exam*. And he was still advancing strongly in the subject in December 1954, *There have been no Exams this week. But the geogrophy exams are out and out of 26 I was equal 1st*.

Science at the Dragon seems to me to have been a very particular case. There is no doubt that Gerd Summerhoff's teaching and example was a remarkable success. The subject had a magic of its own and I enjoyed many aspects of it, at least in the middle years, and regret that I never came back to it in later schooling. Sandy also enjoyed science a lot and showed considerable aptitude for it.

I was intrigued by all the things which happened, but unfortunately being intrigued by the bangs and sparks, winking bulbs, widgets, wires and transistors or even Bunsen burners and glass crucibles with blue salt crystals appearing, was not enough. I was not able to move from a hope of leaning by absorption to wanting to learn properly. Had I had a natural bent in a scientific direction I guess it would have been identified - and the Science Club was obviously the place to be to take learning to more advanced levels. The letters home show it was enjoyable; in March 1952, *I joined the Science Club. It is very interesting. I have completed 8 out of 20 simple Electric Experiments... In the Science club I have completed 8-22 experiments. Such as constructing this [sketch of wiring diagram] - it is great fun*; and later that month, *In Science (form work) we were all given electric shocks which felt very ticklish*. The sketch brings those neat little wiring diagrams back to life - and reminds me today how much I was intrigued by them.

Gerd had a good rapport with boys which the science club members appreciated; in that month, *On wendsday it was Gurt (Mr summerhof our science master) birthday. We gave him a present between us. He made a cycloscope which shows what sound waves look like. It is very interesting and full of wires ~ He showed us how a T.V. set works (Not in Science Club but a form period)*.

That autumn Sandy was firing ahead in his science work, In October he wrote, *I have just started since I am doing Cemestary [chemistry]. Mr Summerhof is very very brainy much more than I thought him befor [sic] ~ he has showed us 3 or 4 Experiments all very clever ones*. And in November it was *in Sc[i]ence on Tuesday Mr Sumerhoff showd us how to mack Carbonate Oxid [??] . Then he shod us how to mack Hichedrom [= hydrogen] . He arsked my to do it and too brove [= prove] that ~~nothing~~ when you lite a match it will go out if you have corbonate oxid it was good fun doing that he mad an Expatation [= explosion] as well it mad a very lowd bang*

My last letter reference to science was to refer to the success of Gerd's latest invention, *Our [science] research party is in the Oxford mail 'a ring of inventors' and photo. The boat is now the smallest with most controls ever made*. And Sandy's last remark on science was to report success in July 1955, *We have had all the exams and I was top of my form in science and 9th in the whole school*.

There was a rather curious incident, however, in 1953 when both Sandy and I for some reason thought Gerd was being too clever. Maybe our feelings related to the Science Club as a whole, but something must have gone wrong. The negative mood, however, did not last because Sandy continued to enjoy science through the rest of his Dragon days,

On Sunday last Jamie and I saw popsy Summerholfs radar controld Plane. It now can be stere[d] on the ground as well as in the air. Now I am against Popsy Summerhoff so is Jamie and it is jolly funny to us when anything goes rong [sic]. The boy who was sterring it lost controls and it was going about 15 mph for the wall but at last he found controls so he tried to turn a sharp corner but it was going to[o] fast so it turned a summersalt and landed on its side Ha Ha He He ~ and then he tried to steer it [t]h[rough] tennis nets but it didn't work and it hit the post (diagram) and smashed ~ it was jolly funny and it surved him wright for trying to be to[o] clever

I have no recollection of the teaching of divinity, except a vague memory of bible stories from both Testaments, some of which I enjoyed, perhaps for their language but chiefly as crisp and entertaining accounts of good stories and remarkable incidents. I left no remarks in letters on the subject. I came top once in a 1954 term exam, but remarks in most term reports hovered between fair to good. Sandy refers once to taking a Divinity exam but sent home no comments on the subject either.

Subjects such as art, woodwork, arts and crafts and music are discussed elsewhere. There are very few mentions in letters and nothing revealing of method; but one task, undertaken in December 1952, *In art I painted the Niagara falls* sounds rather ambitious. And it seems that I took a portfolio of art work with me to Sedbergh for the scholarship entrance exams; I had forgotten that.

*

I cannot remember anything about prep, or where and when it was done and for how long. Which probably goes to show that prep did not become too tiresome a drudgery or painful a business. I recall no agonies or sleepless nights over whether I would be able to recite the first three verses of this or that poem, or rehearse such and such irregular verbs the following morning. No doubt I suffered some difficult and wearing preps, but I was not scarred. It seems that we did about an hour and a half of prep, but perhaps less in the earlier years; and prep was probably divided into half hours by subjects. Did we do prep in the Locker room, Quiet rooms, dining rooms or simply in our class rooms? And presumably prep sessions were invigilated. Letter references reveal almost nothing - except to do with reasons for there being on occasions no prep. At the start of the summer term of 1952, before school had really got going, I remarked, *For Thursday and Friday we only had on hours prep from 6 - 7... end of same letter Next week we start work properly*

There seems to have been a halt to prep around half term time too or at the time of performances of school plays, as in June 1952, *On Saturday I went to the Dress Rehearsal. It was very well done. Instead of prep on Thursday I went to a performance. There was no prep on Friday.*

And letter prep, of course, took place on Sunday mornings - for perhaps three quarters of an hour or maybe an hour, sometimes curtailed if there was along walk to church down town ahead.

Time was given to revision for exams, possibly for term exams but certainly for entrance exams to second school. I think revision sessions were held both instead of prep or instead of classwork. My first reaction to periods of revision was no doubt like that of every other boy - one of relief not to have to cope with oral or written hand-outs of knowledge or tests in class but rather to be able to sit down comfortably to some reading. I expect it took time to learn how to tackle this vital art properly.

*

Tests, reports, exams and other paraphernalia of monitoring and controlling progress in school work were in place at the Dragon as at any other school. Traditionally no schoolboy likes tests or exams, and reports are worse – a minefield for the unwary. But it is also clear that the great flow of tests of all kinds played an essential part in the learning process. There are very few insights in Sandy's and my letters on this subject, perhaps because it was not an easy one to discuss freely with distant parents. For example I sometimes tucked the results into the middle of a lengthy report on something else, such as sports results, as in July 1953, *We have finished all exams and we are having the results. All the sport have begun now. In the heats under 11 and under 12 we are all in the finals except for hurdling which we have not started yet. I jumped 3'5". In the geog exam I was 1 of my set with 70% ~ I got 61% in the Greek[,] 63% in the English, 51% in the science, 63% Latin ~ I am now one of the fastest in the form swimming.*

On the whole, I have positive recollections of exams, less positive ones of tests, and mixed memories of reports, fortnightly or termly. I don't remember being nervous of exams in general, but grammar tests were a bug bear. For me perhaps this was because there was little inherent interest in the substance, but they represented some kind of constant and nagging attack on my weak points. On the other hand, examinations in main subjects seem to have been more friendly affairs; and I was better positioned, on average, in end of term exams than I was in general classwork. I think I was happy with spelling tests, as in March 1952, *Friday after noon there was a spelling test ~ I made 7 mistakes out of 75.*

Sandy had trouble with his writing and spelling through much of his Dragon career, as in March 1952, *On Thursday we had a spelling test with the whole school ~ the[re] was 25 words ~ the loest mark was 13 and not done by me and he is aged 11 years and 10 mths and he is in my form.* And in another test that month, *On Friday we had a test and it was out of 70 and I got 21.* But he got good help at school, and also from our Hone grandmother who was very keen on good spelling with constant word lists and challenges for us – such as, 'an embarrassed cobbler met a harassed pedlar gauging the symmetry of a lady's ankle in a cemetery'.)

In December 1952 I had had quite a reasonable set of exams, with an average mark of 70% (see Chapter 4), and I had good news to report home too in July 1954, my last term, *We had French, Div and Science exams this term already. I was 9th in the French and 1st in the Div. I don't know about the science yet.* Over the years and terms however, my results often seemed rather inconsistent, with spurts of success and then doldrums of poor scores and positions in class.

For Sandy it was much the same, as in November 1953, *My Report this week will be a bad one because in English I will be about 10 or even nearer the bottom and about 15th in Classics and bootom in French and Second bootom in maths! He performed well in geography exams in 1952 - We had the History Exam, the maths Exam and the French Exam all last week ~ and [in] the geog Exam that we had 2 weeks ago I got 63 out of percent ~ I only know that result; and again the following summer, And on Friday we had the geography examinations [which] was very easy*

But a History test in May 1954 landed him in trouble, *I had my History Test paper torn up on Thursday for fooling but he let me do it again because he thought it was a bit thick.* [The master was Bruno.]

As we neared the end of our Dragon career, term exams took on extra meaning and significance as part of the process of preparations for entrance to our next school. Sandy had found it difficult keeping results even across the range of subjects taught, but in December 1955 in the first of two extra terms when he stayed on at

the Dragons to prepare for Common Entrance, he was making progress, *All the Exams were this week. The Latin on Wednesday I got 70%[,] in French I got 57 and the History, English, Maths have not been corrected. Our maths Exams was very difficult and I did not get a high mark but also I don't think I am very near the bottom.*

Other exams at the Dragon started with the 11+ which I took in March 1952 in two (or was it three?) sessions. On the first day we took the Intelligence Test (no comments in my letters, but I do in fact remember it and always enjoyed what seemed more like fun puzzles than school work) and on 19 March I reported *I have just finished the 11+ ~ It was the English and the Maths. The maths were easy but there was a very short time.* I suspect I was missing the point about the time factor - and had in fact been struggling with the Maths.

Preparations for scholarship exams (known as 'schols') took some precedence. In my last summer term some subjects were held back, *We have not started music lessons yet though everything else is back to normal. This term we do not have art or woodwork until the exams are over.* And life came under a bit of pressure and a chance to go on an expedition to the Farne Islands had to be scrapped, *I would really love to go but it is at a difficult time with schols, cricket matches and rehearsing for the play.*

Scholarship prep covered all subjects, not just mainstream; thus in May 1954 I was reporting that, *In work, Miss Richardson has asked me to do another painting to take up to Sedbergh with me... I have done a lot of musician working from your book and one Mrs Senior left me. Also I have got a new piece for the clarinet. A minuet and trio. It's a very nice piece though the minuet is rather difficult.* Interestingly, I think it was the first time I used the term 'in work,' to refer to class work at the Dragon. By the end of May revision for the 'schols' had begun, and Wilky Wilkinson had good advice for those sitting them, *We spent most of the week of classics doing scholarship papers, all kinds of latin and Greek papers. It is very useful for examination craft. In maths we have done all we need to do and 'Wilky' says we won't learn anything more in the last few days.*

After the scholarship exams at the end of June there was a return to other aspects of school life, cricket, swimming, field sports and intensive preparations for the term play, *We are doing Macbeth rehearsing all the time now and I have missed two matches through rehearsals - chiz chiz.*

Sandy's Common Entrance Exams came in the spring term of 1956, and his letters give a good account of it all, starting in January when he reported, *I take Common E on the 27th (Monday) 28th 29th of Feb.* He prepared hard, and early in February took care to deflect any niggling pressure at home from my father, *I am trying in my work and if anyone thinks I am not they are mad because I know I have to pass C.E.E.!* On Sunday 26th he wrote, *C.E.E. is tomorrow and I will be very very pleased to get it over with. Tonight is an early night, that means we have to go to bed early.* And a week later reported, *C.E.E. was on Mon Tues Wed and I think I did fairly well on Maths and very well on History but not so well on Geog, Divinity, English but of course I don't know.*

*

Along with exams and tests come reports, another essential part of the monitoring of progress. Fortnightly reports could be harder than end of term reports, partly because you had to face up to the staff if there was criticism, whereas term was over and a bygone by the time an end of term report reached the parents - and parents were generally supportive in their relief to have their little ones back

home! Reports were of course all to do with growing awareness of what school was really about. Hums' red ticks on our fortnightly reports, as Tom Stanier recalls, were praise indeed and a source of satisfaction and encouragement. Our awareness that one was achieving results below what was expected made for constant nervousness about fortnightly reports ahead, as in February 1952, *We have reports this week. I don't think mine will [be] very good.*

My letters contain quite a few of such warnings of parents on the subject. In October 1953 at the start of my fourth year I asked my parents to note, *I don't think I will be 2^d again in form for French. In English I forgot to give in one prep which lost 40 something marks, otherwise I might have been fairly high for I did well on the other preps. In maths I am bottom or second bottom I don't know.*

And one month later, I was again unsure of the quality of reports coming up, *This fortnight we have got reports ~ I am 2^d in Latin I know but I don't think I will be high in French or English and I am pretty sure I 'm bottom in Maths.*

Earlier that year I had ducked altogether following a bad Latin result, claiming to have lost my fortnightly report, *before I had time to post it.* Sandy was adept at excuses when in trouble too, as in his remarks in September 1953 with their cunning rider, *I am in B4 French and B5 English. My Repport will not be good this week because I am rusty after the holidays though the second one will be mutch better I think. I hope you are not having to work to[o] hard in your office.*

Along with reports another part of the supervision process, and the only serious punishment at the Dragon, were impots. They were painful to receive, and our dignity was hurt however much we tried to make light of them. It seems the right to set them was vested in your form master, since in the example below in November 1952 Yatto took me for neither subject, *Yatto has been setting lots of impots ~ I have done 6 from him ~ 1 in maths 2 in French ~ It is quite a full time [job?] ~ if I'm set writing Impots I'm learning something which I ought to have done in prep.* I have no recollection of any other form of punishment in class (and do count as serious the occasional smack over the head or tweak to the hair, even a ruler on an outstretched hand other as exhortations to pay attention, think again and for Heavens' sake don't repeat that silly mistake for a third time. Impots were not incriminations and there was no implication of wrong-doing; if something went seriously wrong in attitude or behaviour then you heard from Joc.

The lesson I found hard to learn with regard to reports, especially fortnightly reports, was that position in class was not relevant to assessments of work and progress. I could not accept that I should be criticised if I was coming top in class or close to it and yet got a bad report - it seemed unjust and I was offended and my pride hurt. In writing home I tried to fend off criticism by referring to position in the class, as in February 1953, *In English we had a big history test. I got 51 % and I wasn't bottom by quite a bit.* The device may have worked sometimes with parents, but I doubt it, and of course it did not wash with staff.

*

So where did our parents come in to all this? It must have varied from family to family, and for boarders depended in part on their remoteness from the school. In my case I saw my mother only in the holidays in my first three plus years, but then quite a lot in the last year and a half (both in term time and holidays). I saw my father during term time only two or three times in my Dragon career, and in only one holiday between summer 1951 and the end of 1953; and in my last Dragon year, he was absent in most of the holidays too on account of his travelling duties in the Foreign Office.

The early 1950s, however, were very different times from today where there is constant interface between parents or guardians, teachers and pupils as joint stakeholders in a child's education. Today parents are greatly involved, whether by attending PTA meetings, joining masters on the touchline, even accompanying children on school sporting or artistic tours or cultural outings. I do not think there was much interface between my parents and Joc and his staff. My father wrote a note of his thoughts at the beginning of my first term; my Hone grandparents found a way to have an occasional talk with Hum (being of the same generation), and my mother probably the same when she was in Oxford for four months or so in 1951 and again in 1953. On my father's few visits, there may have been the odd interview with Joc (although I have seen no reference to one), but more likely it was a case of a drink with old family friend and Old Rugbeian Wylie (to which there are references).

As to term reports, when the parents were around, interaction with Sandy and me, as I recall it, was (mercifully) brief. We had a talk, for better or worse, followed by one or two desultory attempts at home work (French grammar, Kings and Queens of England or whatever) and then at the beginning of the next there would be exhortations in this or that direction. By then they were probably pleased to see us on our way and out of their way, knowing we were in good hands – perhaps with self congratulatory and comforting reflections on lines of, well, the Dragon's a good school isn't it. I am being a bit cynical but they really were different times – and we were in good hands.

As to lessons, even my father, former head prefect under Vaughan and then a schoolmaster at Rugby, did not have any comments, requests or suggestions to make to Joc, so far as I know. (He was more interventionist in my Sedbergh career). He did however utter to us boys, even if not to Joc and staff, worries he had such as why we had so much free time, so many film shows or dancing lessons and not more prep. Otherwise they were supportive and ambitious for my academic success at the Dragon, although my father found Sandy's progress or rather apparent lack of it more puzzling. I have written about this elsewhere.

I do not think I suffered too much from pressure of expectations in my last year in the run up to scholarship entrance (partly on account of particular circumstances at home), but in my middle years they held views which conflicted with those of the school over my streaming. For instance, my mother felt that I was capable of writing reasonably well, as in early 1952, *the boys' last letters have been wonderfully tidy. J wrote a really first class account of their walk over Higher Winder, Calf etc. I don't know why his English master (Jacko?) says he doesn't write good essays. From his description I could exactly see the fells in the snow under the clear blue sky & the frozen waterfalls.*

She was rather surprised therefore by critical reports that July, as she wrote further to her parents, *...The reports certainly aren't good but I agree it's better not to say much about them. John feels worried & thinks it looks as though James won't be up to a scholarship. But I think that although that may be so it can't be helped & we know he's bright & it just won't do any good to worry him. It's disappointing if he isn't in the top flight – but the Dragon standard is very high isn't it? I feel rather annoyed with Jacko's comment 'a poor essay'. I'm sure he's forgotten again that he's dealing with 11 year olds.* This reference to my progress in a letter to her parents is one of only very few and probably related to our forthcoming summer holiday visit to my parents in USA. At the end of the same year, however, she saw an improvement, *It's lovely that J did well in his exams. He sent us his marks & places in form & we are very pleased He really must have pulled himself together...*

My education at prep school age gained from my parents' input in a number of ways at home, but they did not affect lessons and learning at school very much. In short, I think the school got on extremely well without them, and through its own remarkable range of processes of interaction was able to gauge the home factor in my schoolboy life pretty well and to allow for it as appropriate at school.

6 IMAGINED WORLDS

The boy's room (School House) in 1951. A couple of years later I spent the evenings here where we sang folk songs and spirituals with a master.



READING

A growing child lives simultaneously in the physical and social landscape on the one hand, and a world of equally real, yet imagined events and objects created by art – in books, films, museums, pantomimes and other forms. In some ways this is more vivid than the physical world, especially as in games and hobbies the two become interblended. I know that this was immensely important to me, but can only trace a few of the external residues of what most influenced me between the age of six and thirteen. Nor can I separate these alternative realities into home and school – most overlapped so that, for example, the films I saw in the holidays and those I saw weekly at the Dragon are part of one story.

With respect to the elusive principles of imagined worlds in general, Jamie's own experiences lead him to see a number of variables. In the first place, I believe that some children have a feeling for, possess, use and enjoy this dual inter-blended reality more than others. This may be due to their nature or to their environment, e.g. family situation or closeness of siblings. More important, it seems to me, is that the material in question (the books, plays, comics, films, expeditions, etc.) works at many levels and in different ways with each child. The material can have instructional value or entertainment value; it could be about sharing and companionship or have value as a diversion – for passing time, resting and relaxing (a vital part of growing up). I also think that in quite a few cases it can be about comfort and calm needed to distance oneself from oppressive circumstances or anxieties at home or at school.

At another level the reading, viewing or participation can be about content and concepts. It can help train the mind as well as develop aesthetic taste through a gradual process of selection, analysis (conscious or subconscious) and appreciation. (Why do I like one book rather than another, or Charlie Chaplin but not Buster Keaton? Children are quick to make up their mind about such things without, at first, quite knowing why.) The material can have serious instructional content, or a framework which consciously or unconsciously inculcates a sense of ethics (The Rev. Chad Varah's 'Eagle' and 'Girl' were concerned with morality and honour as well as adventure). Comedy, especially slap stick comedy, can be healthily cathartic, and indeed a child can be inspired to dreams or play equally by Swallows and Amazons, King Arthur, Robin Hood or Mowgli. First reactions may be influenced by the opinions of peers, staff, or parents, but gradually a child learns to form and be willing to stand by their own opinion. (This emerges very much in Sandy's very frank letters)

Some aspects of imagined worlds are simply about fun and satisfaction – but the pleasing, age-old spectacles of pantomime, circus and puppet shows, for instance, also play on emotions (sad clowns, happy endings). Children will react in their different ways, but for all of them development of worlds of the imagination makes for a broadening of the soul. Here we begin with reading

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Alan clearly read some comics at school, though much of my comic life was also at home. In fact there is very little reference to specific comics in my letters from the Dragon – they were perhaps too prosaic to mention. It may also have been the case that at the Dragon, at least, we were discouraged from reading too many comics. In the 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1951 it was noted that there had been 'an offensive launched by the authorities against "comics" and "trashes".' By the 1970's, however, things may have been more liberal. Paul Watkins mentions 'Thursday was comic

book day. 'Beano', 'Topper' and 'Eagle' and 'Look and Learn' arrived rolled up into pipes.¹

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'The Eagle' was Jamie's favourite comic in my Dragon days too. Dan Dare and his battles against the evil Mekon were a huge part of life, much waited for, much enjoyed and much passed around. I don't think I ever subscribed, but many did, or their parents did for them, and you got copies off friends later. I also specially enjoyed the big, blown-up, diagrammatical coloured drawings in the middle page spread explaining things, which were quite instructive. And the 'Beano' I liked too although I cannot recall the contents very much; the 'Dandy' was less to my liking. Where was Rupert the Bear with his yellow waistcoat, and Popeye? And much sought after were the comic Annuals; some got left in the library, some were loaned, and I am sure they were often on our Christmas wish lists. If I saw other comics I do not recall them. And were newspapers of any kind (a tabloid?) available in the Quiet rooms? I think so, or perhaps it was only for prefects.

There are very few references to comics in my and Sandy's letters home. I wrote of buying some on a journey to school from a holiday in Sedbergh in January 1953, *At Bletchley we bought some comics while we were waiting. I spent 3/- and Ad. Sandy spent 2/-*. The financial report, I suspect, reflects the fact that we knew that our parents were not too keen on comics in general and money spent on them in particular. Sandy in his second term (January 1951) was becoming an enthusiast, *I am klekting [=collecting] comets [=comics] now... I am geting a new comic evrey week ~ it is called the egal. It is about Robes and mederers [=robbers and murderers] and rele life [2 words illeg.] and we are getting it evry week.*

*

Alan takes the view that much of his leisure reading and its effects in his earliest days are better studied under his home life, where a more detailed account will be found.

As to reading at school, Alan writes, I must have come under increased pressure to read sufficiently fast to enjoy the process at the Dragon, though I only mention reading a couple of books in all my letters from there. Quite early on in the Summer term 1951 I write that *I am reading a book called the sign of the wolfes head*. [a book I cannot trace...] Nine months later, however, it still appears as if it is worth my grandfather writing to my mother reassuringly on 30th March 1952 that *He reads quite a lot to himself and has been playing chess with me*. My interest was probably stimulated by listening to stories on the radio, noting on 30th May 1953 that *'Tonight I will be listening to Treasure Island on the Wireless*. And by this time, aged eleven, people were giving me books as presents. On 18th February 1953 *I got a book from aunt Jean and uncle Alan and a letter from the other granny*. And on 18th May of the same year I wrote to my parents *Thank you very much for the lovely book*.

As for what we read, either through readings by others or ourselves, there is very little explicit record. My mother mentions on 8th December 1951 when she is preparing to go to India and teach my sister Anne there that she went to London 'and enjoyed browsing round among all the children's books, they are going to be taught from all sorts of fascinating things like Arthur Ransome and Winnie-the-Pooh!' These were clearly two of the texts. Kipling in various forms, especially Mowgli and Puck of Pook's Hill were favourites, as were Beatrix Potter and 'The

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 79

Meeting Pool' and other imagined worlds.

A search through my books may reveal by their dog-eared state other childhood favourites, certainly Arthur and His Knights, Biggles, Worrals and Ginger figured there. 'Treasure Island' and I think Robinson Crusoe were favourites. Also A.A.Milne and 'Wind in the Willows'. I don't think that I stooped much to Enid Blyton, though do recall the Famous Five. 'The Railway Children', 'Five Children and It', 'The Secret Garden' and others were also favourites. Robin Hood and his adventures of course, and I think this was the age for the 'Just William' stories. Later we went through all ten of the 'Swallows and Amazons' series. Other books included Hans Anderson, the Brothers Grim and other sets of fairy and folk stories - perhaps Andrew Lang's Colour Fairy Books - which were important on the magical side, often forming the background to pantomimes and to early films of Walt Disney - especially 'Snow White' whose wicked witch terrified me for months.

Other books emerge from my letters. For example, I had forgotten that around my thirteenth birthday I became obsessed by murder and detective stories, of which 'The Saint' was a particular favourite. Thus I wrote on 11th January 1954 *I have taken up reading Agatha Christie in the last three days I have read three different books 1 "Mr Hercule Poirot's Christmas" 2 "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" and "Murder on the Orient Express. When I returned to school a popular theme of boarding schools emerged when I wrote on 17th January 1954 I have read an extremely funny book wich I advise you to get. It is called down with school or your might get "The Horror of St Trinians". They are verry good and I think the girls would love them.*

My interest in detective fiction, shared particularly at this time with my grandfather, is noted further at the end of the year. On 15th December 1954 my mother wrote of me *he is running a temp. of 100.8 which is nothing much and has read two detective novels to-day and listened to the wireless without a pause and is no trouble...After lunch we left Alan to his 3rd murder and went out on our bikes exploring...* In fact I had become such an avid reader that my mother a few months earlier, on 6th September 1954, complained that when we went out to see some other children *My kids weren't particularly sociable, sat about reading books most of the afternoon but of course hers are a good deal younger.*

*

Some references in letters home to books Jamie and Sandy were reading at the Dragon show once more that book reading inevitably begins, like charity, at home. In brief, my parents and both sets of grandparents, with whom I spent so much time between the age of eight and twelve, were avid readers - and all were readers of very differing subject matter, as I have described elsewhere. Each had their own large, personal, collection of books, and books were thus always around me - as I wish music had been - from an early age. I was read to at home essentially every evening from the age of about three until I was eight; and I learnt to read at a very young age by following on the page stories from the Jungle Book which I had already learnt by heart because of sheer pleasure in their exotic subject matter, rich language and rhythms of incantation. In sum, I was at home with books.

My love of reading was further fostered at the Dragon, although I think I was making my own choices, and today they seem rather grown-up ones, by my second, and certainly third, year. Like Alan, I did not write a great deal about it in letters - perhaps because it was a personal journey of exploration.

In my first year at Stradlings I well remember Yatto reading Eric Linklater's 'Wind on the Moon', C.S. Lewis and the Doolittle stories, as well as some old favourites

like the Pooh stories. The Wind on the Moon may have appealed because, as James Meek wrote in 2005, it is a wartime book, published in 1944, which 'dwells on those elements of life in short supply or under threat in Britain, such as food, and liberty, and fun. It is not a prisoner of the time, though, and one of its delights is the cavalier way in which Linklater swings between pure fantasy and the everyday made fantastic...'¹

Yatto read to us in his sitting room, while we lounged on the floor in dressing gowns, huddled around his Old English Sheepdog, Tilly - a thoroughly snug and enjoyable winter evening occupation. At the same period my own reading started to advance. Classic children's books read at home made way for new material. First came the comics, as described above, starting in perhaps the second year at the Dragons - I do not remember any comics at Stradlings. They were a craze in effect and never diminished my pleasure in books

In my first term (October 1949) I was already working away at Arthur Ransome, *I am reading the big six now (its another Auther Ransome book) ~ its very nice like all of them* ~ and in November there was Kipling, *On Friday instead of prep we had a story called the timber box ~ instead of latin on Saturday we had a mowgli story called for Litritchure ~ on Monday we had Ricka tika tavi*

The following September I was buying books (unidentified) with the help of a family friend on the way back to school, ...*Then we went to a book shop. I bought 3 books and Sandy 2.* And later that term I had a book about dogs, probably in the 'Observer's Book' series, of which Sandy and I had a small collection, *I read in my dog book ~ it says, You must never give him hare bones or birds because they break up into splinters and stick in his throat or somewhere.*

By March 1952 my tastes had grown up considerably. I was reading 'Behind the Microphone', a book about cricket by Len Hutton (who had become a commentator, presumably); Sandy was reading it in June, *I am reading Leonard Hutton's life story. It is very intresting.*

From sport I even progressed to current affairs, *Last night I read a very detailed article (Magasine) on Captain Carlsen with the Flying Enterprise* (the dramatic affair of a merchant ship which floundered in the English Channel and then sunk in early 1952). More surprisingly, in November it was Fitzroy Maclean's 'Eastern Approaches', *I am reading Maclean's book ~ It is rather funny about trials for getting into central Asia but always turned back by the NKVO or is it, anyway the Russian troops. I think it is a good book.* It was a present from my father who had worked with Maclean in the Balkans during the war - hence perhaps the sophisticated comments?

In the holiday at Sedbergh at Easter 1952, it was Hugh Lofthouse' Doctor Doolittle and interestingly, although I could read perfectly well at this age, I evidently still enjoyed being read to by my Bruce Lockhart grandmother. Later that holiday I was reading T.H. White's 'The Sword in the Stone' and in June I reported from school, *I've just finished Little Lord Fauntleroy. I thought is very good.* In Summer 1952 I was, *lending Jock of the Bushveld to another boy and he likes it very much;* and reported home that *I read a book on columbus and also a book called romance of Heraldry ~ It has got country badges and clans.*

We were also read to in class that autumn, *In History we are being read to ~ a book on Francis Drake. At the end it says he arrived back on Sunday during the service (at Plymouth). The sermon was well under way when there was a noise at the back of the church. Frank Drake is back, and within a few minutes the priest was*

¹ James Meek in Classic Book of the Month, *The Guardian*, February 2005

giving a 'half sermon' [and] the church was empty.

In January 1953 I was in bed with a cold at Sedbergh, a chance to catch up on reading, *In the last week I have been reading William books; I have read about 6!* And a Christmas present from USA was a richly illustrated book about the Niagara Falls which I took to school, *Many of the boys were fascinated by it.*

In February I had *just finished reading the Invisible man by H.G. Wells. It is a lovely storie [sic] and very exciting;* and in March there were birthday books to enjoy, *I got the Cruel Sea from Uncle Bill and a Pictorial Encylopedia from Sandy ~ I have started reading the cruel sea already. There is one of the heroes called Lockhart.*

The next two terms brought a mixed diet of tartans, Everest and Ogden Nash. In October I wrote home, *Thankyou very very very much for the book of tartans. It is a very nice book;* and then the book by Sir John Hunt about that year's successful Everest expedition (presumably long promised), *...And thankyou very much for that very interesting Everest book with the excellent photography in it.* I still have both those books. Everest was of special interest because a cousin of our grandmother Hone was Sandy Irving who accompanied George Mallory on that last fatal attempt in 1924.

In February 1954, I was responding, I imagine, to an offer to forward a poetry book left at home, *We don't need our Pattern Poetrys after all for we do Macbeth instead (I had not realised that before).* I do not recall 'Pattern Poetry' which we were apparently using in school, but in July I had found Ogden Nash (parental reading I think), *I was lent a book of Ogden nash by our English master. Some of his short poems are terribly funny.*

*

And Sandy's reading burst into life in the spring of 1952 (there are no references to books in his first year) with book readings in dorms in February, *our Matron is reading a book about Be[a]vers in the rocky[s] of Canada ~ it is great fun.*

In March, *I am reading a very nice book called Long Legs the Heron and he is caught in a trap and Petter Rabbit comes to help. In the end Long Legs migrats.* At Easter at Sedbergh in 1952, he told our parents, *I have been reading King Arthur knights ~ it is a very nice book* and in May 1952 Sandy mentioned that *Mr Denison Smith is reading us a loverly book ~ he reads very well ~ it is very funny.* [The book is not further identified].

In June 1952 there was different fare; Sandy had a *Book which tells day of week of your birthday,* and another book *About county cricketers;* and there was more dorm reading, *One of the masters is reading a book in dorms about the French Revalushian ~ it is very intresting, The French King is Just going to be killed for going agenst Libaty [sic];* while in class *Our English master read us Captain Hoorneblower for a whole perride [= period].*

In the winter term of 1952 Sandy thought he would have to face ghosts again, *Yesterday Mr Denison smith read us the story of Scruge and the Christmas currol [sic] it has gosts in but very exiting ~ it is by Charles dixens ~ I did not have nightmares or dremms [sic]*

In February 1953 there was an opportunity for some intensive reading in the sick room of books and magazines too,

I am reding moore now ~ today I have read 3 stories and they were quite long and it is only just after lunch. Before I came in sick room I were reading a very good book called Teddy Lester in the Fiffth ~ it is a school boy book and it is

very very exiting ~ it is a school boy book and it is very very exiting. When I am better I will send you a bit of a magazine and it tells you how a German taught horses to do sums and spell ~ and it tells you about a horse that was wipped and it told its master and he made the person who wipped the horse give him some carrot ~ and this [= there] is a picture of this man looking very angry giving the horse some carrots.

Both Sandy and I were great Teddy Lester fans

When he was out again, he and I bought a book of jokes (25 February 1953), *I have boug[h]t another of those laugh[t]er books but it wasn't so funny to me ~ so did Jamie ~ One of the jockes was a man in a train who had just got in and the train stopped ~ It started[,] he then put his walking stick on the chain that stops the train and said whats the dam train stopping for now. Ha ha.*

By November of that year we had apparently started borrowing books from the local library near our new home in Ockley Surrey and worried about their return (from the summer holidays!), *have you returned our library books?* And by early 1954 Sandy's tastes were firming up, *last week I finished reading 'the secret Garden'. It is a bit soopy [= soppy] but quiet interesting and this morning I practicy finished 'Secret water'. I have only about 15 pages left;* and in May war books start to figure in his readings lists, *I have been reading a fasinating book called v.c. heros. It is a simply marvellous book, it has got all the most famous V.C. heroes. The storys are wonderfully told and just the right length.*

And at the turn of the year he reported on another wartime adventure story,

I am reading a terrifically good book now called 'Duel of Wits' It is about a young man called Micheal who is a chap who lands spyes by canoe and subs and goes on dangerous missions to the Germans Radio station Ste Assise, the place for talking to German U-Boats. He is just going to be drouped by parachute to sabotage it. It is jolly exciting. He is armed with sten guns, and time bombs[,] fake French documents etc , because he is pretending to be a French country man as well ~ he is going with 2 other chaps. Jolly brave blocks [= blokes] all of them. It is written by a chap called Peter Churchill.

In June 1954, *On Tuesday we had a latin Exam ~ out of 100 marks I got 82 ~ the form did it so well that on Wednesday Putty gave us 2 periods of reading Hucklebury Finn. It is a jolly good book and is very funny. He said he would read us the village cricket match soon.* (Nice that for a modest class, the reward for success in Latin was being excused from Latin. The cricket match was no doubt the famous chapter from A.G. Macdonnell's 'England their England'.) And in the summer term of 1955, his last term, it was 'The Prisoner of Zenda' followed by *Cards on the Table by Aggie and Aggie Christie 7 Dials - loaned by Gert.*

Along with all the reading came pleasure in ownership of books. I remember keeping the odd treasured book at school, loaned from home or received as birthday presents. For some reason Trent's Last Case was one - a parental recommendation, but I think I found it rather difficult going. Another was Ian Hay's 'The First Hundred Thousand' - a present related to the Bruce Lockhart family's Highland and regimental connections. I had one or two red cloth octavo editions of Buchan (again presents from my Bruce Lockhart grandparents), and I suspect that I was already by my last year reaching the stage of wanting to own books of attractive appearance and feel. A whole collection of Arthur Ransome Sandy and I kept at Belbroughton Road for reading there; and I enjoyed even looking at their invitingly

designed dust jackets. Such were the beginnings in Dragon days of a life time of collecting books. And finally - with a wonderfully typical English sense of irony - we all fell for Molesworth. Sandy and I loved the books, and I still read them with pleasure today.

FILMS

Films were an important part of my imagined world as a child. Watching them was divided between home and school. Those I remember watching, or which are described in my mother's letters, are considered in 'Dorset Days'. Here I will concentrate on what I can recall of my film interests at the Dragon.

When I went to the Dragon my film-viewing was enormously enhanced by fortnightly films during the Christmas and Easter Terms, and occasional films in the summer. When I first arrived we only had a silent projector in the Ciné club. The technology was improving rapidly, however, during my time at the Dragon. The 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1952 speaks of 'the new talkie now installed in the New Hall' (and in the Cine Club notes for that term this is described as a new Bell, Howell-Gaumont 621 Sound Projector) and the following 'Term Notes' that the 'Cine shows now talkies'.

Likewise at first the films were in black and white, and certainly the films on which I frequently comment in my letters always appear in my imagination in Black and White. For example Monsieur Hulot, various westerns and school sagas, which I shall list. The first references to coloured films do not occur in my letters until 1955, when I make a point of that fact.

From the letters, it appears that films acted very strongly on our imaginations. They were surrogate worlds, peopling an area now filled with television and the Internet. I never became a film expert, but count amongst the deeper influence on my life some of the great films - from 'Some Like it Hot', to Kurosawa and the Studio Ghibli, through to Ray, Bergman and others. Much of this was in my University period but built on the film-watching foundations laid at the Dragon.

All this was recognized by the Master in charge of the Cine Club, J.D. Briton and before looking at films more specifically, it is worth quoting from him. In the report on the Cine Club in my first term, Christmas 1950, he wrote a long account of film in schools, partly in reaction to a recent report from the Departmental Committee's Report on Children and the Cinema. I shall quote several paragraphs from this account.

'It is now the common knowledge of a well-informed public that children and adolescents are influenced to an extraordinary degree by what they see at the pictures; and it is also widely known that this influence may be as harmful to a child as it ought to be good. Since we cannot keep children away from the films, something must be done to prepare their minds against the possible evil.' Briton then quotes at length from the Report on how films may affect children, the possible nervous and moral effects. He continues 'Good parents, who take an active interest in the nervous and moral welfare of their offspring, would have a right to complain if the schools to which they entrust by far the major part of their children's physical, mental, and spiritual nurture took little or no part in combating this "contrary influence" of the public commercial cinema.'

Briton then discusses the relative advantages of silent and sound films, coming to the conclusion that since 'Children of this age are mostly interested in unadulterated action', dialogue is not much appreciated and silent films with music are probably

best. Thus silent films with suitable stories are good and sufficient basis for future excursions into the sophisticated world of the sound film, which will be regular fare at a public school.' He continues that 'children prefer straightforward film stories, full of action and the simple emotions of loyalty, courage, and affection (not "love," which is anathema!)... The early silent films have an added advantage of being so far removed from the experience of everyday life of the average boy or girl in their plots and characters that there is little danger of their being muddled up with reality and producing the harmful effects complained of by the Departmental Committee.'

He notes that 'The most popular silent films seem to be Rin-Tin-Tin dog films... Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, and Harold Lloyd are popular among the slapstick comedians.' Furthermore 'The tremendous outbursts of laughter and cheering which occur during the showing of these old silent films mean that the impact of the varied climaxes and incidents is immediate and the emotional release absolutely spontaneous and complete.'

Britton concludes, 'During the preparatory school stage, let us try to make the cinema, however it is employed - as entertainment or instruction - the familiar friend of enjoyable and interesting hours. Thus will boys and girls reach adolescence comparatively free from the harm they might have suffered through indiscriminate film-going.'

An interest in film seems to have started early at the Dragon. The 'Century History of the School' (p.149) states that in 1938 'This Autumn term saw one innovation come to stay, the Cine Club, which, with its own projector worked by the boys, turned on a Cine Show for most week-ends... The Cine Club survived the war years, and then, guided by Jim Britton, made great strides, setting up its own Film Unit which attracted the attention, and the cameras, of the B.B.C. With the help of more than one Dragon parent in the business it gained access to some of the big Studios to study film-making at first hand...' One such expedition is noted in the 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1953, namely that 'Jim Britton and the film Club break new ground with a visit to Pinewood Studios'. The activity was unusual and a year or so after I left ('Century History', p.205) the BBC came down to film the Science Club and later to make a film of the Dragon film Unit making a film.

Looking through the reports on the Cine Club by Britton, I note that between 1949, when the film-making started, and Easter 1954, it reports that some nine films had been made (seven or eight of them clearly in my five years at the school). In Christmas 1950 there is reference to an earlier film, 'Angus McBrainstorm's Brainstorm' about a mad scientist at the school. In 1951 there were 'Father's Welcome' a comedy, 'Pardoner's Tale' (Chaucer), 'The Last Ten Days' (of a Dragon Term), 'Bright Star' (the first sound film) and 'The adventures of Jan Storm' (another about a scientist). In Christmas 1952 the 37 members in the club made 'Struwpeter'. In 1953 they continued with this film and made 'Little Johnny Head in the Air', a short comedy called 'Picked Parents' and visited Pinewood studios. In 1954 there was a film about school activities during the last fortnight of term, including a cricket match, drill, swimming, athletics and other things. This film was shown in the Summer Term 1955, where it is noted that it was hoped to show it with some additions in September. There was also a modern version of 'Guy Fawkes'.

Jake Mermagen remembers also "'The Bicycle Thief" starring "Dennie Whiff (Mr Denison Smith). I also starred in one 'Britbash' production and was known for a while afterwards as Marlon Mermagen.'

*

As for my reaction to films during my time at the Dragon, there are a number of hints in my letters. In June 1951 I wrote *We had a good sinny show last night about the making of marionetes and puppets. A funny one about school dogs and a pretend hairdresser which I could not under stand it much.* Clearly I was still learning to read films, as my mother had found with Bambi.

In 1952 on 8th August my mother wrote to me from Assam *We had a film at the club yesterday called "The Half Breed" which was all about Red Indians and the wild west and villains were rolled over the edges of precipices and horses tore about in clouds of dust (in Technicolour) - it was rather fun. I wished I'd kept the girls up for it. We have one or two good ones coming which they'll enjoy including "Where No Vultures Fly" again.* ('Where no Vultures Fly' was shown in the Summer of 1954 at the Dragon).

My mother's amusing description may have set me thinking about how I could improve my film accounts for on 7th July 1952, just before my eleventh birthday, I wrote a somewhat breathless and unpunctuated account as follows. '

We had a film last week called the Eureka Stockade it was about a Gold Mining village where a man called bently was accused of murder and a mob burnt down his house and the police were fining them £2 a month for the land and the miners made a blockade but the police attacked and beat the miners but the leader managed to get away and they got a doctor and the docter had to do something that hurt terribly and to drown the noise of the man they sang adeste fideles and it all ended happily, lots of love Alan

On the return from my first trip to see my parents in Assam over Christmas 1952, I saw one of my very most favourite films, *The Crimson Pirate*, a swashbuckling predecessor to the immensely successful *Pirates of the Caribbean*. I was to see this again later and it was the benchmark for the future. I saw it in Calcutta with my father as he escorted me on the way home and I described its effect obliquely at the end of my journey home when I wrote on 18th January 1953 from the Dragon. *I saw some saber jet fighters at rome. I nearly went to the CRIMZON PIRATE again but there was not time so I went to a news theatre.* During the summer of 1953 I saw the *Crimson Pirate* again and on holiday in Scotland I wrote on 11th January 1954 *Next day I went to a film in Wishaw but it was not very good. On Thursday I went to "Shane!" Wich is a very good Cowboy Classic but I think I liked "The Crimson Pirate" as much.*

In the meantime during 1953 I went to a number of films at the Dragon. On 27th January I reported *I saw a film last night called bus Christmas, which was about horse thieves.* A week later on 2nd February I wrote *We had a jolly good sinny show last night called Mad about Music.* It is worth pausing on this film since the Cine Club Report by Mr Briton contains a long and mainly disparaging account of it, which does concede that we enjoyed it.

He starts by describing 'the sugar and jam-puff stuff of Deanna Durbin's singing film 'Mad about Music'. This was 'Strangely and excitingly popular, this film had just about everything to ensure its being hooted off the screen; sentimental, artificial; 'Ave Maria' crooned by shiny-faced American choristers, with hazy close-ups of mist-enshrined Deanna dewy-eyed; brash, newly-breeched, dough-brained youths lining up chocolate-sundaes for equally doughy-faced schoolgirls - all this, but the film was a howling success.' He concludes that 'boys are born romancers'.

Two weeks later on 15th *We had a film yesterday afternoon called the tudor rose wich was about history but was very serious and murders and executions.* The report on this by Briton describes this as a 'movingly sad story of young Edward VI and the Lady Jane Grey'. 'This very good film, simple to follow and finely photographed,

has taken time to show its reactions. Boys were subdued at the finish – rightly so, at the tragic death of the innocent young girl. This bit of history, however, will remain quietly fixed in memory...’ I am not sure, however, that it has, though no doubt if I saw it again it would flood back.

The following week on 22nd February *We had a sinny show last night we had two funny films one was about a spider and a fly and the woman fly got caught but the other one got away and called the other and they mounted on horseflys and some attacked on dragon flys and dropped pepper on the spider. And we had one about the dutch and a charlie chaplain.* Three weeks later on 15th March *There was a film on Thursday instead of prep and It was about birds.* All these are in the spring term.

Finally on 22nd March 1953 I reported my first Jacques Tati, ‘Jour de Fête’, describing how *There was a film last night about a french fair wich was spoken in french but had English written underneath and it was terrificly funny.* Again I dimly remember one or two scenes, particularly one where a postman hitches himself to the back of a lorry and sorts the mail as he is carried along. Briton writes that ‘All agreed – a marvellously funny, brilliantly made film.’

I anticipated on 3rd May ‘We are going to have a very good film tonight called. “The happiest Days of your Life”.’ Sound was beginning to come in when I noted two weeks later on 18th May *We saw a film yesterday on the last Coronation and a Talkie one on the preparations for the next one.*

The following Christmas term on returning to school I noted on 27th September that *We are having a film called “The man in the white suit” with Alec Guines...* This was, however, just a continuation of a spate of films I had seen during the holidays, taken by my grandparents and uncles. I wrote that *In the hols I saw Genevieve, The Crimson Pirat again, “Call me madame” Peter Pan Natures half Acre “Hans Cristian Anderson”* I am not sure whether ‘Call me Madam’, a musical, was a film or a show, but I do remember little snippets from some of the others.

Meanwhile my mother in India tried to arrange for some children’s films for my sister Anne’s birthday, but it was not a success. She wrote on 5th June *We also ordered some films to show on our projector they didn’t arrive in time needless to say, they came yesterday and we showed them last night but were most disappointed, they were frightfully old, one of them was a Charlie Chaplin and kept breaking, the others were “Terry Toons” and pretty feeble but the kids weren’t too critical.*

The year 1954, when I was twelve, was in many ways the high spot of my film watching. Some of these were at the Dragon. On 17th January I *wrote Today we are having a film called “The Adventures of Hukleburry Finne”. Which I think I will enjoy very much.* A couple of weeks later on 2nd February *We had a very good film indeed on India It was called “The Drum” the town where it was all filmed was in Tockut wich you probably know. It was about a rising of the Indians.* This film about the Indian mutiny, I suspect, was probably one which would have appalled my mother who was already very restless about the imperial message. Two weeks later on 16th *We are having a very good film tonight called the big store featuring The Marks brothers.*

In each issue of the ‘Draconian’ under ‘Cine Club’ there is a list of the films shown in the term and a note on those ordered for the following term. In the winter ‘Draconian’ 1954 it notes: ‘The entertainment film programme for the Christmas term included the following: ‘the Lavender Hill Mob’, ‘the Four feathers’, ‘the Dragon of Pendragon Castle’, ‘vice Versa’ and ‘Appointment with Venus’. For next term, we have booked, so far, ‘The Holiday of Monsieur Hulot’, ‘Sanders of the river’ and ‘The Titchfield Thunderbolt’. This provides an independent check on

how full my coverage was. Certainly from this list, I noted all of the films except 'Vice Versa'.

The series starts in my letter on 25th October 1954 when I wrote *We have had some very good films this term the first was "Lavender hill mob" with Alec Guinness. The second "The four feathers". And this week there is "Appointment with Venus" about a petigree cow wich is rescued from the Channel isles.* A week later on 2nd November I wrote that *There is a film this evening called 'The Dragon of Pendragon Castle. And a Walt Disney film.* Unlisted above was the fact, noted in a letter at the end of November, that *There are some cartoons tonight instead of a long film.*

Back at school in 1955 I wrote home on 27th January 1955 that *On Wednesday there were some school films and a film about a storm at sea and then after that there was a bit of Television.* In the same letter I added

In the evening there was a lecture (by an undergraduate from Worcester college) who gave a talk about the Oxford travel club's journey to Angola in S. Africa. And he illustrated it with a coloured film. This evening there is going to be a film called 'The riders of the new forest' and it is about some people (a boy and girl) who live on the outskirts of the New forest and have lots of adventures.

A week later on 1st February I wrote that *on Sunday there was a film 'It's in the Air' with 'George Fawcby' and it was extremely funny.* Whether Sundays were our usual day for films I cannot now remember, though it was the stated date for several films. What I do remember well is the large school hall where we watched the films.

On 20th February I reported that *Last Sunday there was a film The Titfield Thunderbolt which you have probably heard of.* This was one of the films promised in the 'Draconian' and another I mentioned in an undated letter in early March. *This evening there are going to be some coloured Geographical films... Last week there was a film called 'Les vacances de M.Hulo' which was about a crazy Englishman who went in a mad care to a holiday hotel in the south of France and the typical holiday camp sort he meets there. And it was extremely funny.* I still remember the collapsing canoe scene from this film. He was, of course, the antecedent of Mr Bean - ideal for an era of silent films, or for showing to audiences whose grasp of English is not great - more a mime than anything. The final film was noted on 13th March when there was a *very good film tonight called 'Sanders of the river' from the book by Edgar Wallace.*

It is interesting that of about forty films whose titles I have recovered from the 'Draconian', over half are described in my letters. Looking at the titles and subjects of the films it seems clear that the majority were comedies - Tati, Hulbert, Marx Brothers, and Ealing Comedies. There were some adventure or historical films - Tudor Rose, The Man in the White Suit, Captains Courageous, and some others. Apart from the Eureka Stockade, a western, there were really none about war. So it seems strange that by the 1970s the films seem to have become more aggressive, at least according to the memory of Paul Watkins. He remembers a film a week in the New Hall and writes that 'The films were mostly war films - *633 Squadron, Cockleshell Heroes, The Guns of Navarone*' and also *Zulu.*' I don't know whether he has just remembered these amongst many others - it would be possible to check in the 'Draconian'. Certainly, even though television was now vying with film, the films had a strong effect on his imagination, as they did on mine, in his case causing fear and anxiety among other things.¹

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 82-3

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Jamie has a few, rather vague, recollections today of the existence of the Dragon Cine club, but until reading my and Sandy's letters had thought of it more in terms of a few individuals rather than a 'club'. I recall the interest and excitement when they went to Pinewood studios, very exotic. One of those Dragon things of which we were all proud!

Of films made by the cine Club, however, the only one that rings a bell now is Angus McBrainstorm. I knew that in-house films were being produced and I respected those who did it. I am sure I enjoyed the documentaries, but I wonder whether the more creative films were sometimes too far removed from what I regarded as the norm for cine-enjoyment. Perhaps I am quite wrong. Maybe I loved them; or perhaps I was suspicious of something a little masonic about the secret arts of film making at the Dragons and was envious at the same time?

I first refer to Dragon film making in a letter home in February 1952, *They [i.e. the Cine Club] are making a new film ~ I watched them. It seems to be very funny.* But a tiny note of scepticism creeps into a letter of the following month *We had films yesterday all made by the cine club ~ they were mostly our 'comedys' so called.*

In October 1952 there was another Cine club film on the menu, *This evening we're having the schools latest film 'Strewell Peter' I saw part of it being filmed.* And in February 1954, *Tonight we have the 'skating 54' film which Mr Brittain and Joc made. I expect it will be pretty good.* This film seems to have been made privately by Joc and Britto rather than by the Cine Club.

In March 1954 I was invited (by a friend I suppose) to come to a Cine Club film show - a new development in my film-going life (so far as I can make out), *Yesterday evening I was asked to go to a Cine Club film (that means private for the club, staff and other boys who are asked to come). It was a very old film with Harold Lloyd. It was terribly funny although there was no noise. It was called 'safety last' As usual with Harold Lloyd it was about marching about on roof tops, hundreds of feet up. Terrifying to those who dislike heights.* I had not appreciated that the Cine Club was on a kind of subscription list basis.

*

As to films shown at the Dragon, Jamie comments that he finds it hard to tell whether his obvious enjoyment of the experience at such a formative stage of life, reflected or created a natural bent. I clearly loved cinema, and still do, and the Dragon must have played a key part in establishing and perhaps in helping direct that pleasure and interest.

Films were to me, I think without exception, an immensely cheerful form of amusement and entertainment; they were not imagination-searing life experiences. Pure escapism is my primary recollection. First, I enjoyed the whole occasion - the anticipation, the laughter, the crowds, the bagging of seats (could you hold seats for a friend?), the chairs - and nothing but pleasure in store. And then a safe place cocooned in the dark, a haven in the middle of the often testing realities of school term life. And then the fairy magic of the clattering film and dappling rays of light. And the numbers count down. And then the film upside and general hysterics of laughter and prolonged agony of pleasure. If that isn't escapism, what is?

In addition, going to the film shows was another group activity with all the enjoyable elements of participation and sharing, and as said elsewhere, I was clearly a tribal animal.

And yet, paradoxically, watching the films also brought a new private world into

play, especially if it was a story rather than a documentary. While watching a film story unravel I think I was mostly alone with the screen and my own thoughts. Friends and neighbours disappeared a bit into the background – but were there as needed to share the punchline, the dramatic volte-face, a giggle or a gasp. I think this was particularly true in my earlier Dragon years. In later years there was more genuine sharing involved. I imagine we talked about the films afterwards mostly in terms of ‘wasn’t that funny when...’ wasn’t it exciting/ silly when...’ but without much analysis. My reactions to the film were no doubt in part affected by the reactions of others around me, but not entirely.

The preference I feel today for films (it applies rather less to books) with straight line narratives, preferably with comfortable and familiar values, rather than complex concoctions may originate in Brito’s selections – the adventure pix, action, straight out comedies, good tales. Like everyone else I wanted the guys in the white hats to win, just as at Dragon age I generally wanted the good things in life confirmed, not the bad things tellingly probed! Uncomplicated and demanding stuff, but with such films I could willingly suspend disbelief, whereas I think I found that harder to do with films of a more complex, artistic nature (say, *Henry V*) or a social or political message.

I think I soon learnt to appreciate aesthetically good photography and well balanced pictures. For example, we probably all became connoisseurs of that rocky valley landscape so important to Westerns, where heroes and villains can hide behind rocks in the shoot out and the horses be tied up to dried-out trees of the right type, etc.

I think I preferred stories about people to those about animals, and I probably enjoyed most films where it was possible to identify with the hero in some way. I think I would have firmly applauded Brito’s point that in silent movies ‘the impact of ...the varied climaxes and incidents is immediate and the emotional release absolutely spontaneous and complete.’ It does not apply only to silent movies, of course, but also to most pre-1950 movies altogether (but you could not see that in 1950!). And it is precisely why I like such films still. This is entertainment at its purest; and such films can be cathartic, without the pressures of lingering emotional gymnastics.

Brito’s selection may indeed have encouraged my tendency to want to avoid films which twist the emotions around too much – just as it may have strengthened my dislike of ‘soppy’ stories. Similarly, I enjoyed revisiting familiar films just as today I enjoy re-reading favourite novels – not for what happened, but to see again how it happened. The Brito legacy again?

Nor do I recall any films that left me with nightmares or anxieties, such as might have put me off cinema. Sandy, on the other hand, who suffered quite a lot from nightmares, was anxious about films with ghosts or the supernatural in them; presumably he had more imagination than I did.

Briton’s remarks and conclusions seem to me to reflect the spirit of the period – at a time when when the social effects of mass audiences of pre-war years had not yet been properly assessed, and the rather exceptional aims of wartime film making only just ceased applying. As in other aspects of social life, the world of films at the Dragon from 1949 to 1954 reflected a world in transition.

His fears about the potential negative influences of public commercial cinema seem fair enough at the period, even if it applied less to Dragon children under a high level of discipline and structured supervision at home.

I think one could also say that Briton’s film selection puts Dragon school cinema-viewing bang into the central context of the Edwardian muscular Christian view of

education, with its focus on action, loyalty, courage and affection. But in all I think he must have done his job extremely well and I today salute his choices.

On minor matters, I thought silent films were very much an exception by 1951? And I remember the colour quality of those early Technicolor (or other colour) films as being awfully bad – nasty, pastel tints and fuzzy tones. They did not match up to the high quality colour already used in photographic slides, etc., at that period – for example those used in the best lectures. Indeed I wonder now whether the colour detracted from the story line by making the subject matter look like documentaries because we were so used to black and white.

I do not remember any 3D films (with glasses) at Dragon period. Possibly from at home, I recall the plastic glasses well, but at what date, I wonder? Music accompanying films was an important element, and a lasting memory. Westerns had good jingles, ones that one could remember and hum along later, and which provided a wonderful sense of anticipation. And early comedies, not just silent movies of Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton but those such as Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy had a very particular music that added to the fun.

*

But what of my and Sandy's taste in films at the time? The first mention of a cinema film in his or my letters home dates to our journey to school (for Sandy's first term) in September 1950 by way of an overnight stop with family friends in London,... *We then went to the dentist at 4 p.m. ~ and went to a news film after ~ which was dull at first, very. ... On Friday [presumably in Oxford now] we went to a film called the black Rose ~ very nice indeed ~ then we went to School.* Sandy mentioned the cinema trips too in his first letter from school, but in reverse order (perhaps thinking backwards in time as he composed this important letter), *we saw a film of Black Roes [= Rose] ...we went to see the chanshing of the garedes [= Changing of the Guard] we went to hamles [= Hamleys] - We went to the sin om [= cinema] of micki mouss and it was grat fun*

Interestingly, it seems that we did not – presumably were not allowed to – go to school film shows in our first year. I had forgotten that. Our accounts of films thus start in our respective second years. This would fit with the vivid memories I have of winter evenings being read to on the floor of Yatto's drawing room those first two terms. And, with hindsight, what a sensible policy.

Nor do I mention having seen any films even in the first term of my second year (September-December 1951). Perhaps an age limit, or membership of a junior house (Jacko's), still applied. My records of films thus start in mid March 1951, the week of my tenth birthday; and by January 1952 we were both committed to a steady and generally enthusiastic film watching career for the rest of our time at the Dragon.

Thus, taking the films in chronological order from March 1951, I saw the following, *Yesterday I saw a film called 'Dare Devils on Snow & Ice', ski-jumping, cresta run[,] [on skis] pulled behind a racing horse[,] on skis pulled behind a motor bike and pulled behind an aeroplane at 80 mph ~ scating [= skating] and cars on ice racing ~ Scating, sailing the yaghts on skates type of thing. Very good fun I thought. What was 'Bambi' like[?] I hope it was good fun.* It seems from that interesting and rather grown-up sounding enquiry, our parents were the first in our family to see Walt Disney's famous full length cartoon film, Bambi. Sandy writes of another film being shown that month, but it may have been a lecture with a film, which I missed, and which I think may have been about the Korean War, *he [= there] was a sini on the war wiht [sic] the Americans.* This was followed by a Dick Turpin film in May,

although I think it was rare to have a film show in a summer term; perhaps games had been rained off?.

Sandy then leads us into 1952, writing in mid-January that, *Last night we saw the film of Henry the Fifth. Have you? I thought it was jolly good. There again we see a 2 hr film for 2d with sound. I think we do jolly well for films here. There is a cine tonight.*

The film that Sunday evening, he later reported, was, *called Loray [= Laurel] and Hardy ~ they are 2 very funny film stars like Charley Chapman ~ one is fat and one is thin ~ Loral is the thin one and Hardy is the fat one...The[re] is a film tonight about the covered wagon.*

From mid-February to early March 1952, according to Sandy, there were three sets of school films, starting on 17 February, *Yesterday the[re] was a film ~ they were Dragon films and I could see Mummy on the bank in the people in the swimming competition.* One week later, Sandy wrote, *The films larst monday were school films ~ one I have not seen before;* and on 9 March, *Yesterday it was raining so we had some school films and some funny wons [sic] ~ it was great fun.* Two points occur here. The film in which my mother could be glimpsed must have been produced in July 1951, when she was in England for seven months or so between leaving Germany and joining my father in Washington DC. Second, I am wondering, but it seems that I did not attend these school films; maybe I had seen them before, or maybe I had more enjoyable things to do?

So it went on, with an interesting mix of the serious and the comic. 'Cine shows' in March 1952 brought another feast of cartoons, followed by *a film called Prisoner Throat-slasher ~ It was a Laurel and Hardy one. It was really very funny.* After that there was *a film taken by an OD which also has talking... With film on MCC tour in Australia.* The latter may have been combined with a lecture. Then on 3 May there was a return of the old favourites, *we had a cine show ~ a cartoon then a Laurel and Hardy and another film;* and in mid May a showing of *Kim;* Sandy noted that. *One of our master is waring the regimental tie the [= that] the regiment had in Kim [the film].*

On 5 October 1952 I reported that, *The cine show tonight is on the RAF - which may also have involved a lecture.* The next film on the agenda was cancelled at the last minute. We had been looking forward to, *the film Coronets and Crowns [= Kind Hearts and Coronets] next Sunday ~ Daddy says it is a good film and we ought not to miss seeing it;* but in November I had to report that, *We did not have 'Kind Hearts and Coronets' because one of the masters agreed [= argued?] that it was to[o] old for us. But the film we had was very exciting and well done.* Sandy reported that instead *we are having a film calld Under the Frozen Falls and it is with noise withch out [= which ought] to be a pretty good film.* I remember now some dramatic pictures of the Niagara falls under ice.

It seems that Brito had films ready for bad weather too. On Saturday 30 November 1952, it snowed all day and *There was a cine instead of games. It was a film called 'Jack of all Trades'. It was very amusing ~ the hero is Jack Hulbert who is a famous tap dancer. He did a lot of tap dancing in the film It was very good.*

The film show the preceding week was also good, *The film last Sunday was really lovely. The Empress of France [sister ship to Empress of Britain on which we went to Canada] appears in it. The hero is one of our boys' neighbour ~ He is now 15 but was only 11 at the time of the film. And then there was a film called Eureka Stockade. It was very amusing I thought though parts were very serious.*

Sandy has plenty of comment on these films and more, On 5 October he wrote of the Farnborough Air Show which we had visited with our mother that summer,

The sinny [= Cine] last Sunday on the R.A.F. showd 1951 Farnbre [= Farnborough] ~ it was exilant [= excellent] and taken from another plan[e] which I did not see when we went did you? I tried to pick our car out but could not find her[,] the[re] were so many of them.

That same evening we saw *Jake Jones Adventers and RAF of 1950 in colour witch will be fun* - but I cannot say I recall Jake Jones or his adventures.

In November 1952 Sandy mentioned two films, *On Sunday last we had a film on Canada and a film on training animals and people for the Berterain Mills circus* - *It was very intresting.* And at the end of the month, *tonight the[re] is a film called the Magrat ~ it says it is a side tekeler [= tickler].* I cannot place 'Magrat', but it was followed on 5 December by, *the film called Ivanho Stackad [= Eureka Stockade] about the Gold rush in Australia ~ it was very good and now I see why the flag of Australia is what it is ~ I thought the film very funny and Exciting ~ In places it was very bolld thursty [= bloodthirsty]*

The spring term of 1953 brought a feast of films, as I wrote in January, *Last night we saw the film of Henry the Fifth. Have you? I thought it was jolly good. There again we see a 2 hr film for 2d with sound. I think we do jolly well for films here. There is a cine tonight.* The following week, *On last Sunday evening we saw a lot of cartoons and 'The boy who stopped Niagara', followed by 'Bush Christmas...' and '...Mad about Music'. They were both very good films. I could not say which I prefered [sic].*

In late February, *We had a lovely cine show yesterday ~ with a Charlie Chaplin film. It was very good. We had some cartoons also. I have tried drawing Donald Duck [showing a sketch of D.D.]; then came a film called 'the Tudor Rose' in the afternoon. It was a very good film. All about Lady Jane Grey and the boy King Edward ~ V I think.* Sandy noted a film about horses in Australia... and last week one about Niagara, and gave a rich commentary of his own,

the[re] were no games but instead a film called Tudor Rose about Lady Jane Grey. It was a good film but to[o] blood thursty and I simply hated the Executanors ~ they looked very fritening[,] espechaly with they [= their] big black masks ~ and Laddy J Grey had to walk up a long prosseshion and then pardon these big ugly crate Execiutions to Execut her. It was not at all nice.

On 15 March 1953 Sandy described a film which evidently made an impression.

Last Sunday the film was michanories [missionaries] in Chaina and in south Africa ~ [it] was very good. In the south african film the[re] was a very bad year for crops and the cows started dying and the water went in to the ground and the crops shriveld up. So the Africans arsked the witch docter what to do. He said 'some body has ofended the goods [sic] and he is angry' ~ 'so one of you will have to be sacrificed'. So all the Africans walked round him with drums then they all sat in a sircal ~ And then the witch doctor started dancing also throwing his hands in the air and things. It was a sort of war dance. He went on dancing and waving his hands in the air and kicking his legs about till suddenly the drums stoped playing and he pointed at a person he [= who] had to be sacrificed ~ The person who had to be sacrificed was a cribble. But while they were wa[il]ting for the full moon to sacrifice him he escaped and hobbled away for miles and miles over rivers ware [= where] crocodiles were and many other Adventures til at last he came to a michionry place where he was tought about Christ and Cristianerty and the Proper way to live.

I can not tell you about the Chaina won [= one] ~ it is to[o] long but it was very intresting [sic].

When Sandy worked as a farm manager for six months in Southern Rhodesia, as it then was, after leaving Cirencester Agricultural College, I wonder whether he recalled this film then?

The autumn produced another bumper harvest , but judging by Sandy's record, I did not see them all – perhaps due to absence at away matches in the 1st XV. Sandy's wonderful accounts, however, more than make up for that. It started in October, *Last Sunday we had a film called 'the Man in the White suit'. It is very funny. Alec Guinness is the star.* Sandy gave a long account of it,

The film we saw last Sunday is very good ~ it was called 'The man in the white suit' and funny ~ It was about a man who was trying to invent a curious mixture to mack suits that would never get firthy and they were [word ille.] ~ Proff Alec Guinness was the man in the white suit who was the inventor of this suit. He worked in a wonderful laboratory and one day he mad[e] this invention by talking it out of a [word illeg.] just before it would of [= have] exploded ~ so he rushed off[] to show his girl friend. And the people in the lab thought he was mad and caught him and poured the mixture down the drain ~ then the man in the white suit went to the head man of the lab and tried to tell the [word illeg.] but the porter was given orders not to let any boody in. But alec Guinness['] sweet hart was the daughter of the boss and told him ~ And then after hundreds of Explosions and roofs falling in he made it. The suit man was humming and for some reasons the citizens of the city chase[d] Guinness in the night but he then got out of site [= sight] and a butcher in a white suite came in view and he and they chased him but eventuali they caught him and his suit dissolved and was a failer

He also gave a full account of Winchester 73, the title of which I recall, but not the film,

On Sunday we saw a supper [sic] film called Winchester 73. The[re] was a man who was the hero and I will call him Hero, but he had a half brother who was a crock [sic] ~ the hero came to a town with his pal and in this town there was a gun on show going to be a prise for a shooting contest ~ it was the best in the west[,] the most accrate the nicest to handle and could fire the furthest ~ the Hero had just come to do this town and he was a stranger but his semi brother saw him but full of hatred didn't tell him he was his brother. In the contest for the wizard gun the Hero fired first and got three bulls eyes at 25 yards and so did the Hero's semi brother get three bulls eyes ~ so the[y] put the target back to 100 yards and the[y] both got three bulls eyes. So next the judge pat through [= throw] up a coin and they both hit it in the air and spoilt the coin so the Hero brought a [2 words illeg.] but this had a hole through it so next just the Hero fired and missed ~ next his brother fired and missed ~ but then the Hero said "If I can shot a hole through a postage stamp going through the air I have the gun' ~ But if I don't you have it ~ So he shot a hole through it and got the gun. But when the Hero was walking along he got the gun and rode off with it into the country. After a time the Bad hat no 2 riding through the hills he came to a shack were he took on another man on gambeling for money but found he had knon [= none] so he was forced to give Bad hat no 2 the wizard gun. But then this Bad Hat No 2 went to sell this lots of riffels [sic] to a Red Indian.

At the beginning of October, now a considerable amateur film-goer, he had some advice for my father just returned from Washington to a home posting in London at last,

Dear Daddy, I hope you are having a nice time in London. If you take my superb advice, I should go and see Shane before it leaves. Evidently the new Western in the West End was all the talk at school. And at the end of October, Sandy wrote, To-night there is a film called 'Opointment [sic] with Venus' about a pedegree cow.

And in early November came something different for me, *To-night I am in the projector crew and [= at] the cine-show which is good fun changing reels ~ we have got Oh Mr Porter today which is a Will Haig comedy. I expect it will be good.* This was followed at the end of the month by, *Captains courageous ...a jolly good film. No doubt you have read the book.*

Sandy's school film going continued, *Last Sunday we saw a very exiting film about a millionaires son falling over board and then being picked up by a shiping boat and all his adventures on the boat. The film is a story of one of R Kiplings books. And tonight the[re] is a comedy called something wendsday.* I can't place the last one? And then in early November 1953, Sandy reported that we all went down town for an important film, *On Thursday next the school is going to the super cinemar to see the film of climbing Everest ~ it is in colour I think.*

The Easter term of 1954 started with *The Big Store featuring the Marx Brothers. It is a comedy and will be jolly good.* But Sandy's accounts of films that term were rather spoiled by (not very fair) paternal criticism. In January 1954, *The[re] is a film on to-night. About some boody's adventures ~ Don't worry because next Sunday I won't give an account of it because Dad grumbled about my bad accounts.* There is some humour in Sandy's remark, but unhappiness too.

In mid-January, *Tonight the[re] is a film called "the Big Store" starring the Marks brothers;* and at the end of the month, *In the middle of the week we had a film instead of games because it was snowing hard. It was called 'The Drum' it was wonderfull photography.* Sandy much enjoyed *The Big Store, The film last Sunday was very funny at the end when the marks brothers were being chased all over a big firm like Harods ~ they were on roalar scates. But the first bit was jolly boaring. The Manager of the firm in the film last Sunday looked exactly like the man who was the manager of 'Trouble in store'.*

On my birthday that year there was another good film for boys interested, as we all were, in Second World War stories, *Today we have the 'Wooden Horse' on at the cine show ~ I certainly won't miss that. I had read the book too - I've now read the 'wooden horse' by Eric Williams. I think it's a jolly good book.* Sandy was immensely enthusiastic too, *I will not go into detail about the film last Sunday (the Wooden Horse) but I will say it was absolutely exclent. One of the very best films I have ever seen. The father of one of the boys here was it's directeur.* (Perhaps the refusal to go into detail reflected continued hurt from my father's criticisms.)

That spring (unclear date) there was another home made film, this time, *the 'skating 54' film which Mr Brittain and Joc made. I expect it will be pretty good.* The last film in my Dragon days was in early May, and clearly appealed to me, *On Monday we had the film 'Where no vultures fly' It is absolutely wonderful, Have [you] seen it. The photography is marvellous, all about wild animals.*

Sandy loved it too - but, fifty years on, my wife, Flip, recalls having seen it at her British Forces Education Service boarding school in Kiel, Germany, and being terrified.

The film we saw on Sunday last was excellent. Rinos charged cars and sent them spinning down drifs with the bad peple in and just missed the good peple. Elephants charched [= charged] the camera and the film star who porbly [= proably] had no prac[t]ise missed the first 3 shots ~ all this was done with film stars risking their lives. A boy picked up a lion cup and the lion tracked him and got nearly in springing range but it had machine guns trained on it so nothing could happen but of course you could not see them. The hero was run through by a spere and the bad man took away his bullets so in the night a tiger came after him and nothing happned because he had no bullets ~ then another native had a fight with a tiger and the native killed him. The were lots of marvellous animal photography

Sandy managed to see two more films that summer of which I make no mention. At end of June he wrote with excitement of a forthcoming long feature film, *This evening this [=there is] a film called the last Test. It is a comedy and is supposed to be very funny ~ it is a long one because it starts at half past five instead of at six which [is] usurall [sic].* And in July there were home made films of Dragon events, *To-morrow evening the[re] ll be a film taken by Joc and [the] film master and various people ~ they are showing the farn Island film which Mrs Rowbotham took, which is in colour.* The Rowbothams, parents of Sandy's friend Hugo ad been co-sponsors with the school of a small Dragon expedition to the Farne Islands. Both Sandy and I had hoped to go but problems arose of conflicting half term and school match priorities.

After I had left the Dragon, Sandy's fourth year delivered another rich crop, but in September he had once more to aim off for paternal angst, *To-night there is a film (don't go saying in your next letter we see nothing but films!!!) It is Lavender Hill Mob. The[re] is O else to say so Good-bye.* In October it was, *a film on called the 'Four Feathers' ~ its in tecknicoulour [sic] and is half an hour longer than Lavender hill.* In November he reported that *There is a film on tonight[,] tow [= two] Cartons and a biger film called the 'Dragon of Pentagen Carstel'.* We should note the Dragon phrase, used twice, which is not 'we have a film show', but 'a film on'. And in December, *This evening there is a film of Vice Versa ~ in Stradlings House Yato read us the book but we only got halfway through the book.*

*

1955 started with a failure, *The film 'Mr Hulot's holiday' was an absolute flop. It was the 2nd worst film I have ever seen.* I wonder what the worst was?

But in February there was a more enjoyable medley, *On Sunday last there were five small films, on the beauty of England, one on the beauty of Scotland, these two in tecknicolour. One on Atomic age, plumes [= plums.?] and Herings, these three all in one and two films on the Australian sheep and drovers. They were jolly good except for the one about Plumes.* I suppose the film was about plums as in fruit farming, but it is not clear. Mid February brought a classic English comedy, however, *Yesterday we had the film which was meant to be tonight. It was the 'titchfield thunder bolt' ~ it was jolly good and very funny.*

At the end of the month a lecture was brightened by films, *The lecture last Sunday was very good indeed (the one about castles) ~ there was a still film on them and a movie ~ the films showed the old warriors of the 400 to 1400 century trying to attack it and defend it ~ It was jolly good.* This was followed by, *a film called 'The Riders of the New Forest' ~ it is about two children of the new forest and their afdventures [sic].*

In March 1955 there was another war film, for older boys only, called 'convoy' ~ it was about a convoy in the last war, It was filmed in the war on ships actually on Patrols, The convoy lost the merchant ship. The U boats kept attacking ~ the Germans shot down a recognition plane with a merchant gun but did no other damage until a German Pocket Battleship had a fight with a destroyer ~ the hero was killed and a lot of his friends. In the end the Deuchland, the German pocket battleship had another battle with some British Battleships and was blown up and smashed to smithereins. It was a very good film Only the chaps over 12 went.

And in May there was another winner, 'Jeneviev' the film was absolutely smashing. it was a real laugh ~ it was in technicolour.

The autumn season brought more of the same. 'Christopher Columbus' the film was very good indeed. The ending was very sad though. In November, Sandy was looking forward to, a film to-night it is the Marx brothers 'A day at the Races'. The following week he reported his comments, Last Sunday's film was an absolute scream. It was the Marx brothers. In December a film was shown which Sandy had already seen in our local town, To-night there is a film which I have already seen at Horsham, called 'the Kidnappers' about these two boys in Canada who kidnap a baby.

On 24 January 1956, in Sandy's last term, he wrote,

we saw some wizard films, 1 micky mouse and Pluto[,] one Popeye Cartone[,] one Pluto Cartone[,] one film on the Tulip Motor Rally and one on the Monte Carlo Rally. The last two were in colour and were simply wizard. I have realized that if you are going to do well in the Monte Carlo Rally you have to do a mountain course, and the speed they go round the iced-up corners is fantastic. In my opinion the mountain course is more dangerous than ordinary racing car-races, we saw 4 cars crash skid badly on corners and go for six on the mountain or take a corner to[o] fast and smash into a tree ~ the acceleration and breaking tests were wizard.

Then there was a tale from Dickens, *Today we are having a film called the Pickwick Papers' (Dickens's book) ~ It seems impossible to me how it is possible to make Dickens's books as funny film.* But the following week he had been won over, *The film Pickwick papers was funny actually and made a much better film than I thought it would.*

In mid-February *there was a super film you would have liked ~ it is 'Where the river bends' ~ it is a western in technicolour. It should be wizard ~ I am really looking forward to seeing it;* and he subsequently reported that *it was very good indeed ~ there were tons of shooting with rifles and pistols and fights it was very good.* The reference to 'which you would have liked' reflects the fact that my parents were both in a small way Western buffs - Shane, and High Noon., for example.

In early March, *there was a special film for the sine club ~ I went even though I am not in the Cine club. It was 'San Demetrio' all about a tanker in the last war it was very good. The tanker was going from Texas to London when it was attacked by Jerry rats. There was an American who was terribly funny. It was a very good film.*

And Sandy was not quite sure what was on offer with the very last film he saw at the Dragon, *To-night there is a film which is called 'Magie' and [I] have not an idea what [it] is going to be like.* But it turned out to be another success, *The film last Saturday which was called 'Magie' was very good. It was about a gang of Scottish*

men who owned an old trawler and a boat an American who was a very big wig. It was very funny indeed.

*

Dayboy Tom Stanier (who later worked in television) gives a rather different view of film going in Dragon days in some comments on the letter references above. 'I had a less austere childhood in terms of films than you did. My parents used to let me go to the cinema on my own or with a friend - an opportunity which I gleefully seized. I loved pedalling off to the Regal or the Ritz in the certain knowledge that I was about to enjoy 3 hours of bliss. The half hour B feature and the Pathe news were just as much part of the experience as the main feature. If only one's visits to the cinema or theatre today were as assured of success. The Dragon films were also very enjoyable. There was a certain boisterous music hall feel to the experience when one was surrounded by one's peer group. War films and comedies featured heavily, if I remember aright. Sex did not rear its ugly head - though I quite wish it had.'

*

Several of Alan's school letters mention visiting day-boy friends or friends in Dorset who had televisions at this time. The school itself also started to put on special television events for the boys - there seems to have been some way to project television since I seem to remember the 1953 Coronation on television. My parents express envy of this in their letters, but the home television era for our family would come much later. The early days of watching the potter's wheel, Muffin the Mule and Bill and Ben largely passed me by.

My first mention of television was in a letter of 17th February 1952. *I am going out with a friend to his birthday party he is Dunken Cooper grandson of frank cooper who is the owner of coopers marmalade factory and I am going to see the tellivision.*

It seems to have been in the early months of 1953 that television arrived at the Dragon. On 22nd February 1953, I wrote *We have had television brought into the school and probably we will be seeing it soon.* It was only two weeks after this that we had the debate on the motion that 'Television and the cinema is a substitute to reading'.

Both the arrival and the ambivalence, at least of many of the older staff, is shown in two references to this term. 'During the following Easter Term a Television aerial appeared above the eastern end of the New Hall, and got a somewhat mixed reception. "Moron's morphia" was Ted Hicks' comment...' ¹In the 'Term Notes' it states that a number of older staff though it 'one more victory for the Passive over the Active'. The comments on the televising of the Coronation the following term in the 'Term Notes' shows both what the impetus had been, and how some of the opposition was undermined. 'And for the rest of the morning the television screen in the New Hall was the focus of attention, and in excellent focus too. And a good many of us were soon feeling a little uncomfortable about the lukewarm, or even hostile, reception given to television on its arrival last term.'

By the following year, my last at the Dragon, television was obviously installed in the school and become more common. On 27th January I wrote that I went to a film *and then after that there was a bit of Television.* A month later on 20th February *Today is not very interesting except there is no work and there is going to be T.V. this evening.'* On 3rd May one of the choices we had on a special day was *watch the*

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 195

cup final on T.V.

It will also be interesting to see how the school tried to control the power of television. By the time of Paul Watkins, twenty years after I was at the Dragon, he notes 'The corridor led to the TV room... We could only watch TV on Saturday afternoons and evenings.'¹

*

The first television screening Jamie remembers seeing at the Dragon was of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953, in amazing colour and shown on a specially imported, huge screen and equipment. I reported its arrival in an ironic letter of 22 February 1953, *We have just had a T.V. erected in the new hall. The screen is 6' x 4'. It is huge. It is a projector so is the purchase tax!*

And viewing the coronation on television I found to be an eye-watering affair in June 1953, but I am not sure whether this was emotion or eye-strain, I rather think the latter. Writing on 7 June, I reported home that *The television started at 10.15 but I played soft ball with 3 other boys. I went up at 10.45 and saw a bit of the procession. It was very majestic ~ We watched the service and followed it in our books until 1.15. My eyes watered from watching it.*

I presume that we all were given copies of the service; and television clearly added to the magic of *a glorious day we will remember all our lives...* It was an historic broadcasting event, and for us boys an emotional, patriotic occasion full of pomp and circumstance. As described elsewhere, I was busy at the fete that afternoon but my mother, who was home from USA by then, watched more television coverage of the day's events *...After lunch I went along to the side show I was doing and put up skittles. Then I went away and rolled up to the other side shows. Mummy went to watch the TV...*

It is possible that we saw a television screening, maybe in a boarding house and maybe in black and white, of the Funeral of King George VI. But there are very few if any other references to television viewing at the Dragon. Nor did we see any television at home, neither my parents nor grandparents having a set until I was about 17. For Sandy and me television really thus an exciting rarity.

Nor do I recall listening to the radio very much at Dragon age; certainly not in our Bruce Lockhart or Hone grandparents homes. In the holidays of my last year at the Dragon, I think we heard radio shows for the first time. My parents allowed us to listen in to Much Binding in the Marsh, but we were not very interested. More fun for us were the adventures of Dick Barton, special agent, whose name was much invoked at the Dragon, like Bulldog Drummond before him or James Bond afterwards, as a shorthand for a tough and dashing heroic person or action. I think Journey into Space appeared around this time but neither Sandy nor I followed it - we were too busy messing about outside or with our own games in our own playroom.

ENTERTAINMENTS AND EXPEDITIONS

The one performance which lies on the boundaries of musical and pantomime which Alan remembers from the Dragon is mentioned in a letter of 1st February 1955 from the Dragon *Then on Thursday afternoon we went to 'Listen to the wind'*

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 29

wich is a very funny Musical Pantomime and I think it was the best I had seen. The 'Term Notes' for this term give the following account of this event. "Listen to the Wind", the Christmas play at the Oxford Playhouse... Joc... now persuaded the Company to give a special performance for Dragons...' The account continues, 'The two ladies received their admirers, and their boxes of "Dragon" chocolates, seated decorously on their Victorian sofa'.

*

Jamie has always found pantomimes enjoyable fare - and still do - and Sandy's and my letters home contain a handful of cheerful references to outings from the Dragon to the Oxford Playhouse to see them, usually early in the spring term, the traditional pantomime season. They were thoroughly pleasurable occasions and I do not recall ever being frightened - except by the sudden surprises designed to make you seize your breath. The Oxford Playhouse Christmas pantos were surely very much geared to suitability for children, and Sandy leaves us some particularly good descriptions of all the fun.

In my second term, in spring 1950, *On Wednesday I went to the pantomime with all the other Dragons & had the seat behind the best seat in the theatre which cost 2/6 ~ It was mother goose ~ it was jolly funny ~ there were to [= two] Scotsmen playing the bagpipes.* In 1952 there were two theatre outings for older boys only and neither Sandy nor I went. In February 1952, *The elder boys went to Charlies aunt at the Playhouse;* and in November 1952 again, *Some boys went to the Playhouse last night to see the housemaster ~ 3/- got 5/- seat. I was not old enough which was a pity. It was very funny they said.*

In January 1953 Sandy and I went to the Playhouse pantomime with our former nanny Ada who was keeping house for the Hone grandparents at Belbroughton Road at the time. Perhaps we missed a school outing that spring, maybe on account of epidemics. *We went to 'Babes in the Wood' with Ada. It was great fun, though there was too much dancing (ballet). The babes sang a song themselves which was very good for their age.* I suspect that my rather condescending Dragon comment disguised my pleasure in a song, 'Me and my teddy bear' sung by a pretty little girl! But in February 1954 there was a better show on offer, when I joined a friend (presumably with parents or guardians) on another outing, this time to, *Humpty Dumpty. It was extremely funny and not too many love songs like the[y] usually are.*

Sandy joined the school outing to Listen to the Wind in January 1955, and leaves us a description not so different from Alan's,

On thursday the whole school in the afternoon went to 'Listen to the wind', a mixture of a musical comedy 50%, a play 20% and a pantomime 40%. It was about 3 children who were captured by gipsies[,] and birds as big as humans took them away to there [= their] Island where all the weather is controlled. Then a character called thunder cloud came and took over control of the weather. He shouted out to his men orders like 'The 51" Lightening brigade attack sussex[,] and the 27 & 8 Hail company destroy all the crops of hants etc. There was one sonic song by a Galle Bird called 'I'm a goody goody gale bird'. There was a song called 'Who'd be govern by a governess'[,] one called 'When I grow up' There were lots more. It was jolly good but not half as good as 'Salad Days'.

In Sandy's last term in the spring of 1956 there was another panto, and one with lots of comic turns,

On Wednesday it was to[fo] frosty on the ground and snow so we could not play games. But instead we went to see the Pantomine [sic] 'Little Miss Muffet'. It was very good. There were three clowns who were the funniest thing I have seen for years. They were all brothers. They just played the fool, and threw around jelly and water, and they hit each other all over the stage. They were very very clever. They did one act where the[y] played instruments of all kinds and they played them jolly well. They played a oboe walking along, one of them blowing one pressing the notes. It was very clever. They played a tune on a car pumb [= pump] one pressing the handle and one straching the nosel [= stretching the nozzle] into certain shapes so it played a tune, jolly cleaver. There were two men trying to do ballet propaly hurling a ghastly lady round the stage. The looked like New York toughs to me and they were just soppo. Otherwise it was jolly good, the clowns were absolute screams.

It is a wonderfully vivid account, and interesting that Sandy could not stand the 'ballet' turn even though it was obviously a skit.

*

There is a report on the visit of 'The Hogarth Puppets' to the Dragon on November 15th in the Christmas Term, 1951. Alan does not mention this in his letters, though on the preceding 30th June I had written home that *There was a puppet show last week with had the hoagarth Ochastrer, the flower ballet, two plays one was fly by night and 2 kings.* The Christmas Term show is described at some length in the 'Draconian'. I expect I particularly enjoyed the last of the five acts, namely 'The Hogarth Puppet Circus' featuring Hoopoo, the Clown; his Mysterious Excellency the Grand Turk; Colonel Poonah with Bulbous; Flash, the Cowboy, with Sparkle; Muffin the Mule etc.

Jamie's very few visits to the circus or to puppet shows were similarly home and holiday events. Conjuring and magic shows, however, had a Dragon dimension. Sandy and I were always fascinated by these - and had some (high quality) magic trick kits of our own with which to try to learn the arts of prestidigitation (mine was a billiard ball to be made to disappear in a silken black bag with hidden compartments - I never mastered it properly).

At the Dragon Jock's friend Mr Hornby (he of the 2½ litre Bristol sports model which we all admired so much) held some informal conjuring sessions in March 1952, *We had no entertainment on Saturday but a man (a friend of Jock's) did conjuring tricks to the elder boys.* Sandy went a week later, *Last night there was a man who is a cudjera [= conjuror] and those triks came to perform but I am not old onogh to go so I will go next week. Tonight is I think that you go to bed at half past five or six or 7.15*

A sing-song in March 1954 included some conjuring. Sandy wrote, *This evening there is a conjuring show on. It is going to be done by a lot of boys who are good conjerous. They are going to have a jazz band with a piano accordion[,] banjos & Ukalalies and lots of other instrements.* My view was similar, *This evening we are having a conjuring show and songs. Gert Sommerhof is doing it with his band. The band is actually rather weedy and wet but Gert conjures jolly well.*

I imagine that conjuring was also performed at quite a number of evening entertainments for the school or boarders, but did not always get a mention in letters. It was not that we were blasé about them, because conjuring shows were a great pleasure - rather I suspect that they were quite frequent.

*

A form of educational entertainment which again had great force in the pre-television age was that of museums and displays. Alan's interest in collecting things, described elsewhere, may have partly been linked to the growing realization that there were people who had 'Cabinets of Curiosities'. This is exactly how I remember the little Museum at the top of the stairs in the centre of the playground at the Dragon. I particularly remember the collections of butterflies, beetles and eggs, supreme among them a huge and wonderful (part of) an egg supposedly of an extinct species or even a dinosaur. On a recent visit, the egg seems to have gone, but the old drawers of butterflies and the cases of beautiful are still there. Jake Mermagen remembers 'The waste paper basket made out of an elephant's foot'. The Dragon boys in an earlier generation had included the great biologist JBS Haldane and he and others, I suppose, had built up this collection.

*

Jamie remembers the school museum quite vividly too, with its glass cases and strange objects, as said elsewhere. It was intimate and graspable, a kind of hall of curiosities, as Alan says, but the important thing about it was that you could poke and peer around at your leisure and pleasure; and that made it all very personal. Going to a large museum on several floors of great acreage, with limited time in a busy programme, never really worked for me.

But Sandy and I came across the Dragon museum in two particular particular connections. First, in the autumn term of 1952 we presented a giant caterpillar, correctly pickled in whatever is correct in Washington DC with the help of my biochemist mother. I was in charge of the operation and the caterpillar was very splendid and I wonder if it is still there.

Sandy's story (of November 1952), however, is rather different and a curious one;

On Thursday we did some ditecture [= detection] work ~ we went on a case of people taken [= taking] things out of the meusum ~ we new [= knew] that people were taking them out so we got a friend to find out who they were and tell them to put it back in there ~ he found out[,] told Hugo and me ~ we found him then taking the glass lid off a case with a pen knife and puling that back ~ we found out 6 people doing it so we got a parent in the meusum comity to tell Joc who he wanted to tell them ~ it was good fun doing it

I recall one or two other museums. There were school outings to the University's Natural History Museum, but it seems from a letter I wrote in February 1950 (my second term) that we had to be of a certain age before joining them, *All the boys in the lowers went to the Natural History Museum in Oxford ~ I did not go because I am in the middles*. I remember being thrilled by the sheer size and height of dinosaur, the whale and other monster skeletons in the beautiful light and airy grand hall. That was a treat. And again I recall the exotic and weird objects in display cases and containers, snakes in jars, stuffed birds, curly horns of antelope skulls, butterflies on cork boards and so on.

Indeed I wonder now whether the school might not have made more of the proximity of the Natural History Museum and the extraordinarily fascinating Pitt Rivers Collection. A single trip is all very well (a kind of inoculation perhaps?) but for budding scientists a series of short visits might have been more profitable, offering a chance to get to know the museum and each time to see a different part of its collections. I imagine that the omission was connected to the long-established

Dragon preference for the humanities over the sciences.

And we visited other museums, both with family friends and on school expeditions. Sandy loved the Science Museum in April 1954,

the Museums went too were simply karking. In the Science Museum there were lots of Gadgets, where you pressed the button below and it started working ~ things like model trains and power stations. In the childrens Department there were Burgalar alarms and doors that you go up to and they opened automatically ~ it was jolly good fun. We went to the natural History Museum [sic] and the Geological one.

It is interesting to read today of the magic of the first automatic doors we encountered. On one expedition to London, however, in June 1955, Sandy chose not to use his free time to revisit a museum, *We were allowed to go anywhere in London for about an hour. Some chaps went on the underground wasting their money ~ some went to the Natural History Museum but me and 3 other chaps felt jolly hungry so we went and had egg and chips at the Corner Café (1/3d)....*

As to the Festival of Britain Exhibition in 1951 I went, as did all Dragons. It was essentially a national event which we all keenly supported; but I really do not remember much - except the perilously balanced Skylon and a hot tiring day with lots of walking, ice creams and soft drinks. There are no references to it, however, in my or Sandy's letters - except to a school debate on the motion that the Festival's success had justified its expense, which the majority patriotically supported. Since that time, I confess, I have not turned out to be very good at exhibitions of any kind where you have to walk miles and stand for hours. A quick walk round Pressed Steel or a chocolate factory on other school expeditions, with the prospect of an edible prize on the spot, was more enjoyable.

As to zoos, Sandy and I went a couple of times with relations as well as with the school (see below) to Whipsnade but I do not remember going to the London Zoo or other zoos until after Dragon days. In those days today's 'open farms,' and other little collections of animals for children to visit at weekends had not yet been invented; and while I partly came to agree with Alan's mother and many others about the melancholia of zoos, I had yet to become acquainted with the beautiful architecture and lay-out of some, such as the 1840s Schoenbrunn Zoo in Vienna.

*

Alan remembers that there seem to have been two expeditions a year. In the mid-term break of the Christmas Term the boys were given a choice of various places each year arranged for boarders by the School. The records I have from the 'Draconian' suggest the following choices. In Christmas 1950 the Tower, the Mint, the G.P.O., the Navy at Greenwich, the Palace at Westminster, a nerve-centre of British Railways. The following Christmas of 1951 it was Imperial Tobacco, a visit to Bath, the Severn Wildfowl Trust, and Brabazon air-liner (Bristol Aeroplane Factory) . In 1952 there were whole day expeditions to the Tower and London. In 1953 it was to Cadbury's chocolate factory, a marmalade factory, Severn wildfowl etc. The 'Draconian' in Winter 1954 noted as the 'Mid-term expeditions' and gave accounts of visits to: The Mint, the G.P.O, the Houses of Parliament, Guinness, The Imperial War Museum, Harrods, the Tower, Slimbridge (Wildfowl Trust). Reports on all the expeditions were written by boys.

Only on this last occasion, as far as I can see, do I mention the expedition. In an undated letter towards the end of November I wrote to my mother *I spent a very*

enjoyable week end, and on Monday I went first to the Imperial War Museum which was extremely good also I went to Harrods which was also good. These expeditions suggest a range of finance, communications, politics, business, the army, retailing and conservation.

In the summer we tended to go elsewhere. For example, in the summer 1952 there were whole-day expeditions to the River or Whipsnade, and another excursion to the Bradfield Greek Play. In 1953 I mention in a letter of 6th July *We had a lovely time at Whipsnade and I took 8 photographs.* Then in the summer of 1955 there is mention of visits to the Royal Tournament at Olympia and Whipsnade. The school also made its first overseas expedition, to Paris, but I did not go on this. The River expedition, I now discover, consisted of hiring a flotilla of boats and going up the Thames from Port Meadow to Wytham Woods, Godstow and elsewhere. There was a great deal of bathing, special teas, various games and masters and pupils participated. On the expedition on June 29th 1953, the headmaster Joc was 'armed with cine camera and portable wireless set', and since some film taken by Joc survives and is being restored, there may be film of this.

*

Jamie's view is that expeditions, along with private outings, taking us to the world beyond Bardwell Road were of enormous importance in our Dragon lives. I certainly remember many quite vividly. They were not a Dragon show-off thing, but served a variety of important purposes. Major expeditions were aimed to open our minds to the world of things rather than ideas (a concession by the Lynams to concentration on the humanities, having its roots perhaps in Skipper's yachting days?). The concept of expeditions was not derived from or particularly relevant to the Muscular Christianity school of educational thought and traditions. It was a kind of add-on.

Expeditions might open up ideas for possible careers, but it was more about exposure; a career in engineering or industry was not really on the mainstream Dragon agenda. It was a matter of opening the Dragon mind to new subjects altogether, seeing things at work and how things worked, and seeing people at practical work. Both Sandy and I were intrigued; I gave a detailed account of how coins are minted, Sandy gave an excellent description of The Royal Tournament at work, and we both liked Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust.

There was possibly an element of Dragon representation, diplomacy and advocacy involved and a way offered of learning how boys should handle themselves with outsiders. I am sure we did not let the side down.

Equally important was the sheer fun of it. These expeditions were good for morale, for bonding and building of team spirit - according to Victorian public school traditions - as well as for rest and recreation. They took place at half terms and helped create a complete break from the routines of school life. Indeed, had we simply been 'mucking about' for three days on the premises - with no school classes or games - at half terms, everyone would have got rather fed up, boys and staff alike.

Some of the minor expeditions, trips on the Thames, a bicycle ride to Wolverton, were also part of the business of identification of the school and ourselves with Oxford (along with watching Varsity sports, cricket, rugger or rowing, concerts in the Sheldonian, plays at the Playhouse, as described elsewhere).

These outings to a world beyond Bardwell Road, were also experiences which we could share with parents rather more easily than accounts of the humdrum round of school life. We were on adult ground. Perhaps I am being fanciful but I believe that

this contact with the world outside enriched our correspondence, created mirror images, contributed to the retention of holiday interests and fostered the linkage between school and home. In fact it helped us grow up.

Schools, certainly public schools and maybe some prep schools, do all this in a different way these days (2011), with a much higher quotient of parental involvement – such as fathers following the first fifteen on matches round the country; endless exeats and long weekends, holiday skiing expeditions with parents in tow, choir tours, cultural tours, cricket tours to Barbados, you name it, we all do it together now. Maybe the Dragon expeditions and minor outings of the early 1950s were the first steps along the road to that new, liberal ingredient in modern boarding school education.

*

School expeditions were principally for boarders, although joined occasionally by day boys. The fact that they took place at half term was not only organisationally convenient, but also added extra spice by linking expeditions to other festivities and entertainments. Expeditions were important and refreshing holiday events in our lives.

The first I went on was to Cooper's Marmalade, one of a handful of basic outings which could be arranged (I presume) without too much difficulty in the Oxford area for boys in their first year or two at school. They included Pressed Steel, Job's Dairy, and no doubt others I have forgotten. Here is a description (of 5 November 1949) of my first half term expedition,

On Monday at 10.15 I went to Cooper's marmalade factory ~ it was very exiting. some of the boys went to a steel pres [= Pressed Steel] and some to the railway, some to the paper mill, some to London and some to Birmingham coal mine. Most of them say that the one they went to was best. In the Cooper's marmalade factory they make much more things such as pickles and horse-radish and honey and mint etc. ~ we saw them putting the labels on the bottles and sturing up the mint. There were many machines similar to the ones in the sweet factory. I wish I went down the coal mine but I did not ~

In my second term, Easter Term 1950, it was a trip to Blenheim, *Yesterday, Saturday we had a tour to Woodstock to Blenheim park the Duke of Marlborough's Palace ~ do you remember going there once before with granny. I am out of sick room now and I were in school from Thursday onwards. All the boys in the lowers went to the Natural History Museum in Oxford ~ I did not go because I am in the middles.*

At some point I must have gone to Pressed Steel because I remember the nice, feely little pieces of smoothed metal sheet or whatever it was which were handed out as presents. In any case, In November 1950 it was Job's Milk dairy next, *On Monday we had expeditions ~ 6 to places of interest in London for the older boys and 3 in Oxford for younger ~ I went to jobs milk dairy ~ it was great fun ~ Sandy went to cooper's marmalade where I went last year.*

And here indeed is Sandy's very cheerful account of his first expedition, to Cooper's, *on munday morning I went to a mronelad fakry [= marmelade factory] ~ we saw it being botald [= bottled] and making it defowr ~ we sou the wirks ~ we had pop and caeks and they gave us pots of jame*

In November 1952 I wrote a most vivid and full description of the expedition to London to the Greenwich National Maritime Museum and the Royal Mint. Other

London options were the Tower, the Houses of Parliament and the GPO - and perhaps variations could be permed, I am not sure.

I had a really lovely [time] on Monday and today. On Monday we left the school at 6.40 and left Oxford a [= on] the train (8.5). We gambled with matches with a master (I have the ace) and other games. When we got to Paddington we took an Underground to Trafalgar Square. From there we went by electric train to New Cross and by bus to the Greenwich Maritime Museum. (1) First of all we went into the House of Neptune which has models of boats the beautifulest I've ever seen. Also there they have the Royal barge dating back to ~~1840~~ 1780. We went through all sorts of places. One with Nelson's pants and socks ~ His telescope and all sorts of relics were there. A guide took us round.

Then we went outside and took a bus to the Tower ~ We had a [two words illeg.] on lunch at the Tower Restaurant. Then we went to the mint. We watched one ingot of copper go the whole way round. First they are melted and shaped [it] into bars then the bars are cut up ~ It is poss to see if it is pure copper the whole way through ~ It is sent to a chemist to be tested. Then coins are cut out by machine for 1d ½ d 3d and West Africa 1d ½ d (cupronickel) ~ 75% copper 25% nickel hence cupronickel. Then they are taken to another machine where whatever they are is stamped on them, both sides at once. They are taken to a place like a concrete mixer where they are turned to the colour of a penny ½ d to[o] ~ do that they have to go through 600° centigrade. They come out red hot into buckets of water. They are then cooled off and checked that they are not faulty ~ then they are put in boxes and [word illeg.] the bank of England etc or the docks where they are sent out to colonys. We then went back and had a drink before we went to the Tower ~ we started round the Tower at 3.15 ~ we went into the lower [] where Robin [Hood?] was imprisoned ~ We saw the room where the Princes were murdered high up in a small cell in the Bloody Tower ~ We then went into the centre case where torture instruments are put out. We then went by underground to Paddington . We had tea in the train When we got to Oxford we watched Fireworks.

That same half term Sandy went to Peter Scott's Severn Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge on the Avon,

On Monday we had simply lovely fun at the 7 [= Severn] wild Fowl trust. We saw some really very beautiful birds and I liked the queens tree geese one of the best birds their [= there]. As we walked into it a very big black Gose came up to us and we could strok it ~ a man called and the geese flapped the wings almost 7 feet off the ground and took it out of [his?] mouth. When we went to the fiel we did not see anay geese because the[y] were all on the mud about a mile away.

In July 1953 Sandy went to Whipsnade, where I had been on a rainy summer's day two years earlier when all the roads were flooded,

On Monday I went to Whipsand [sic] and it was very hot but that did not matter ~ we went in a one decker bus and eat strabeys[= strawberries] on the way. I think I licked [= liked] best the Kowala bears being fed or the seals and I thought the Monekys very good and amusing ~ some of the monekys were playing in the trees[,] not in their neted part[,] and one Dragon who had a bag of crisps had it knocked out of his hands by a monkey[,] rip[p]ed open and most of them eten

by him and his pals. I took some very nice photographs ~ they have not been developed ~ by nice I mean interesting ~ I took a good one of a polar bear standing up on his hind legs against the bars of its big cage ~ and it had quite an interesting background of his hut carved into his store lick [like] a cavern and his pool to swim in and the rocks made out of carved stones to look like his old ice blocks ~ it gave an impressive idea of [what] the Whipsand can do to their animals and [their] comfort.

I remember the black and white (rather over exposed) photos well. Sandy and I were very excited about having our own real photos of real wild animals. It must have been in the early days of his or our camera ownership.

The expedition I joined in October 1953 (at the start of my last year) was another great success.

I had a spiffing day on Monday. We left Oxford at 9.30 a.m. And passed through Swindon and Farringdon on to Bath. Then we were taken round the Roman Baths there. It was interesting but the burbler (guide) was futile. We had a smashing lunch there in the pump room. We left off in the bus again and arrived at Bristol around 2.30

We were shown round the warehouses and watched the cranes unloading. Then we went to the locks and watched two steamers going through. I took quite a lot of photos there and at Bath. Then we went to a canteen where we had tea. By the time we left it was dark. Our driver in my opinion was a road hog. He drove down the middle of the road pushing lorries on the grass at the side and giving death scares to little cars. We arrived very late [= late] having to stop for sick chaps twice. But we had a first rate holiday.

In February 1954 Sandy went on a second expedition to Slimbridge, another magnificent success,

When we got there we first went to a very big pen about half a mile by ¼ of a mile ~ there were some very beautiful birds and the biography of some species were very very interesting indeed ~ then we went to a hide out from where you saw the birds being caught and ringed ~ then we went to another pen where there were some of the most colourful birds and we saw the most colourful water bird in the world. When we went to see the wild geese we only saw the silhouettes [= silhouettes] on the skyline. On our way back Putty (my form master) told us some terrifying ghost stories.

In May 1954 I wrote home about a possible expedition to the Farne Islands, *It is definite now that the expedition is to be on the Sat 12 June to Mon. That is on the father's match day and I am not at all sure which to do. I might be playing in the first though and then I would go up to the Farnes.* There were conflicting priorities here. The date was after scholarship entrance exams all right but having a part in the summer term play, Macbeth, was probably a factor. In addition there was the father's match, which, whether your own father was playing or not, was a social as well as sporting occasion not to be missed. In the event, neither Sandy nor I went.

That October (I was now at Sedbergh) Sandy had another good range of options to choose from, *The [re] are lots of expeditions on half term Monday. There is Meusums and: House of Commons and Westminster Abbey: the Mint: Mount Pleasant railway letter sorting place: Harrods; seeing the back scenes and all the new*

toys and Things, all the way of storing and arranging for Christmas: Guinness Brewery: the City which is seeing all the sight of the City: which do you think would be the best to go on[?] I might not be able to go on my 1st choice but if not I will be able to go on my second choice. I think Mint or Harrods but I don't know which would be best. It is really half term now.

In the end Sandy opted for going to the Mint and Guinness, as did his friend Hugo Rowbotham,

I had a marvellous half term at Guinness's and the Imp' war Museum. We left school at about half or quarter past eight and Arrived at London at 5 to 10 about. Then we went to the Imperial War Museum which was very intersting [sic]. When we had finished looking at the Imp War Museum we had lunch at the Churchouse Restaeraunt by the Houses of Parliament. We had disgusting celery soup[,] the[n] roast meat and spuds and peas, Jelly.

We went by tube to Guinness Park royal Brewery. Mr Montgomery shod [= showed] us round. There are some wizzard gachets [= gadgets]. We saw it from Hops Malt and Barley to Guinness going away in huge tankers. We had tea in their grounds and the masters drank for too long so we missed the train back to Oxford. So we had a second tea at Paddington and caught the next train back to Oxford.

In June 1955 Sandy went to London to see the Royal Tournament,

We started at 10 o'clock after a mangy foul Breakfast. Then at about 12.30 we had two very mangy sandwiches and a 'penguin'. That was our lunch. Then we got there about 1 o'clock. We were allowed to go anywhere in London for about an hour. Some chaps went on the underground wasting their money ~ some went to the Natural History Museum but me and 3 other chaps felt jolly hungry so we went and had egg and chips at the Corner Café (1/3d).

Then we went and saw the show. It really was bang-on. The three best were

1 the field gun race. This was taking a field gun across a cavern

2 A raid by commandos on a radar pylon [= pylon] and Guard hut on top of a cliff

3 'Tother was a high class gym thing

It was all absouloutly sonic. Pipes and Drums band.

In the spring of 1955 a Thames river launch cruise at the start of the Summer holidays for three or four boys was arranged by Gerd Summerhoff, *I leave for the cruise almost immedaitely after the end of term; arrive home Sat 30th July.* In May he explained the idea further, *With Gert we are starting at Oxford and going down to Henley and Marlow just pottering then come up here again.* The boat trip duly took place and was greatly enjoyed by all. In October, Sandy was writing home for the photos he had taken but left at home, *Please could you send my river trip photos. The one of Gert and Jeremy sweeping the deck especially ~ if possible send the whole lot.* Sandy also kept a short three or four page diary but most unfortunately it went missing in the clearance of his papers after he died in 2008.

Gerd had also been hoping to organise an expedition to see a Shakespeare play at Stratford on Avon, plans did not work out, *talking of Gert we are not going to Stratford for he can't get tickets anyhow ~ so he is going to take us round Press-steal [= Pressed Steel] or the Oxford Printing Press, he can get into both those because he taught the manager's son of Press steal and has had his books printed by the*

Oxford press. The latter expedition took place in mid-July and they also visited Triang, to whom Gerd was a technical adviser on account of his radio-controlled model boats, aeroplanes and other inventions, *On Thursday coming gert is taking us round press steal on Friday taking [us] round Triang works.*

In November 1955 Sandy went on an expedition to Bath, in the success of which clearly good food played a major part,

On Monday morning (half term) we started in our buses at 8.45 ~ We went on till about 11 then stoped and had buns. We arrived at Bath about 11.30 The Roman baths were very interesting ~ the water in one place was so hot that if we went down there we would [be] to[fo] hot and pass out but in some places I felt the water and it was very hot. We had a bang-on lunch[,] absolutley wizzard.

Tomatoe soup (rolls), Roast Pork, Green Peas, Cabbage, Roast spuds, Mashed spuds, Mint sauce, Fruit and Ice Cream , Orange aid. We had all of that and a jolly big helping of everything.

We then went on to the colour printing factory ~ they printed lots of Sweet papers and Tined food rapers [= wrappers]. It was all very interesting and some of the printing Machinery was wizzard. We saw some artists designing some advertisements and pictures for a callender. We had a slap up tea as well and had some wizzard fun fighting on the return journey in the bus.

*

Travel to and from school could be an expedition itself. Return to school at the beginning of term from Germany, and later from Surrey, commonly involved visits to a) Mr Widowson, a dentist in Harley Street, b) Hamleys, as a reward for a), c) a cartoon theatre (to pass time comfortably for all) and d) a museum or other hall of culture if time permitted. If it was a two day affair, there might be a show in the evening. Return to school, and staying with family friends in London, in September 1950 (Sandy's first term at the Dragon) was typical,

on wendsday we went to London ~ saw the changing of the life guards at Whitehall ~ Then we went to Hamleys and bought some dinky toys and our torches. After that we went to Jan da Silva's ~~hou~~ flat in Cumberland mansions. In an American Women's Club for lunch had enourmous [sic] ice. Then we went to a book shop. I bought 3 books and Sandy 2 ~ We then went to the dentist at 4 p.m. ~ and went to a news film after ~ which was dull at first, very. But just as we were going to leave for the train, the exiting bit came. we watched half and missed the train! So we had tea on the station (because we did not have any) and went on the next train.

Then there were river trips. I recall clearly the flotilla of boats going up the Thames from Port Meadow to Wytham Woods, Godstow and elsewhere, and the picnics, bathing parties and various games on the riverside meadows, with masters and pupils all participating. They were popular events. But their importance was as a tribal rite (placing no doubt tremendous demands on the organizational abilities of the elders of the tribe), rather than as a successful picnic. The numbers were too many, there were not enough strawberries to go round, or lemon squash to satisfy the cast of hundreds; the grass scratched, flies bit and legs itched; not everyone could have a go with the rounders bat, the sandwiches ran out and the sun went out; but we all endured it and came home to school happy.

Other river trips involving rowing are covered elsewhere in connection with other

summer river sports. Sandy, however, was taken with Hugo by the Rowbotham parents on a most enjoyable expedition to the Henley Regatta in July 1955,

We started at 10 o'clock missing morning school [and] went to Henley royal regatta. It was spifing sonic, marvelous wonderful ~ we rolled up there in their rolls ~ we arrived at about 20 to 12 because Mr Row' did some shopping in Oxford.

We tried to get a punt but it was 5 guineas for 5 hours we diceided it was a thorough scandal and left. We went into the General Encloser and bought 4 seats (deck chairs) ~ we saw the yank and many British teams and clubs and leanders club ~ it was jolly good racing ~ there was only 1 race I think with the winner over 1 length ahead. We saw 8s, 4s, 2s, and 1s ~ we saw a pole beat Band in the sculling and we saw the Soviet beat the Leanders and they beat someone in the 4s. They are wonderful rowers.

*

Nearer school, there were of course traditional visits at weekends to Linton Lodge in Linton Road, the Mecca of North Oxford run by the egregious Mr Retty. Sandy went to the hotel twice at half term in the summer of 1952 when Hugo Rowbotham's parents were staying there, *We stayed in the games room most of the time playing ping pong or darts or puff ball and backing [= baking] eating chestnuts ~ 1 day I played against an Indian man at ping pong ~ he was a graduate from Cambridge ~ I won 21 to 18 points ~ his aksent was terrible funny and I could not understand him.*

In my mind's eye I always see Linton Lodge in summer time, the colourful garden with deck chairs and garden games, where you took tea with scones and strawberries, and the dark inner halls at the back where you played ping pong. But with grandparents based only one road away we did not need to go often.

Then there were occasional visits, weekday as well as at weekend by relatives of sufficient seniority to be able to get us out of school for an hour or two. Grandfather BL, 'Dear Man', came more than once on conferences. In April 1952 I wrote of it, *Dear man is going to Oxford to give a lecture on French to French masters and head masters. He is all for grammar (I'm not!)* And again in July 1952, *Dear Man came down on Tuesday to a Headmaster's meeting (or something of that sort) and saw us; and Sandy noted it too, on Tuesday Joc had a head masters meeting and Dear Man went to it and Joc arrached [= arranged] for us to see him ~ so we did.*

Other relatives, especially in the school mastering business, occasionally looked in for a quick visit when they were in Oxford; and of course another form of expedition were the away matches at more distant schools, Wellington or Clifton Juniors, or the prep schools near Rugby came past. These are described elsewhere.

We also enjoyed occasional outings at weekends with friends to their family homes, sometimes for birthday or other party occasions, although with Sandy and me it was usually the other way round, with boarder friends coming out with us to nearby Belbroughton Road for lunch or tea or both. Not all are noted in our letters by any means, but one example is Sandy's outing in November 1952 with Jeremy Burrow, for Jeremy's brother's birthday party at their grandmother's home,

Yesterday I went out for lunch and tea with a boy called Jeremy Burrow and it was in a haunted old house like a maushion belonging to his Grandma. We got wonderful grub and we had a party for tea because it was Jeremy's brother's birthday party. The[re] were 7 people there most grown ups and the grub was

like on board the Queen Mary and twice as good ~ they have to [= two] very nice dogs[,] one a cocker spaniel and one a Dalmatian which is a Great dane just a little smaller. It was great fun ~ me and Jeremy played in the fields and round the garden and climbed high [= high] pine trees and stone walls till tea then the party started

*

Then there were outings to our own relatives and family friends in or near Oxford too, such as a Sunday in July 1953 at the house of Sheila Callender, my mother's closest friend at the Radcliffe, *then we went to Sheylers [= Sheila's] house to have a pick nick with 12 other Gyser bills ~ it was rather rainy so eat it in her atick ~ then after Shela played the gramophone record you gave us ~ It is very very nice!!! We went to the river in two boats with the rest and stayed for tea.*

Almost counting as small expeditions were occasional longer walks or bike rides we made around Oxford. One was with Robert Acland in February 1952, *I also went for 1 [hour's?] walk with Robert Acland. We went to Marston Ferry ~ crossed ~ I then got stuck in a bog up to my knees but was pulled out by a master whom we past [= passed] ~ (he was taking some of the younger boys) ~ I got stuck in another bog and Acland pulled me out ~ he got stuck and I pulled him out. We saw a man fishing for [word omitted] ~ We saw a bottle floating down stream the other side of the river ~ about 10 yds shot and I hit it [pres, with a stone?] Our boots got caked with mud. Mine came off with the weight and I got my socks thiftly [= filthy] ~ We came back over the Hump bridge through the Parks.*

Another was a bike ride with John Turner up the Thames in March 1952, *Yesterday I went for a lovely bike, past Sheila's house to the Trout. I fished a bit there with J. Turner and then I went on up the thames to the Boathouse (north of the Town) on the tow path. We watched some coaching. I saw coot and some babys in the reeds. I looked but could not find their nest.* With hindsight I am rather surprised that we were permitted to ride so far from school in our third year - but we grew up faster than I remembered.

Finally, one might include holiday visits to the homes of Dragon friends. In the Easter holidays of 1954 I stayed with John Hordern, whose father was vicar at Collywestern near Stamford. The visit was arranged partly because my mother was expecting a baby early that April. Sandy went at the same time to stay with the Rowbothams near Newcastle, but we have no account of it. I remember the stay in Collywestern well, a rural idyll,

It is a lovely place and yesterday we had perfect weather. John and I first watched and helped the blacksmith make a shoe, Then we went to the slate mines. Collywestern slate is the only of its type and I have brought some. Today I am going to Stamford market and look around Stamford...I slept very well last night and in the morning I ragged around with John and Michael aged 10. I came back from the station on Rev Hordern's motor bike side car. Smashing...

And a few days later I continued, *We went for a 2 hr bike ride before breakfast yesterday. And in the afternoon we went to a Castle 'Worthop ruins'. We found skulls in one of the dungeons but they were sheep skulls not human ones...*

We went to Communion Service this morning as they all do. I got cramp kneeling down in those small piews (not sure of the spelling). This afternoon we hope to go on a bike to the 'ills and olls'. There was a battle fought there and flowers which only grow where blood has been dropped grow there. The ground

is all [sketch of wavy ground] as I have been told. Great fun I should think playing stalking games in it as we hope to do.

The letters make, with hindsight, a pleasant account of two typical Dragons messing about, contented and self-contained - and quite probably taking something of our Dragon world with us all the time too.

7. ORAL CULTURE

The New Hall in the 1940's, with allegorical painting, the scene of many performances



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LECTURES, SPEECHES AND SERMONS

We were subjected to various kinds of lectures and exhortations throughout our time at the Dragon. These consisted of lectures by outside speakers, speeches at the annual prize-giving speech day, and the sermons preached each week at the Sunday service. We were also strongly encouraged to develop rhetorical skills through speech giving ourselves, recitations and a lively debating society. Each of these gives us an insight into the kind of mental and social world which surrounded us in this school.

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Alan comments that there were occasional lectures by outside speakers on particular themes which were thought to be useful or amusing – perhaps in giving us ideas for our future careers, or to broaden our minds into what was happening in distant lands. The choice of person and subject, a few of which are noted in my letters, tells us a good deal about the kind of world it was expected we would inhabit.

In the Christmas Term of my second year, 1951, there was a lecture by Mr Beckett, summarized by in the 'Draconian' by one of my friends, Mark Elvin, later a distinguished sinologist, when he was 13 years old, on Kierman's expedition in Persia and the follow up by Beckett. It was illustrated by slides and Elvin ends his summary 'They had an interesting conversation with some South Persian soldiers before they left. They discovered that they are friendly, lazy, good-natured, and detest war.'

On 18th February 1953 I wrote that *We had a lecture last night on a expedition to the Arctic and it was very interesting.* Ten days later on 1st March I wrote *We had a lecture on Saturday about the Olympic games with lantern slides and the lecturer was Harold Abrahams who is a very fine athlete and who won a race a few years ago.... We are having another lecture today about naval aviation and here is a jet or two. [pictures - obviously traced with carbon paper of four kinds of plane].* A week later on 8th March *We are having a lecture tonight with two sound films on missionary in Africa and china.*

Another lecture occurred at the start of my fourth year, when on October 24th, according to the 'Draconian', Philip Bentlif (O.D), gave a 'very stimulating lecture' on 'In the New world', an account of his travels across America. The account ends: 'Philip's vivid account made it possible for us to understand the amazing paradox of a highly civilized and artificial society built on the edge of a desert and possessing few natural resources. At the end of the lecture he answered a battery of excited questioners, and sent us all away with the urge to visit the B.O.A.C. or Cunard agencies as soon as possible.'

In the summer term there was a lecture by Mr. Copleston on 'Takoradi to Timbuktu', travels from the Gold Coast to the north of Africa on a bicycle. The report was written by another friend and colleague of mine, Philip Steadman, now a distinguished Professor of Architecture, then aged twelve and a half. The lecture was accompanied by slides, and ended with a film 'The Tree of Life' on the founding of palm-oil refineries in the Belgian Congo.

I do not note any of these in my surviving letters, but in my last Easter term, on 27th January 1955 I wrote *In the evening there was a lecture (by an undergraduate from Worcester college) who gave a talk about the Oxford travel club's journey to Angola in S. Africa. And he illustrated it with a coloured film.* Then on 17th March I note 'in the evening their was a talk by a women from the N.S.P.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). And it was all very stirring. But next day I

was sick.' I was clearly becoming faintly cynical in my old age, or perhaps uncomfortable at a talk which may have been a little close to the bone. Much earlier, on 20th April 1952 I wrote from a summer camp at Milford on Sea *We had a lecture on doctor bonados and a film on the children their*; another glimpse at another world of children.

In this small sample we find that exploration is a central theme - various explorers and another on missionary work and a further one on naval aviation. All these, and even the talk on Olympic sports suggest a wider world, with the talk on Cruelty to Children an apposite one to end on in my penultimate term.

*

Jamie has a number of general personal comments about lectures at the Dragon (which were held in late Winter and through the Spring terms).

First, I remembered very few until I read my and Sandy's letters from school - and even then, I could not recall many. I was not a good audience; neither my level of interest nor span of attention was up to much. The number mentioned in letters may have been high but this was probably to reassure my parents about my cultural awareness - at least I thought the subjects might have been of interest to them. The fact that most took place on the evening before Sunday morning letter prep also no doubt helped recall - and masters would always be willing to oblige with a forgotten title. Second, I was usually attracted, as I guess Sandy was, more by the charisma of the lecturer than the subject matter. One lecture I remembered was given by Harold Abrahams - august former Olympic hero and an Old Dragon to boot. Young undergraduate explorers also probably had an appeal. Third, it is, not surprisingly, evident that I liked best lectures with visual aids - in order, coloured film, black and white film, coloured (lantern) slides.

My comments in letters show that there were some lectures clearly appealed while others held only mild interest if any. The ones I enjoyed most were about exotic places, preferably with good colour photos (geysers in NZ, the Great Barrier Reef, mountain climbing). Nevertheless, the exotic dimension had an important role. In terms of a lecture programme, there was a kind of continuum from matters exotic or of geographic interest through to adventure, expeditions, to armed forces, economic control and empire. Patriotic patterns and imperial considerations were painted in positive terms - all befitting our future role to conquer far away places for Britain?

Lectures which score a mention in our letters include ones on

- New Zealand (March 1951), with slides. I had no comments but Sandy was most taken by the geysers, '*...they said you can have a bol [= bowl] of booling [= boiling] warter besaid [sic] a bol of frozen warter!! Do you belev in it?*'

- farming in Australia '*which was very interesting*' (February 1952).

- a journey from Australia to UK (with lantern slides)

- a British/ Swedish/ Norwegian Antarctic Expedition with slides and a film, shown in January 1953. *It was very like Scott's but took place 1949-52. Wing commander Wetton [pres. the speaker] took place [= part] in the reconnaissance part in Aeroplanes. It was very good. The photography was jolly good. Sandy however did not like the cruelty, ... The[re] were colour slides and black and white films ~ it was horrible when they killed seals and caught Penguins and put them on Board ~ The howle [= whole] boat was cove[r]d with whale meat and the dogs eat most of it.*

- Malaya rubber (4 May 1952) *...a lecture on Malaya's rubber and East Asia (E.A. was in technicolour) Malaya's rubber was a very good film. it first showed the uses of rubber form Baby's toys, school boys catapults, a master's canes, then*

university tennis courts and middle aged men's golf balls. Then it went through the rubber from a plant to mattress [= matrix] ~ It also showed communist troops who he filmed from the jungle ~ they were about 15 yards off. The film in technicolour also was very good.

This last lecture was evidently a success, complete with its adventure and fighting - whereas one on Korea in November 1952, as I remarked in a letter home, had references to the Korean war but no fighting. And Malaya was perhaps of heightened interest because our great uncle Rob was commander of British Land Forces there at the time, and my godmother was accompanying her soldier husband there.

In February 1953 we were shown a film on the Olympic games 1952. The only camera in the arena. It was a copied film ~ the chap who took it ran 4th in the 400 metres relay. They run at a terrific speed. Stacey was his name and Guy Butler helped him film it. They are both ODs. It included slow motion photography which must have fascinated us, as is evident in Sandy's vivid account,

On Wednesday an Olympic runner came and gave us a film on it. It was very interesting and some men throwing the hammer were so fat every body watching including the masters laughed very hard. Everything we saw was shown in slow motion and Ordinary speed. So if you were watching you saw just who [= how] they did it and it taught me quite a lot by seeing [= cine-ing] the Double [= double] and Slow motion.

I myself was apparently more impressed by Harold Abrahams, there was a lecture on the Olympic Games by Harold Abraham ~ Father of one of our boys. I think it was better than the one by Mr Stacey.

In the extreme exotic category were lectures and films in March 1953 on missionary work, We saw 3 cine films taken by missionaries [sic]. One was about a cripple, and there was a drought so the witch doctor did a dance and to take the evil spirits away was about to sacrifice this cripple. Then there was a total Eclipse and in the confusion he escaped. The others were (1) about peasants in China ~ and the other about life in Pakistan. They both were very interesting.

And ultra exotic of course was a lecture in December 1955 by popular Australian staff member Pluto (Mr. Potter) on the Great barrier Reef!

...Yesterday evening Mr Potter (Pluto) gave a lecture with coloured slides on the Great Barrier Reef. He is a v. v. good photograph[er] and had some very good coloured slides. Also there was a film on the Great Barrier Reef which was partly under water swimming amongst the corals and fishes. It was v.v. good and very interesting. There was a photo by Pluto which was the nest of a __ blue bird which beside it on every nest in the world is a long stick which on every nest in the world faces due north or south to the absolute fraction of a degree; also the bird steals anything that is blue. in its nest was a blue toothbrush and blue coloured toothpaste tube and other blue articles.

Anything to do with underwater swimming was a guaranteed success, as is evident from Sandy's letter of 11 March 1956,

...a really wizard lecture all about under water swimming and diving. The man is a wizard under water swimmer himself ~ they spear fish to 90lb and then have smashing fights. There were 2 films and they were wizard ~ they showed you all

about diving and spearing fish ~ they all have aqualung diving apparatus which the man (lecturer) showed us and he told us how it worked. There was a film on the old Greek ship being excavated by divers.

This lecture may have had particular appeal because Sandy and I were already very keen on snorkelling, having been given masks and flippers for birthday presents by this time.

Other lectures on far flung corners of the empire getting a mention, include *South Africa - by Dog (Mr. Wiley)* on a snowy night in February 1954; then one in February 1955 (Sandy) *by a chap at Oxford about the university expedition to Angola in Africa. We had lots of colour slides. He was a very good photographer,* and one in March 1955 about Hong Kong, but no further details given.

Perhaps more surprising was Sandy's interest in a lecture *'on Athens by a very learned bloke who was giving it to the other learned blokes who learn Greek. It had some wonderful slides and it was jolly good.'* But maybe the slides made it? Also notable is Sandy's affectionate if ironic reference to the scholars in the top classes.

Geography was a subject both Sandy and I enjoyed, hence my interest in a lecture in July 1952 by *'one of our old masters gave us a lecture on Weather forecast [sic] which was very interesting.* And a number of lectures on the medieval world perhaps had exotic content by being far away in time or involving romantic elements such as one on, *old castles by Spiv the geog master - had slides and film of warriors of 1400s - good fun* (Sandy February 1955).

Lectures on Britain's armed forces were predictably well received, *...We are having a lecshure on the Royal Navy.* (Sandy, March 1951). And in November 1955 there was a lecture on the Royal Air force with four films (a sensible move by the RAF liaison officer!), *4 subjects, Farnborough, Greenland Exped, Jets etc. an excellent lecture by an air force man. He showed us all the pilots kit and escape kit and told us the history of jets and some of the problems of modern jets. He brought 4 films with him, 1) on Jet engines 2) Farnborough air display 3) on the Greenland expedition 4) a true last war ship bombing film. All were very good.'*

Of possible career interest was a lecture on architecture in mid February 1953, but no details are given. It is not clear, however, what a lecture by *Mr Thwates on Europe with colour slides in January 1955* was about, nor one on *'village life with a film strip'* in November 1954 .

Politics however, was a bridge too far for Sandy who wrote on 21 November 1954 of a lecture by *The right Onerable Sir Hugh Gatskill Chancellor of the Exchequer of the Labour Party came and lectured to us yesterday, about 90 boys, I was one of them . It was rather hard to understand what he was talking about, though I got some of it in my nut.*

Quite a catch for the School, but...

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The speeches given at the prize-giving in the summer terms are printed in the 'Draconian' and Alan will take some extracts and themes from these to see what we were being told. They are particularly interesting since each year a mother and a father of two current pupils gave the speeches, followed by a short speech by the headmaster. So we gain some insight into what parents thought the boys might be interested in, how they should be encouraged in certain directions, what the assumptions behind sending boys to the school was.

My first summer, 1951, the speeches started by one by Mrs. Dunbabin, who had

just given out the prizes. Amongst her remarks, all of them printed in the 'Draconian', it is worth noting her views on Dragon Diaries. 'But the people I really admire are the writers of the diaries. I have always thought diary writing one of the most valuable of all Dragon activities, and when I congratulate the winners I must certainly include their families, because I am sure a good diary must be, partly at any rate, a joint effort... And much more than the prize, the diary itself will be your reward. I know you will enjoy re-reading it and re-living a summer holiday, perhaps in the depths of winter. Best of all, if you do it year after year, you will have for always a record of your family, your friends, and yourself, and if you watch your ideas changing, and your hand-writing and spelling, you will be very much like looking back and seeing how you became the sort of person you now are.' Alas that I did not take her advice and do not seem to have kept any diaries.

On the subject of diaries, some people did keep diaries, for which they might be awarded prizes. I have read one or two of them. Nigel Williams, a companion of Jamie Bruce Lockhart in Upper 2A writes that 'The Dragon holiday diaries have survived however, which on re-reading seem to be heavily influenced by Molesworth. The most frequent entry is "Mum in a bate."'

The next speaker was Tommy Hodgkin. Among other musings in a witty and clever talk, he said. 'I sometimes wonder what makes me respect and admire the Dragon School as much as I do. I think that, more than anything else, it is that at the Dragon School one gets the idea of doing what one thinks right and saying what one thinks, and not paying too much attention to whether other people approve of it or not. When I went on from here to a Public School, the first thing people said to me, when they heard I came from the Dragon School, was "Oh, you come from the School where the girls play Rigger'. Hodgkin, being timid, was at first going to make a conciliatory answer that they never got beyond the 3rd XV. 'Then it occurred to me to reply, "Well, why shouldn't girls play Rigger if they want to?" and I found these people had no answer to that...'

In Summer 1952, my second year the first speaker was Mrs. Hope, whose son Francis, as I recall, was a very successful boy at the school, and who had been a parent of Dragons for twelve years. She proceeded to praise the school, especially for its teachers and for the diverse and often contradictory teaching they received. Ronnie Evers then made a speech. Among other things he said that 'Lots of things you do here are extraordinarily difficult, but you do them as though they are easy; and you will find, when you go to other schools, that you are much more practised at that kind of thing than other people. You are lucky in being given that sort of training here, making difficult things appear easy. You do not think them easy, but you work so hard at them that everyone else thinks you find them easy.' He then goes on to point out that the school motto, 'Arduus ad Solem', was used by Virgil to describe a 'particularly noisome snake'. Yet, 'The Dragon, you see, has taken something ordinary and made it into something rather remarkable, and I should like to think of what this School does for us in that way.'

The final speech was by Joc. He quoted a letter from a Dragon parent: 'My husband and I would like to thank you and your excellent staff on our boy's behalf. He has acquired an ease of manner and stability of character - that indefinable something which real Dragons get and which we are happy to know will last him all his life.' Joc then commented. 'I like to think of this indefinable something as being passed on from one boy to the next all the time.... And I like to think that this "something" is based mainly on the freedom which exists here more, probably, than in any other Preparatory or Public School. But freedom isn't easy to respect. Indeed, it is far easier to abuse. And the real Dragon spirit only comes from learning

how to use freedom properly and not to abuse it. It means that every one of us has a much greater responsibility to the community than if there were more outside controls, and it means that one of our greatest responsibilities is to learn how to control ourselves.' He then drew attention to an earlier address which had talked about three lamps which the boys should burnish and make brighter. 'The lamp of friendship - an outstretched hand always ready to help someone in trouble or someone less lucky than you are yourself. The lamp of witness; that means the lamp of faith - faith in yourselves, faith in others, and faith in what is right. And lastly the lamp of dedication - that is, of giving ourselves up to do what we believe to be right.'

At the prize-giving in Summer 1953, the first speech was by Mrs. Backus and the second by Mr. Cartwright. The latter suggested, among other things, that 'The charm of the Dragon School to all Dragons and Old Dragons is that all change is very, very gradual. Revolutions, whether in countries or in schools, are very unpleasant for everybody.' Later he continued 'Nothing is ever changed just for novelty's sake. If there is something good, they try to make it better; and I expect that if you boys think something is bad, you very quickly tell a master about it, and it gets put right.' Joc's final speech was mainly a report on how an extremely busy term, dominated by the Coronation, had gone.

Joc ended by noting that the Ministry of Education had suggested that 'Competence, Curiosity, and Conscience' should be encouraged in school. To this he wished to add 'Courtesy, Cooperation, and Cheerfulness'. This was addressed especially to the leavers. 'If, when you leave here, you do so as competent young men able to do a job well, reliable in a crisis, and able to look after other people if they need; if you leave here with inquisitive minds wanting to know why things happen and the reasons for rules and conditions which to you may not seem to make sense: if you leave here having trained your conscience to know the difference between right and wrong and having trained yourselves to do what your conscience tells you is right: if you leave here determined to be kind and courteous to all those with whom you come in contact and to co-operate readily with anyone who needs your co-operation; and if you have learnt to remain cheerful always, especially when things go wrong, I reckon that your time here as Dragons will have been well spent.'

At the summer prize-giving in 1954, the parents chosen to give out the prizes were Mrs. Thompson (Penelope Stradling, O.D.), and Mr. Stanier, Headmaster of Magdalen College School. Mrs. Thompson again praised the values of the holiday diaries and exhorted those who wrote them 'Don't destroy them or lose them, and don't let your mother tidy them away at spring-cleaning'. For when they are re-read 'as sometimes a smell or a tune will bring back some memory that you have forgotten, so as you read your diary a ghost of your former self will appear before you to remind you ...' She then proceeded to say 'Now I want to repeat what many people have said to you before. You all know you have a big debt to pay for your heritage. It is a debt to a great many people, and one which you will find hard to pay...' In the final speech by Joc alongside his usual thanks to staff and account of the term, he said 'Because I reckon that happiness is rather important. A happy atmosphere is a very important part of any community, and that atmosphere can only be created by the members of the community itself.' He also alluded to the last sermon of term which had stressed how privileged the children were and that this brought responsibilities. Joc added 'It's not enough to grow up in a happy home and in a happy school and to do your part in making those places happy. It's your responsibility also to find out what other homes are like and what other schools are like.'

At the end of my last term, the two Dragon parents giving speeches were Mrs

Bruce and Mr. Gilman, both of whom spoke briefly. Among Joc's observations were some specifically for me and others going off to our Public Schools. 'Much will be expected of them there, and may I just remind them of what I said about two things, Privileges and Responsibilities? I always hope that one of the things which Dragons learn here is that privileges are very unimportant things, but that responsibilities are very important.' He ended by saying 'During these last few days there have been some splendid contests in the river and on the fields. Boys have learnt to swim well, to jump well and to run well. But far more important, they have also learnt - I hope and think - to win well and to lose well - to take success and disappointments in their stride. Don't ever forget the importance of these two things.'

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Jamie comments that he has really no recollections of prize-givings - except of a hall crowded with seated parents of all shapes and sizes - and none at all of the speeches. Speech days come to my mind as part of a programme of end of term (were they ever held at half term?) events. I can only find two references in my letters to speeches, and none in Sandy's, and I am not even sure whether they were prize giving occasions. One was in December 1950, *tonight we have our dorm plays which will be good fun and a semi-house supper ~ today there are carols sung by boys ~ on Monday no prep ~ we have the Home talent as well ~ on Thursday we have speeches.* And the other related to arrangements for the end of the Spring 1951 term, *On Tuesday we have only 3 periods of work, for me Art, Art, music. Then speeches and reading. Our form are reading from 'Oliver Twist'. I'm reading Mr. Limbkins' part. we then have a half.*

There seems to be a real lacuna in my Dragon recollections when it comes to speeches. They never were a favourite part of my schoolboy experience, but it almost seems now as if they had been blotted out.

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Each term the 'Draconian' would print a list of the services which were held on Sundays, mostly in the School Hall (since there was no Chapel). The readings at these services are also given and are sometimes revealing. Occasionally, if it was thought to be special, the whole sermon would be printed. I (Alan) shall look at these since they again give insights into the mentality, and the morality, which surrounded the school.

The first sermon I heard at the school, on September 24th 1950, was in fact by the Headmaster, Joc. He spoke on 'Orando laborando: how to become good citizens and good Christians, by hard work and prayer'. It was a suitable theme for a school with the motto 'Arduus ad Solem'. The readings went beyond several biblical texts, to something from Ruskin ('Do not ask for God's Kingdom when you do not want it'); St Francis de Sales 'On cherishing the small virtues'; John Bunyan on 'Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth' and 'Pray to the Father' by Tennyson.

The next week the Headmaster of Donnington School, Oxford, preached on 'The vision of God', and music from Haydn's 'Creation' were played on recordings. There was a little later a sermon by the Bishop of Buckingham on 'Childhood into Manhood; what to keep and what to get rid of: keep trust and wonder; life regarded as a treasure hunt', where the readings included something from C.S.Lewis.

The sermon on November 5th was by the Rector of Lawford in Essex, on 'Trust in God: personal experience of its effects, in India and in war'. At this service the new 1950 Hymn Book was used for the first time. The Remembrance Day service

was held a week later on November 12th at the Cross. Various poems were read by boys and the sermon was on 'Friendship; God's Gift to Man'. The following week the Master of Magdalen College School preached on 'Fear - often unnecessary, to be encountered by prayer and faith'.

Amongst the sermons the following term were the following. The Revd. Wilkins on 'Three choices of man - wealth, fame, and service - giving not getting.' This was illustrated by the casket scene in the Merchant of Venice and a reading from Isaac Walton, amongst other things. Several masters gave sermons and then the Revd. Christopher Stead (O.D) chaplain of Keble, preached on 'Run the race, looking unto Jesus: looking forward to the goal: perseverance and heroism in man.' The readings included George Macdonald and Thomas Carlyle on the 'Heroic in Man'.

In the Christmas Term 1951, at the start of my second year, there were three Bishops preaching. Joc the headmaster again started the year, with a sermon on 'Beginning of Term: happiness, courage, thankfulness'. Most of the readings were on courage. On 9th October I noted in a letter home 'We are going to the City church for the service'; as usual, the second service was in the City Church for Harvest Festival. Most of the sermons were on fairly straight religious topics, with the reading of C.A.A's poem 'The Trust' by several boys at the War Memorial. On 25th November the Revd. Savage preached on 'Memory as the stimulus to Hope'. On Advent Sunday, December 2nd, the Revd. Wilkins preached on 'Adventure in life and religion, keenness: whatever they hand findeth to do, do it with thy might', with several poems and a reading about a book on Everest. The last service was followed by carols.

In the following term, Easter 1952, the first sermon was by Basil Blackwell, the founder of Blackwell's bookshop I presume. The topic was 'Pride, the greatest evil: the story of St. Agatha'. There were several poems read. His sermon is printed in the 'Draconian'. It suggests that the thing that does more harm than an atom bomb, cars, or even illness, is pride. The proof lies in a story which fills most of the sermon of a nun near Rome who was tripped up by her pride.

The next sermon, by the Revd Preston, was on 'How the life of Christ still touches us in this century and in this country (a) by setting standards for us to apply to our own circumstances and (b) by giving us the power to live up to that standard.' On February 10th, following the death of George VIth, the Revd Tucker preached on 'The responsibility of life: the parable of the talents'. On March 2nd, L.A. Wilding, one of the masters, preached on 'Passing by: having left undone the things which we ought to have done.' The theme of talent was taken up again on March 10th with 'Talents: the least has one, and is to make the best us of it to the glory of God.' Again there were poems and a reading from George Macdonald. The final service was in St. Andrews church and the Easter Carol was sung by a small choir of staff and boys.

In the summer term, there were sermons among others on 'the need and the forming of habits', 'Dives and Lazarus: concentration on self and forgetting of others.' 'Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves: mind as well as soul', and a sermon by B.C. Guinness of the Oxford and Bermondsey Club and Rugby clubs, on 'the importance of work among Clubs'. On June 2nd there was the annual attendance at the Cathedral Service of College Prayers, the sermon being printed in the 'Draconian'. It contains exhortations to 'study large maps' and a fairly long account of Baden Powell and the siege of Mafeking. The last Sunday was the Revd J.R. Smith on 'The Cloud of Witnesses; the Olympic Games: Lamps', which included a reading from Ruskin and the Dragon War Memorial.

In the Christmas Term 1952, the first term of my third year, Joc again gave the

first sermon on 'responsibility: lamps to light and keep burning, and freedom without the abuse of it', thereby continuing the theme of his Prize Giving speech at the end of the previous term. On 5th October I wrote to my parents that 'We are having the service at the city church and the lord mare will be there because it is harvest festival'. In the 'Draconian' it was noted that this annual harvest festival service at St Martin's church 'was admittedly rather long, and we hope that some improvement in this matter may be arranged for future occasions' On October 26th my teacher Francis Wylie spoke on 'Hope: Mercy even for Pooh Bah'. There were the usual memorial services and readings and then on November 16th, following the performance of 'Patience' in which I had appeared, W.F.Oakeshott the Headmaster of Winchester preached on 'Leadership and true greatness', and the readings included Mencius and Albert Schweitzer. On November 30th the new Principal of Ripon Hall, Bishop Geoffrey Allen preached on 'the answer to the call', 'illustrated by his own career as Fellow of an Oxford College, service in China, and as 'Bishop of Egypt' and Ripon Hall.

The following Easter term we heard about 'Building on foundations, e.g. Dartmoor Stone: Jesus Christ, the Foundation' and two weeks later 'The extra mile': not content with duty only: the unprofitable servant, which included a reading about Livingstone. The following week we hear about Missions to Seamen. A few weeks later Bobby Jessel, an O.D preached on 'To seek and find all that is best in others: the successful does not necessarily do the best service to god.' The next week the Principal of Wycliffe Hall preached on 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from Evil', which included readings from 'Paradise Regained' and 'Pilgrim's Progress'. The following week the Senior Tutor of Hertford College preached on 'Trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope' (from St Paul), which again included a quotation from Thomas Carlyle. At the end of term I wrote home on 22 March that 'We are having our service in St Andrews and we have not much time to write our letters'.

Then in the Summer Term 1953 there were a number of biblically inspired sermons and the usual visit to the Cathedral Church at Christchurch with a service by the Dean. After the performance of the 'Merchant of Venice' J.T. Christie, Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, preached on 'The Merchant of Venice', and his sermon is printed in the 'Draconian', with various reflections on Shakespeare and history.

At the start of my fourth year, Christmas 1953, the first sermon was again by Joc, on 'A spirit of purpose and energy, combined with unselfishness and goodwill', and included a reading from Frank Sidgwick an old boy. The following week the Chaplain of Worcester College preached on 'bearing burdens with cheerfulness: make them light by following the methods of Jesus'. The following week the Harvest Festival service in the City Church had been shortened, following complaints that it was too long the previous year. A few weeks later A.B.Brown of Worcester College and May of Oxford (whom I was later to know as an undergraduate there) preached on 'Oxford, ancient and modern, a habitation of Dragons'. Later the Joint Warden of the Oxford and Bermondsey club, Peter Marindin preached on 'Our dependence one upon another, and the call upon each for all'. The final service, which included Handel and carols, was a reflection by the former Bishop of Nassau on his personal experience in Bethlehem.

In Easter 1954 among the sermons was one by the Reverend Marsh, Principal of Mansfield College on 'Privilege and Responsibility', one by the Master of St. Peter's Hall on 'Winter', and by Basil Blackwell on the author of the Prayer Book Catechism 'a noted angler'. The sermon was printed in the 'Draconian' and

concerned 'fishermen and forgetfulness', and drew on his long experience of Juvenile Courts. The sermon of one of the masters, C.H. Jacques, was also printed and Jacques drew analogies between the Resistance Movement in Holland during the Second World War, and the work of Jesus and his followers.

In the Summer Term, the sermons were started by Joc, who preached on 'the importance of character: the Good Shepherd and the widow's mite', and, as usual, included some poems. The following week there was Eric Fletcher, M.P. on 'the use of talent in service to the community'. A later sermon by Lionel Carey, Headmaster of Bromsgrove School was on 'God and our neighbour: how each individual counts, and yet how insignificant is man and our world'. Lord Hemingford preached on 'Forgiveness' and the Dean of Salisbury on 'Patriotism to God'. As had become a custom, the last sermon was preached by Rev. J.R. Smith, an ex-master, on 'Privilege and blessings call for duty and responsibility'. Two of the sermons were printed. The first by the Dean of Christchurch, Canon Jenkins. It is a lively piece from the later famous or infamous Bishop of Durham who was believed to have suggested that there was no God. It includes such passages as 'Whether we know it or not, among the most remarkable things in the world are Love, Service and the capacity for Wonder, and they are all of them ways in which God may reveal Himself to us and we may learn something about Him.' The second printed sermon was by J.T. Christie, Principal of Jesus College following the performance of Macbeth. My mother attended this service with me. It is a long and erudite piece which concludes that this 'tremendous play' has no moral at all.

In Christmas 1954, at the start to my last year, Joc spoke in the first week on 'the beginning of term: prayer and work'. On October 17th the Rev. Cragg spoke on 'Finding the way: the need of a compass', and included poems by Whitman and Quarles. As before, one of the speakers was an O.D., a master from Manchester Grammar School. On November 4th, my mother and I again attended a service after 'Iolanthe', where the Principal of Ripon Hall preached on 'Things old and new', with appropriate references to 'Iolanthe'. The following week Michael Gover, O.D., preached on 'Manners', and the service included a reading from Tennyson's 'The Passing of Arthur'. On December 5th Dr Booth, Professor of Historical Theology in Boston University preached on 'the beginnings of religion', including such items as negro spirituals, which were illustrated by a performance of one called 'Were you there?'. The final service 'was followed by Carols, which were by general consent perhaps the best ever performed at this Service.' Alas, I had already gone home because of 'flu.

In Easter term 1955, the first sermon was by the Rev Wilkins, the school teacher in divinity, who was about to leave, on 'It is better to give than to receive'. Dr Booth from Boston returned to give another sermon on 'Abraham Lincoln: a biographical sketch of his life and character'. On 20th February I wrote home 'Today the third suppers are going to St Andrew's church and I am in the choir.' In the 'Draconian' it describes how 'The seniors among the boarders and some of the day-boys attended Mattins at St. Andrew's, where the preacher was the new Vicar, the Revd. F.J. Taylor.

The following week, the Assistant Bishop of Derby preached on 'The cult of a thankful heart'. The following week the Latin master, L.A. Wilding, preached on 'The importance of the insignificant'. On 13th March I wrote to my parents 'Today there was a service at St Phillips and St James with thousands of long hymns and psalms.' Perhaps even the author of the 'Draconian' account was fed up, since instead of the usual detailed account of what was read and preached, it merely states 'The boarders attended Mattins at SS. Phil and James.'

In my last term, Joc gave the first sermon on 'Our duty to god and to our neighbour'. On May 22nd Peter Marindin preached on 'the standard for living'. Following the Father's Cricket Matches, Basil Blackwell, J.P., spoke on 'Unanswered prayer', and after the Shakespeare play the Provost of Birmingham Cathedral preached on 'Seeing ourselves as others see us'. On July 10th Bishop Robert Moberley spoke on 'I serve'. My last sermon was by the Rev. Smith, on 'The silent speaking of Jesus, the noise in the world: the still small voice'. It was accompanied by readings which included Wordsworth's 'Lines written near Tintern Abbey', which became one of my favourite poems.

Two of the sermons were published, those by Basil Blackwell and the Provost of Birmingham. Blackwell gave a thoughtful sermon, once again accompanied with a long story, the Provost of Birmingham reflected on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' which had just been performed. He ended with the sentence. 'For humility and the power to see oneself as the strange creature one is makes for generous tolerance and sympathy for the failings of others, and these are the conditions of being forgiven.'

*

Jamie has no recollection of sermons at the Dragons at all. Letters home mention half a dozen preachers, whose names probably would have been known to us by Sunday morning letter prep.

It is interesting to note that half those who got a mention in our letters had a foreign connection of some sort: a Bishop from India, an American from Mexico, an American clergyman from California. Hugh Lyon's name might have rung a bell with us because of the family Rugby connections; but the only thing I could find to say about Roger Young was to remind my parents of 'Poor Roger Young' the subject of a song sung by Burl Ives (Sandy and I were afficianados).

In fact I only really have two memories of services in New Hall. The first is the setting, which as I remember it was a large midnight blue velvet curtain drawn across the dais to form a kind of backdrop for a simple altar. The second are the 'chair parties' to which, by roster or some other system which I have forgotten, we were appointed whose duty was to lay out properly chairs and hymn books ready for the Sunday morning service in the hall - often after the hall had been used for quite different purposes on the evening before, e.g. dancing, chess tables or whatever. Sandy, for instance, was volunteered after a Sunday morning breakfast with Joc in November 1954, *Then the 5 of us who went to Joc's Breakfast did the books and Chairs in the new hall.* And more senior boys were appointed to lead the chair parties, as Sandy was in his last term at the Dragon in Spring 1956, *I am head of the chair party which means I say when the chairs go out and how many go out and who puts them out.*

*

If sermons are a blank in Sandys' and my letter records, the business of reading at school services, and in School House, does crop up; and we have a full account of the agonies through which Sandy went when reading at a major occasion - a far cry from his extremely relaxed and competent public speaking for a decade as Chairman of Kent County Council and various other public bodies in later life.

I have vague memories of reading in the main Sunday service, which I apparently did a couple of times. In October 1953, *Today I am reading in the service ~ there is a lot of practising to do. I am feeling very shaky about it.* I was also due to read again that November but was rescued from the duty, *This week we have our service at the Cross for Remembrance day Sunday so I am not reading* By May 1954 in my last term, I was becoming more accustomed, but this time there was another

problem, *I read in the service but I had a horribly horse [- hoarse] voice, I could hardly hear myself.*

I had forgotten but it seems that reading in School House was a first step on the road - a less daunting occasion, and a chance for Hum or Joc to gauge which boys might be up to reading in front of the whole school. Sandy mentions it in June 1955: *On Friday I read at breakfast which is reading a passage of about 16 lines then a prayer and the grace.*

Then on the first Sunday of the following term came the big one. *Yesterday I read in the service. (From St Johns gospel Verses 3-9 & 12-15)). There were an extra amount of people being the begi[n]ning of the new school year. Joc had told all day boys to come and if possible bring their parents. It was pretty awful for the first sentences then it got better ~ I reckon I read loud enough also slow enough.*

Grandmother Hone sent a full account to my mother in Surrey, having de-briefed both Sandy and Hum on the subject,

Sandy had been reading at the School services - a terrific ordeal - the 1st Sunday of term with the whole school present, including the day boys over 400, i.e over 500 people. Hum had seen him twice on Sat to test & give directions, Sandy did not mind much the day before or till he got up on the platform; then his knees shook & when he stood up he said nothing but hundreds and hundreds of eyes & a voice came out of itself which did not seem to be his & it seemed to come out more quickly than he would like it to have done!. However he must have done quite well, for Hum praised him after & said he would make a good reader. His passage was part of St John XIII about the washing of the Apostles' feet & he had to leave out 2 or 3 verses, which was the most difficult part of it - in case he did not pick up the right line. Hum said his only fault is being too jerky, saying 2 or 3 words at a time instead of a smooth sentence but he is going to practise him as he may have to read often.

By mid-March 1956, indeed, Sandy had grown accustomed to public reading at the school services and was even enjoying it, *This morning I read in the service which was quite good fun.*

*

Jamie had forgotten with regard to the Sunday services at the Dragon that there was also hymn practice for boarders, immediately following letter prep, according to a letter I wrote in October 1952, *'The bell has gone and it is hymn practice now.'*

But Sandy and I seem to have been in some ways out of step with Hum with respect to the School's Sunday service. Our letters show some signs of budding Anglicanism of an old-fashioned type (eighteenth century rural?) which was rather out of keeping with the Lynams' liberalism. I cannot account for this today. Perhaps this was the influence of my Hone grandfather; or maybe we preferred the surroundings of a church or the cathedral, or possibly we felt that the school hall as a place for worship, and one's own headmaster as the preacher, were a bit too close for comfort.

It seems that we went quite regularly to St Philip and St James, and to nearby St Andrew, and to the Cathedral for the Harvest Festival and possibly other occasions. Many of these visits seem to get a mention in our letters - which could of course be because letter prep came just before or after them. The tone of some comments, however, is markedly positive. In early February 1954 I wrote that, *This morning we go to a proper service at last. At Phil and Jim. Quite a change I expect.* And again in

June of that year, *Today we go to the Cathedral for our service at 10 o'clock which is better than the school one although it's quite a walk.*

Sandy said of the service that '*it was jolly nice*'; and in June 1952 he commented that, *We are going to Christ Church Cathedral for our service ~ last time I went this [= there] I thought it was a very beautiful place.*

We have the benefit here of some up to date reflections on the subject from my Upper 2A peers, Tom Stanier and Patrick Lepper, Tom felt that *Christianity was certainly not rammed down one's throat. I imagine Joc was an agnostic, and the hymn singing was done more for musical than religious reasons. But this side of the school is a bit of mystery. Evangelical it certainly wasn't.* And when Patrick went to Marlborough, he found that other new boys there were astonished to hear that there was no chapel at the Dragon; it had never occurred to him that it was at all unusual. He went on to remark, *in retrospect I rather admire Joc's attitude, which must have been something like: "Let worship be part of normal school life, in familiar school surroundings (the Old Hall on weekdays, the New Hall on Sundays). Let us not confine it to a special place that we use for nothing else." Yes I suppose that meant it was bound to be "Low Church" but it was certainly not evangelical...*

Sandy and I, however, for whatever reason, preferred our services to be held in church; and at the end of October 1955, in his last year, came a change in the school service of which he keenly approved,

Last Sunday the school had the first descent [= decent] service in its history. It was with only 3 readings. Our new Priest took the service and we had most of the things you have at a church ~ then another man gave a sermon. The new school priest who is v. v. good must have persuaded Hum to do it that way

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND DEBATES

There was a formal debating prize at the Dragon, called the Fitch Prize. Alan never contended for this, and cannot recall whether I ever attended what were, presumably, public performances by the boys who entered. The topics chosen each year for the prize, I suppose picked by the boys as subjects they were interested in and could shine with, are revealing. Here I shall give the topics chosen, taken from the reports each term which give the names of the boys, their subjects and a report on parts of their speech and how they were classed A prize could be won in each term, but no-one could win more than one prize in a year and a prize could be held over to the next term if not awarded.

The topics in my first year were: Prep., Korea, Christmas Presents, Holidays, Swimming, Liberal Party, Anti-nationalization of Sugar, Classics to be optional, What School Subjects should be taught. In my second year: The advantages of phonetic spelling, Christmas Presents, Camping Holidays, Trying to be helpful, Shakespeare, Cats, Punctuality, Holidays, Bad habits of the Staff. In my third year (the first term missing - only two competitors), Fox-hunting, Learning foreign languages at school, The British workman, The ideal Schoolmaster, School rules and Punishments, Relatives, India, Was the Coronation in London worth it? Space, Travel Possibilities, Mucking about.

Interestingly, J. Briton, the master in charge of speeches (and the Cine club), added quite a long note of advice at the end of the Summer 1953 report, as follows. 'It is, I suggest, entirely wrong for any speaker to deliver a badly arranged, badly presented, and barely audible speech to any audience - some of the speeches on

this occasion were almost completely inaudible. A speech has to be properly prepared. It has to be thought out, arranged, logical (if the speaker is debating some point), well-expressed, well-spoken, and completely audible to every person in the audience. All this calls, not for an eleventh-hour scurry to get something ready, but for hard work well ahead of the time. The speech, when prepared, should be carefully rehearsed, practised, and timed, so that when the moment arrives, the speaker comes to the business confident that he knows exactly what he is going to say, and how he is going to say it. Future competitors, please note.'

In my fourth year the topics were: The pleasures of camping, The attractions of farming, (second term, Easter 1954, report missing), History is bunk, Railways, The History of Flying. In my last year the topics were: The folly of trying to reach the moon (the only competitor in the first term because of 'flu), The value of international sport, Myxamatoxis, Birds, The H Bomb, The Colour Bar.

Apart from things like camping, holidays, birds etc., two themes seem worth noting. One is that the occasion could be used to make amusing criticisms or suggestions about the school - as in 'The Ideal Schoolmaster' and 'School rules and Punishments' and 'Bad Habits of the Staff'. There was also quite a serious interest in politics and world events - the nationalization of sugar, Korea, the Colour Bar, the H bomb and other topics.

Jake Mermagen writes that 'In 1955, my last year, there were no entries. Out of a sense of duty I volunteered to make a speech on the life of Hitler. At the last minute someone told me that I could not simply recite historical facts, but needed to prove some point. I hastily changed the title to "Hitler was a great man". Needless to say I did not get the prize!'

*

Perhaps to encourage a love of poetry amongst us, as well as to improve our elocution, there was not only weekly prep in which we had to learn a piece of poetry or prose, but there was also a 'Recitation Prize'. Since in my third year I was a member of the Middle 3 class winning team, I have a special interest in this prize and dimly remembering reciting part of Dryden's 'Ode to St Cecilia', which we had to learn. A full report on the event in my first term at the school in 1950 gives a flavour of what it was about.

It starts with some good advice by Mr Briton on how best to recite. 'No one should attempt to recite unless he can do justice to his choice and help his audience to appreciate it, and to do this requires one absolute necessity. The reciter must know his words so perfectly that he speaks them automatically. Then, and only then, can he begin to interpret them. Many poems were ruined by agonised pauses, and tortured groping for words, so that all illusion was lost, and often even the sense. This happened many times when one poem was recited by several different boys, so that the excellent performance of some were nullified by the mistakes of others. When once the words are mastered, then interpretation is helped by the effects of pitch, tone, and pace. Most boys spoke up well and could be heard easily, but too many failed to alter the tone of voice, and few realised how much can be achieved by altering the pace, and by suitable pauses, but not necessarily at the end of the line.'

The report details what each year performed. The Lowers offered 'a delightful mixed bunch of poems, including Kipling's 'Hunting Song'. The Middles gave the best performance, including Humbert Wolfe's 'Two Sparrows', and Middle 5 did Belloc's 'Matilda'. In the Uppers, there was a 'Just So' story, again by Kipling, and Goldsmith's 'Village Schoolmaster' and Belloc's 'Food'. Best of all was Flecker's

'Saracens War Song'. This recitation prize for whole forms was only one of the prizes for reading and recitation. For example there were A.E.L's Reading Prizes and the Daisy Pratt Prize for Baby School Recitation.

A revealing account of part of what was behind the Recitations is shown in a report in the 'Draconian' in Summer 1954.

'The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places: How are the mighty fallen!'

As Roland Brinton began to declaim the magnificent words of David's lament, the whole audience at once fell under his spell.

How the Skipper would have rejoiced to hear him.

Here was Dragon Recitation at its traditional best; first in its choice of a passage which gives such superb scope to the music of the spoken word; second in the way Brinton attacked the passage with such fire and passion; and third in the fine diction and modulation of his voice.

In these days of the glorification of the Common Man, and the needless broadcasting of common ugly voices on T.V. and on the Radio, it was good to hear English at its loveliest, with pure vowels and boldly sounded consonants. Sometimes even Dragons are guilty of slovenly vowel-sounds, due mainly to speaking with their mouths but not with their lips ... Upper 1 finished the morning's proceedings with great distinction, with Stanier, Beloff, and Jeffery to cap last year's Virgilian success with a beautiful passage from 'Alcestis,' in which Beloff was outstanding with his moving and musical speaking of Greek.'

*

Jamie did not opt nor was he volunteered for any public speaking that I recall other than reading in services (mentioned above). I would have shrunk from it and Sandy probably the same. Apparently we became accustomed in the end to reading a lesson, but reading a fixed text is clearly an easier proposition than speaking. Nor did we attempt any competitions for debating, or recitation prizes. Debating and rhetoric seem to have remained beyond our normal reach. My and Sandy's experience of the public stage was thus essentially limited to presentations in class.

Our letters contain, however, just one or two references to reading aloud in class. Activities planned for the Easter break at school in late March 1951 apparently included some speeches and readings, *Our form are reading from 'Oliver Twist'. I'm reading Mr. Limbkins' part.* I have a vague recollection of other readings in class, in the wooden huts - which would indicate experiences in middle forms rather than my last two years. But perhaps they continued, in to later years, but were less nerve-racking. Sandy, however, gives some detail of an exercise which was a regular one and evidently required some preparation. In October 1955 he was looking for ideas, *In our form every Friday 4 boys make speeches of lectures for about 7-10 minutes. For example, under water diving, or tanks, or the Lake District, or horses. Anything that you want to talk about or know about. Soon it will be my turn. Can you tell my something to talk about? If you can think of anything?*

A fortnight later he need more specific help, *Please could you send me any Menus or anything which would help my Speech which is on Friday it is not any trouble to you (I am speaking on the Atlantic crossing (cunard or Canadian Pacific)).* The parents obliged and Sandy then sent his thanks with the briefest of reports, *Thank you very much indeed for the letter and Menus and Log. It was very thoughtful of you to send them. In the end I spoke about liners and they were all a great help.*

Sandy refers to doing another speech in class at the end of that term, *By the way I made my speech the week before last on 'flyfishing'. Mr Wylie lent me lots of flyfishing tackle and I made a much better lecture than last time.*

As to recitation of poetry there is one letter reference I can find. In mid July 1952, I evidently enjoyed what was on offer, even if it might seem rather low-brow compared with 'Alcestis', *In form for recitation we are doing 'Good Grief' there is a very amusing bit in it.*

*When cares attack and life seems black
How sweet it is to pot a yak
Or Puncture Hares and Grizzly bears
And others I could mention...*

(It was written by P.G. Wodehouse for one of his Mulliner stories.)

*

Alan did attend the frequent debates organized by the Debating Society. Here we were to learn something about the art of public speaking, of rhetoric and oratory. This has always been an important area in English life since the days of the medieval universities and legal profession. At the Dragon it was realized that we were being trained to make us leaders of men - and hence the persuasive use of language was an essential craft skill. This forms the background to a considerable emphasis at the Dragon on public speaking and debates.

This seems to have been an activity I really enjoyed and was probably important in shaping and expressing our views. The few I noted can be supplemented from the 'Draconian' and in the reports on such debates give an insight into the kinds of subject it was thought interesting for children to discuss at the Dragon. It also gives, in the description of the arguments put forward as summarized in the reports, as well as the final vote for and against, an indication of our views at the time. I don't remember speaking at these, but I certainly found them worth reporting.

In my first term, Christmas 1950, there were debates around the following proposals. 'That there are such thing as ghosts'. This was carried 43 to 23 an appropriate result for a school which I have argued had more than a hint of Hogwarts about it. Then it was proposed 'That marks should be abolished'. Perhaps not surprisingly, the boys voted 41 to 24 for the motion. Then we debated the hot topic 'That Rugby Football is unsuitable for boys under the age of 14.' Again, perhaps predictably, the motion was lost 15 votes to 44. On the last Saturday of term there were a series of impromptu debates: 'That snow does more harm than good' (carried unanimously); 'That there are such things as flying saucers' (lost by 14 votes to 39); 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' (lost by 10 votes to 21).

In my second term the motions were 'That medieval warfare is more cruel than modern warfare' (carried by 40 votes to 16); 'That the amateur derives more enjoyment out of sport than the professional' (carried by 44 votes to 25); 'That a holiday in a hotel is preferable to a camping holiday' (defeated by 67 votes to 10); 'That the written word is more powerful than the spoken word' (defeated 41 votes to 11). Then, near the end of term there were impromptu debates as follows: 'That tennis should be an alternative game to cricket for all Dragons in the Summer Term' (defeated 22 votes to 29); 'That a good film is more enjoyable than a good play' (carried by 51 votes to 50); 'That a knowledge of History is more useful in after life than a knowledge of English' (defeated by 48 votes to 27). Debates do not seem to have taken place in the Summer term.

The first debate I recorded in a letter was at the start of my second year. The

Festival of Britain had dominated the summer and the school had visited the event. It had been a controversial event, and it was clearly a criticism that it had been an economic failure. I reported on 7th October 1952 *We had a debate and the motion was the festival of Britain gained money. And against the motion one by 43 to 29.* The report states that the actual motion was 'That the Festival of Britain had justified itself.' Which was indeed carried by 43 votes to 29 the day before my letter. I did not write about the next two debates 'That progress had not brought happiness' (defeated 46 votes to 22); 'That films have spoilt the pleasure of reading' (defeated by 44 votes to 22). The end of term impromptu debates were 'That a burglar's life is not a happy one' (defeated unanimously); 'That the spirit of adventure is dead' (defeated unanimously); 'That fat people eat more than thin people' (defeated unanimously).

The following term we had a debate about a subject which reveals something about our views of childhood, where we showed scepticism that these were, as we were often told, 'the happiest days of our life'. On 27th January 1952 I wrote that *We had a debate the motion being 15 is more enjoyable than 50 and against the motion one about 12 v 50.* Since this debate shows something about our attitudes to age and the school, I shall give the actual summary of the Debate (where no result was said to be available) given in the 'Draconian'.

'The Proposer, P. Swash, said that at fifteen you can play games for Colts or the First XI, but at fifty there are no more team games, only golf, which gets monotonous. Pointing to the playground, Mr. Swash asked if grown-ups would have slides or snowball fights. In the Over 45 Amateur Squash Championship there were only seven entries from the whole of England. At fifteen you have your National Service before you, but this can be enjoyable if you have the right approach. If you lose your job at fifty your chances of getting another are small. At fifty there is the fear of death, but at fifteen life is before you.'

'The Opposer, G. Guinness, said that the House had no idea of life at fifty, when there were different enjoyments and appreciations. At fifty you are at the peak of your life, not a doddering old fool, as the Proposer seemed to think. Perhaps the Amateur Squash Championship had only seven entries, but Squash is not a popular sport. At fifty, his grandfather was an active and efficient Mayor of Maidenhead. Besides golf, the over fifties can swim and go mountaineering.'

'The second speaker, P. Bourne, said that it might be nice to see your family growing up, but your schooldays were the happiest days of your life. At fifteen you had a better sense of humour, and if a snowball should hit you, you would return it, but at fifty you would grumble and take it badly. At fifty you would have financial worries, because no one is rich nowadays. At fifteen one might be starting a job, and it would be fun to be earning one's own living.'

'The fourth speaker, M. Rena, said that his grandfather, at 65, is still able to ski, and go for eight-hour mountaineering courses, and will soon take up curling. People might talk about active sports, but at fifteen you are not really at your sporting prime. At fifty one can understand and appreciate many more books, and can do things (such as driving a motor-car) which are not allowed to a boy of fifteen.' The names of eighteen other boys who spoke are noted.

The next motion was 'That it is better to give entertainment than to be entertained' (motion carried by 45 votes to 10). The next debate was 'That life in the town is better than life in the country' (the motion was defeated by 23 votes to 8).

In the first term of my third year, Christmas 1952, I noted in a letter on 12th October 1952 that *We had a debate yesterday and the subject was that a athlete gets more enjoyment out of life than a skolar with the motion won by 69-33.* (In fact, the

result in given the 'Draconian' is 63 votes to 39). Since this goes to the heart of a basic tension in the philosophy of most boarding schools at that times, it is interesting to hear what the boys had to say, so I shall give the account summarised in the 'Draconian'.

'The proposer, Burns, said that the athlete spends most of his time outside, and is therefore healthy, in which case he must enjoy life more. The scholar, he pointed out, is no good at games, and when he has to play is usually hurt through being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The scholar is indoors most of the time doing Algebra and Latin, which is bad for his health; consequently, when he goes outside he catches a cold and has to go to bed. The athlete, he said, is much more popular with the public. Anyone could name a good soccer, cricket, tennis, or rigger player, but who could name a professor of science, physics, classics and maths., and who would want to, anyway?'

'The opposer, I Lindsay, asked the House if health meant enjoyment. He pointed out that even blind people enjoy life very much. A scholar could get on quite well on crutches, but an athlete would not be an athlete any more. If an athlete gets some minor disease he is dropped from the team, but a scholar can continue his work in bed. He described to the House an athlete sprinting the half-mile or playing a game of rigger, while the poet sits in his garden with a box of chocolates and a pen and paper, writing poetry about what he sees. The athlete, he said, has to retire at thirty-five or forty, and make his living on his small bank balance, whereas the scholar continues his good work up to the ripe age of eighty, then expires.'

'The second speaker, P. Balme, said that a scholar spends his time poring over books and manuscripts to discover useless facts and work out useless Algebraic problems. The athlete does not overwork himself doing sums. He tours his own country and even the world, making friends wherever he goes. In the newspaper, he said, by far the most popular page is the sports page, which shows that the athlete is far more popular, and therefore must enjoy himself more. There have been several cases, he pointed out, of professors going mad, which shows that they are overworked tremendously.'

'The fourth speaker, A Montgomery-Smith, said that the scholar, in his youth, may not be good at games, but these are not important. He will get a scholarship and be in the papers. When he grows up, he will be a successful business man with a family. Eventually he is an old man, well-known and respected, and, at seventy or so, can retire on his bank balance. The athlete has to retire young, with little money, and after a few years nobody knows him and he dies miserable.'

Twenty-three other named people spoke in this debate. The allusions to fame and popularity are interesting. So is the reference to becoming a business man, which would not go down well in posher schools. The references to savings and bank balances and retirement finances are also worth noting.

The next debate repeated a theme from my first year, though reversing the proposal, namely 'That modern warfare is more cruel than mediaeval warfare'. The outcome was the same, the motion being defeated by 72 votes to 43. The debate about ghosts was also repeated, 'That there are such things as ghosts' and again the school voted for them, 78 votes to 34. There is a very detailed account of the arguments in these debates, and many people spoke in them, including a number of my closer friends and my cousin Jake Mermagen.

In the Easter Term of my third year (1953), unfortunately the report on the debates in the 'Draconian' was only a few lines long. It only recorded that among the subject debated were: 'That all games should be legalized on Sundays' and 'That corporal punishment ought to be re-introduced for crimes of violence'. The

arguments and outcomes of these debates are not recorded.

There was also an Impromptu Debate, which is the only one I recorded in my letters under 'impromptu' debates. These were reported in my letter of 8th March 1953. In the first, which I correctly transcribed, *the first motion was that a mistress is a better teacher than a master the motion lost 75-25*. My own memory is that the few female teachers I had, particularly my first teacher when I arrived, were kind and protective, but clearly this was not the consensus.

The next recognized the rapidly increasing role of television in our lives. The school was starting to show us television events alongside films and a number of richer parents had television sets. It also recognized how much we learnt from television and film. The motion was *Television and the cinema is a substitute to reading*. [The actual motion was 'That neither television nor the cinema can be a satisfactory substitute for reading'] I reported that 'Against the motion won', though not by how much.

The next, not mentioned in the report, probed our ambition and feeling of confidence that we could achieve much, was the motion 'that a bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush.' I reported that *Against the motion won 100-6*. We were clearly going to go out in the bush and find hidden birds. I also noted another unmentioned motion *that games in the Dragon school should be voluntary the motion was defeated*.

At the start of my fourth year, Christmas 1953, the first proposal was 'That the Schoolboy's life is happier than the Master's' (carried by 45 votes to 23). The second debate was on the proposal 'That the inventions of the last hundred years have brought happiness to mankind' (carried by 53 votes to 27).]

Unfortunately, there is again a very small report for the Easter Term 1954. The first motion was 'That the Popular Music of To-day is more attractive to listen to than the Classical Compositions of Yesterday'. The motion was unanimously defeated.

One of the largest divides in the school was between dayboys and boarders - roughly of equal numbers, though the boarders formed a more cohesive group. Given the loneliness and separation to which the boarders were subjected, it is perhaps surprising that on 16th February 1954 I reported that *Yesterday there was a debate the motion was "Dayboys have a more enjoyable time than borders". Against the motion won 59-7*. In fact, the report stated that 'the motion was defeated unanimously', which is even more dramatic. I do not note the series of impromptu debates mentioned in the report.

In my last Christmas Term, 1954, the first motion was 'Modern Luxuries are the cause of moral decay in modern man'. The outcome is not recorded. There was then something which I described in a letter at the end of October. *There was a new kind of Debat in which there were four [sic] boys. Each resembling a famous person 1 Billy Graham 2 Lord Nuffield 3 Prof Einstein 4 Albert Schweitzer 5 Roger Bannister*

And they were meant to be all in a balloon and two of them had to be thrown out for the other three to be kept in. Here was a chance to place our priorities, would religion, economics, science, philanthropy or sport survive? Again reflecting the rather academic nature of the school I reported that *1 and 5 were thrown out*, religion and sport.

The report on the debate is as follows. 'R. Burleigh, supporting Roger Bannister, said he deserved to be retained as a great sportsman who might still perform great feats. D. Sherwin-White, supporting Lord Nuffield, said that this great public benefactor and Industrialist had made Oxford what it was, and could not be easily

replaced. S. Crossman, supporting Billy Graham, said that this famous evangelist had started a religious crusade which had converted many people. J. Gilman, supporting Albert Schweitzer, said that he had given up a great career to help the Africans. He had won the Nobel Prize. P. Steadman, supporting Alfred Einstein, said that this eminent mathematician had done much work towards the advancement of scientific research.' 'Roger Bannister and Bally Graham were thrown out.'

There was, finally, a last debate at the end of term, the motion being 'Money is the root of all evil'. The motion was unanimously defeated.

In my final term of attending debates, Easter 1955, I wrote on 27th February *We had a debate on Saturday the motion was that capital punishment ought to be brought back for crimes of violence. The motion won 61-29.* It is perhaps a straw in the wind as to our political and social attitudes.

On 13th March 1955 there were several debates. The first motion was 'It is better to be an only child than to be in a large family'. Against won 40-15. Most of us, as I recall, had brothers and sisters. Another was 'Atomic weapons should be banned'. Despite our views on capital punishment, we were clearly disturbed by the new weapons and I reported *For won 34-21* [my next letter said it was 54-14].

Another was that 'It is better to be good at games than at work. *Against* won by 54-14', an outcome which might not have been found in every school at this time.

The final one was a curious topic and a curious outcome. 'The house regrets the invention of Air Travel.' The motion was carried 45-9. What I thought of this with my interest in jet planes and the way the new planes had brought me closer to my parents in India I do not know.

The disagreeing figures I gave in the space of a week as to the outcome of the debates suggests that my attention was more on the debate than the votes, but even the topics became hazy after a while, for I reported on 17th March the topics of two out of four of the debates - on games and work, and atomic weapons, *But I can't remember the other two.* Nor did I remember that I had reported all four the week before.

All this debating was clearly a useful preparation in rhetoric and logic and the general arts of persuasion. A number of the boys were the sons of dons at Oxford and elsewhere and would go on to be lecturers, politicians and civil servants, or, it was still believed, rulers of empire. These were important skills and were clearly encouraged.

*

Jamie comments that while his and Sandy's letters contain numerous mentions of debates, there are very few references to active participation in them. And I had quite forgotten that debates were held under the auspices of a 'debating society', with Mr Dodd its chairman, and the participation of dayboys as well, as Tom Stanier confirms. Perhaps Sandy and I were not fully paid up members - but I had thought that attendance at debates was voluntary, but a reasonable thing for a bored boarder to do if there was not much else on at a weekend. There must indeed have been other competing activities, such as outings with relatives or friends, or other social events or entertainments; or perhaps just a preference for a good book or a game of five stones or draughts. I also wonder whether Sandy and I, being both verbally somewhat retiring, did not particularly enjoy the cut and thrust of the more capable participants.

Lots of titles are listed in our letters, but the majority without further detail - and are probably merely letter-fillers. But some reports do of course provide insights of

interest, such as the division figures, for example in November 1950 the motion that 'Rugby Football is unsuitable for boys under 14 years of age' lost 15-44. Another point I had forgotten is a reference to canvassing by the society for suggestions from home for suitable topics. In February 1951 I asked my parents, *If you could think of any debates which would be suitable for us will you please sent them to me or B. De la Mare same address as mine.*

Some debates I seem to have enjoyed more than others, for instance, an impromptu debate in December of that year, *1st motion was snow does more harm than good ~ motion won 23-10 ~ proposer was I Senior[,] + opposer N Millford ~ 2nd was there are such things as 'flying saucers' ~ the motion lost 24-12 ~ proposer J. Seddon[,] opposer M. Edwards ~ the[y] made some very interesting speeches[,] there [=they] were funny. He made some funny ones in the first motion. the third motion was spare the rod spoil the child[,] which I did not understand at first*

In February 1951 a motion that 'A holiday in a Hotel is more fun than a camping holiday' was beaten 69-10. I voted with the crowd. And the following month a proposal that the 'written word is more powerful than the spoken word' lost 8-41. In October 1951 the majority was with the motion that 'The Festival of Britain has justified itself - feelings of national pride no doubt overcoming any worries on scores of costs and benefits. In the spring term the motion that 'It is more fun to entertain than be entertained' won (another view to be expected from Dragons) and the proposal that 'Life in a Town is better than life in the country' lost by 17 votes. A very Oxford result, that too.

Sandy objected altogether, however, to one debate in February 1952, and voted with his feet, *Last night the was a dabate ~ the moshion was that life at fifteen is more agraoable than 50 and I did not go because I thort it was a silly moshion.*

On my side, apparently I did not vote, or perhaps I could not make up my mind, on the motion in October 1952 that 'modern warfare is more cruel than ancient', but 'Ancient won'.

Sandy comments on two debates in the autumn of 1952, confirming that I spoke at least once in my Dragon career. On the motion that, *athelits get more fun in life than scollers J spoke ~ the result was that Athelets won 63 to 39. I voted for ahhthlets ~ Jamie got up and said something for scollers which wasen't [sic] bad at all.* It is interesting to me now that I wanted to stood for scholars against athletes. Did I want to come to the aid of the minority? I am not sure. Sandy also attended a debate on whether *Modern war is more cruel than Midevil war - I think that midevial war won and it was more crule*

At the end of November 1952 I evidently spoke again, keen to bring the galleries to their senses on the matter of ghosts, *Sat we had a debate. There are such things as ghosts ~ The man who I had Greek with was there. He knew the name Bruce Lockhart ~ I spoke against 4 times. But the Motion one [= won] 88-35. Boo!!!* Perhaps I was prepared for that discussion by efforts over the years to persuade and comfort Sandy - who on this occasion, *did not go because I know that I would have herd some absolutely terrible stories and I do believe in gosts know [= now] and they are not things Shekspere just puts in his plays to make more Exciting.*

In January 1953 there was a debate on the motion that 'corporal punishment should be used for crimes of violence'. My letter said that *I did not attend it but heard that the motion won 67-28.* I gave no explanation for non attendance. Sandy on the other hand wrote that there was a *Debat yesterday ~ the motion was that Coproal [sic] punishment should be used for crimes of violence. I did not go because I think it is a stuped motion.*

I missed another impromptu debate in March of that year. This time it was

'because I was doing an Impo'. Nevertheless, I reported whether or not my opinion was shared by the majority or not,

My opinion [was with] the motion

Yes	[maj]	Television and cinema will never take the place of books
Yes	[min]	A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
No	[maj]	Games should be voluntary here
No	[maj]	Ladies teach better than masters

It seems that I was more cautious than your average Dragon.

In February 1953 Sandy reported that *Last night there was a debate that Sunday sport should be legalized. Mr Evers who you [k]new, his son called Michael spoke as 4th speaker ~ He is only just 11 years old and most proposers and op[p]osers and 4th speakers and 2nd speakers are 12 and a half and over ~ and even though he was only 11 on the 29th January I think he made the best speech.*

My father indeed knew the Evers family, of whom several were at the Dragon in our time, from Rugby School.

Sandy could be sparing with his vote (though he rarely abstained in his political career later),

Yesterday after tea the[re] was an Impromptu debat with four motions - the motions were Mistresses are better teachers than Masters - it was something like 25 to 75 - I did not vote. No 2 Games at the Dragon school showed be voluntary - 51 vote to 57 I voted against motion - No 3 was that the flicks and telivison can be a suitablale substitute to books. I do not know the votes and did not vote. No 1 was that a bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush

Sandy and I took some minority views that winter. In October 1953 I wrote home of a debate with the motion *that 'sport is taken too seriously in England now' The majority disagreed. But I think it is... ;* and in January 1954 Sandy referred to a debate on the proposal *That the popular music of today is more attractive to listen to than the Classical music of Yesterday ~ The motion very easily lost. I voted against the motion.*

Impromptu debates seem to have been popular. Sandy describes two in March 1954,

Last night there was a Debate ~ it was an impromptual one ~ There were four motions. The first, It is better to have a brother or sister(s) than to be the only child. This one I voted for the motion. The second one was it is better to be good at work and bad at games than vice-versa. I voted against. The third[,] the atom and hygredjom bomb should be certainly abolished[,] one [= won] 42-38. I voted against.

Sandy's early forthright view on deterrents matches nicely his strong conservative outlook in active politics later in life.

The second debate went on from tea

till six O'clock ~ the[re] were 3 motions ~ the first was that Policeman should be

armed ~ lost - 88 to 4 ~ the second was that the Schollar had a more enjoyable life than an athlete ~ lost 37-54 ~ the third was that 'Marks should be abolished' ~ lost 76-15. In the second one a boy stood up and got half way through telling the house it was a silly motion (he had a good Reason) but he was stoped by Mr dodd the Chair man half way through.

One senses that Sandy was siding with the boy who risked dismissing the motion.

In December 1954 Sandy took part in a balloon debate in class, *Yesterday in English we had a ballfojon debate. I was Lloyd George, the others were Lord Kitchener, Antony Eden, Arthur Askey, Leonarda A Vinci [sic], Churchill, Malenkov. Three people stayed in: Leonardo A Vinci, Antony Eden and Churchill. Poor Sandy! - a case for Lloyd George's rescue in that company must indeed have been hard to defend.*

One evening in February 1955 there were two debates in prospect which Sandy chose not to attend. *They were That it would not be advantages for a man to know his personal future ~ this one [= won] by 39-9. The second was That to[o] much money time and labour was spent on ancient reliques [sic]. This lost. I did not go for I thought that they were rather boaring motions.*

And the results of three motions in an impromptu debate reported by Sandy in December 1955 might not all have been predicted, *There were 3 motions. That policemen are too inquisitive and another That the invention of gunpowder was a bad thing and another That Marbels is a better game than conkers. The first motion lost, the second won and the third lost.*

The following February Dragons were unsure about the potential value and benefits of space travel - *the motion was that it is useless to reach the moon, the motion was just defeated.* An interesting result, reflecting perhaps awareness of Britain's economic troubles at the period But a last entry in Sandy's coverage of debates says more perhaps about letter prep than Dragon opinion - which was surely predictable. *Last night there was a debate ~ the motion it was 'that cars are a curse not a luxury'. It lost. The bell has gone so I must go.*

8. CREATING MEANING

Iolanthe Christmas 1954, Alan top right



ARTS

Alan comments that parents and schools attempted to channel our childhood emotions and thoughts through the development of various well-known expressive skills - drawing, painting, crafts of various kinds, dancing and drama. All these existed alongside the main formal teaching concerned with the manipulation of symbolic systems in reading, writing, arithmetic and the learning of languages. I never excelled in any of these artistic and expressive skills, yet the attempt to learn and the realization of a world of painting, music, dance and drama awaiting me had a significant enriching effect on my life. Again there was no hard and fast division between school and home here - my parents, for example, tried to encourage me in a number of these skills. Yet the major thrust was at school.

*

Jamie's view is that helping pupils in or towards genuine feelings of creativity was not one of the Dragon's strong suits in the early 1950s. Hardly surprisingly, because artists happen, they are not made. But quite a few with existing creative instincts have found inspiration, example or encouragement from individual teachers or mentors in their young years. Perhaps very few between the age of 8 to 13 but I can think of a couple of examples which are close: Rimbaud and his supportive schoolmaster Georges Izambard at Charleville College, Benjamin Britten and Frank Bridges (but Britten drew no musical benefit from Greshams!), Isherwood and Edward Upward were contemporaries at Repton. It is a fascinating subject, but the Dragon, like most prep schools at that period, was probably looking in other directions all together.

There was some encouragement for creating meaning in writing and poetry; and some pointing of the way in interpretative techniques (such as in playing instruments, alone or in the orchestra, singing in a musical or acting in a play). Some starting points were also offered for development of an awareness of the arts - for the school had large facilities and pupils with a wide range of interests. Less time and effort, however, was given (in class or out of it) to trying to identify and help develop in Dragons the exciting but elusive spirit of creativity.

The Dragon was very right brained. Its basic job was to produce administrators, judges, commentators, lawyers, doctors, educators, managers of charitable trusts, etc - but not artists. Art is incalculable, artists are unreliable - not the stuff of empires, nor part of the late Victorian tradition which demands conformity (with some eccentricity permitted), control of faculties and repression of emotions. The Dragons emphasized the importance of intellectual independence but did not provide the kind of framework in which an artistic soul could thrive and develop - think rather of Dartington or Bedales.

It is important to distinguish between appreciation of arts, performance and interpretation on the one hand (which can include some 'expressive skills') and genuine personal artistic creativity on the other. Expressive skills have their place in art as a craft - in a world of gentlemanly expectations and gifted amateurs. In such a world it was very agreeable if a young man could play the flute well, contribute to theatricals, paint watercolour views, play some pretty Chopin or accompany Lieder, and ideally this gifted amateur also rowed for his college and boxed for the Varsity while notching up a First in Greats. The Dragon was more at home in producing such

gifted performers and interpreters than in creating composers and artists. Luckily, nature determines a child's gifts in the field of artistic creativity more than in most

others, so parents and children wisely did not count on the Dragon School alone.

*

Alan remembers himself as just about competent at art but not anything special. This is one area where it may be worth doing a little detailed work. I have seen how even before language and particularly writing is developed, Lily and Rosa expressed themselves and their complex development through drawings and painting and I have kept many of their art-works and filmed them doing them. One learns a great deal about their sense of form, shape, colour and perceptions of the world, as Gombrich and others have shown in their analysis of children's drawings.

The fact that I have a number of my drawings and paintings from about the age of seven onwards may be interesting. They were sent to my parents alongside letters, or to fill them out. What I chose to draw - often aeroplanes etc, and how I drew them - very stylized houses, using carbon paper to provide an outline - are all indicative. They hint at a richer world of development than can be retrieved from my handwriting.

My interest in trying to draw and paint was undoubtedly encouraged by my mother, who pointed with approval at my early efforts in my letters. For example she wrote to my father on 18th March 1948, when I was a little over seven, *I enclose a picture he painted for you. It has got rather smudged, but isn't bad really and completely his own work.* As yet I have not located this painting. [perhaps the picture of the ship - smudged]

My mother was herself an aspiring artist and wrote quite frequently about trying to paint. In her later years in the Hebrides and beyond she became quite a keen and good artist. In this period she had an inferiority complex about her painting, especially in relation to my father whom she thought a much better artist. This comes out, for example, in a letter she wrote to me on 11th December 1949 from a river trip in Assam. *In the afternoon I tried to paint but I'm afraid I wasn't a bit successful and the only thing I could do was this picture of our huts. Not a nice picture but I've come to the conclusion I can't paint! The green sausage-looking things are banana trees!*

My attempts at painting and drawing can be seen in a number of drawings which are attached to my letters or within them. These need to be scanned and will show the development of my limited skills. On the whole they are pretty basic and a world away from the skill which, for example, I have seen in Lily's development. Here are a few references and I shall put all of them here.

July 1949 - small painting of vase of flowers dated July, signed Alan

28.7.1950 - a painting of fisherman and shooting birds on Loch Morar

There are perhaps half a dozen more, of people playing games, the boat my parents went to India in, aeroplanes, our house in Dorset, my father shooting a tiger.

As well as the paintings and drawings, it may be possible to use the development of my hand-writing to make quite a detailed study of my control of form and content with a writing instrument. The Chinese and Japanese rightly see writing and painting as one form - as in the art of calligraphy. My letters from the age of seven to thirteen, seen as calligraphy rather than for their content and again scanned and placed alongside each other, may well be revealing in showing the development of my artistic sense in another form. They will also, particularly in terms of my signature, show something of my developing concept of myself and degree of self-confidence in my identity.

It will be possible to watch how the shape of the letter and the signs of some dyslexia (commented on without real comprehension by my mother and my

kindergarten reports) with reversed 'b' etc, can all be seen. The way we were encouraged to develop copper-plate writing, given special lessons and special pens (I still remember the pen fetish and getting my first shining 'Parker' set) is significant. Later in life people would read not only what we said, but how we said it, in our hand-writing - not just our character but also our education. So learning to write in a good style was a significant form of training at the Dragon.

So I tried out different pens, different colours, different styles in my letters. In particular, the way in which I practised on my signature and soon ended up with the form which I still use - with an underlined Alan (cf. Roald Dahl who signed himself 'Boy') is worth noting. I have watched (and filmed?) Lily trying out a signature and lamenting that she did not have one - and finally grasping on to one as if the signature and the personal identity grew together. So the development of writing, both the physical side of it and the content, will bridge me into the growing mental world of the child which should be one of the most intriguing parts of this study.

My mother does not really comment on my hand-writing or painting very much beyond commending my first efforts. What she thought of them I do not know. But there is one form of external commentary which shows how other people viewed me.

In my first kindergarten, aged six, I got an 'A' for drawing, with an 18/20 for the exams and second in the form. At my kindergarten at 'Southlands' the school reports on 'Art' were fairly bland but favourable, as follows.

Aged 6-7 Summer 1948 good

Aged 7-7 Summer 1949 good

Aged 8-0 Winter 1949 fairly good

Aged 8-3 Spring 1949 Good work this term

Aged 8-7 Summer 1950 Good, some work spoilt by too many minute details

The last comment on 'minute details' ties in with a feature commented on when I went on to the Dragon. The reports on 'Art' are as follows:

Aged 8-11 December 1950 Much improved use of brush and colours - Some good results

Aged 9-3 March 1951 Gaining confidence in his own ability

Aged 9-11 Dec 1951 Has done well. Will increase quality of his pictures by strengthening his colour

Aged 10-3 March 1952 Is still using weak colour, otherwise sound.

Aged 10-7 July 1952 A careful worker.

Aged 10-11 December 1952 He gives good attention and is interested

Aged 11-3 March 1953 Not wholly reliable in either work or behaviour

Aged 11-6 July 1953 He needs much prompting but there has been improvement lately

Aged 11-11 December 1953 Rather bald in statement but has shown a better approach

Aged 12-0 March 1954 Fair: he does not exert himself

Age 12-6 July 1954 His small scale drawings are well managed

Age 12-11 December 1954 Very stiff drawing and very little of it

Age 13-3 March 1955 Definition good. Avoids colours when he can.

There is no report for my last term...

On the whole the reports start reasonably. They decline in the middle part of my time at the Dragon, and then pick up to a certain extent. It is tempting to analyse this as coinciding with a period when I was missing my parents particularly and

seldom smiled. The internally grey world of loneliness and anxiety which is commented on in other school reports could be thought to have inhibited me. I would not splash out, either with colour or with bold drawing. My work was minimalist, over-detailed, 'stiff' and lacking confidence.

Interestingly I have absolutely no memories of the art classes, where they were, how they were run or even of the KRR who taught me for four out of the five years and with whom, at one time I showed 'not wholly reliable' behaviour. [I now discover that KRR was Miss K.R. Richardson of Woodstock Road]. Unlike sports, hobbies and games, I do not seem to have found a way to express my inner anxieties or frustrations through art. I did not lay any foundation for art appreciation - there is no mention of going to galleries or looking at paintings either at the Dragon or from home. I have always thought of myself as visually blind in terms of formal art and I now see the early roots of this.

*

Jamie has a vague recollection that a first introduction to art at the Dragon was making prints with potato cuts; after which we progressed to making drawings with brushes in insipid poster paints on soft, greyish paper. Sandy mentions, but I had forgotten, that there was a room devoted specifically to art (December 1954), *Wednesday also was a half holiday. I spent the afternoon in the Art room.*

Reports I received were pretty consistent: neat, accurate and well managed but with too small in scale to be expressive, and with too much emphasis on minor detail rather than creating a strong overall painting. It seems I may have tried to make my painting freer, but I could not 'throw away the map'. I still find that incredibly difficult to do.

<i>Dec 49</i>	<i>Very promising He uses his brushes and colours well RCM</i>
<i>Mar 50</i>	<i>Definite in ideas and brushwork - KRR</i>
<i>July 50</i>	<i>Inclined not to see the wood for the trees</i>
<i>Dec 50</i>	<i>Neat but the small things should not be allowed to take precedence</i>
<i>Mar 51</i>	<i>Successful when the scale is large enough</i>
<i>Jul 51</i>	<i>stronger in expression than formerly</i>
<i>Mar 52</i>	<i>Clear even work without being expressive</i>
<i>Jul 52</i>	<i>Enjoys painting and is becoming freer</i>
<i>Dec 52</i>	<i>the picture as a whole better conceived; the parts always good</i>
<i>Jul 53</i>	<i>neatness takes precedence over essential expression of an idea</i>
<i>Mar 54 v.</i>	<i>much interested & progressing well</i>
<i>Jul 54</i>	<i>seems to have lost heart for the moment</i>

Perhaps the teacher was despairing of me in my last term while I was preparing for scholarship exams and having a lovely time on the river.)

I was probably creating meaning in a small way satisfactory to myself, but it did not go very far as art. I suspect that the best drawings I did may have been doodles on loose pieces of paper, or in the margins of notebooks, on a small scale and private for myself. Certainly, in my Swallows and Amazons stage (from 9 onwards) I endlessly drew boats and sails and outlines of lakes and mountains; and I liked drawing birds (learnt by copying) or playing with cartoon characters.

The abilities (and weaknesses) noted consistently in my reports and these preferences above were all present when I took up drawing, painting of watercolours and etching on quite a serious basis later in life. I had some success in those media because representation and line were my strongest suits along with a fair sense of

design. As for Sandy, he could not draw as accurately as I could, but his paintings were freer and may have said more about what he saw and was thinking than mine did.

But teaching art must be very difficult at early stages of school. Creative art needs danger. Artists throw away earthly things and pull out paintings and design from within themselves. The materials were not very suitable. (You cannot paint yellow in poster paints - although crayons are not quite as bad: at least you can make a mess with them on walls.) But I do not recall being introduced to exploring ideas and feelings with line, experimenting with strong colours or resolving visual problems with which artists wrestle - such as indicating the mass and shape of the back of an object which you cannot see from the viewpoint you have.

The staff did their best and there must have been quite a few successes. But in many cases I suspect the problem lay more in the general culture of the school and its 1950s English middle class background. Easier for pupils and teachers were matters such as precision and completeness in execution (good for architects, district officers, naval lieutenants or colonial circuit judges) but if I had feelings of joy or anxiety, frustration or calm which I wanted to express in paint, I doubt I was given any ideas about how to progress.

As for opportunities for developing art appreciation of some kind I do not recall either books or visits to galleries - nor do general knowledge questions, for example, refer to artists very much. Dragon art was perhaps more to do with acquiring a useful or social skills than creating meaning.

*

Jamie comments that at certain points later in my Dragon years, he took some pleasure and an interest in writing. Letters home provide a fascinating picture of the basic development of handwriting, but they were hardly the right medium for exploration of calligraphy. They were written in a limited and short letter prep period (three quarters of an hour maybe) on a Sunday morning when we were impatient to be off to other activities.

My handwriting changed noticeably somewhere at the end of the first year, and remained a steady boyish script until about the age of eleven when I evidently began to experiment for a while. After that it settled down to a smaller, quite confident but not very tidy, round hand through to the age of 13 and beyond. Experiments were for effect, for fun, for pleasure. I bent the writing this way and that, I copied my parents' writing (both had very similar handwriting) and I deployed various curly or underlined signatures. A propos signatures, I changed my name from James to Jamie immediately after the Christmas holiday of 1952, as described in Chapter 12.

Some letters home were neater than others, and just occasionally I seem to have been conscious of lay out on the page. I cannot see that my letters or handwriting particularly reflect emotional changes or external circumstances affecting me at the time - other than as an obvious result of illness (e.g. letters written in bed in sickroom) and, more often, all too apparent haste.

All through the Dragon years my spelling was reasonable to good, but Sandy suffered some dyslexia, with letters formed in confusion ('s's and 'n's backwards, 'd's and 'b's reversed and transpositions of letters (such as 'Werdan' for 'Andrew'). My letters show that I worried about what would happen if he arrived at the Dragons without being able to read and write properly. In my first letter home in September 1949 it was the first subject, I raised, *can Sandy read properly yet ~ I hope he can. We have great fun in the Dragon School. I like it very much*

The following month I wrote to Sandy, *I hope you are having a nice time ~ It's a*

great pity but I haven't found another cub pack ~ is Black Beauty your faviroute horse or do you like the others better [?] how's work [?] see if you can write joining [up] ~ I hope you can read now

In February of the following term, I wrote in capitals to make sure my message got through, *WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING? HAVE BEEN HAVING A LOVELY TIME. CAN YOU READ PROPERLY YET ~ I HOPE YOU CAN?* And after the Easter holidays, *What have you been doing since I have been away? I have moved up four forms. How is your reading [?] we had a very rough weather coming over here ~ it was drizzly all the time*

In May 1950 it was the anxious brother again, *Is Sandy better at reading and spelling? I hope he is. In your next letter can you tell me when he is coming.* And on 14 May, *How is Sandy [?] tell him I think [h]is writing is better than last term but [he] still makes spelling mistakes ~ can he read properly now?*

And by the end of May I was clearly getting nervous, *I hope you are well and having a nice time. How is Sandy? I am riding my bike a lot ~ I can turn round in the road. I hope Sandy is better at reading and writing ~ He must improve his writing because when he comes to school he has to write more than six lines decently.*

Sandy finally arrived at school that September, after a North Sea crossing and a day with family friends in London. He reports in his first letter home,

We had a horobel crossing ~ I were sike [= sick] 11 Times ~ I am in midly [= middle] Five in Foumes [= forms] ~ in games I am in 9 ~ we play a lots of marbles ~ we saw a film of Black Roes [= Rose] ~ Dosilvers [= Da Silva's] mum bouth [= bought] us Books under 6/- ~ we went to see the chanshing of the garedes [= Changing of the Guard] we went to hanles [= Hamleys] We went to the sin om [= cinema] of micki mouss and it was grat fun

In the same mail I sent my new address and re-assurances about my brother, before signing off on the subject, *I am in School House now, but I sleep in Charlbury so my address is different. I wrote it up at top so you would know. I like it very much ~ Sandy likes it as well a [= &] writes a letter to you (I hope).*

Sandy's earliest letters are sometimes quite difficult to make out. Interestingly, however, the handwriting which emerged a little later, aged about ten, then remained remarkably steady. Our writing was quite alike at about eleven, and then mine became rounder whereas his stayed rather upright, almost backward sloping as if written left handed.

Writing paper and implements are important to good handwriting; and as long as I can remember I have enjoyed both, so I suppose this started at Dragon age. A child needs good solid paper with a bite that can hold a pencil or pen, and decent quality pens not scratchy cheap ones or ball point pens (which can leak just as much as fountain pens). Paper produced for Sunday letters was thin. I remember taking pleasure and pride in pens, especially mottled Waterman's pens and Parker sets, and asked for new ones for presents. And no doubt there were limitations of design and expense in those times. I still prize my fountain pens today.

*

Various minor details come back to mind from my letters. I did not like biro in those days (the ballpoint pen was still quite new in England?); nor apparently did my parents. I wrote in November 1952, [in biro] *I am sorry I am not writing in ink, but I have no pen or pencil in here. [change to another biro] I've managed to borrow*

one at last but it doesn't write very well. And another letter reminded me of the whole business of having one's beautiful pens engraved with one's name (in letters coloured gold I think), *Sorry I'm writing in pencil, but my pen is being marked.* And good propelling pencils were prized possessions too, and we were all delighted with a Joc present to all boarders on the morning of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953, *The next morning we woke up full of excitement. At breakfast we found propelling pencils at our seats. I am writing with mine now; so are a lot of people.*

Then there was the Osmiroid pen - with its italic nib (or even a set of interchangeable nibs, I think). There was a craze for them near the end of my time at the Dragons, and I enjoyed experimenting with one, shaping up Gothic looking writing or adding curlicues and serifs. Looking through the collection of my letters I see that the high point of this experimentation came between November 1953, and the start of my last summer term. In November 1953 my handwriting was changing in style, in mid-letter even, from round, to upright, to a sloping script. Then in March 1954 my handwriting again started varying between normal and italic, backwards and forwards, sloping and dead upright. By April I had moved into Italic mode, with envelopes addressed in smart italic writing and texts of letters in forward sloping italic writing. This was my Osmiroid hey-day, but it did not last the term.

In the end, however, I could not find an italic style that suited me or keep up a consistent effort, and the writing came to look rather spikey, hard-edged and uncomfortable. So, perhaps with scholarship exams ahead, I decided just to stick to what was tidy but easiest, and I finished my Dragon time with a reasonably fair, roundish, upright to slightly forward sloping hand.

Clearly, fine handwriting can add value to communications and can also be part of creating meaning. I think the Dragons set us out on a good start but might have done more to develop an awareness of the possibilities. I do not recall being encouraged to think of calligraphy as an art form or to see that a few words on paper can actually look nice - although there were competitions for good handwriting as well as tests, as I wrote in March 1951, *I went in for a hand writing test 3 days ago. I shouldn't think I'll win though.*

Letters written under the eagle eye of my Bruce Lockhart grandmother in the Christmas holidays of 1952 and 1953 are a real pleasure to look at and read. But I fear that, with that exception, I thought little about the presentation of letters. Thus I wandered off by myself through my last years at the Dragon to try to form a writing which I suppose I thought was neat, quick and easy and looked sort of clever and confident, with capital letters exaggerated in size.

But I suspect this attitude is again typical of Dragon priority accorded to scholarship and production of effective new members of the professional classes. Writing as an abstract art form with shapes and patterns (think of David Jones's calligraphic works), broad margins, clear lines and balanced spacing was perhaps a bridge too far. But good presentation does matter (even in the age of the pc) - and can catch the eye and mind of those who will not read beyond the first paragraph.

*

Jamie does not remember whether I attempted or we were taught anything about writing poetry or short stories or otherwise introduced into creative writing proper. I have a vague memory of being asked to write (very) short stories - in class or prep, I forget - presumably in order to learn some principles and practice of narrative style. And I suppose we wrote poems as part of English lessons perhaps with the verse and rhyme forms set etc. And we certainly read and heard a great deal of poetry -

an important step but only part of the way towards actually using words. As to personal experimentation, I suspect that in the run of the schoolboy mill, ideas of writing poetry were regarded as sissy.

I tried a summer holiday diary in 1952 (for a visit to my parents in USA) Mothers like their children's diaries; and there was encouragement at home as well as a little at school. I refer to its progress back at school in October with perhaps a little excitement, My diary is in and being marked, and was pleased to report *I got a first prize for my diary!* Am not sure, but I wonder if the rather matter of fact tone in November indicates that I had slightly lost interest in the subject by then.

A diary can certainly be a creative art form in many ways, and I think the school, very sensibly, left us to do it our own way. I do not recall any particular instructions in advance or discussion of ideas, say, about imaginative use of a diary other than as documentation of events or an aide-memoire. I do not think mine had any literary scope or pretensions, however, and maybe like those of others was in the end a series of brief reports topped up with tourist postcards, copies of parental photographs and attempted sketches when ideas and words became harder to find.

We were issued with a large, hard-covered, brown exercise book which was rather satisfactory to use. I can well imagine that Joc and Hum liked reading them to learn about the home life of their boarders, and I would certainly be fascinated to see it again today – alas, it has disappeared along with most other Dragon trophies.

Such personal diaries as I kept were not particularly creative, although occasionally inventive. There were normal diaries with brief entries about main events (and possibly scores in school matches, and weather reports); in January 1950 I was having a go, *There has been no games except indoor voluntary games ~ there has been cold weather most of the time ~ I am keeping my diary.* One year I started a food diary (things eaten) and in another year a diary in which I tried to attach a name of a person who had a birthday (from Dragon colleagues and relatives to famous personalities) for each day of the year. I also kept records of birds seen, but not tied to a diary I think. None of these diaries were not maintained very consistently or for long. I would guess that to reach March would have been a good run.

Finally on the subject of diaries, for every day use I had, like others, one of those marvellous Letts Schoolboy diaries, as requested for Christmas in November 1950, *can I please have a letts school boys diary 1951 ~ they show history dates[,] latin verbs, nouns etc, greek, French, lengths of rivers, sports, heights of mountains, geographical notes, etc ~ there is a place for your timetable at the back ~ blue one* ~ I remember them terribly well, and loved them They were neat, the right size for the pocket and and comfortingly crammed with useful knowledge.

MUSIC

I (Alan) don't remember music in my infancy in Assam though, no doubt, there were lullabies from my mother. Her songs are a strangely haunting remembrance to me still, partly because Sarah sings them. I don't remember tribal singing or drumming, martial band music, or even the music of birds from that time, but no doubt all these entered me in ways which I have seen with Lily and Rosa as they danced to Handel as soon as they could stand, or Premkumari danced the 'ghato' when she was a little girl. Some of the early nursery rhymes, 'Half a pound of tuppenny rice', etc involve singing and bodily dancing and I must have played and

sang these.

It appears from the school reports of my kindergarten that I was quite keen on music before I went to the Dragon. The report form had a space for Violin and Piano, but I clearly learnt neither. The reports for four terms were as follows:

aged 6-7 Singing - Quite Good

aged 7-0 Music - most interested

aged 8-0 Singing - very keen, Band - good rhythm

aged 8-2 Singing - Very fair

In my last report there is no mention of music.

I have the vaguest memory that at one time I did try to learn the piano, but am not sure where or when this was. Yet there is a notable absence of any music or singing reports for the Dragon. In the almost complete set of termly reports, every other subject is noted. Only the slot for 'Music and Singing' is empty for every term. This confirms my view that I did no formal music learning - whether this was at my request or because my parents felt it was an unnecessary expense, I do not know.

At the moment the first memories I have of music was in various films and in the pantomimes. One strand of this which I particularly enjoyed in the Broadstone days was the musical. This was the great period for Rogers and Hammerstein and others and most of my relatives, including my father and especially Robert and my Mermagen cousins were particularly keen on this. So 'Oklahoma', 'Annie Get your Gun', 'Call me Madam' and other musicals haunted my life. We would sing them on car journeys, while doing the interminable washing up ('A you're Adorable, B you're so Beautiful...'). I can still sing quite a lot of Oklahoma and hearing a song from these American classics still brings back the excitement and energy of those days. They brought light and warmth into a tired and rationed post-war Britain, a touch of exotic romance in a bleak world.

They may also have had an added attraction to someone on the edge of puberty as my mother describes in the following account written on 6th August 1954.

Last Wednesday Alan and I went in actually, we had an appointment with the Dental Specialist and Richard took the girls and Mummy to the Races at Salisbury so we have ourselves a treat and went to the matinee of "South Pacific" after the dentist and the usual grim café lunch - not very expensive as we stood in a queue and went to the cheapest seats, unfortunately I hadn't taken my glasses so saw it in a mist but it was very pretty and gay. I said to Alan "What is the principal girl like, is she pretty" and he said "Yes she is, but not as pretty as some of the girls in the chorus" which surprised me a little as I didn't think he would have noticed, must read the Kinsey Report!

Other forms of singing and participation from that time apart from the Gilbert and Sullivan plays, discussed later in the chapter, must have included singing in church though I do not remember this. On 20th February 1955 I wrote that *Today the third suppers are going to St Andres church and I am in the choir*. But this I do not recall.

Nor do I recall something which I allude to in my letter of 2nd February 1953 where I stated, after noting a *jolly good sinny show last night called Mad about Music*, that *I always go to the music club wich is a club where you sit down and listen to records being played*. The report for this term is worth quoting fully as an example of what this club was about. 'The Club has continued this term, to awake

from their Sunday valhalla the residents of Gunga Din with thunderstorms, be they by Rossini or Beethoven, Casse-Noisettes, trumpets (purely voluntary), and other variations on an unoriginal theme. As is only natural, vocal rather than symphonic works seem to please most, though the pianoforte has a great following.

The vocal works played have ranged from Purcell to Ellis, from Handel to Sullivan. Larry Adler, the superb exponent of that sometimes disfavoured instrument, the harmonica, did not go unhonoured. Catholicity was the watchword, though the influence of Christmas Term productions makes the Savoy Operas strong favourites in the popular esteem. It was with this in view that the end of term competition took the form of a 'quiz' based on 'Pineapple Poll', the next ballet arrangement of Sullivan's music.... (report on competition). The Singer's Club were busy this term practising four songs altogether, two of which, an arrangement of 'O, No, John!' and 'The Camel's Hump,' were sung well and with plenty of life...' The members of the club, sixteen named boys and five masters, do not include my name.

This does not give emphasis to the playing of music, to which I allude, but the term before it notes that 'Nearly all the records played have been the choice of individual boys, and that such fine works as Symphonies and Concertos by Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, etc., have been a regular feature is a testimony to their good taste. During the term the Club also studied Haydn's 'Clock' Symphony with scores, playing a playing a movement a week.'

I have just found that in Christmas 1953 it states that 'This term there were altogether forty-one members of the Club with a regular attendance of between fifteen and twenty-five. J.Pleues never missed, and other very regular attenders included P. Green, R. Gadney, J. Gaze, D. Hawley, A. Macfarlane and J.Snape.' In this term 'As usual our repertoire of records was fairly broad; from Haydn to Sullivan, and from Grand Opera to modern American musical shows.' The following Easter 1954 term, I find that 'The gramophone playing section had a good term... At the end of term, a competition was held, and among the seven named prizewinners is Macfarlane. A specimen weekly programme, based mainly on the requests of the boys, is given as follows.

Overture: 'Pirates of Penzance' Sullivan
Extracts from 'Swan Lake' Tchaikovsky
Extract from 'Paint your Wagon'
'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' Bach
Harry Lauder singing 'Keep right on to the end of the road'
First Movement of Mozart's Symphony in G minor with scores
First part of 'The Pirates of Penzance'.

A similar kind of assortment - Handel, Mozart, Elgar, Liszt alongside Iolanthe and Larry Adler was played in Christmas 1954. In my final term of music club, Easter 1955, I am glad to see that alongside Handel, Rossini, Schubert, Tchaikowsky, Chopin and Bach, we had 'Paint your Wagon' and Harry Lauder 'The Road to the Isles'.

I have also just discovered that I was a member of the voluntary 'Singer's Club'. Thus in Easter 1955 the 'Draconian' reports that 'The Singer's Club were busy this term rehearsing three songs for the School concert and a carol for the last Sunday service. The songs were 'The Camel's Hump', 'The Frog', and 'Disobedience' from words of A.A. Milne. The Easter Carol was 'This Joyful Eastertide'. The club had twenty boy singers and five masters this term, among which was A. Macfarlane.

What I do remember was that there was active folk singing. I used to delight in sitting around in the locker room in School House with several dozen other little

boys and singing old rounds, Negro spirituals, folk songs and so on – Polly Wolly Doodle, Clementine, John Brown’s Body in its shrinking version, Yodilee-Yodal-a, all these I recall with many others. Jake Mermagen recalls that this was run by R.I. Kitson, or ‘Kitkat’. This memory is echoed in the same letter in which I talk about the music club. I describe how *We have community singing in the evening we have songs like Campetown races or polly wolly doodle and Old folk at home. This is my version of Old folks at home. Way down upon de dilhi riber far far away, still longing for de old plantation. And for de old folks at home.* [The Dilli was a river I had seen on my trip to Assam].

Later I moved on to the ‘Scottish Student’s Song Book’, which I still have, and then to accompany myself on the guitar. At the Dragon I think we just banged spoons and sticks, but the joy of combining voices was intense and some of the best evenings were spent like this. The rhythms and tunes of Scottish and Irish music mainly reached me through the dancing classes, where we heard many famous tunes, and it may have been here that I first heard some country and western music, as well as the exciting rhythms of south America.

On 30th November 1953 I noted ‘We are having a concert given by all the staff who can play an instrument.’ This was one kind of concert, alongside which every term there were ‘Home Talent’ concerts by various boys and masters. There were also, occasionally, special concerts. One which clearly impressed me was described on 29th November 1954 in a letter I wrote to my father in India: *there is going to be a concert tonight given by a 13 year old boy who plays the piano wonderfully. He started when he was eight and he has not even been Forced to do it he has learnt in his spare time. He has composed lots of tunes and he can play Beethoven without the score. One piece he has composed is called ‘The wild train’ and it is extremely good.* The ‘Draconian’ for that term describes how ‘On November 28th, the School had the pleasure and privilege of being given a recital by a gifted young pianist, Michael Derry, a thirteen year old schoolboy from Northampton, whom Gerd Sommerhoff had met by chance during the summer holidays. His remarkable technical maturity was combined with the freshness and spontaneity of a child, and he tackled a formidable array of works from Scarlatti to Sibelius with effortless and enviable fluency.’ Among the things he played were Beethoven’s Sonata in G minor, Op 49, No. 1, and a Suite of four pieces he had composed himself, including ‘The Bad Tempered Train’.

We also heard a good deal of ‘popular’ music of the fifties on the ‘wireless’, as we called it, though, as yet, I can’t remember much beyond the theme tune of ‘Much Binding in the Marsh’ and ‘Dick Barton Special Agent’. Especially with the Mermagens, but also with my musical grandmother, mother and uncles, there was a certain amount of music making in the evenings.

There must have been quite a bit of singing at the Christian boy’s camps I went to – not just rather jolly hymns, but ‘sing-songs’ of various kinds. My uncle Richard, in particular, was very keen on classical music and there are mentions of concerts he went to. For example my grandfather mentioned on 19th September 1952 *Richard and Robert have been to several concerts at the Winter Gardens Bournemouth.* Richard may also have started to learn the clarinet and I vaguely remember even at ‘By the Way’ the plaintive notes of the slow movement of Mozart’s clarinet concerto being endlessly repeated. I have also discovered a note on 29th January 1951 in my grandfather’s diary about my uncle Billy: ‘Billy plays recorder’.

*

Alongside such music and theatre described above, my greatest love between the

age of nine and thirteen was for the Doyle Carte operas. My uncle Robert was very keen on Gilbert and Sullivan and sang the female lead in 'Yeoman of the Guard' at Sedbergh when I must have been about eight. Thus my grandfather noted on 19th September 1952 in a letter *Alan is musical and he and Robert are great Gilbert and Sullivan fans.*

The cycle of five Gilbert and Sullivan operas at the Dragon, wonderfully produced by 'Bruno', in which I was in the second ('Patience') and the last ('Iolanthe') had a deep effect on me. They took me into colourful imaginary worlds of pirates and gondoliers and Japanese emperors which added to the delight of the music. The jokes and text, of course, were also teaching me a great deal about the English class system, the political and legal system, even the system of aesthetics ('Patience') which portrayed a Britain which was still relevant.

I do not note the first, 'The Mikado', but was keen to be in the one in my second year, 'Patience'. On 28th September 1952 I reported that *Thee play we are acting this term is patience a Gilbert and Sullivan Opera.* There were a number of trials of our voices and I still remember Bruno coming along the line of the singers listening attentively to each of us and desperately hoping my voice was alright. I could report on 5th October that *We are doing Patience and so far I am in it.* A week later I reported in triumph *Dear Mummy and daddy I am in patience and I am very excited.* I was a maiden and still remember 'Twenty love-sick maidens we...' I have the programme of the performance, done on Nov. 13, 14, 15, with a list of those in the 'Chorus of Rapturous maidens'. This includes two girls, several of my long-term Dragon friends, and A. Macfarlane. There is also the photo of the cast, and one photograph where I appear on the top left at the front of the rapturous maidens.

The next in the cycle was 'Pirates of Penzance' which I desperately hoped to be in. I note, however, on 27th September 1953 that *We are having "Pirates of Penzance" this term. If I am in it I will be a Policeman or Pirate, but I have not much hope as I am two small.* This was indeed the case and no more is heard of this, or of the next year's 'Gondoliers'.

My final chance was to be in 'Iolanthe' in my last year. On 10th October my mother wrote to my father *My move is complicated by all the children's half terms which happen just about then. I'd like to fit Alan's in anyway if possible as he may be in "Iolanthe".* A week later on the 18th she wrote *Alan is a peer in "Iolanthe" as you probably know, so I must go and see him. It isn't till Nov. 12th which will give me a slight breathing space.* Ten days before the performance I explained on 2nd November *We are rather behind hand with the play 'Iolanthe' in which I am a peer and there are only three more days until the dress rehearsal.*

I remember that I was so entranced with the music and words that I vowed that I would never forget a scrap of 'Iolanthe' and for weeks afterwards sang it through to myself before I went to sleep. The only down side was that in my zeal I decided to add a brilliant touch, namely to have gout as an aged Peer. So I hobbled onto the stage on the first night. Afterwards Bruno asked who the boy was who had been hobbling about as a parent had complained that a boy with a broken leg was being put on stage. I was shame-faced. Now I read in one of the commentaries on the performance ('Draconian', Christmas 1954) the comment. 'Some at least of the peers are supposed to be decrepit old men; why, then did they all adopt a stiffly erect posture? More variety here, a few bent backs and shuffling gaits, would have been in order.' I have discovered that I am vindicated after nearly sixty years! The enormous coronet is well displayed in the photograph of me in the group picture which I still have and was reproduced in the 'Draconian', no.201.

The quality of these performances became a bone of contention between my

mother and myself and probably show some class snobbery, or at least over-zealous school patriotism on my part. On 27th March 1955 she wrote *Yesterday afternoon I took them to see "The Yeoman of the Guard" as done by the Windermere Grammar School. It was very good I thought, though a bit wooden in parts - but Alan was most scathing and compared it unfavourably with Dragon School productions, wrongly actually!*

*

Of the wide range of music and musical activities on offer at the Dragon School Jamie enjoyed most of all the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. They had an immediate impact in helping me understand what music is about, and I am today still grateful to the school for them.

I only took part in two productions, and in the chorus, but felt very involved in others even as audience. We went along to a number of rehearsals, and friends were in the show, so, like Alan, I learnt many of the songs and tunes. They were ideal prep school entertainment - and more: we swooned with the romantic heroes, we pined for the fair heroines, we laughed with the comic dukes, chancellors and generals, we danced with the supporting trios; we allowed our emotions to be tugged this way and that and we were sad or happy on cue. I willingly suspended disbelief, but extra spice, indeed an extra dimension, was added by knowing most if not all of the cast.

Even if we did not understand all the period jokes in the text, the plays gave us the greatest pleasure. More important, we learnt a great deal about the presentation and performance of music (and plays) through them. The operas helped develop a strong sense I have of rhythm and melody. We learnt about balance and use of contrasts in music, about the shape of pieces of music, with an introduction, a middle and a finale and about connections between music, rhythm and dance. And it is probably easier to see and feel how music can play on the emotions in an operetta than in orchestral or chamber music.

I have a copy of the full libretto (as a school prize) and the music of some of the operettas arranged for piano inherited from Bruce Lockhart grandparents. The problem with the latter was that the introductions were hard, and the accompaniment rather boring to play by yourself; you needed someone else there to sing, or play, the melody line.

In my first term at the Dragon it was 'Iolanthe', which I recall only a little, then it was 'Mikado', 'Gondoliers', 'Patience' and the 'Pirates of Penzance' in my last year. I was a love sick maiden or similar in the 'Gondoliers' (list and learn ye dainty roses), and a pirate doubling as a policeman with cat like tread in the 'Pirates'. Thus I participated and sang away to my heart's delight from the safety of the chorus, and my dramatic skills were happily not tested much beyond having to figure out the steps of a bolero.

A rare Gilbert and Sullivan event, in 1952, was a performance by Joc and masters of 'Trial by Jury', with a handful of boys in support. And most enjoyable it was too; spirited and clever but I also recall it was all rather grown up and slightly different. I remember the beautifully built set consisting of a series of wooden boxes and pews to form the court, and that the play was not as easy as our hum-along favourites - but perhaps that was because there was less participation by boys, and we attended rehearsals less.

My memories may be touched by the rosy glow of time, but letters home confirm a very positive attitude at the time. In my first term I saw Iolanthe twice, *I went to Iolanthe yesterday, it was lovely and very funny ~ every [body] thought Lord*

Chancellor was the best ~ I wish you were there to see it . One can sense the sheer pleasure of an eight year old being transported by the magic of the music and play. I had seen nothing like it at home, and I saw the play a second time when the grandparents Hone came to see it, On saturday afternoon at 2.15 I saw the play ~ it was very nice and very well acted ~ I think the best actor was the Lord chancellor who was Hugh Peers ~ every-body said he was the best encluding Granny and grandfather

In mid-October 1950 my references to the 'Mikado' show how much we were all wrapped up in these plays, *I am tacking a boy called Evers out ~ his younger cousin was Peep-bo in the play and his older one Nanki-poooh ~ he is a soloist like both his cousins. This evening there is a concert. J. Chatterton, D. Evers and C Evers are singing with the masters. J. Chatterton was Koko in the play there ~ Mr Yates and Mr Barnwell are singing solos ~ a story about the school rather like Hiawatha.* Interesting that the same boys with singing gifts also performed in school concerts, but I confess I do not recall a school Hiawatha story.

In the autumn of 1951 I was in the 'Gondoliers', and delighted by the experience. Unfortunately, however, there are no letters or that term in my mother's collection because she was in Oxford before going to join my father in Washington. Apart from being on a stage for the first time, the excitement was also in being so close to the making of the music, right beside the soloists and the orchestra and involved in expressing the music. I think the chorus was on stage as the curtain went up, and sang the opening song sitting down and flapping fans (which were fun; my grandmother Hone taught me the knack of opening it properly with a snap). The chorus' part was not very big, and the steps of the bolero hardly sophisticated, but this was a tremendously new musical experience for me and such a long way from lonely practising of The Jolly Farmer on a piano in a hut behind School House.

There was a prolonged system of selection for having a part, solo or in a chorus, with singing tests, and weeding of candidates to a short list. This shorter list then went to practices, but still on probation. At some point the final list (plus maybe a spare body or two in case of illness) carried on to the final rehearsals off stage and then on stage and the performances. Thus I wrote in *I have not yet been chucked out of the Gondoliers. We have finished the first act.*

I was not in 'Patience' in 1952, but that clearly did not stop me enjoying the words and music, *I am now learning the colonels song in Patience [:] If you want a receipt for the popular mystery known to the world as a heavy Dragoon. I am not in it ~ the lists went up on Wednesday. But I have a little chance that someone might break down.* It was performed in November, as usual. Sandy and I liked it, but apparently not everyone, *I saw the play last night. I thought it was very good. Granny did not like [it] ~ I am [illeg.] good with it but it has some very nice tunes.*

In October 1953 I got into the 'Pirates', *The play list for the choruses went up on Thursday and I am in one of the Pirate chorus in the 1st act and a 'copper' in the second act. I have quite a lot to do. There certainly are some every nice tunes in the play I think.* At the start of November the pace of preparations was hotting up, *In the play we have finished all the words. Being a policeman is great fun. We'll be acting next week (not performances); and on the 8th I wrote, Last night we were rehearsing for 3 hrs exactly with 5 min break half way. We have practically gone through the whole play now, actions and all. It is really jolly hard work.*

My numerous comments on 'Trial by Jury' show how excited we were by the idea of a staff play: first the stage, on 10 February 1952, *This week the stage for Trial by Jury will be erected.* A fortnight later, *The masters are doing Trial by Jury ~ with some boys also as the Bridesmaids.* And more excitement in mid March, *Everything*

for the play 'Trial by Jury' is up now. The stage looks very nice.

The next day, there was a general rehearsal of *Trial by Jury*. I listened to them; and on 30 March a performance at last, *On Saturday we went to a performance of Trial by Jury. It was very good indeed... We have been making up plays and one opera, which is not yet [] ~ we only made up two songs.* Interesting how the play led to our trying to make up plays and librettos ourselves; and in response to the high general level of interest, the play was repeated at the Sing-song a few days later, *On our Sing Song we had the Jazz Club, two poems from masters[,] the new film and another performance of Trial by Jury.*

Sandy had his own original views of Gilbert and Sullivan as of many other Dragon things - and could be critical. He reported on the 'Mikado' in his first term (in his own code!), *I went to the play on saterday ~ it was very funny I will send you the program ~ did you have fireworks on Nov 5th? The mackardoo lockt firne [= Mikado looked fine] and the sining [= singing] was good.*

A propos singing in these operettas, the best Dragon singers sometimes performed outside school too, as Sandy noted cryptically in February 1952, *Micheal Evers is singing in a play in Oxford about the Godes[s]es ~ he is a qubet [= Cupid?] so he will be out of our doorm for 2 nights.* Michael (one of the large and gifted Evers clan) must have been aged only nine and a bit at the time.

Sandy made no comments on the Gondoliers at the time in 1951 but the following summer, he wrote that Hamlet, with the much enjoyed grave diggers, was *much better than the Gonderlares.* Maybe he felt that the 'Gondoliers' lacked the comic element present in other Gilbert and Sullivan plays.

In October 1952 Sandy was a candidate for 'Patience', *I have past the test to go onto the play but about 30 people pass that out of 100 people and only 16 people get in or 19 out of the 20 people.* but he was not upset or put off - we weren't, the Dragon culture ensured that - but on the contrary enjoyed the play immensely, *We went to the evening performance and it was terrible good ~ Bunthorn was best I thought then Patience and then the Archibold Grovenner then the Duke. It was mutch better than the Gondoliers ~ No body forgot they part either ~ I think it was the most amusing of all the plays[,] Gondoliers and Trial by Jury[,] Micardo[,] Pairats of Pensans and I cant tell the other ones. I must go now*

As to 'Iolanthe' in 1954, Sandy showed a certain lack of interest - and had other things on his mind, *It is really half term now. Iolanthy sounds a pretty soopy [= sappy] play. Do you know if you can fish in the winter, I mean are you allowed to?* And a year later, in his last winter term, Sandy was again occupied with a great many things, but Gilbert and Sullivan seemed not to be among them. A reference to 'Mikado' was again connected to family arrangements, and the competing attraction of our wolfhound Jeb being shown at Crufts. *The play is on the 12th of November ~ I am not in it, so I suppose you (Daddy) won't be coming but will be coming for the weekend a bit later... I hope that Crufts is not on the play weekend of November or it might be rather a muddle.*

And he asked again the following week *Are you coming up for the play [?] Don't forget to tell me everything about Jeb and the Crufts etc.* Arrangements for half term visits of this kind were indeed muddling and could be a worry. In the end, my mother, at least, did come up for half term and saw the play, hence no report in any letters, just thanks for the visit, *I had a lovely time at half term and it was very very kind of you to come down here. I do hope that Sahra is well.*

*

Like so many boys I (Jamie) started my musical career learning the piano. Over

two years I fought my way nobly to The Jolly Farmer and a little beyond, but sadly that was it. Laziness, an unwillingness to practice, an inability to deploy both hands deftly at the same time and an insistence on the security of reading the score rather than trying to learn music by heart left me struggling. In my third year I switched to the clarinet, and things began to look up

The idea came from my parents on the principle that it was an instrument you could easily carry around with you, and could be played equally in classical music, modern popular or jazz. I was taught by Mrs Senior, sister of Bill Gairdner, the senior French master at Sedbergh. Mrs Senior's son Ian and her nephew Johnny Gairdner both went through the Dragons to Sedbergh, the former a little older, the latter a contemporary of mine. I enjoyed my lessons; she was a good teacher, and I was soon coming to grips with the not easy business of correct embouchure.

Teaching an instrument to a young boy whose interest in it may be fragile is obviously difficult and at this stage must inevitably deal principally with technique. With hindsight, however, it is a pity that everything was done strictly from books and notes. There was no improvisation, no playing by ear; not even scales or arpeggios, and no learning of tunes to play by heart. I think these were serious omissions. I was not really taught to be at one with the instrument – which remained a foreign thing to be managed by reading. Such, however, was the traditional method of teaching at that period, and with Ma Senior's help my fingering was satisfactory and I made pretty sounds, even if I did not advance into making music. Perhaps that came later, and the technique and basic understanding of the instrument at prep school age certainly allowed and encouraged me to proceed later to appreciating music and progressing in my own way at Sedbergh.

Am not sure exactly when I started the clarinet, but it must have been in the autumn term of 1951, at the start of my third year, because in February 1952 I was already getting down to practising, *Queen Elizabeth drove through Oxford yesterday at 12.0 ~ I did not go but practised the Clarinet*. By July I was making at least some progress, *Home Talent to-night. I am playing clarinet in it a piece from one of Handels march. I am also playing Drink to me only, Early one morning, pieces from Schubert and other things including Jazz (when I'm practising). I can play quite a bit of Jazz on the piano*.

The next step was to acquire my own clarinet (rather than continuing to use a school one). This was planned for the winter term of 1953, but there were problems, *Mrs Senior said that the clarinet she had is 'afraid' and that the seller was a 'bogus bogie' (my language) so I'm using the school clarinet now. I am doing a piece from the water music*. I assume that when a clarinet is afraid it is badly (cheaply) built with the result that it tends to cause overtones and be out of tune according to strength of air flow, etc.; and the seller here was obviously a sharp dealer. As a result, I had my own clarinet by Sedbergh days but am not sure when I was given it.

By my last term, music lessons were expanded to include study of famous composers in readiness for the scholarship exams, *I have done a lot of musician working from your book and one Mrs Senior left me*. I remember the little book in question (a small dictionary of music, composers and musical terms etc.)

Reports for music lessons record reasonable and steady progress, I think they included in the first year or two, singing and group music both sung and orchestral, as well as lessons on instruments, in my case the piano at first.

Dec 49 keen and intelligent work
Mar 50 a good term's work MEP

July 50 *has made more effort and practised harder MEP*

Dec 50 *worked well & intelligently; sight reading improved*
Mar 51 *has tried hard and definitely improved*
July 51 *the best term for music so far*

Dec 51 *report missing*
Mar 52 *clarinet: marked progress, good steady work, very keen*
July 52 *ditto v. satisfactory progress, good sense of rhythm*

Dec 52 *a v good term's work; becoming a useful member of the orchestra*
Mar 53 *report missing*
Jul 53 *steady & reliable player; has made notable strides of late.*
 Promising

Dec 53 *keen & good work; tone & technique steadily improving*
Mar 54 *v. satisfactory work; useful and reliable member of orchestra*
July 54 *valuable member of orchestra ;playing shows real promise*

The reports also bring out another important point about music at the Dragons, namely the focus on orchestral, or group, participation. I understand the reasons for this, but I sometimes wonder whether, for the naturally gifted players, concentration of focus on orchestral work might have stifled creative feelings and development of playing skills. Music became a team game; discipline took the place of artistic expression. According to the Victorian ethic of team games, you were invited to have a go, containing your personal feelings for the common good (you can't have every trumpeter blasting away at the top of his lungs); playing your part when called upon without hesitation (a solo which you are not quite up to), never miss your cue (the nervous triangle player), never miss a practice, train hard, never let the side down and be cheerful in adversity and so on. Empire building stuff.

I am exaggerating of course, but this insistence on group therapy came of course from the parental mafia. And both Sandy and I enjoyed and no doubt benefited from playing in the orchestra, but perhaps there is time enough for orchestras later in musical life; it is not really for a prep school. And more might have been learnt at this stage by playing duets.

*

Sandy's experience and progress in the world of music was very different in character. What he really most enjoyed and loved (all his life) was listening to music. He tried hard at learning and performing but it was not his natural habitat. Like our mother he could not find and hold a note in tune, but he had a deep appreciation of music.

He too started on the piano, reporting in May 1952 that, *I am doing a very nice piece of muci [= music] called Flow Gently Sweet Afton*. He struggled along for a year or two and may have stopped lessons altogether for a while; then he switched to the trumpet. As I remember it, he was keen to try, and our parents were enthusiastic, especially since a trumpet too was portable. He may have been encouraged to try something again because my lessons were going along well, as were those of his friend Hugo Rowbotham who played the violin.

Sandy started in February 1955, *Mr Collins, the person who is going to teach the*

trumpet to me, is coming down here at half past twelve to-day. Mrs Senior says that he sounds a very 'D' chap. Later that same month, after they had met, Sandy could confirm, Mr Collinson is a terrifically nice chap. He is coming down after the service to-day. He was soon ordering his own trumpet, and in early Sandy was off, The trumpet arrived on Tuesday morning, it is just right and super.

By the summer term Sandy was ready to move forward again and reported proudly at the end of May, *I am going to join the Orchestra in a week's time and I am having just been shown and given my piece.* In July he could announce, *I am not going to play any more matches a) because there is only 1 more and b) because on Wednesday next when we have a match I am playing in the school concert.* And one week later he added a PS to his letter, *On Wednesday there was the school concert ~ I played for the Orcestra ~ we played a march from flavins by Handel. Mr collinson came down and played with us.*

At the beginning of the following autumn term grandmother Hone met Collinson and reported to my mother that he had *praised him [Sandy] for having evidently practised well in the holidays, he had made good progress.* And in his last term he was going well, as Joc reported (in a 'Draconian' I think), how nice it was to hear such a modest boy blowing his own trumpet so well.

*

As to other aspects of musical education, Jamie does not remember music classes at the Dragon having much meaning, other than as preparation for the orchestra, and I suppose group singing in early days. I don't recall being taught about the structure of chords, harmony, the nature of melody or the role of a bass ground or any hints about how classical music might be composed. Perhaps I did not avail myself properly of the opportunities. In preparing for scholarship exams I did my own reading about music and musicians.

I vaguely recall a Music Club to listen to classical music but do not recall attending. A reference in November 1952 might have been to a Record club, or to listening with some member of staff, *There were not games so I listended [sic] to records. We all asked for what we liked. I asked for the Pastoral 4 and 6th ~ the storm and the [word illeg.]. I asked for Voce sapete [Mozart aria from the 'Marriage of Figaro', much loved by my mother].* I also began to collect gramophone records myself before long - apparently to have at school as well as at home. By March 1954 I was after some more favourite music, *Uncle Robin very kindly gave me a 15/- record token. I think I will enclose it here and use it in the holls to get some Gilbert and Sullivan records like those auntie Kay gave [me] (extracts from Mikardo).*

I do not remember the Singers' club - but I did not sing very well. Nor do I remember any concerts given by staff or visiting performers - although they did take place, as I reported home, *There is a staff concert this evening ~ I expect you'd like to hear it ~ it has ¼ Mozart ¼ Bach ¼ Schuman ¼ Sullivan.*

Of concerts held at the school Sandy wrote of a visit in November 1954 by *Michael Derry the famous pianist who plays on T.V. he is 13 years old is coming down to play a concert of his ofw]n music and some bethoven ;* and he clearly enjoyed a school concert in December 1952, *The[re] was the conce[rt] yesterday and the boy you said was very good was playing Grennsleves very well. Hugo [Rowbotham] played a solo on his violin ~ he is jolly good at it.*

And I think we may have gone to occasional concerts down town, *I went to a concert on Thursday. There were some lovely symphonies.* In November 1955 Sandy met his trumpet teacher, Mr Collinson, in the town, *Because I learn music I*

went to the childrens' concert at the Sheldonian and it was v. v. good. There was the Overture to Figaro, parts from the Opera 'Carmen' and a smashing piano concerto and the 4th march of Sir something Edgar [=Elgar]. Mr collinson was playing and I met him there.

As enjoyable as formal music at school, and equally if not more beneficial, was a range of informal musical events for boarders in the evenings, often in the Locker Room. These included singing of folk songs and ballads (accompanied by a banjo, or maybe a piano?) or buzzing out 'Men of Harlech' with combs and tissue paper - stirring stuff. Then there were the wonderful end of term smoking concerts, as in March 1951, ...a sing-song which goes on till about 10.30 p.m.

Here we were endlessly plied with all our favourites- Abdul Abul Bul Amer, Herring Boxes without Toppes, John Brown's Body, Upidee, Upida, Down in Demerara. I had apparently first experienced such sing songs at Wolf Cub camp in Germany, *We had three songs to finish off the party with. I have forgotten the first two songs ~ the last one was 'John Browns Body' which I liked very much ~ it reminded me very much of cub/bjing.* And of course we learnt all the songs by heart - another important musical experience.

I don't remember being in a choir at the Dragon, but you learn a great deal through singing even in a large congregation. You can have a go, and learn to decide for yourself what is pleasing and what is not, and the Dragon Book of Hymns became as familiar as the Dragon Book of Verse. And there was carol singing too, which I remember I enjoyed, *today there are carols sung by boys, ~ on Monday no prep ~ we have the Home talent as well.*

Home Talent concerts seem to have taken place mostly as part of the end of term programme of events, as in December 1950, *Home Talent to-night. I am playing clarinet in it a piece from one of Handels march...* They may have been more frequent, and were, as I recall, informal house concerts in which both boys and staff performed, with much community spirit and much enjoyed.

Music at dancing classes was important, and had to be right to make the classes fun. There was a good change in October 1953, *On Friday nights we have dancing and there is a new lady who plays the piano and instead of playing classical Mozart and composers like that to the dances she plays jazz songs and Copenhagen and April in Portugal and swany [= Swanny] river and smashing songs like that.* And the following January Sandy wrote of a dancing session where the boys themselves made some of the music, *we had a micraphon and three very good singers (Evers, Burleigh, Denison Smith) sang song[s] down it which came out of the loud speaker while we danced.*

In March 1954 there was more Dragon music making, *a conjuring show by boys and - They are going to have a jazz band with a piano accordion[,] banjos & Ukalalies and lots of other instrements.* And by Sandy's last term, records and popular music had reached the classroom too, as he noted in March 1956, *We have got a gramophone and some jolly 'D' records in our form now. A day boy brought them and it brightens life up.*

We may also have learnt as much about music from dance lessons (see below) as we did from music lessons. Music is about rhythm, feet tapping, and about melodies that move you. It is about reproducing feelings - not reproducing notes. Music from films (and shows) also plays a role in demonstrating to children that music is fun, exciting, passionate, and that musical sounds can be magical, strange and powerful. Music in films can be very evocative, and involves subliminal appreciation of music related to emotions. I can hear some tunes and types of music in the back of my mind still. All of these phenomena are part of musical awakening to which we were

brought at the Dragons in the early 1950s.

I suspect that a musical home is the key ingredient in successful development of musicality in a child. I missed this in my earliest years, but was increasingly exposed to music at home, in particular through my mother's friends after her return to England in 1953 and with Bruce Lockhart relatives in holidays through my Dragon years.

DRAMA AND DANCE

I (Alan) don't remember that my parents took us to any straight plays during our childhood. Nor did they, as far as I know, go to many themselves. My mother was no doubt a fan of Wilde, Shaw and others, but there is no record that she went to the theatre which must have existed in Bournemouth, if not Poole. Certainly London theatre would have been an extravagance beyond normal life and when she talked about a special treat when my father returned from India it was mostly in terms of a film. So we never went to plays from home.

Acting was important at the Dragon and the highlight was a Gilbert and Sullivan opera which took place every winter and a Shakespeare play every summer. I think I showed no interest in being in any of the five Shakespeare plays though I do remember enjoying some of them, especially I think, 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream' and 'Macbeth'. I do not refer to any of the Shakespeare plays in my letters, which is perhaps indicative of my apathy.

My mother wrote the one account of these summer plays in a letter. It is worth quoting in full since it shows a great deal about her ambivalent attitude to the school. It is clear that the play and the following service the next morning were to impress parents and to show off the self-confidence and upper class airs which we were being taught. But for a struggling relic of a declining post-Raj family, it all seemed pretentious and jarring. Her response is full of contradictions - she was making great sacrifices to put me on the ladder to Oxbridge and the elite, yet she also rebelled against it. On 29th June 1954 my mother wrote:

back to the Dragon for "Macbeth", back again to look for supper and finally to bed at 11 p.m. frozen cold as I'd forgotten my bottle! "Macbeth" was very well done really, but as usual one could see nothing except the hats in front, the girls were thrilled however and Anne kept up a running commentary which my neighbours said "made the show" for them. Ann, when Lady M. appeared in her nightie - "Ah, here comes an angel"! and after the murder when she appeared surprised - "She knows perfectly well whats happened" in an indignant voice! The boys were word-perfect but fearfully pompous and droney, I was struggling not to giggle half the time and when Lady M. slapped her bony chest and shouted "I have given suck and know how sweet to love the babe that milks me" I nearly collapsed on the spot. Everyone else was frightfully impressed so I fear I must be flippant.

What my mother probably did not know was that party of the bony sound was due to the fact that the boy had broken his arm. As the 'Draconian's Term Notes' put it, 'many of the audience never spotted that Lady M. was burdened with a pound or two of plaster and a stiff elbow.'

My mother then wrote,

We went to the service next day and the same lot of little boys got up and

droned again, this time they read us Shakespeare's best known sonnet (after explaining carefully what it meant!) and a long excerpt from "Faust" - can't think why, but they were all so pleased with themselves. It was very hot in the hall and several boys were sick so I was glad when the service was over. As usual I spoke to nobody and no-one to me and was quite glad to get away from the place - not a satisfactory school from my point of view.

This sense of being with an alien crowd mirrors that in the account of going to 'Iolanthe'. Perhaps others also felt awkward. I note that in Jamie Bruce Lockart's account of his grand-father, who as a retired Bishop with many friends in north Oxford where he lived might have been expected to be self-confident, found encounters with other parents and friends at Dragon functions difficult.

It is clear that there were also other plays and I reported three out of what must have been more. On 11th February 1952 I wrote *I went to a school play by some boys one was scandal for school and the other two's company threes a crowd*. The following year on 10th May 1953 I wrote *there is going to be a play done by one of the forms wich is called "The hand and man" written by Bernard Shaw*. Thus we were watching plays by Sheridan, Shaw and others from quite early on, though I don't remember them.

*

Jamie writes that of the Shakespeare plays which were performed every summer term at the Dragon not surprisingly he recall best the (only) one in which he took part, 'Macbeth'. Shakespeare is an ambitious project for a prep school, and not at all easy for the majority of the boys. I think my honest account of the play in the summer of 1950 at the end of my first year (I have forgotten which one it was) says a lot, *We had the dress rehearsal on Wensday ~ all bofa]rders had to go to it ~ we only saw half the first half ~ it was 1 hour and a half ~ I went & saw the whole thing on Friday evening ~ that lasted 3 hours ~ the end was good fun but otherwise it was a bit boring. I liked it though*

In other words it was, frankly, long and boring apart from the ending, and probably incomprehensible to a nine year old, but I was careful in my letter not to let the side down and tempered my judgement with that qualification 'but I liked it really!'

I suspect that, like many of my peers (and Sandy), I found Shakespeare rather hard going apart from scenes with comedy or exciting action on stage, if any. I was more interested in watching my acquaintances perform, or in special effects such as ghostly appearances (Banquo, or a dagger, achieved with ultraviolet lighting), witches' cauldrons and lightning than in the play itself. That said, I think that the Dragon School was more successful at teaching boys how to create meaning through the school plays than in the purer creative arts of painting and music.

My mother (a keen theatregoer) commented rather dryly in a letter to my grandparents after hearing that they had seen Hamlet at the Oxford Playhouse and that the Dragons were going to put it on, *Why must the Dragons do Hamlet? Unnecessary ambition I would say!* But in the end she surrendered: *We had good letters from the boys, who seem to have been thrilled with Hamlet, I wish I could have seen it. I can imagine the boy Hope would make an excellent Hamlet as he is obviously a highly sensitive & talented child when he played Henry V*

I took part in one Shakespeare play, in my final year as Lady MacDuff. Happily the part wasn't too extensive and it had one dramatic scene and the enjoyable duty of delivering a mighty scream from the wings. I can remember clearly the grease

paint and make-up pencils, the feeling of the strange costumes and wig with their stiff and scratchy material. I can see still in my mind's eye the hustle and bustle of preparations in the form room over the science room which served as the green room. I remember the copies of the text we had with the cuts neatly pencilled in. I found it both invigorating and amusing to take part, yet I do not think it resulted in a very deep immersion in Shakespearean drama as an art form, nor an inspiration for further efforts on the stage.

A number of the well known passages in the play remained with me - for the language as much as the content, *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow...*, or *Is this a dagger which I see before me...* and the exchanges of *Sleep no more, Macbeth does murder sleep....* and of course the *Double, double, toil and trouble* incantations of the three witches.

It was ambitious stuff, but the Dragon certainly gave us a broader introduction to Shakespeare and performance of classical drama than I would guess any other prep school could have offered. There was a Dragon strength here, and an obvious debt owed to Bruno and others who produced the plays. Even the non theatre enthusiasts among us respected and were proud of those who performed well and were proud of their achievements - even if we might be bored by three hours on a hard chair to watch. But I was not personally drawn to theatre in any way. I lacked the confidence, firmness of voice and control of speech and timing to be out front on a stage; I probably preferred the chorus parts I had in the two Gilbert and Sullivan operettas to a solo part as Lady MacDuff.

Sandy's and my letters home reflect some of these things. In 1950 we had the long and boring (unidentified) play mentioned above, and in 1952 Hamlet was on the agenda. As with all the school plays, we started by reading it in class, the term before. We also felt a responsibility to try to get guardians and relatives to attend performances; we wanted to see a full house as well as show off the work of our friends at school. In June I could reassure my mother that *Granny has sent for the Hamlet tickets.*

Then came the dress rehearsals, as Sandy reported, *a dress resall [= rehearsal] on Wednesday* - which boys often attended. And, interestingly, when it came to seeing the play at the end of June, he preferred it to the Gondoliers, *The Performance of Hamlet was very good ~ it was much better than the Gonderlares. I wish you could of seen it. The Grave diggers were exelant and terribly funny ~ they made me roar with laughter.* With hindsight, that does surprise me; it must have been the gravediggers who did it, but Sandy was also proud to report, *The[re] was an Articalle [article] in the Oxford male [Mail] saying who [= how] good it was [three words illeg] and took 2 days [= terms?] to learn to be made but it was difentely worth it in the end. Granny said the [= that] she saw the [Word illeg. = O.U.D.S?] do it and it was not as good.*

In 1953 the play was the Merchant of Venice. I reported the start of the search for a cast in February, *Next term we are doing the merchant of Venec and people are being tried already and parts are chosen.* And I enjoyed the play in July, as I told my father in USA, *The play was excellent ~ especially shylock and Porshia ~ Granny and Grandfather came to see it as well as Mummy*

Macbeth followed in 1954, my last term. By snowy February the play had been introduced as a reading subject in class (instead of poetry for a while). Tests for parts followed soon after, and I reported that *I am being tried for Angus in Macbeth.* But I was not suited to that part for whatever reason (size, strength of voice or required presence on stage), and was later appointed to play Lady Macduff. But interestingly I do not recall any disappointment or feeling of demotion to a minor female part.

My only other mention of the play was in a letter of late June, *We are doing Macbeth rehearsing all the time now and I have missed two matches through rehearsals - chiz chiz. Some of the scenes are jolly good. The apparition and the witches.* A very schoolboy remark, that, complete with ironical reference to Molesworth.

In 1955 Sandy was surprised by 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. His class started reading it in June, *We are doing 'A mid [summer] nights dream' in English. It is a sloopy [= soppy], rotton wet play and I am jolly glad you are not coming.* He missed the mid week dress rehearsal but, *we went to a performance on Thursday and it was a jolly good laugh. I really was terribly surprised because Granny and Co Ltd said it was not a good play. One of the funniest things was when by mistake Bottom knocked Thisbys wig off.*

Alongside the formal summer term Shakespeare, there were one or two modest and informal efforts by boys, themselves. In February 1952 I reported home that, *There was a play produced by the boys called 'Scandal for School' [= School for Scandal, or was it an intentional variant?] and then one called 'Two's company three's a Crowd'. They both were good indeed.*

Perhaps it was the example of these plays which later that month inspired Sandy and his friends to try to write a play themselves,

Me and Michael Evers are ~~doing~~ macking a play it is about red Roby. The[re] is an old man in an arm chiar [sic]and he has a search light light on him with a green screen in front so he looked green ~ then 1 rob[b]ler comes in and throws a waste paper barsket at him ~ Then he has a red light on him so he looks angry and the rober hits him very hard and cove[r]s him up with a green cloth and tacks a red Rober [= attacks the Red Robber?] any [= and he] goes away ~ then the rober is in a very rich hous[e] in the next seen [= scene] and the man who he kild comes in as a gost with a cloth on him and a green light that macks him look green ~ then he strangles him. In the next seen the robber is all right and he comes to a Hostipal [sic] and is caught. Then he is taken to a juge [= judge], and is tried. Then he sticks them all up and goes. And he is caught in a pub.

It sounds fun – even if the plot seems hard to follow. And at the end of that term Sandy and I apparently got down to another attempt after watching a film of the staff's 'Trial by Jury', *On Thursday we hade a sing song and a film is are play of Trial by Jury ~ it was very good. James and I have been macking a play and a opera for our animals.*

In wider terms, I think the Shakespeare plays at the Dragon taught us a few of the basics about structures of plays, use of dramatic irony or staging of comic or exciting episodes. The plays also increased my appreciation of literature in particular ways. I do not remember being especially moved by the performances although I was no doubt, like other thirteen year olds, a budding romantic, but I think that getting to know the texts well did heighten my awareness of language and taught me to enjoy some of the poetry in Shakespeare.

Interestingly it is not the lyrical songs I remember, although some were in The Dragon Book of Verse' such as 'It was a lover and his lass...', but the stronger passages in particular those from Macbeth already mentioned, Shylock's 'Many a time and oft upon the rialto...', or the vivid horrors of 'Lord, Lord, methought what pain it was to drown...'. I liked the declamatory sounds and biblical ring to the language of such speeches, no doubt learnt in class. It was the long expositions and complex argumentations that made Shakespeare on stage hard to absorb or enjoy.

As to plays outside school, I do not recall going to any theatre in Dragon years other than for Pantomimes, discussed elsewhere. Nor did the holidays bring a theatre experience. I recall going once to see 'Toad of Toad Hall' in Germany which was perhaps something between a play and a pantomime, but Sedbergh was rather far from a theatre in those days, and in Oxford our Hone grandparents were perhaps conscious that Sandy and I were not too keen on anything serious-sounding, and knew better than to try to force us to go.

*

In my letters I (Alan) mention dancing with enthusiasm. On 30th November 1953 *We had another lot of Scotch dancing last night wich was even more fun than the first lot.*

In the Easter Term 1954, there was again voluntary dancing on Saturday evenings. Among the most popular less normal dances, according to the 'Draconian', were 'the Palais Glide and the Dashing White Sergeant. I hardly dare mention the Hokey-Cokey'. It seems that these were the dances I particularly liked, for the following Christmas term 1954 I wrote to my mother in a letter that stretched my spelling to its limit, *There was dancing on Friday and Yesterday (Saturday) there was Scottish dancing. Pallez-glyde, Roger de caveleigh. Barn dance, valetta, Hoky polky and the Gay Gordons, Dashing White Seargent.*

In the Winter issue of the 'Draconian' 1954 there was an account of this term's dancing. It mentioned a large number of drummers (staff) alongside the pianist. *But all this does not seem to have affected the standard of dancing, which has been very good this year, and there seem to have been even more dances to cope with this year than there were last. And we have again had dancing occasionally on Saturday nights, which has been very popular for various reasons, not the least of which was the performance of Gerd's Band...* The end of term dance, we are told, was a success despite rather depleted numbers (because of 'flu). I missed it amongst others.

My last reference was in March 1955 when I recounted that *Their was dancing yesterday evening...* This was different from dancing in the Christmas Term, since it seems to have been voluntary. The 'Draconian' mentions that 'We had four nights of voluntary dancing this term. There were always large numbers of boys present, with some unexpected faces when a rumour had spread of ice creams in the interval.' At the last dance 'there was the added excitement of a real piper in a kilt to play the Scottish dances.' Some boys even introduced coloured bow ties. I have forgotten all this, but probably relished the piper.

The two main types of dance we learnt were 'Scottish' country dances, the Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow, Srathspey and others, and English ballroom dancing, the foxtrot, waltz. There was perhaps also a little Latin American or American dancing as well, Samba, Rumba, Charleston and so on.

I do remember that I really loved the music played - my introduction to proper Scottish reels and folk music and to Viennese and other dance music. I also loved the well-organized and communal dances. The Scottish dancing was the greatest delight - the twisting circles and the movement in and out - better than the musical chairs which we played at parties and even better than the Scottish piped band tattoo I once went to in Edinburgh with my parents.

Naomi Mitchison's memory of the school dance also brings back the excitement of the Gallop. She remembered 'the school dance which happened once a year, because of the pattern dances: Lancers and Sir Roger, and still more because of the triumphant final rage of the Gallop when one careered down the hall, bumping as

many others as possible and quite likely ending in a joyful heap at the far end.¹

Even the ballroom dancing, finding oneself paired with another little boy, having half the time to be the retreating woman, made me realise the gender difference between leading and being led, pushing or being pushed. This was fun. And occasionally one danced with some little boy for whom one felt a certain coy attraction and this gave it a special thrill.

The dances we were taught and the emphasis on dance is indicative of the sort of social world we were expected to inhabit later in our lives. We would be dancing our way into the middle class, the world of debutantes, of May Balls, of tea dances. In fact this world was fading and there were few occasions when I used these skills.

I can now see that dancing was also an important, if minor, part of my education in balance and deportment – alongside bicycling, swimming running. This teaching bodily deportment was clearly the equivalent for us boys to the dancing classes, featuring ballet, to which my sisters were subjected. For example my mother wrote in December 1950 ‘it’ll be difficult to get away at the end of term as Fiona’s dancing class are having their “ballet” then’. Ballet was clearly something which the family appreciated, however. There are references in my grandfather’s diary to going to the ballet at Bournemouth in September and October 1951 and later the family went to the ballet at Morecambe in 1955 when we moved to the Lake District.

I was also taught how to sit and stand properly in the school meals and assemblies. This whole area of the disciplining of the body, which has been a central thread in anthropology is interesting.

*

As their letters show, especially Sandy's, both he and Jamie much enjoyed the dancing classes for Dragon boarders, held in the evenings in New Hall in the winter and spring term. On first reflection this might seem a rather improbable state of affairs at a boys' prep school in the early 1950s. Tom Stanier (dayboy) reported a more normal view in an account of some recollections, *My mother encouraged me to go to the dancing classes, but I was adamant that I was having nothing of that. My heroes in the Wizard and Hotspur would have eschewed such activities. Shame – it would have done me good and might have stopped me being such an unimpressive dancer in later life!*

But, on the contrary, I can see a number of combined reasons why I enjoyed dancing at the Dragons. First, it is a form of very basic expression, involving both music and rhythm, and developing skills of physical balance and control. These are skills which come into play in skiing (exploiting the slope), skating (where the tilt of the blade controls the speed of the glide) or small boat sailing (using the wind). These skills require habit through practice and discipline. Second there was a certain pleasure to be found in the symmetry of country dancing, Scottish or other, in sets – where I had already some familiarity through lessons from my Bruce Lockhart grandfather, an accomplished Highland dancer.

In addition, dancing classes on a winter evening were companionable affairs. They drew in a mix of boys from different forms and games, including some who were no good at games; and no one cared whether you led or followed (it was not referred to as the man or woman's role). Fourth, it was a lot of fun, and an easy going activity, where unlike some did not matter if you got things wrong, you could try again. Finally, there was also some pure entertainment on offer such as a session of musical chairs where the primary aim was to have the masters thrown out, or better

¹ Mitchison, *Small Talk*, 61

still, tip them off a chair.

I suppose an element of deportment is involved, and capable dancers tend to carry themselves well and must be healthy and fit to be quick on the feet. Dance demands physical self-control and discipline of muscles. Even an Arnold or a Vaughan would have approved of that, as they would of the elements of team game and competition which were introduced to the sessions.

I remember many of the dances, and could perform most of them still today. Some, such as the barn dances, are straight forward exercises in rhythm, Military Two-steps, the Valeta, the (oddly titled) St Bernard's Waltz, polkas and the Gay Gordons; others are about expression and balance as well as rhythm, the fox-trot, quick step and waltz. I remember the Charleston and some attempts at Latin American rhythms, but I do not think we tried any folk dancing proper, such as clog dancing, jigs, hornpipes or Morris dancing. Then there were dances such as the Hoky-Koky, Strip the Willow and the Gallop which were about fun - a vital ingredient in any learning process.

I wonder whether dancing was put on the Dragon menu in response to parents' requests in inter-war years or even earlier, when dancing was looked on as an important social accomplishment and such things mattered. We were unaware of any such pressures at the time, but I did in fact find that it was a useful accomplishment later when I first started going to dances aged, say, fifteen, and could lead the way onto the floor without fear or embarrassment.

Many of these aspects emerge in Sandy's and my letters home. In October 1952 at the beginning of my third year, *In dancing we are doing the black and white reel* [forgotten] *and the Gay Gordons*. By the winter of 1953, Sandy was pleased to have graduated from the more boring dances with which we all began dancing lessons, *Yesterday the[re] was a dance up at the New hall ~ it was super fun and very nice dances chosen*. And in mid-October there was some brighter music to accompany the dancing,

On Friday nights we have dancing and there is a new lady who plays the piano and instead of playing classical Mozart and composers like that to the dances she plays jazz songs and Copenhagen and April in Portugal and swany [= Swanny] river and smashing songs like that. At last in dancing we have started decent dancing like the gay Gordons and Dashing white sargeant instead of the Polca and walze.

In January 1954, however, it seems there was some suspicion at home, my father was puzzled and needed explanations. Sandy replied, *The[re] was a dance last night. It was great fun. (This is to Daddy especially) The dance was not instead of prep it was just if you wanted to dance rather than mucking about... It was spiffin fun ~ don't forget it was not instead of Prep.*

That term, my last winter, I was clearly enjoying the Scottish country dances being danced at a session after a hockey match at Bilton grange, *When we came back there was dancing going on and we finished that most enjoyable day with Dashing White Sargeant, Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow, Cumberland Reel etc..* And later that term there were competitions, and as I remember it, I won a high prize (2nd or 3rd I think), with Nash (first name forgotten), who led.

At the start of the autumn term of 1954 Sandy was again most enthusiastic about his dancing classes, *On Friday we had dancing which is jolly good. Next Saterdag we are going to start dancing on Saterdays which is compulsory and good fun ~ we have some jolly 'D' dances*. In early October, it was, *In Dancing this week we are learning*

a new dance called the 51st Highland Division Reel ~ it is a jolly good one. It was followed by another successful evening of voluntary dancing in the middle of the month, It was smashing ~ you go w/h/en when you want[,] and out and dance when you want and with masters if you want though its frightfully hot, but wizard fun. By December, Sandy was a devotee, Last night the[re] was voluntary dancing ~ really smashing bang on fun the best of the week always.

I just wonder whether Sandy found extra pleasure from dancing because it was beyond my father's eagle gaze or uncomprehending eye. Sandy was still very small, not very fast or strong, and knew he would not make it into the first fifteen (a parental goal for us), but here there was an escape from pressure? He could excel in a new activity, and did indeed become a team captain.

In the winter term of 1955 there was more voluntary dancing, but not all to Sandy's liking, *In dancing we are learning the 'Samba' in my opinion it is a very sopy dance. More opportunities were taken to practice, and then came the competitions, To-morrow evening there is the dancing competition. I am a team leader which means I pick my team and then we all dance in teams and are marked on three dances The Waltz, Fox Trot and Velita. You dance one team at a time (8 pairs) ~ my partner is Mermagen.*

In the spring term, Sandy's last term at the Dragon, there was one more session of voluntary dancing, and then in March 1956 came the grand finale, a proper dance, a splendid event and wonderfully described by Sandy,

Yesterday evening U2B (our form) had a dance. It was mainly organised by Guv. We cleared the silence room out which is a room next door to our form where we can read and play chess. It has a very good dancing floor. We danced to Guv's radiogram and we borrowed records from Mr Retty the owner of Linton Lodge who has a wizard collection of records. Joc asked some girls to come from Whichwoods Girls school so 12 of them came down. We were about 20 boys[,] all 2B, who wanted to come and all leavers who wanted to come.

We had tons of grub, 190 sandwiches, cakes, chocolate and sweet biscuits, sasage rolls, etc and orange, fizzy and still, and cider and lemon & cider cup. It was absolutly wizard. Gerd came and did a funny act with liquid oxygen, which was very funny & Jacko came and sang songs and accompanied himself on his guitar.

We had all the decorations the staff use for their staff dances. It was the most terrific prang-on bang-o wizard successe absolutly smashing fun. It was just as good as the end of term fancy dress in fact better...

As the old hands say, 'There was nothing like that in my time'.

CRAFT AND SKILLS

The woodworking area at the Dragon was a small room under the Museum in the centre of the playground. It smelt of wood and glue. I (Alan) remember sawing, making joints and the construction of wobbly bookcases and toast racks. As I recall, I never took to this or any other craft of this kind throughout my life. My hands are nimble enough to fly-tie, which I saw as useful. I found most crafts somewhat pointless since it was clear that professionals could do things so much better. Nor do I remember modelling in clay or pottery.

I may have learnt to sow and knit - especially French knitting, that is creating a

tube of knotted wool which was something I remember was a craze at the Dragon.

My school reports at the Southlands kindergarten under 'Handwork' show a fairly positive picture after a slow start.

Aged 6-7 Summer 1948 Very slow

Aged 7-0 Autumn 1948 Handwork - Very good

Aged 7-7 Summer 1949 Good

Aged 8-0 Autumn 1949 Good

Aged 8-3 Spring 1950 Good

Aged 8-7 Summer 1950 Good

Then at the Dragon under 'Handicraft' the reports were again reasonable.

Dec 1950 Shows promise. Good clay-modelling

March 1951 Very industrious

Dec 1951 Good. He always works hard

After that reports on Handicraft disappear until

Dec 1954 Practical work good

March 1955 Good

July 1955 Good effort

In the light of this it seems strange to me that despite displaying some enthusiasm and industriousness, nothing remains in my memory. Yet this is one of the features of my childhood. The chosen, voluntary, informal areas of hobbies and games remain in the mind. The formal, repetitive, school teaching has largely vanished except in the reports.

*

Jamie guesses that we must have begun by exploring ideas of design using potato lino cuts or pieces of coloured shiny paper. Then came plasticine. New plasticine, which arrived in long thin slabs, had a particular scent. It came mostly in a strange pale brown or rose colours. We attempted figures, and punched holes for their eyes, but it was all rather difficult and before long limbs started falling off. Then we graduated to papier maché models - making useful pots for presents for mothers in which to put things such as apparently ubiquitous hairpins - and clay modelling, making more useful pots to put things in. Anything more ambitious tended to break up.

After these first steps we progressed to other entertainments such as cutting hanging Christmas decorations (complex zig-zag shapes) to take home, or making fluffy woollen balls. To create them you wound coloured wool round a piece of card, cut it neatly and tied it round the middle somehow and, lo and behold, there was a perfectly round, soft woollen ball. Rather pleasing, that one.

I enjoyed wielding a pair of scissors and folding paper for various basic origami. Like most prep school boys I could make hats and some invented model animals - most enjoyable was a snapper thing; I could make fine paper darts, in various shapes, build a solid water bomb or, of course, construct fortune telling boxes.

After this modest beginning, came woodwork, the bane of the English schoolboy. We did woodwork in the Barsonry where there was a fascinating smell of glue and wood shavings. I remember clearly the tables and vices, the heavy files of various

sizes and strengths, dangerously sharp chisels, the turning machines and the attractive, even to a layman, large and ancient wooden planes. Here I made a pencil box (mortice joints) with a lid in my first year and then was promoted to making those Christmas presents with which every family must have been familiar, the toast rack for mama and pipe rack (had to be turned) for papa. But I don't think I progressed very far beyond that. My reports tell the story

Dec 49 effective clay modelling JC

Mar 50 Has worked well JC

July 50 clay modelling improving

but they came to an end after my second year, perhaps because I was volunteered for the orchestra. Jake Mermagen remembers the barsonry: 'I loved it at the time and made some things which survived at home for many years afterwards.'

Crafts require sustained care and attention - that is where the skill lies - and it was not my nature then, although I have improved since. The appeal of some crafts was more theoretical than as a practical proposition. I did not lack in concentration if I was really interested, but I did lack patience, and became quickly frustrated by mortice joints that did not fit properly, corners that came apart and glue that travelled from my fingers into my hair. All of which is a pity, because I came to enjoy some crafts later in life, such as etching and engraving (which suited my feeling for line). If I had been inspired to try longer and harder I might perhaps have come to enjoy other materials and perhaps to see the possibilities in carving, sculpture or marquetry or whatever.

But I do not think this was really my field. I had trouble with Meccano and construction of models of any kind such air-fixed plastic, or of balsa wood, although Sandy was trying the latter in November 1953, *I have just taken up a new hobby of making things out of balsa wood ~ it is very very good fun*. Nor do I think we attempted any metalwork, which is presumably difficult to teach at prep school level. I suppose that the only way the Dragons brought together theoretical science subjects and practical engineering was under Gerd Summerhof's supervision in the Science Club.

The only references I can find to crafts are cryptic notes (possibly for the eyes of one parent only) about presents in preparation, such as Sandy asking in November 1952, *Do you think I should send your Christmas presents ? or on the other hand wait till you come to England so we needn't send them. They will be very fragile presents!* and in July of both 1954 and 1955, on the eve of my mother's birthday, added that he *will bring presie for Mum v fragile*. In October 1950, I was readying a present for the Hone grandparents, *I have made a tost rack in handicraft which I'm giving to granny for Christmas*.

*

Alan writes that it is not easy to know where to put gardening, but I suppose it is a form of craft. In the section on gardens and gardening under 'Dorset Days' I explain that gardening was an important part of my life at home. This continued in a minor way at the Dragon.

Perhaps as something partly left over from the war, I do remember that the Dragon school had allowed the boys to dig up part of a bank near the road opposite to School House and above the sports sandpit. Here we were encouraged to do a little gardening, both flowers and vegetables. I remember that I was quite keen and had a small patch with carrots, the great standby, and perhaps some mustard and cress. I don't remember ever winning any prizes.

My memories are supplemented by reports in the 'Draconian' which show that

gardening was seriously encouraged at the School. For example in the Summer of 1952 we are told that 'There have been four outstandingly good gardens this year...', and various boys are named as outstanding gardeners. 'There was such a demand for gardens earlier in the year that the flower beds on the Silence Lawn have been divided up and allotted... The perpetual shortage of tools has been relieved by some trowels manufactured in the Handicraft Hut.' The following year there is an even longer report since the weather had been good and ten named individuals won prizes. Thus it was obviously something which was valued alongside other arts and crafts with special prizes. I do not appear to have won a prize for my meagre efforts.

*

In Jamie's view gardening is a fascinating and important subject well worth including here; and it certainly involves creating meaning. I never had a garden - my gardening was limited to joining those who experimented with growing cress seeds on 'blotch' in little boxes on the boot-room window ledge - but Sandy did, and I enjoyed it at second hand through him. The gardens were close to and followed the line of trees along the Bardwell Road as it curls northwards opposite School House. Each was about six or eight foot square. The soil was dark, as I see it in my mind's eye, neither sandy, nor heavy clay but light in weight.

Speculative, but it seems to me that there were three possible reasons for gardening at the Dragons. First it is something very practical, something you do by yourself - and there is no one else but yourself to count on. Sandy liked all that (and became a farmer, the first in the family); in addition it is peaceful and restful, well away from the hurly burly. Second, it is creative and rewarding - you design and organise a lay out of your garden, dig in your chosen seeds and plants and watch them grow. Third, the end product is thoroughly satisfactory; you can wear it or eat it.

Gardening did not figure in my home life in Oxford at pre-Dragon age. My mother did not have time at Beechcroft Road, but borders of mostly perennial flowers, spring bulbs for window sills, gardening for food or cut flowers for the house were all an important part of life in the homes of both grandparents, as described elsewhere. This must have had an effect on Sandy's interest in gardening; I was certainly influenced later in life by gardens I had known in childhood - and willingness to plant and wait must be in direct proportion to the depth of feeling with which you want to see the end product.

The Dragon School's offer of a small patch of garden to a boarder a long way from home was a sophisticated as well as kindly idea - even if it had its origins in wartime allotments. A couple of masters kept an eye on the gardening, but maybe one staff member had a special responsibility for it, I am not sure; I cannot identify the handwriting on references in Sandy's term reports. Sandy would have received strong encouragement from our Hone grandparents, from whom he may have got plants, bulbs or seedlings from Belbroughton Road, as well as buying them in North Parade.

We both liked flowers, and Belbroughton Road had a beautiful garden, of fair size for North Oxford, as Sandy and I both noted in April 1952 after return from Sedbergh to Oxford's softer climate, *Granny's garden is realy butifull [sic] all difrent colorurs of tulips, and some other lovely flowers.* And my rather poetic letter of the same date dwelt on the fruit trees, *Granny's garden is now looking absolutely beautiful with flowers and blossom. It looks just how I've imagined a garden in spring time, with the blackbirds singing ~ the apple trees half hidden with blossom.*

Sandy, interestingly also had a passion for button holes, even at school. I think this

must have come from my mother and the Hone family; it was not a Bruce Lockhart thing. Perhaps the sight and scents reminded him of home, or reflected some closeness to nature; or maybe it was a way of striking out on his own. I really do not know. But in June 1952 he wrote, *I have got a lovely big buton whole [= button hole] ~ it is a glorus white rose*, and again later that month, *Before breakfast Hugo [Rowbotham] and me went into Chago's [= Jackos's] garden and found some really lovely buton wholes [= button holes]*

He was a consistently keen gardener, enjoying his patch of Dragon garden through the seasons, in autumn too, as in October 1952, *Most of the leaves are off the trees and it is bare except for the garden*, and he was still working on it as creatively as ever in the spring of 1954,

Our garden is getting on superbly ~ there are thousands of Crocuses and all difrent colours and our daftidills our just about to burst open. We have got a new garden and made a rockery and spent a howl [= whole] evening digging it up so it was 'd' soil. On Friday when the[re] was a half because of such lovely weather me and Teddy my Gardning pal went down town a [= &] bought Flowers[,] rock plants and Seeds ~ then we came back and planted them. We planted a few seeds but most need to be planted later on in the year. We have got quiet a good lot of Chisanthians [= chrysathemums].

At the end of the month he reported again with pleasure, *My garden is getting on fine*. Term reports in 1953 and 1954 have mentions of 'a keen gardener' and 'kept a nice garden'; and as I remember it, he won (more than once I think) well deserved prizes for his horticultural achievements.

*

Nature interests for both Sandy and me started quite early, and Yatto's outings in my very first term immediately built on the introduction I had received from my mother and the Hone grandparents who took a keen interest (as described in 'Different Days'). I wrote home about my first weekend at Stradlings at the beginning of October 1949, *We went to Frilford and had a picnic their [= there] ~ it is a lovely place ~ they [= there] are real alive snakes 1 ft 6 ins in the grass ~ Yato has a bus sort of thing which we call the brake because its so woblely and noisy ~ one the boys from are [= our] house found a face of a statue a real one*. Yatto's brake may have been fun, but so was natural history, and the following weekend, *we went to Frilford and collected over eighty mushrooms*

The following year, however, birds and birdwatching began to figure increasingly in my school and holiday life. Sandy too was keen and our interest was actively encouraged at home by my mother, the Hone grandparents and Uncles Robin Hone and by Logie Bruce Lockhart in particular in holidays at Sedbergh. These activities are described elsewhere.

In November 1951 I went on the school expedition to the Severn Wildfowl Trust. For my birthday in March 1952, my Uncle Robin followed up, *I have now adopted a teal at Peter Scott's sanctuary. That was [Uncle] robin's present*. And I did some bird watching on a bicycle ride up the Thames tow path with John Turner, *I saw coot and some babys in the reeds. I looked but could not find their nest. The babys were all fluffy & we also saw some[word illeg.] Red beaked Black back wings grey and white tummy*.

There was wider interest at school too. In May 1952, after more bird watching expeditions at Sedbergh, I was back at school stalking a green woodpecker in the

grounds; and I reported to my parents that *I have joined Upper 5[sic] Bird Club ~ there are 4 other boys in it. Upper 5 is my form.*

There was in fact not only an informal gathering of would-be twitchers in Upper 5, but a school Bird Club, as I found out in February 1953, *I joined the bird club which for is in command of Joc. It was started in 1944. The secretary read through pieces of the log at our meeting yesterday.* I rather think that I may have been secretary for a while because I remember the carefully written out minute book - my first encounter with such an august institution.

Meanwhile Sandy's interest continued, feeding birds in the Hones' garden or finding birds nearby, *Then we tied crisals[= pieces of gristle] and pork on the end of a string[for bird food] above grandfather's study ~ it was good fun... In grey cots [= Greycotes] school there is a nuthash [= nuthatch] ~ it has plasterd up the wall and the top of its house.*

In May Sandy wrote that, [Uncle]Robin gave me the *Observas* book of birds. And he looked in 7 difrent shops in Bristol and one other town and could not find it ~ they oferd him a book on nearly evry other animal you can think of but he did not tack them. Thus armed, his birdwatching advanced the same month, *We saw a cocoo [= cuckoo] and a great gren woodpecker;* and in June Sandy wrote about another bird watcher, *I am taking another boy out with me for lunch and tea ~ He is Hugo Robothan ~ He is the boy who is mad on birds ~ he is a teal tick like James ~ he calls it Sampson.* I am not sure whether a 'tick' meant being a 'birdwatching freak' perhaps, or referred to being a part-owner by having donated money to support a bird (at The Wildfowl Trust) Was Sandy's phrase common usage or school slang, I wonder?

After all this birdwatching interest and fun, by November 1952 I was keenly looking for a bird book to request for a Christmas present. I asked for a decidedly large and expensive one, thinking it might do for the whole family as a reference book, *a big Bird book like your 'Birds of America' with coloured plate[s] but British birds. There is one called a History of Birds which is in the silence room. 6 volumes each has 100 plates in full colour and some very good descriptions of Birds - all the birds in England the very rarest even. There is no bird seen in the British Isle which is not in that book. I think it would be very good if we had it as a family book.* Very sensibly, however, my mother instructed the Hones to get me a good, adult, bird book of a more manageable size. I have it in front of me, *The Popular Handbook of British Birds*, ed. P.A.D. Hollom, London, H.F. & G. Witherby, 1952, with my bird lists for 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1955 written in my best handwriting on the back inside pages.

On return to school in January 1953 from yet more bird watching in the course of another Sedbergh holiday, I found other enthusiasts and yet another club was formed, *There are 2 other boys who are interested in birds and we've made a club. One thing is we have a special piece of ground where we put bread crumbs from breakfast. We have seen many starlings, great tits, chaffinches eating away there. A blue tit caught my eye in form and put me off work.* A novel excuse, that. But by the end of the month, I was filling letters home with drawings of birds, *Here are some of my bird drawing [sketches of birds, 7 from memory, 3 copied... Verso, 3 more birds]. I can do about 4 others but there is no time.*

Meanwhile Sandy had followed up on his interest in birds with not one but two visits on school expeditions to Peter Scott's Wild Fowl Trust at Slimbridge (in 1952 and 1954), described in Chapter 6. Hardly surprisingly, given my other interests and commitments, there are fewer references to birdwatching in my letters from my last year, but my parents' move in 1953 to a house deep in woodland and right beside a

13-acre lake on the Surrey/Sussex borders brought new birds into view and new interests in natural history. It was becoming second nature to observe and note, as Sandy wrote in May 1955 after I had left the Dragon, *...another chap and I went to the Parks and on the far bank having a look at birds and their nests, one black birds nest had 3 eggs and their mother blackbird sitting on them.* And thus our modest interests continued for a very long time, for life in fact.

9. GAMES AND LIFE

The school playing fields, looking down to the war memorial and river in the distance. Around here we played our first games of school rugby and cricket



GAMES AND LIFE

My (Alan) interest in games dates back to my early childhood. As a very small boy in Assam I played with my mother and my father (an enthusiastic games player, including an excellent rugby and polo player and huntsman) and my local ayahs and small Assamese friends.

When I returned to England I was deeply influenced by my mother's younger brother, Robert. He was only seven years my senior and was a passionate games player, despite being blind in one eye and not very strong. We spent our holidays together, he aged about 14 and at a games obsessive school (Sedbergh) to which I would later go, and myself six or seven.

Robert taught me most of the common games and we played imaginary games with soldiers, cars, horses and meccano. His mother, my grand-mother, was also a games fanatic, particularly card games and mah-jong, a Chinese game which I early learnt. These are described in the companion volume on home life. So I entered with passion into competitive games, and also watched the obsession of those around me. Robert cut out and collected everything about his favourite football teams and made and played with many kinds of model. There are a number of references in my grandfather's diary to the fact that he went to local grounds to watch football. So I became imbued with gaming and imaginary worlds from childhood with a rich set of rules and toys.

Looking back from sixty years later it is difficult to understand or remember the reasons for this passion; a mixture of loneliness, competitive spirit, imaginative wonder, joining a wider world, all these and others no doubt. Each game opened up new worlds, 'subuteo' (football), a game of horse-racing, toy soldiers, ball games of many forms. They seemed to give a sudden expansion of the mind as well as the body. Expanding the small models to the large, learning the rules and mastering the skills, it was all exciting. A huge amount of my time and energy was devoted to games, inventing, playing, subverting.

So games shaped the person I am and much of my adult life, both in work and leisure, has been an application of what I learnt in those early hobbies and games. They have clearly been one of the single greatest influences on my personality. So I ran and jumped and kicked and batted and threw vigorously for ten years. Fortunately some natural ability, perhaps inherited from my father, plus the early training from my uncle, combined with determination, meant that I was reasonably successful, though not outstanding.

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Playing games is usually strongly encouraged in schools. This is partly to strengthen the muscles and to use up surplus physical energy. Yet team games are also believed to improve social skills. The essence of a team game is to balance selfishness, the desire to shine and triumph, with sociality, the desire to make one's team win. This balance is also one of the most difficult things to achieve in much of social life. When to keep the ball and when to pass it to another is an art which stretches out into many of our activities. The balance between co-operation and self-assertiveness is well taught within the structured environment of the rules of a game.

It is also believed that games enable people to learn how to demarcate their lives. While the game is on we abide by certain rules. Then the whistle blows and we no longer have to. Learning how to handle defeat (it took me some years not to weep bitterly after losing a game) and feel relaxed with someone who has outwitted or outplayed you is an important art.

Likewise the subtle art of playing within the rules, but using as much scope and skill within them as possible, is one which is handy in almost every branch of later life. You have to learn the rules of your trade or occupation, but if you just stick to these without creative thought then you will end up as nothing special. If you break them and are caught the result is even worse. How can you keep to the rules yet excel? Skill, personal tricks, long training and perceptive observation of others are among the things needed. The concept of 'spin', which makes the ball behave in odd ways in cricket and disguises the real motives of politicians when they deal with the public, is one example of this.

People enjoy playing games because they like to compete and dominate; to play, strive, outwit, win, are all important survival tools. But there is more to games than this, particularly team games. Members of a cricket, football or bowls team play together, often socialize together and either create or express their friendship in this way. Friendly rivalry over a game of chess or in the squash court may also cement friendship. Matching minds and bodies or depending and sharing with other members of the team, both give great satisfaction. Friends play together and the stress on learning games at school is also meant to be a lesson in friendship. Like friendship, play is not directed to a practical goal. It is 'just a game', but to refuse to play is a rejection.

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Jamie writes that the Anglo-Saxon, especially British, fixation with team games is, seen dispassionately, rather odd. Prep school children could devote far less time to such occupations without much loss. Team games might indeed help develop all kinds of moral graces, survival tools and social skills - but they are not the only things which do so, and they certainly do not guarantee any success. In other words, the traditions of Edwardian muscular education with respect to school games have some value, but do not represent the entire story.

We were brought up to the idea in the early 1950s that games somehow mattered. But surely not: they were just good fun, and they were a good way to tire out restless boys (in a limited space where you could easily keep an eye on them and in clothes specially designed for the purpose) and give overworked staff a break.

The moral and social foundations for team games seem to me to be a kind of by-product. If the aim were to develop physical coordination and strength, we might do better to think in terms of a combination of swimming and running (sprint and distance), pistol shooting for steadiness of hand and jumping, both wide and high. Riding would be too expensive or exclusive but there could be fencing for quickness of eye (and the sport requires very little space), wrestling for speed of physical reactions, throwing a cricket ball for coordination of hand and arm (or even casting a lure or fly); and how about some rowing for something different? Very popular in the media, the latter, since Sir Stephen Redgrave. I am being facetious of course.

But, more seriously, I cannot think of many really great men, British, European or American who excelled at games, whereas I can think of many great who never took any exercise as boys beyond walking to school and back home again. As F.E. Smith, no mean games player himself, is reported to have remarked in his dotage, 'The only exercise I seem to take these days is following the coffins of my more athletic friends to their graves.' With hindsight these reflections make me wonder whether I would have done better to have spent more hours in Gerd Summerhoff's laboratory or at projects in arts and crafts. But this is irrelevant; and of course at the Dragon I got stuck in to all organised team games with enormous enthusiasm right from the start.

What was that enthusiasm for? A great number of motives were involved. Being outside on beautifully kept grounds was a pleasure in itself, as was merely running

around on freshly cut grass. We relished the aspects of tribal rites – the pleasure of standing shoulder to shoulder with team mates. Games with set frameworks and rules (and perhaps even supervision) are comforting. I accepted and liked rules. I suppose I learnt something about demarcation and, yes, games could help create and cement friendships. But I am not sure that you need organised team games to learn something about striving and outwitting; mere propinquity to other boys will do that!

In addition, I had inherited a few skills and not a bad eye, mostly from the Bruce Lockhart side of the family, and had had a bit of early coaching at home, so I did not come to team games as a nervous novice. But my general memory of games at the Dragons is not of wanting to win, throwing myself in wholeheartedly, shedding tears of effort and frustration; rather I wanted to enjoy running around and playing.

How did it all work out in practice? In their early Dragon years, I imagine, most boys went along with the concept that games were important. Rebels were few; but having conformed, you then gradually discovered whether or not you were good at games. And if you were gifted, then games started to matter more. You want to be on the winning side. And as you acquire more skills at a game, the more pleasure you get from deploying them. Those who were not good at or interested in games could gradually withdraw as they got left behind in the inter-games system and could happily take up other pursuits.

It was the boys in the middle who suffered; those who were only quite good but felt it their duty to carry on. There could be a dark side to games, such as the humiliation of being the last one to be picked for a team, or having to make way for a younger and more talented boy when you thought you had a place in a team I can think of umpteen examples.. And such matters bring us to another vital aspect of school games. To say, as did the Victorian muscular Christian school of education, that such things make a man of you does not hold water. Hum and Joc knew this and Dragon games were run accordingly – but the pressure is still there, from peers, from parents.

The notion that boarding schools are for upbringing not education and games are as central to education as school books (which applies less so in Scotland) assumes that learning to think can safely be left to a university stage for those who chose or deserved to undertake it, or would happen at home; but learning to be a proper man and a useful member of society was why parents entrusted their offspring to a private English boarding school. Hence all the emphasis on teamwork; on teaching boys how to win gracefully or lose bravely, how to surrender one's own interests to a greater and higher cause (the fly half who keeps holding on to the ball and trying to score on his own rather than passing it out to the centres for the wings will end up with a wiggling). To learn leadership skills, to understand that practice makes perfect (cricket nets) or at least improves one's performance. Games were character forming; guts – how to overcome pain barriers; how to control aggression; how to accept personal discomfort – being stood on, having your face squashed in the scrum; how to overcome upsets, keep your temper and not let emotions get the better of you. Games also introduced young boys to the principles of fair play and unquestioning acceptance of the rules, including tolerance of apparent injustice – the (wrong) decision by an umpire or referee.

But the emphasis on team games is rather odd, when the person you are really playing against is yourself. As said above, it is by no means only team games that help develop physical strength, fitness and endurance, or a sense of balance, control of limbs and coordination. And the very sound principle of 'mens sana in corpore sano' surely does not refer in any way to team games. The Orwellian view of games

as a form of fighting certainly applies to organised games at prep school level, and for those who decide to commit to games represents a useful part of growing up. The importance of looking after one's equipment is not just a militaristic but also a generally sensible principle; but the inculcation of socially useful skills for later in life only applies if you actually want to play games later in life. Some games or aspects of games are worthwhile because they are very elegant (a justification for bullfighting?), endlessly fascinating (golf), artful (hard court hockey) or full of intriguing puzzles to solve (5-day Test matches). If they did not exist you would have to invent them.

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Alan comments that another contradiction lies at the very heart of Victorian and Edwardian society. This is the obsession with games. Brendon notes the development of the games mania at boarding schools in the later nineteenth century. She suggests that manliness was replacing godliness as the main ideal of boarding schools. By the 1880s the games ethic was dominant in the public schools. Brendon commented that 'It also attributed to school sport the peculiarly English tendency "to be willing to sink the personal in the public interest".¹ It is clearly part of the package of imperial fortitude, team playing ability and competitive emulation which has so often been discussed.

On the one hand the Dragon seems to have subscribed to the philosophy that games were an important part of the training of a young person. The school song set the tone for what one might expect (in *Dragon Century*, p.30-1).

'Let us always keep heart in the strife
While our wickets or goals are defended,
For there always is hope while there's life,
And the match isn't lost till its ended!
But whether we win or we lose,
If we fight to the very last minute,
The intent of the game is always the same -
To strive that the Dragon may win it!'

When I was there, the same philosophy was present, as suggested by the 'Term Notes' for Easter 1953. The game must go on for 'the Dragon view is that, come germs come weather, matches must go on...'

Yet the attitude and treatment was ambivalent. On the one hand sport was encouraged and as at all such schools a good deal of one's status came from prowess at games. On the other there are strong hints that the School valued other things as much or more, and, equally, that the boys did so.

We can see the ambivalence in the school debates during my time in the early 1950's. There were three debates around this theme which I reported (with strange spelling) in my letters. In the first, *The motion was 'that games in the Dragon school should be voluntary the motion was defeated.* Another on the theme of games had taken place in the previous year on 12th October 1952 when I reported, *We had a debate yesterday and the subject was that a athlete gets more enjoyment out of life than a skolar with the motion won by 69-33.* Yet the theme came up for a third time in my last spring term and I reported on 17th March 1955 that one of the four motions debated was, *It is better to be good at games than at work. Against won by*

¹ Brendon, *Preparatory*, 52

54-14, an outcome which might not have been found in every school at this time.

Furthermore, when I reported a new form of debate on 25th October 1954 I wrote *There was a new kind of Debat in which there were four boys. Each resembling a famous person 1 Billy Graham 2 Lord Nuffield 3 Prof Einstein 4 Albert Schweitzer 5 Roger Bannister. And they were meant to be all in a balloon and two of them had to be thrown out for the other three to be kep in.* Here was a chance to place our priorities, would religion, economics, science, philanthropy or sport survive? Reflecting the rather bookish and academic nature of the school I reported that, *1 and 5 were thrown out,* religion and sport.

The ambivalence is also shown in the termly 'Term Notes' which was sent to all pupils and their parents. During my time there, in the Summer issue of 1952 it is mentioned that 'Dragon cricket had a good season, in that a great deal was played with considerable enthusiasm by a great many boys. But true to Dragon tradition, little or none was watched.... A common query from the Sunday morning letter-writer, hard pressed to make the second page, would be "Who won the match yesterday?" - quite often when there wasn't one.' The same was true of ruggar, for in Christmas 1953 it was noted that the ruggar team had 'hardly anyone watching'.

There was also pressure to decrease the amount of sport, for in the Christmas term 1954 'a Staff meeting discussed and approved a motion that Dragons play too much ruggar, with the result that for all but the top games the four weekly games were reduced to three.' Incidentally, 'Later in the term, at several informal Staff meetings held on the touchline during matches, a further motion, that Dragons do not at the moment play ruggar very well, was also passed.' As Jake Mermagen comments, 'Given the sheer numbers, the Dragon should have dominated prep school ruggar, but id did not. There were very few international players from the school later in life.'

There also seems to have been a note of cynicism about the values which team sports were meant to be inculcating. Thus in 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1952 when the First Fifteen won the last match of the term and this was announced to the school 'they were publicly congratulated on their very fine season and some of the older Staff gave a subdued round of applause to the suggestion that success had been largely due to "team spirit," that old-fashioned virtue now almost condemned by the cynics to share the fate of the Old School Tie.'

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Jamie comments that happily for us, games were generally valued at the Dragons but were not the be all and end all of everything. I had been told they were at home where several relatives were exceptionally gifted games players and games equipment was always in the back of the car or at the front of the house. As the Dragon successful games players won respect, but not the kind of status that was accorded to them in some public schools for instance - because at the Dragon there were other things - for everybody - to do and perhaps excel at - for a few (such as school work, acting and singing, non team sports such as diving and a hundred other valid occupations from gardening to chess). Crazes for other leisure pursuits were not only permitted but fostered - with the result that the average Dragon thought as much about marbles or conkers as about who was or who was not on the Rugger XV. Thank heavens.

Even Skipper, Hum and Joc, who stood at the liberal end of the spectrum in such matters, did not entirely reject the muscular Christian thesis. Perhaps they could not on account of their duty to prepare their charges for further life at such Hearty institutions as, say, Marlborough, Uppingham, Rugby, Oundle or Sedbergh) as well

as at more academically inclined establishments such as Winchester and Westminster. The genius of the Lynams and Joc in particular, it seems to me, was to add on other magic ingredients to counterbalance the continued general middle class predilection for muscular Christian education in Britain in the first half of the 20th century.

Comments and references in Sandy's and my letters underline the subtlety of the Dragon approach to games. Everyone was given a chance to find out if they were good at one or other of the games or sports by being introduced to them at a level suitable to their size and apparent natural talent through the inter-games system. The inter-games system worked on a ladder principle. There were about eight to ten 'Games'. A 'Game' was divided into two teams; first they played each other so the staff could see who were the most able; then the best, formed into an upper team, played the lower team of the game above, and the outstanding boys would be promoted on the spot, and in the following season everyone could be allocated accurately to his new 'Game'.

Another clever practice was to have matches between 'tribes', by way of forms and dorms. It seems that these were a sort of half-way house between formal and informal matches. They were competitive, with tribal issues at stake, but not too competitive because inevitably a mix of abilities would be involved. Games in the covered rink represented another half-way house. The covered rink was more than just a playground out of the rain; games involving all kinds of skills were invented and played and played in this instance without staff supervision

Second, the Dragons had a knack of encouraging boys who were not good at mainstream games (all or particular ones) to try other sports, say, tennis, gym, athletics (field, which meant long and high jump, or track, which was running or hurdling,) or shooting on the .22 range. Third, the Dragons were also very good at promoting semi-informal games of all kinds. These could be mucking about games, rounders, roller skating in the rink or just knocking up with a tennis ball on the hard courts - and of course the winter sports of sliding and skating. You chose your partner(s) and cleverly, masters could be involved too, much as fathers and uncles might be at home, to join in, supervise and encourage equally. And lastly, the Dragon School not merely allowed but encouraged all kinds of invented games which provided fun and exercise for all regardless of sporting talent, King of the castle, bicycling, cowboys and Indian games and various forms of ragging games which were vital both for sheer enjoyment and for letting off steam.

Swimming and river sports had all these ingredients too: formal competitions in swimming relays (in 'boats' - very Oxford, that - of four swimmers) and diving competitions too for the skilled swimmers, but in addition there were regattas, clothes tests, early morning swims, boating in kayaks or punts or rowing on the Thames with masters for all.

A number of aspects of games at the Dragon come back to mind when I think of the fun we had - such as the pitches, equipment and the weather. I see long, fresh grass on the rigger pitch in early autumn (before the mud or ice): comfortable to fall on, sweet smelling and a pleasure to run on. Or a tightly mown cricket pitch on a summer's day; the ground hard but a little yielding; warmth and sunshine - did we wear sunhats? - and the cool, dark pavilion.

Then there were matches against intriguing other schools and Away Matches with the excitement of school teas or missing prep; or the fun and enthusiasm which came from watching games at the Parks or Iffley Road, or watching staff, ODs or others playing on Dragon pitches or at St Edwards. We came to identify with Oxford university teams like old hands, found role models and enjoyed following

their progress through the seasons. And in the end, a handful of school matches in which I played and results have remained in my mind – such as the crushing victory at rugger over poor Bilton Grange – and they were such nice chaps too.

All these things we wrote about faithfully in letters home – and there are not too many of those curious references of schoolboys to the results of school matches in which we were neither involved nor spectating. Perhaps we listed them because they were all the talk of the form or dorm; or maybe they were just letter fillers. Other mentions, however, make it clear that we were proud of the school's achievements, and sometimes we knew personally boys who had performed well – the heroes of the day. Perhaps, say in later years, we also instinctively grasped that parents might feel their fees were more worthwhile if the school was winning! An interesting mix of motives on which we can only speculate now. Far better to take a look at Sandy's and my letters sport by sport, and see what we made of it all at the time.

WINTER - RUGGER

We shall follow the order in which we played games at the Dragon. The first (Autumn) term was rugger, the second was football and hockey, the summer was cricket, and competitive sports such as tennis, swimming and athletics. So let us start with the most decisive character training game of them all – rugger or rugby (union) football.

Rugger was a special game at school in various ways and especially for me (Alan). It was a very rough game and taught you about the toughness and hard hits of life, but that one could recover from these. It taught one how to play together in some of the most intimate ways, everything depended on others whether in the scrum or in the line-out. It told one a lot about a person's character. It was the most important game in terms of status both at the Dragon and Sedbergh. If one did well in rugby then one's prestige was high. One could not be described as 'weedy' or a 'phleb' or any of the other insulting words. It was the ultimate test of Spartan character, a true nurse of man.

Personally it was a game I wanted to do well at. I knew my uncle Billy had been a brilliant player at Sedbergh and had played for the army. I knew that my father was an excellent player at school and had played for Scotland schoolboys. As late as 1949, when he was over thirty, he still played occasionally, as a letter from my mother mentions on 22nd May 1949 'You will laugh when I tell you that Daddy is going to try and play Rugger on Sunday. He hasn't played since he was at school and thinks he will probably die starting again in this heat but I tell him he must get into training so as to take you on, Alan.'

It was also a game which all the family followed avidly on the radio and occasionally to watch. The family listened to the Varsity rugby match in mid-December each year and on 11th February 1951 my mother wrote to my father *The wireless is a great joy, we listened to the England-Ireland rugger yesterday - by the way I hope you listened to Scotland-Wales match and swallowed some of the nasty comments you made on Kinninmonth!* (Kinninmonth was an old Sedberghian and close friend of my uncle Billy). Six weeks she wrote again on 20th March to my father about his future leave. *There'll be the winter to hibernate in and you can get down to your golf and watch Rugger matches in the rain. I listened to Scotland being beaten by England in the Calcutta Cup on Saturday. All Peter Kinninmonth's fault according to you I expect?! Actually he played quite well, Billy watched.*

My father did go to watch rugger on his leave, though whether it was in the rain I

do not know. My grandfather mentions on 29th December that 'Mac takes Robert and Richard to see schoolboys rugger international at Richmond'. As my father had himself played for Scotland schoolboys, he had a special reason for going.

Even I went to a professional match where there was added excitement that one of my teachers was playing. I wrote on the 11th of January 1954 to my parents *On Saturday I went to Scotland v France pity France won 3-0 my rugby techer (Mr Marshall) Played full back for Scotland.*

I instinctively knew it was important to shine at rugby, but there were a number of obstacles. Unlike the other three games where I had been able to practice with my uncle and sisters at home, I had never played a game of rugby when I arrived and hence had no skills. The only kind one could reasonably play at home or on the beach was 'touch' rugby - touching the opponent rather than tackling being less dangerous.

We did play this, but later and not with my uncle Robert who showed no interest in the game. For example on 11th September 1954 my mother wrote *We had a day on the beach with the Mermagens before we left, a really warm day and I bathed and we all got very burnt and played rounders and cricket and touch rugger and every other game all day.* [I accompany the letter with a picture of a man converting a rugby try.]

The other problem is that more than any other game, what counts in rugby is size and speed. To run fast with the ball is the ultimate goal. I was always small for my age and a relatively slow runner. What was I to do? I think it was particularly in relation to rugby that I decided I would test the thesis that 'anybody can do anything'. Despite our natural abilities if we exert huge will power, try really hard, practice, and put all our effort into things, we can attain at least a decent level. Rugby was my life's experiment and, as we shall see, fortunately it worked. I learnt confidence that despite my natural mediocrity I could succeed against the odds by grim determination. This is picked up pretty well by the accounts of my progress in this game and indeed seems to have been my greatest triumph at the Dragon, precisely the recognition by even the Head Master, as well as the other boys, that I had triumphed over a natural handicap. I was a living embodiment of the school motto, 'Strive to the Sun'.

The first school report at the end of my first term at the Dragon captures my effort straight away. It noted 'Plays Rugger with incredible dash.' I think it was in this first term that I remember one of those flashes. A huge boy (Nick Bullock, now a Fellow of King's College) came hurtling towards me - I was the full back. I threw myself at him and brought him down - and still feel the pain and remember the bruise that lasted for weeks. But I was hailed as a hero and that was enough.

In my second year I seem to have lost heart somewhat. I did not enjoy the game and though I tried, it was touch and go. The report read 'He is very plucky, but seemed to lose much of his dash towards the end of the season.' But a year later I was gaining confidence again. My school report now mentioned me as 'A promising player' and the increasing success was mirrored in the letters I wrote to my parents. On 28th September 1952 I mentioned *We are playing rugger now and I am in fourth game.* I also noted the arrival of my cousin Jake Mermagen who made a good start: 'Mermagan has come and he is a very good rugger Player', another role model, though Jake now writes that 'I was also small and slow and had not played before coming to the Dragon.' I was greatly looking forward to seeing my parents again on a trip to Assam and this may have boosted me. On 20th October I wrote *Dear mummy and daddy it is only a very little time till I will be seeing you again. We had four rugger matches. The first one won 28-3 and the third 16-11 to them.*

My admiration for good players of my age is shown in a letter I wrote on 3rd November where I wrote about my friend Sandy Bruce Lockhart. Interestingly I called him by his Christian name, and wrote *Sandy is in a very high game in cricket too. He is a very good bowler.* I illustrated the point with a picture captioned '*He converts it over the post and gets 3 points.*

In my fourth year I had changed my position to scrum half, the kind of position I really liked since one tended to get rid of the ball as quickly as possible. I wrote to my parents on 27th September 1953 *I played my first game of rugger the day before yesterday but it only lasted ten minutes. Yesterday I was scrum half and we had a proper game in wich our side got about 12 points.* The report at the end of term was enthusiastic. 'A very good scrum half - he passes and tackles exceptionally well.'

It was in my last year, aged nearly thirteen, that I reached the pinnacle of my limited success in the game. I did not write about the matches, but there are several independent assessments of that determination and almost reckless enthusiasm which was so highly valued. If the battles of the future were to be won on the playing fields of the Dragon, I would be the sort of man to lead his troops into the guns of the enemy.

At the start of the term my mother wrote to my father on 30th September 1954 *Alan writes to say he is in 1st game at rugger - don't know if that is the 1st XV - and has gone up in form.* A few weeks later she wrote on 18th October. *He played in 2 1st XV matched and they were beaten 19-0 ("a lot of louts about 2 years older") but won the 2nd. Rugger is the game he likes least, but perhaps he'll change his ideas now.*

My overcoming of a natural dislike of the game by sheer effort is referred to below and it is something I remember right through to the end of my boarding school days. Rugby was in many ways torture - cold, painful, miserable. But it made you a man.

My last school report on rugger was unusually long. 'A fearless and intensely plucky full back in 1st XV. His tackling has been a feature of every game and when he grows a bit (and can kick a bit further!) he will be a more than useful player.' When my mother went to see the headmaster Joc Lynam she was somewhat amazed to find that the little boy she regarded as often rude, difficult and unpredictable was so highly regarded by the school. She describes the sherry and then the conversation in a letter on 14th of November to my father.

He said Alan was very popular with the other boys and with the staff which pleased me as Alan never introduces me to his friends or in fact mentions them! He also praised his rugger, especially his tackling which was marvellous he said, poor Alan, he told me he never enjoyed a game of rugger till it was over! Joc said there was terrific excitement over his Colours, much more than over the average boys, all of which pleased me a lot and will you too I'm sure, apparently he isn't the problem we have always imagined him to be!

My 'marvellous' tackling, that is the intrepid way I threw myself at larger boys (I was now full back and very small and light for my age) is the central feature of the unusual eulogy which I have recently discovered in the school magazine the 'Draconian', and which obviously gave my parents, and particularly my father, great pride as well as earning me the respect of my peers and teachers.

On 11th January 1955 my mother wrote to my father 'He has had a very good Rugger write-up in the magazine, his play would have warmed the hearts of Old Dragonians! I'll send it out to you to frame.' The account, was printed in 'The

Draconian', no.201, 1954, p.12281 was as follows:

'Nor was the size of our full-back much of a deterrent to the opposition. He was, in fact, smaller and lighter than any three-quarter - but his pluck and coolness were comparable to anyone's: what the scores in some of our earlier games would have been if Alan Macfarlane had not been there does not bear thinking about. He is not yet a great 'kick' but his tackling of opponents of all sizes has been a truly memorable feature of the season, and something that Old Dragons of all ages would have very much liked to see... Against Radely, however, we were up against a really good team, and did fairly well to let them through on only six occasions. Indeed, had it not been for a sterling performance by Macfarlane our defeat would have been far heavier. He again played a grand game against Stowe the following week, and this was only not won because a try between the posts was most unaccountably not converted!'

The official recognition of this was not just my colours, but also a School Prize for rigger. My diminutive size in all this is well shown in the school photograph where I sit at the end, much smaller than most of the others.

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I (Jamie) enjoyed rigger because I was reasonably good at it, having quickly acquired some sort of feeling for the game, for positioning on the field (which I lacked in soccer) and for handling and kicking the ball. Unfortunately I was not always fast or strong enough to carry through the openings I could see or to catch and bring down someone else going for such openings. I enjoyed being fly half, where you saw a lot of the ball, and I also like playing at full back where positioning and a good punt, with either foot, was everything. But being in the scrum was not all bad, especially in cold, wet conditions when it was warmer pushing and shoving in a mass of steaming sweaters than standing freezing out in the wet and cold as an outside waiting for the game to proceed. Wet rigger could be awful - with boots, supported by those terrible studs of that period which came out too easily, getting ever heavier and more slippery till you could hardly get up from the mud. A preparation for Paschendael.

There is something very basic about rigger as the ultimate running-and-chasing-and-throwing-a-ball-around game, especially as played at prep school. It is a kind of tig with the additional fun of having a ball which you can throw to a chum on your side just before you get tackled, or which you can throw away in a panic as you fall flat on the ground (which leads to a general scrummaging around on top of you by everybody else). I do not recall any fear and trembling about that part of the game, because boys were carefully segregated into games according to age and size and there was a member of staff keeping a careful and kindly eye on things. Our letters in earlier years refer constantly to 'inter-games', this excellent Dragon system of streaming at games, just as we were streamed into sets in class work. More nerve-racking was standing alone expected somehow to stop a large member of the opposing team charging down upon you from scoring a try. The elements of 'toughness and recovery' to which Alan refers were, I think, part of the fun at prep school age; at that age scrums were not too tight, you did not get too squashed and getting up again with body and breath in tact was not too difficult.

But also hard to contend with were some pressures of expectations (from my father in particular) which fell on me as the oldest boy in a new generation, in a family which had excelled at rigger and boasted several international players. Logie was indeed playing for Scotland at that time, and my father sent a message to Joc to have Sandy and me taken to Twickenham one spring term to watch him play. It was

of course pleasing to have such connections about which I could no doubt boast, but they had their drawbacks too.

In general, however I enjoyed the game very much when played at the right level and got a great deal of satisfaction from it; and as predicted in my last Dragons report, I finished up in later years as a reasonably efficient wing-forward.

Dec 49 Rugger - Good, tackles well
Dec 50 a very promising player
Dec 52 very fair
*Dec 53 1st XV after being tried at fly half made himself into a useful full
back. Speed seems to be his handicap - perhaps he will end up in the pack*

My first report on my rugger career was written in 1950, my second season. I was in 5th game,

I played games 1st XV of 5th v 2 XV of 5th ~ I was in the first ~ we won 23-0 ~ Saturday was intergames ~ I was in 1 XV and played 2 XV of 4th ~ It was very exiting first half ~ they pushed us back and there was a touch 3 yds from the try line ~ the half time whistle went which saves us. Second half it was our kick off ~ we were right on the try line with a five yard scrum ~ we pushed their scrum over and they collapsed and there was a pile on ~ the whistle went for end of game ~ score 0 - 0... I don't know how Sandy's intergames match went ~ I know he was in the 2nd XV of 9th playing 1st xv of 10th bottom game.

And a game of rugger at least brought some warmth on a cold, dank November day, *We had a lot of frost yesterday. the temperature was 31 ½ ~ today is 31 ~ it looks like snow ~ it was very foggy yesterday ~ I played games ~ fly half was my position ~ they won 6-3 ~ you could hardly see the ball ~ any way it was warming indeed.*

In October 1952 reports of school matches start to figure in my letters home, with typical Dragon pride, *The matches, 1st XV won 24-3, 2nd lost 45-0 3rd lost 16-11 4th lost 35-3. Mark you they are a public school.* And later that month I reported a few minor injuries, *We played intergames matches yesterday we lost 15-12. I have been playing rugger a lot ~ I've heart [= hurt] my leg and can't swing it. I was put off [= off-Ex] for 3 days. I did something to my thumb. Dr Cameron said with faith hope and charity it's not broken.* But my rugger reports for that season fade away after half term in the face of an early frost and an early start to skating at the beginning of December.

In 1953, my last rugger term at the Dragons, there was a chance of being in the First XV. At the start of October I noted that, *The [first] 1st XV match is on Oct 14th - quite a time yet.* Then the day came, *On Wednesday I played in my rugger match. They were all quite a bit bigger than us. We got knocked about quite a bit. The game was great fun. We lost 10-9. A penalty goal nearly levelled us last minute.*

The following week I had some success, *On Saturday (yesterday) I played another 1st XV match ~ against Magdelene College School. They were slightly bigger than us on average but we simply massacred them 30-0. I scored 2 tries. I played fairly well. There was hardly any tackling to do. Once there [= their] man got through but was tackled by our wing corner flagging.* And Sandy reported on the match too, *Yesterday there was a match v Mordelen college. 1st XV match and jamie scored 2 tries ~ the score was 30 pts to us and 0 to them.*

At the end of the month there were two matches each week, of which a couple

were Away Matches which brought yet more fun. *On Wednesday we played Cheltenham Juniors and lost (at home) but yesterday we played Dean Close and beat them. We had a wizard tea and afterwards we went to their 'shop'. You could get anything practically from pins to bikes and lots of tuck. It was run by Selfridges. We had a jolly good time there.*

On 24 October I reported on more enjoyable Away matches,

This week I have played in two matches: an 'A' and a 1st XV. In the 'A' which was away at Dunchurch Winton Hall, Rugby. I scored one try. There was one ten stone chap playing for them. There were all very nice boys. We had a wizard tea, Sausages and mash then glorious creamy cakes. We lost 28-8. We had a lovely drive there and back.

On Sat (yesterday) we were playing the Radley Under 14. I would have scored if the wistle [sic] had not gone for an off-sider. I thought I would have the advantage for I had beaten the fly half and the full back was out of place, 5 yards to go and nothing (or no one) in the way. Swizz. We lost that 28-6. They were bigger than us. However both matches were great fun.

At the turn of November, *we had the first game trials ~ I scored two tries and drop kicked a goal from a pass from the scrum half. I think I played my best game then. I think I might get in. I did.*

*On Wednesday I played against St Edwards, We were playing very much in defence ~ there were 8 ODs playing against us and against the other teams there were another 4. Sandy reported on the game too, Wendsday th[ere] was a 1st XV match in which our fly half was [not] playing so Jay played fly half. The other side was about twice as big as us and they won easily 23-0. Then on Saturday, I was moved to full back which became my regular position for the rest of the season, and finally got my colours, I played full back, Our side were in the attack and I had little to do though I made several tackles. And as Sandy put it at the top of his letter, **JAMES HAD GOT HIS COLOURS FOR THE FIRST XV...***

Then there was another distant match, as Sandy reported, *J went down to Clifton to play a game of ruger. He saw Uncle Robin.* I remember the long trip for the match and pleasure in the whole visit. In the next game we went down on account of a penalty, but finished the term with a good win,

On Wednesday we played Bilton Grange. We lost to them 5-3 but they were only in our half 4 times counting kick off. The scrum half took the ball out off the scrum too early twice when we were on the line. But yesterday we played Winchester House XV and minced them 33-0. No one would tackle Tommy (Tomlinson) and he was kicking very well. I had very little to do being full back. On the way there we had a competition for how long one could keep the same sweet in your mouth. Tommy did 24 miles, I only did 16 ¼

Thus ended my rigger career at the Dragons, like many such later in life, in the back of a bus!

*

Sandy's reports of his Dragon rigger career begin in October 1952, his second year, *I am in 5th game rigger this term which is the bottom of the senior games so we are allowed to go and see games between good sids instead of games. ... My rigger is going quite well and I am doing an awful lot of practising.*

And for practising there was some good company too, *Yesterday the 1st xv played against [illeg.] and won by 3 points to 0 ~ [name illeg.] was kiked hard in the nose and had a bleeding nose for the rest of the game ~ Yesterday I and a boy called Alan Macfarlane who is Scotch we played matches by ourselves against England for Scotland.*

In November 1952 there were inter-games and school match results to report, *The[re] was inter games yesterday ~ our games won both matches ~ our 1st XV won 34 to 9 points...* The school had done well that season, as Sandy reported in December, *Our Dragon 1st XV has won every match its played this term whitch [incomplete].*

In the winter term of 1953 Sandy played in his first school match, *Yesterday I played in an away match for an 'A' XV. It was v St Hughs ~ they won 8-6 and they had a wacking Negro darki playing on their side. It is about 17 miles from Oxford. It was smashing fun. We had a corking tea. The two bad things were; we changed in a dungeon which I think was drugged to make us play badly ~ b) we played on a rabbit warren but really that was quite good fun.* But, as mentioned before, with my parents back in England, and mother based in Oxford house-hunting, there were not many letters in the collection that term.

The start of the season of 1954 found Sandy in critical mood, (3 October),

Joc has just invented a daft rule that we only have 3 games of Rugger a week instead of 4. when are you coming down mum? Yesterday the O[D]s played St Edwards [sic], And it was a jolly good game ~ the score was 17 [-] 14 to us which was jolly good of St Edwards because they got 14 points against Blues and International Mr Marshall [and] they are only boys. Mr Marshall (Mini) takes me for Rugger, and English.

He was now in 3^d game scoring tries, fly half - not a very good one - backing up. In October he was tried on the wing, *In rugger I am playing on the wing now but I don't think I will get into the 15,* and in the middle of the month, *On Wednesday there was a 1st XV match v headington. I was not playing. We lost 5-3. On thursday we played 9 at a side, which I think is very much more fun than playing 15 a side. We will be playing some seven-a-side soon I think.*

Nine-a-side rugger and Sevens evidently promised to be fun but the weather did not help much that term, In November 1954, *We played rugger yesterday in the Drissel and mud ~ It was jolly good fun. I did not score but I dropped a penalty goal. And in early December Sandy wrote, There has been only one game of rugger this week because of the roton weather.*

The 1955 season, however, brought Sandy an enjoyable mix of rugger fare and a regular place in the Second XV. Games started late because of bad weather and there was much practising by way of messing about with a rugger ball on the fields as usual,

On Friday after tea we played a smashing game which Mermaid (J. Mermagen) and I invented ~ it is with a rugger ball. We call it American Touch Ruger. It is like rugger except you do not tackle you just touch ~ you pass a lot and kick. For a scrum the side whose scrum it is throws it straight back to the fly-half. Also we have a great deal of drop-kicking. We score 1 for a drop goal, 2 for a try, 4 for a converted try.

I remember well those rugger balls we used to draw from the stores for such

informal games; all were heavy, most were misshapen, some had their bladders poking out of the lacing holes, some were round and others were still wet from use the previous day in junior games. If you could kick those balls well, you could kick anything.

Another rucker practising game called 'golf' was played by masters and copied by boys. It was described by Sandy later that same month,

After tea every day some masters come on the field and play what we call 'golf'. This is a game with a rucker ball ~ you play normally 3-aside and about 3 groups. Someone choses a 'hole' it might be me. You start under the first game post ~ You kick towards another stated post (any sort of kick)[,] then go over it (place or drop kick) then under another post, over another and another post that would be one hole. The group that had the least would win that hole. I play golf every evening except on Tuesdays when I do music.

I also recall masters kicking a ball around at posts on the field; we were constantly amazed by how hard, high and far they could punt or drop kick a ball.

Then came some away matches with enjoyable games and congenial opposition, *I played in an away match v Pinewood. It is the best school in my opinion I have been to apart from this one. We played there [= their] 1st XV with our 2nd XV which we do to all prep schools apart from Eagle House and a few better ones. Which is not supprising [sic] because we have many more boys. It was a jolly good game and we just one [= won] by 2 points. They were the best crowd of chaps I have ever played against and had the best grounds. It was about 25 miles away which is also good because the further away the more fun (we miss prep).*

On the way back we had a had a sort of chase with the 3 cars. It was dark ~ we kept on over taking the other cars and when we were ahead going and hiding down a side road and doing it again when they had past [= passed].

In their grounds they have the biggest spreading beech in all of England.

At the turn of the month, Sandy wrote, *Our 1st XV played Stowe ~ we won ~ won [= one] of their chaps brock his leg after being tackllled. There were 2 doctors watching. They carried him off on a stretcher. And then a game in late November was memorable for a different reason, Yesterday I played I a match (2nd XV) v Oakley Hall. One of their chaps was a Persian and he got very angry and did millions of fouls. It was a draw 3 all.*

At the end of the month Sandy missed a game or two *I am off games because I have gone and cut my heal and when I run it rubs and makes it worse;* but at the end of the term he changed his normal position on the field, and ended his Dragon rucker career with fun playing Sevens, *I am playing scrum half at rucker now. Yesterday we played a seven-a-side which was corking fun.*

*

Watching senior rucker was fun - possibly more fun and instructive than watching cricket. We had a greater chance of becoming involved with the team and the individual players, because in a rucker match you see them all at work for an hour and a half, whereas in the course of an afternoon, or part of it, watching cricket you are unlikely to see more than a handful of batsmen or bowlers in action, and at that only from one team: it could easily happen that you spent an afternoon in the Parks without seeing a star Varsity batsman at the crease or your favourite bowler at work. Sandy and I came to identify rather strongly with the Oxford University Rugby

Football Club (O.U.R.F.C.) teams. Furthermore, connections were many and varied, and our accounts of watching OURFC become intermingled freely, even confusingly, with our own matches. It was all a very Dragon thing.

In November 1950, for example, I wrote, *Yesterday I went to watch a rugger match O.U.R.F.C v Blackheath ~ they won 5-8 ~ very exciting match indeed.* Blackheath was significant for us because Grandfather had played for the team when he was a curate at nearby St John's.

The next term, the Oxford University captain had a Dragon connection (Old Dragon, or a former part-time staff member, it is not clear) *yesterday Bollard (captain of O.U.R.F.C) some time ago was playing for us.* And later that term Blackheath was back again, *The Varsity beat Blackheath 36-3. It was a very good game.*

Then there were international matches to follow in March 1951, *I heard the 'Calcutta cup' match on the wireless yesterday. They said England played much better than they did against France, Scotland did to[o] - much better than they played Ireland. 5-3 to England. Did you hear it?* Our uncle Logie played for Scotland on that occasion; and the following Easter holidays at Sedbergh, we were following Logie's games avidly, playing for London Scottish against other major clubs such as Bath, and heard from him all about a London Scottish rugger tour in the South of France.

In March 1952, J.C. 'Minnie' Marshall, member of staff, was due to play for Scotland, but could not; *It was a pity Scotland did not beat Ireland though they had very little chance. One of our masters, J.C. Marshall, the Oxford 3rd best full back, hurt his back playing on Monday so he could not play. Campbell played instead.* With all these connections it is not surprising that we became rather knowledgeable.

In December 1952, *Several boys went to watch the Varsity match ;* and the next term, in March 1953, Sandy and I were taken to Twickenham to see Logie play for Scotland, at a special request of my father in Washington. We went with Joc's friend Mr Hornby in his 2½ litre Bristol, with I think one other boy and a master. It was a wonderful expedition and I remember well my first experience of Twickenham and the sheer size and height of the stands. But my mother had returned to England that month so there was no letter covering the event.

That October I reported that, *Yesterday I watched the O.Ds playing St Edwards School XV. The ODs fly half played well and their [= there] was a lot of dummyming. The scrums were rather inefficient at hooking the ball and one player sat down when he hooked. Silly!! The O.Ds won in the end.* And in January 1954, Sandy mentioned that *Yesterday it was raining so we watched Mr Marshall play for Scotland against the all blacks on T.V. He played jolly well.*

In February 1954 I gave a rather full appreciation of an international game I had watched on television,

Yesterday afternoon I watched England v All Blacks on T.V. It was an extremely good match. The English wing (one time centre) Davies absolutely outran his man ~ terrific speed. He nearly scored twice but Scott managed to deal with him. On the other wing Woodward, the second heaviest man on the field, could not be tackled. Like a destroyer trying to outgun a battleship. He really is a hulk. N.Z. won 5-0. When they crashed over King, the English full back was hurt and taken off the field. However the English kept them out ~ but failed to catch them up and overtake them.

And in March 54 my father had been enquiring after Minnie Marshall's games for

Scotland; Sandy replied, *You asked me if Mr Marshal played rugger at Belfast ~ He did ~*

We really were quite involved in rugger off the field as well as on it in those days. And after I went on to Sedbergh, Sandy kept up his interest - and no doubt briefed me at home on Oxford news in the school holidays. In October 1954 he noted again that in the match of ODs v St Edwards - there were varsity and internationals playing; and yet again he watched *OURFC v Blackheath, Grandfather took me ~ we left about 5 mins from the end when the score was 16 to 0 (for Oxford). It was a very good game. Oxford have a marvellous kicker ~ he placed 3 converts straight over from very near the touch line, and the scrum half called Coles is very good. It has been such bad weather this week that I have only played one game this week.*

Then came the Varsity match itself; Sandy wrote, *On Tuesday we had a half holiday and watched Oxford on T.V. play Cambridge. It was an awful game I thought and Johnstone played very badly. You can almost hear the disappointment.*

In February 1955, Sandy was still following international rugger closely and sharing his interest with my parents (or rather my father) now at home. And in November 1955 there was a new rugger star on Sandy's Oxford horizon, Onllwyn ('Onkers') Brace whom Sandy saw playing for the University against Stanley's XV,

On Thursday afternoon 1st game saw Stanleys play Oxford Univ. It was simply smashing. The papers and the people who have seen other Stanley matches said it was the best for years. Oxford scrum half O Brace was simply wizard. He did many wonderful scissor movements and he did a dummy scissor and then past [= passed] to some one completely different who scored. He was absolutely wizard you must watch him. You must both go to the Varsity match if you want to see something that will rally startle you! In the second half Stanleys got together and also did some very good movements. Though not as good as Brace. Stanleys scrum half Jeeps was jolly good too.

You can see that Sandy, now a scrum half himself, was eagerly following new heroes playing at that position.

At the end of November, at the last game Sandy watched, there was a disappointment, no Brace, although Minnie Marshall was playing, *Yesterday I went down to watch Oxford Univ play London Scottish. Brace was not playing which was a chiz. Minnie Marshall was playing and so was B.E.Thomphson [sic] who was a master last term. It was not half as good as Stanleys match but it was good to watch.* And in December, Sandy enquired of my father who had been to the Varsity match at Twickenham to check how Brace (later OURFC captain) had done, *I hope you enjoyed the varsity match and do you think Brace is a very good player?*

The closeness of it all to the Dragons is remarkable, an easy afternoon's walk as reflected in the phrase, 'I went down' to watch. Although the Parks were close by for cricket, Iffley Road was actually some distance. But these walks were pilgrimages.

SPRING - FOOTBALL AND HOCKEY

Of all the team games which I (Alan) played at the Dragon, I think it was football which I enjoyed most and continued to enjoy through my Dragon years (though sadly we only played it in a minor way at Sedbergh). It combined the excitement of rushing around, much less boring than cricket, but without the pain and roughness

of rugger. It was on a par with hockey in terms of satisfaction, requiring both skill and thought. It was particularly important to me because it was a game I could and did play a great deal not only at school but also at our Broadstone house and my enthusiasm for it started well before I went to the Dragon. My account of football at home is found under 'Dorset Days'.

In terms of the Dragon school status system football was less important than the two games to which a whole term was devoted – rugger and cricket being upper class sports of 'gentleman' played in the winter and summer terms, football and hockey being games we shared with a much wider swathe of the British population and even with girls in the case of hockey. Yet it was a game that could be played not only on open fields but also in the closed building or 'Barge' as it was called.

As noted, I arrived as a 'keen and skilful' player in my first school report in March 1951, but it was not until the following year that I mentioned the game in a letter to my parents, writing on 27th January 1952, We had games in the snow wich was nice but when you fell down it was very cold. I scored my first goal yesterday. At the end of the term I was noted as 'Very good' in my school report.

The following year I was playing for the third school team. I mentioned the game twice in letters and was obviously able to play informally with a ball my parents had given me. On 27th January 1953 I *noted I have played two games of soccer this term and my little soccer ball is coming in very useful.* A week later on 2nd February I was less enthusiastic. *I had a game in third game yesterday but I did not like it much as I hardly ever got the ball.* Nevertheless the school report noted me in '3rd game – very good'.

I moved up to the top team in 1954 and the school report mentioned 'Should be useful next year. Played well in 1st game.' I do not, however, mention the game in my letters. The following year the school report stated 'Played very well indeed for the 1st XI'. This time, gaining my school colours (the 'some fluke' was a protection against envy or hubris I imagine) I gave my only real descriptions of a couple of games and my part in them. On 1st February I *wrote last week there were the first games of soccer and on Saturday I played in the 1st XI match against Salesian College (Some fluke) wich we drew 3-3 one of our best players headed a goal for them.* My mother wrote on the 18th to my father *Alan has got his football colours as you probably know.*

Two days later on the 20th I wrote to my mother in the Lake District.

On Wednesday we played away against Bluecoates school Reading. They are a Public school and play soccer all last term and they only beat us by 3-1 the lowest score against us for about 5 years. On Thursday I got my colours as centre half (Soccer) but I started right half. In the afternoon we had a half holiday and it was lovely weather. Yesterday we woke up to a sprinkling of snow but we played the return match at home against Bluecoates school. In the first half we were pretty equal. Then we kicked off and scored a goal straight away then there was a ding-dong battle in which their were several scrabbles in their goal mouth and in one the ball went over their line but it was quickly kicked out again and the referee did not see it. (I think it is true [I wasn't there] because they admitted themselves that it was a goal). Then in the last few minutes they managed to score and so it was a draw.

The report on football in the 'Draconian' for that term mentions 'There were four half-backs! In the centre Julian Travis was probably the best equipped player on the side, but when it seemed as if we would have to make use of his versatility in

the forward line, Alan Macfarlane moved in from the right and played some splendid games - particularly against the Blue Coat School.'

*

I (Jamie) enjoyed soccer less than most other games. The ball was hard and heavy and often soggy, slimey and slippery, and although I could punt or dropkick a rugger ball quite well, I had trouble controlling or kicking a football effectively. It is a different skill, one requiring a different kind of strength in the legs, which I never mastered. Nor did I ever manage to head the ball without considerable pain. Perhaps because I was not good at the game, I never developed a sense of positioning in soccer. It all seemed rather arbitrary and a matter of luck.

My few memories of Dragon soccer seem to be connected with rain, and stockings permanently bedraggled and hanging down to the ankles, because of the kicking, and requiring to be hoisted again. It was only played for half a term, for about six weeks in the first half of the spring term, and was, thankfully, overtaken in a couple of years by snow ice and skating. In the rain, I was either looking forward to hockey, or regretting the lack of snow and ice for winter sports.

At prep school age you play a primitive form of soccer - one which excludes the true art of the team game, namely passing, making space, moving forward, drawing the opposition this way and that, making overlaps and so forth I don't think I ever got that far. We all enjoyed dribbling, however, and beating the opposition - and that is of course what we practised with friends. The games I recall seemed to be about rushing across the field and back again or round in circles following the other side doing the same. Rugger seemed to have more sense of direction.

My reports for soccer only exist for two years, and seem to have got the flavour of things

Mar 50 Soccer a promising player

Mar 52 4th game a good forward but must learn to shoot straight

And I regret to say that I can find no mention of soccer in my letters home at all.

Sandy, however, reported in January 1954 (in the middle of one of his battles with my father about suitable subject material for letters), *Jamie is a preafet and is in first game soccer but that wont intrest you at all*

Sandy himself commented on a few games. In January 1952 it was soccer in the snow, *Yesterday we had snow 1½ inches deep and played football in it and it was very cold.* Then there were two references to soccer in 1955 season, *We played games on Monday Wednesday and Saterdag. I played Inside Left twice and yesterday center [sic] forward. Yesterday there was a match[,] Masters and 3 boys v the first XI ~ the boys won 1-0.* More enjoyable, perhaps, was six-a-side game a couple of weeks later, *Yesterday we played games with six a side it was jolly good fun.* And then the soccer came to an end, *On Wednesday I played in a match v Hedington. It was snowing hard while we were playing and the ball was as hard as lead. All the same it was a jolly good fun. We won by 4-2. Next week we start hockey.*

In his last term, in January 1956, Sandy was, *playing centre half in 1st game soccer which is a jolly 'D' place on the field.* He was doing well, and reported home, *There have been no games this week but if it had not snowed on Wednesday I would have captained the 2 XI. But I hope to get into the First.* He did; in mid February, *On Wednesday I played for the 1st XI at soccer. It was v Reading Blue Coats away but we lost 5-2 ~ this is because they played all last term.*

I refer twice to watching soccer. *In early February 1954, In the afternoon we watched Pegasus v Wellington at Soccer - Both goalies were tremendous[,] leaping*

and diving terrific heights and lengths and saving goals! (uncommon in amateur football). A curiously knowledgeable throw-away line there?

A propos, Professor Harold Thompson, the father of 'Thompie' Thompson, at whose house I boarded in my last summer term, was the founder of Pegasus. It had been formed in 1948 in an attempt to revive 'Corinthian' ideals of amateurism and was open to current or past Oxbridge soccer 'blues'. The club had considerable success in the 1950s, with two FA Amateur Cup wins, but folded in 1963.

And Sandy watched football in half term week of November 1954, *This week we never do much work, and I saw West Bromwich Albion play v O.U.F.C at soccer. It was pretty boring ~ it is not half as good as ruger.* And apparently he also occasionally followed national football, writing on 4 May 1952 (his tenth birthday) that, *I am glad that Newcastle won the cup final, a preference perhaps influenced by his friend Hugo Rowbotham who came from Newcastle?*

*

I (Alan) took to hockey early in my life and always enjoyed it as a game. It seemed to be less aggressive than rugger, and as satisfying as football in its need for strategy and reflection. I came to play, as I now remember, as a half-back, ending up as centre half. I always liked such a position, and played in the same position in football and the equivalent, fly half, in rugger, at least later on. I was the communicator, intermediary, the person who controlled the team, moving from defence to attack. I did not need to do too much, but what I did was vital. My great hero in football, Billy Wright, played centre left, and I knew he was right. I enjoyed the solid thud of a well driven ball. I adored the version of hockey played on ice, and there was perhaps some distant memory of the version which my father played on a pony - polo.

Later, during my middle years at the Dragon, the shorter, more curly, 'Indian' hockey sticks came in, but I think I stuck to the older kind. These curly sticks, curiously, resembled the walking sticks with which I first played an infant version of the game as described on 19th February 1951 when my mother wrote

Their latest craze is balls, they have three each and a walking stick apiece and they drive the wretched things round the house and garden and take them for walks, each ball has its own name and character and gets bathed and put to bed at night and were even taken to church, though I did insist they should be left in the porch, I couldn't face hockey up and down the aisle!

Hockey featured quite regularly in my letters from school, always being described for the second term, alongside football. On 3rd February 1952 I wrote to my grandparents, accompanied by a drawing of a hockey goal, *I had a game of hokey in wich I hurt my ne but I scored a goal and it was a very nice game.* Towards the end of the month I wrote to them again. *I am playing hockey know and I am in 7th the same game as I was in soccer we have been winning most of the soccer and hockey games We won against st louis 3-1. Hamilton is captain he is very big.* I reported my success to my parents and my mother commented on 3rd March *we were sorry to hear you'd been in bed a week, was it your cold or something else? I hope you're quite alright now and getting some hockey, jolly good being in the seventh game.*

Three weeks later on 22nd I gave further details to my parents, which illustrate that it could be a dangerous game. *We had a match the day before yesterday wich was a free half and the Dragon won 5-0. The afternoon that was a free half we had a hockey match against another form and we won 7-3.... There was inter games on*

Wednesday and our game won 3-1 but they had two players missing and another his nose broken. The school report for March 1951 noted that my hockey was 'satisfactory' but by the end of 1952 it was 'very good'. (Inter-games were matches where the top half of one game team would play the bottom half of the game above.)

In 1953 I continued my enthusiasm. On 22nd February I noted to my parents in a slightly contradictory sentence *We are starting hockey tomorrow and I played it yesterday.* The games were not just between forms, or schools, but also between the larger dormitories when I moved into School House that year. On 15th March *There is going to be a dodo v Phenix match. Dodo and Phenix are two big dorms and they are going to have hockey match.* The school report noted me as 'A most promising and thoughtful hockey player.' The element of rational calculation of how best to play reflects what I liked about the game.

In 1954 there are no comments in my letters, though the school report noted I was a 'promising half in the 3rd XI'. In my last year the report noted that I was a 'very useful centre half in the 1st XI'. The question, however, was whether I would get my school colours. My mother wrote to my father on 18th February *Alan has got his football colours as you probably know, his ambition is to get them all but he is a little doubtful about hockey.* Part of the problem was that this was an especially cold winter. I was also ill quite a bit. As I explained to my father on 13th March *On last Wednesday we played the first game of hockey and it was a 1st XI match against new college in which I played right and left half. We have not played hockey this term hardly but we have had plenty of skating.*

The hoped for outcome of school colours is described a few days later in a letter to my mother on 17th March

On the Wednesday before last there was the first game of hockey (because of the snow) and it was a match against new college which by some fluke I was in and which we won 3-0 ... Last Tuesday there was a half for games and on Wednesday there was a 1st XI match against Bromesgrove Juniors which we unluckily lost 1-0 but me and another chap called Axtell got our colours. On Thursday afternoon there was another match against Cheltenham juniors which we won 3-0 and three people got their colours including Mermagen ...

The report in the 'Draconian' for the term mentions briefly that 'Alan Macfarlane worked very hard at centre-half and never gave up trying.' The school photograph, with myself, Axtell, Mermagen (interesting that I referred to my cousin by his surname) and others, shows us all with our colours. I continued to play a variant of the game at home, my grandfather noting in his diary on 8th April 1955 'hockey with children'.

*

Hockey, Jamie writes, was more fun than soccer. I played on the second hockey team and occasionally for the first in my second to last year, and was on the first eleven in my last year. I played inside left; I had a reasonable eye and coordination to handle a stick and a ball that was usually moving at an angle to you (as opposed to coming straight at you when batting at cricket). I could sense the movement of play, and where to be positioned, and in hockey you do not need to be especially fast or strong to win possession or position. Thus I much enjoyed the game, frequently bruised shins and black eyes notwithstanding. A propos, did we treat the black eyes with some butter-like grease?

I recall with pleasure the click-clack sounds of hockey which you could hear from a distance. And what an enormously satisfactory thing a nicely balanced hockey stick was. The first sticks we used as juniors had large and open flat heads with handles which were often broken with jagged splinters and ligament-like bits and pieces sticking out of them. The whole contraption bent and wobbled, made strange zinging noises and hurt your hands when you hit the ball hard. And then we progressed to high class sticks, neat, beautifully balanced, with small heads and comfy handles - with a (green or black?) rubber sleeve you pulled over and rolled down them. What a pleasure; you felt you could not go wrong.

In addition, hockey was connected with early spring sunshine and dry, firm grass, after the soggy, muddy pitches of winter and soggy heavy footballs to boot around. This put a spring in my step on the hockey field. I remember the bully-offs which were always fun and the corners which called for some accurate whacking of the ball by the attacking side. Inside right was always busy and, rather like a wing-forward at rugby, had permission to be anywhere. Perhaps there was an element of being intermediary and communicator in all that - of which I might have been aware and enjoyed.

Then there was hockey on the hard tennis courts which I, like Sandy, greatly enjoyed - but I cannot remember the rules. Was it that you had to push, not hit the ball? Did we use a tennis ball - or would that have bounced around too much? I have forgotten.

As to hockey matches, I remember clearly the First game pitch, along side Timms Lane below the cricket pavilion, but nothing in particular of the matches. It was a very short season of six or seven weeks and maybe there only were a few.

I first wrote home about hockey in February 1952, *Now we have just started Hockey ~ I haven't played yet because I could have a choice between soccer or Hockey for the first day*; but soon I was into practising, *I played playground Hockey (ordinary Hockey with a tennis ball instead of hard ones) ~ I played (by myself) [v.] Sandy and another boy ~ I won 10-3*. In mid-March there were more intergames, and I could report that *I was in the 1st XI of 4th game.... I have scored another 4 goals*. Games and practice continued, and I was enjoying it all, *Wednesday there was a free half. A hockey match was on we won 6-1. I hit balls about on the field*.

By early March 1953, I had been promoted twice and told my parents that *I scored 3 goals in 1st game. And Mr Wiley says I might stay there if I play well enough*. Then in mid-March I began to play in school matches, *I played in 2 2nd XI matches I scored 2 goals. We have got a dorm hockey team ~ I am the highest game. ...On Tuesday there was a half we played intergames matches we beat tous allous [Greek: the others] 2-0 (I have forgotten my numbers)*. With hockey going well and the throw away Greek, I must have been in cheerful form.

At the end of the month, *Wednesday we played intergames matches. Our 1st XI lost 5-4*. Then came the first report of those most enjoyable occasions, usually confined to end of term celebrations of *staff matches, boys v staff. they both were drawn 2-2. The masters['] handicap was walking sticks*. I remember the games well. Some of the staff were very deft with the slim stick, but what comes back to me now is the masters' speed, strength, dexterity and above all their size when you were playing against them close up.'

The 1954 hockey season with some hard court hockey, a most enjoyable game played, presumably because the playing fields were out of bounds, on the hard tennis courts, *I have played some hard court hockey. I captained 2a and we drew against 2b and later I captained a mixed side and we slosed 4a 7-1. It is jolly good fun. (I don't use my own stick because of wrecking it)*. I cannot recall now, however,

whether we used a tennis ball, normal hockey ball or some other composite confection.

And then on 7 March I wrote of games ahead, *We have had quite an exciting week, what with 2 matches versus New College School and Magdalen College School ~ We won both ~ 7-0 v NCS and 5-0 v MCS. I am not getting nearly as puffed now. Both games were great fun. Next week we have our real testers, Wellington college Yearlies [= Yearlings]and Bilton Grange (I think).*

Writing on my birthday, 14 March 1954 I reported on a number of games that had taken place. The accounts of the matches are getting rather technical and it is evident that I was enjoying it all a great deal,

On Tuesday we played Bilton Grange. And we scored twice by their goalie practically dribbling it in!! Rather careless of him. But they scored their goal off our goalies foot. They're jolly nice chaps at Bilton Grange. On Wed. I played in a second XI against a (illeg.) school called St Louis. They laid a very clever off side ploy bringing their backs right up. This muddled all our forwards but in the second half we scored 3 goals [to] their 2.

The next game, an away match at Bloxham School, was notable more for Joe's attitude to the Headmaster than the result of the game. I travelled there with Joe and others in Mr Hornby's Bristol, which not surprisingly got there first. Our party did not go in to the school, but, *waited there in the school drive because Joe said if they went to the headmaster they would have to chat and 'the head is an awful bore'.* It seems that a prep school boy in his last year can get in to rather grown up exchanges with his headmaster.

There were three more matches at the end of March, including a most enjoyable return match against Bilton Grange, this time on away ground and with an even better result against a school we evidently liked,

I have had a pretty good time this week. On Wednesday we played Dean Close. They were jolly D. chaps . In the game we lost 2-1. On Thursday we drove to Wellington . It is a lovely place. Their pitch was very good. Here again we lost.

Yesterday we went to Bilton Grange. We left here early and had a bang on lunch at the 'Dun Cow'. We then went and walked round rugby school... [the visit to the school is reported elsewhere] Then we left for Bilton Grange. We beat them 7-1 in a rather one sided game, but they were jolly nice chaps.

Those seem to have been my last hockey games at the Dragons. I had enjoyed it all a great deal, and my reports seem to show fair progress achieved

<i>Mar 50</i>	<i>Hockey quite good at times</i>
<i>Mar 52</i>	<i>energetic and promising</i>
<i>Mar 53</i>	<i>no report kept</i>
<i>Mar 54</i>	<i>useful inside forward in 1st XI</i>

*

Sandy's reports on his hockey career at the Dragons start in February 1952, *We are Starting Hocky on Monday ~ Yesterday Saterdag a [= I] played hocky ~ the score was 6-5 to us and a good game.* By mid-March he was finding his feet, *I play best inside left and was scoring goals later in the month, On Saterdag I scored 2 goles in hocky.*

His 1953 season was unfortunately spoilt by a septic leg, with long spells in the sick room and Radcliffe visits. He only really got going in March, *Yesterday afternoon I had a wondefully long game of hockey. Our game is getting jolly hot stuff and it is sonic fun to play in.* And in 1955, the season did not begin until March

because of the weather conditions, *I am in second game. I play center forward so far, and I think I will play there the rest of term.*

By his last term, spring 1956, Sandy was really looking forward to his hockey, (19 February), *hockey starts on Thursday.* The first engagement was hard court hockey, *Yesterday afternoon I played hard court hockey ~ 5 other boys and I and 4 masters played. It was wonderful fun and I think it is miles more fun than ordinary hockey.* Then on 3 March he was off, *in 1st game played on the wing. Mum watched first half. The following week, there was great entertainment, On Wednesday I played in a match ~ it was 11 boys (us) v 6 masters. We won 5-4 ~ it was corking fun[,] really prang-on.*

From mid-March there followed a series of good matches, *Yesterday afternoon I played in a home match v Winchester house ~ we lost 2-0 but it was an extremely good game. I played inside right.* The following week, *On Wednesday I played in a 1st XI match v Dean close ~ we lost by 4-1 and I played right half and I scored the only goal on our side. It was pouring with rain and it was very good fun.*

And Sandy's last hockey match at the Dragon was a match with a difference, *Yesterday afternoon I played for the 2^d XI v the lady staff ~ it was great fun and v Funny. I will tell you all on Tuesday.*

Sandy and I - indeed the school in general I think - did not go to watch senior hockey in quite the way we watched rugby or cricket. I don't recall seeing any Oxford university games for instance, but there were occasionally opportunities to watch staff matches, which could be played at a high level, as Sandy reported in March 1954, *On Monday evening before prep there was a hockey match between the staff and an other team. It was a jolly good match. Mr Marshall was playing and he hit the ball so hard that his stick broke in two pieces, one piece went flying into touch while the other piece was still in his hand, so he had to get a new stick...*

Another match was to take place on the University ground, *Today there is another staff hockey match[,] all very good peple[,] blues and that type of thing. They are playing against an Old Dragon side with 4 internationols. I[~~t~~] may we [=be] abanded because of the weather but I don't think so. It ought to be a jolly good match. It is being played on the University [ground].*

SUMMER - CRICKET

Alan comments on the fact that the English love of cricket was once a mystery to the world. Now that it is a passion in India, Australia and elsewhere it does not seem quite so strange, though what the attraction of a basically rather slow game is to players and spectators it is difficult to say. Much has been written on the subject in order to try to explain the obsession - almost religious - felt for the game. From memory it was a game that my uncle Robert was obsessed with, which encouraged me. It could, at a pinch, be played by one player - with a good wall to throw the ball against. It encouraged team camaraderie. It called on three different sets of skills, as batsman, bowler and fielder - and I enjoyed all three. As I was small and a slow runner, it was a game that did not penalize these deficiencies, largely being dependent on a good eye, good body co-ordination and endless practice and commitment - all of which favoured me, at least at the Dragon.

It was also to a certain extent a symbol of both Englishness and middle-class occupations. It required a reasonable pitch, equipment and above all leisure. It also linked us to the wider world of Oxbridge for at the Dragon we were next door to the famous 'Parks' where Oxford University would play some of the best teams in the

world. So we had a chance to watch really good cricket – which my letters record that we did. We also had some excellent coaches and cricketers among the masters, including, as I remember well, the handsome and brilliant David Sheppard, who played for England.

So cricket was one of the holy triumvirate of games, along with rugger and football, and it was continued at Sedbergh, though then I tailed off. At the Dragon I was in the top team and remember spending hours in the nets and at a wooden cradle-like device where we practised our catching. Later at Sedbergh I preferred fishing in the summer term. So, given these few memories, what do the sources tell about my interest and ability at this most English of games?

*

Cricket was very important in my home life and I shall give an account of my training and practice with my uncle Robert in that account. When I went to the Dragon I started to play cricket seriously and to discover both the delights and the ennui of the game. In my first summer I mentioned cricket once, writing to my mother during the summer term *Dear Mommy I hope you are well. It was intergames yesterday and we one by 4 runs 7 wickets. Noakes who is someone in the house got a new bat with test written on it with Don Bradmans atagath on it.* My mother thought that I might be watching the game at the Parks, writing to my father on 17th June *No letter from Alan this week. I always imagine grisly things when I don't hear but I expect he's much too busy watching cricket in the park, they get taken to all the county matches.* I remember such games dimly later in my time at the Dragon. The majestic trees surrounding the huge expanse of green with diminutive figures in sparkling white in the distance. The school report is missing for that term, so I don't know how I was rated.

In my second summer the report noted that I was 'the most improved player in 6th game.' My letters now have quite a bit about cricket in various ways. On 12th May 1952 I wrote to my parents 'we have been playing cricket and last game I was captain and in the first inings I scored 16 and thanks to Miller and Namouk's [Prince Omer Namouk, international chess player and descendant of the Ottoman imperial family, whose nickname was 'Spook'] good bowling and there fielding and crossmans fielding and they are all in my house.' On 8th July I wrote

*There was a match against cheltnam junior school they got 61 all out. We got 70 for 6 wickets. We are having a house match soon and the list of bating is this: A.Macfarlane +, R.Collins o, G.Marsh o?, A.Munro, A.Miller o, S.Crossman o?, J.Noakes o *, D.Cooper, R.Moulnton, K.Patterson, C. Berresford (+ = wicket, captain = *, Bowlers = o) Lots of love from Alan*

Clearly prowess at cricket was worth mentioning to one's parents as on 3rd November 1952 I mentioned that I was going out with a friend from school, Sandy Bruce Lockhart. Unusually I called him by his first name and wrote *Sandy is in a very high game in cricket too. He is a very good bowler.*

By my third year I was noted in my report as 'A promising player in 3rd game'. There is now a great deal about various aspects of the game in my letters. I wrote on 15th February to my parents to commiserate about some aspect of cricket which my father played in Assam: 'I am very glad sonari won the Roberts cup, but it was a pity about the cricket.' Before the summer term I was given the highly esteemed present of a new cricket bat. I still remember it – small, with the false engraved signatures of a few great cricketing stars like Len Hutton on it. I remember carefully

oiling it with linseed oil daily and treasuring it for several years. The event was reported thus. On 30th April I wrote to my parents *I have got a new cricket bat to take to school and a new watch wich is lovely.* My grand-mother explained the purchase in an appended letter. *I have bought the watch and cricket bat with the money I got from selling your bits and pieces and a final 24 shilling for Alan's suit. I had meant to buy saving certs; but I thought these things were as essential and save you the cash!*

Again we watched cricket in the Parks. On 3rd May I wrote

We had a Lovely choice yesterday of what to do. (A) we could see the Oxford University Athletics club have a competition against the Ameteur England team and we could see people like bannister and Baily all afternoon. (B) We could do that for an hour and then come back and see the cup final on T.V. or (C) Play vol cricket and watch the cup final on T.V.¹

Two weeks on 18th May later I wrote that 'I saw yorkshire in the parks but they did not have Trueman.'

The game, though less dangerous than others, had its threats and I wrote on 18th May *I have been off games for a week because I was hit on the eye by a cricket ball.* But I was also proud to report that *One of our Masters said that our 4th eleven is equal to an ordinary prep schools first.*

On 2nd July 1953 I wrote that *We won the last cricket match by about 80 runs.* 'I also noted that *'The test is not going too badly for England,* a subject which I could share with my parents who listened to the sport in far away Assam.

In my fourth year I had moved up to the top team and was reported to be 'A much-improved batsman in 1st game, whose fielding close to the wicket was exceptionally good.' In fact, this was the only game at which I gained my school colours in my fourth year. On 18th July I wrote to my parents *By some fluke I have got my tie for cricket.* My mother reported this to my father a week later on my return home: *Alan looks very fit but is slightly husky, he was very pleased as he got his cricket tie before leaving ("by some fluke") and has brought back a picture of himself in his team which I'll send onto you - he looks terribly tough but rather sweet!* The photograph was sent later, my mother noting on 10th October *I've found the picture of him in his cricket team and will send it separately. I wish I could see him playing in a match, perhaps we will next summer.*

In my letter of 10th July I described how

I have played in three matches since Wednesday. Firstly I played against Cothill in which we won by about 70 runs I only made 8 runs but while I was in the score went from 44 for 5 to about 85. On Thursday I didn't bat against Cheltenham but we won by five wickets (They scored 98 for 7) and we scored 102 for 6. Yesterday there was 2nd XI match against Salesian College. They declared (very decently) at 120 for 6. As someone was ill I was playing. Our first few batted well. Ellis 8, Scolah 14 Axtell 32. And when I went in it was 64 for 4. Then Wilson was out for 3 and Westrup came in. We began to look as if we would draw when by a fluke I hit 10 in 3 balls then Westrup hit 3 fours. But he was out for 25 but we managed to win with ten minutes to go. I made 33 not out... Today I am playing in a mixed team against the Oxford and Berbonsey club. We have not played yet

¹ 'vol cricket' must have been voluntary cricket, in other words not a formal game

but I will put the results down. Lots of love Alan
Outstanding scores Evers 33 Mermagen 25
Our score 110 for 6
Their score 99 all out
My score 6 (not out)
Result We won by 4 wickets

Two days later I wrote on *We have only got another three weeks until the end of term. There was a match on Wednesday which we won by 50 runs. I batted 3^d but I was run out by the boy at the other end before I had faced a ball.*

The 'Draconian' magazine recorded these games in great detail which gives a flavour of the attention paid to this sport by the school, and my own small part in it. The summer issue number 200 includes all the scores of the 2nd eleven matches, for example against St Hugh's: A. Macfarlane (first bat) b. Newbury, against St Andrews, AM did not bat, the Father's match was abandoned because of rain; in other games I made lowish numbers, with a highest score of 17 not out. I also caught out two people. At the end of term I received a prize for fielding, which I still have and which has the signatures of all the team, many of whom were my closest friend - including W.Arber, S. Poulter (Seb), Omer Namouk, N. Raison, J. Mermagen, P.R.N. Travis, Jeremy Noaks.

I already had my colours when I went on to my final year in 1955 and received another prize, this time for both batting and fielding. My school report wrote that 'His batting improved enormously during the term and I hope he will do really well later on. Can always be relied on to hold a catch almost anywhere.' I do not, however, mention the game in my letters, though by this time they are less full of news as both my parents were home in England. I do remember, however, the pleasure of a last summer term of cricket, the endless practising of catching, my delight in the wonderful spin bowling of my cousin Jake Mermagen and the sadness, after all its difficulties, of leaving the Dragon.

*

I (Jamie) have only some vague recollections of cricket in my earlier years at the Dragon. Over on the junior pitches (to the south of the tree lined hedge I think) we lived in a world of 'donkey drops' and balls rolling on the ground barely within reach when you had to chase them and sweep them away as if with a hockey stick. And later on it was not all easy either. I recall really sore fingers from trying to stop a well hit ball; or a ball coming hard along the ground in the outfield which could bounce up unexpectedly and hit you on the face.

Cricket meant more in later years, as one progressed to the larger grounds, and became recipient of more serious coaching attention. I remember very clearly the smell of linseed oil on a new bat, and knocking it gently into shape by bouncing the ball, on it. I recall new cricket balls (real and compo) received as presents and a wooden cradle for practising slip catches. I can think of the feeling of the gloves, the best of which had green rubbery spikes on the top to protect the back of the fingers, and remember enjoying a well fitting pair of new pads which made you feel safe and efficient. Bad pads however were a misery, because the straps were broken and the pads dragged on the ground, were loose round the calf, or the ankle or simply kept coming undone or falling off. I suppose when we were younger the batsman was only issued with one (left) pad for a right hander, and you handed them to the next chap when you were out. I remember trying to work out how to handle the bat with the correct grip which always seemed awkward to me. I tended to finish up with the

left elbow sticking forward unless I was using a kind of golf swing to hit 'cowshots' to midwicket.

I have lots of vivid memories: the bright sunshine on the field, the dark of the pavilion inside in first game, or shade of trees for more junior games. And the ignominy of being out second ball or whatever. I was not a good bat; I could not judge properly the line and distance of a ball coming straight at me with any speed, and when facing slower bowling tended to alternate between hefty swipes with my eyes shut, or blocking shots without thinking much. At bowling, I remember getting more and more tired after a long spell on the main pitch, trying to swing the ball and keep up some speed of delivery while arching the body ever more sideways. I later enjoyed a bit of spin bowling but could not keep it up for very long because it twisted the fingers too much; and this I would vary with one faster straight ball (going for the Yorker). I finished up in the Second XI as a bowler of medium paced out-swingers.

My school reports for cricket give a general picture,

July 50 *cricket - a good bowler*
July 51 *cricket promising*
July 52 *a good all rounder in 3rd game*
July 53 *keen & most promising a useful member of school 3rd XI*
Jul 54 *useful bowler in 2nd XI - action leaves a lot to be desired. Must persevere - has possibilities*

Letter references to cricket, however, do not begin until my third year, in May 1952 - but include all the detail,

This week I caught 1 ~ caught & bowled 2 ~ bowled 0 ~ 1 lbw ~ 1 stumped ~ I have had 3 innings and not out twice, 1 run out 1st inn ~ 2 not out 2nd Inn ~ 10 not out 3rd Inn.

Then a week later, *On ~~Thurs-Sat~~ Thursday my side we [were] fielding ~ got them out for 55 ~ we batted and were out for 41 ~ 15 to make ~ they batted again and they were all out for 13 ~ We batted ~ 1 and 2 both out for 0 for 2 ~ I went in with 3 and made a stand for 20 mins approx and he made 15 not out and I 10 not out. We had to draw stumps for tea.*

By early June 1952, I was in to 'averages', *My batting ave is now 6.65, my bowling is 2.52, and a week later, My game bowling ave is 50 runs, 22 overs, 8 wickets, 0 maidens, 3 w. maidens ~ [average] 6.25 I make it.* But a letter of late June gave a fuller description of a game on a hot summer's day,

My batting ave is 11 and my bowling is 2 ½ Yesterday I played in an under-12 match against 8-12. I was run out for 0 first innings (I never faced) ~ I took one wicket LBW, and nearly caught a catch. It went up into the sun and I just saw it landing & moved forward ~ the Ball hit my hand & bounced out. The temp that afternoon was 78 in the shade and 84 in the sun. We started at 9.30 played till 4 then tea (pretty miserable I felt very hungry after it) and played [till] 6.30 when I had supper ~ 7.30 I was very thirsty the sun blazing hot and I had not sat down since lunch, for there were no chairs. 1st innings we were 110 all out ~ 65 all out [in] Second innings ~ I made a catch, 9 runs and took 3 wickets.

It seems that by this stage cricket games were becoming more drawn out and serious affairs, but I never thought of the game at the Dragon as being slow and boring. In general, it moved on quite quickly. In informal school games, as I recall it, you had a swipe, maybe got a handful of runs and then were out; and the same for the next chap. An innings took maybe an hour or so? And then it was your chance to try to bowl, catch, and hurl the ball around as a fielder. Primitive but good fun.

In some games, of course, you never had a chance to bat, *I have only played games once this week ~ in which I did not do anything other than sit in the pavy [= pavvy = pavilion] and watch ~ we made 33 for 1 ~ 37 for 2 ~ 42 for 3.* Interesting that in my third year we were already playing on a pavilion pitch. And in mid July, with the athletics and swimming seasons looming, *We had our last game of cricket on Thursday Inter-games matches ~ I took 3 wickets and made 15 not out and we won by 8 wickets.*

With my mother in Oxford in the summer of 1953, my cricket reports begin again in May 1954, *We have already played two games of cricket. I took 1 for 3 in 4 overs. Not a bad start. I have played a lot in the nets practising bowling.* The following week, *We have played quite a lot of cricket [biro collapsed; change to pencil] ~ I took 3 wickets yesterday.*

Then in mid May, *So far I have played in the 1st XI matches and have taken 3 for 27 yesterday against Radley College Under 15. Tom Stanier our crack batsman made 66. We beat them and St Edward's colts. I took two for 18 and I bowled 7 out 12 maidens [= 12 overs, 7 maidens].* At the end of the month, a different prep school problem struck, *We haven't had an 1st XI match this week because Horris Hill were all in quarantine from mumps. But on the field rink cricket has started. That is great fun. I have had quite a lot of innings.* I so not recall how rink cricket was played on the playing fields, but I think it means simply 'rink cricket rules'; in other words you play with a tennis ball (and an old, shared, bat), and got in to bat if you bowled someone out, or made a catch, but there is only one wicket, hence no running, and there is nothing calling for umpire judgements, i.e. no wides and no lbws.

In June I sent my father two reports on less formal cricket matches, the first was inter-form, *We had a half on Tuesday as Mum knows, and 2a played 3a and beat them by 6 wickets. I took 4 wickets and nearly a hat trick;* the second match was inter-games, *We played intergames and I made 15 runs and took 2 wickets. We won quite easily. Sandy was off games from a blood blisters. I have a batting ave of 7 and a ½ ~ I have not see my bowling ave yet in the score book.*

And in mid July 1954 I sent my last report of cricket at the Dragon, *I had quite a good cricket week. I made 14 v St Hughs and took 1 for 25 ~ not so good, although I bowled a lot of overs ~ V. Summerfield I made a duck but took 4 overs, 3 maidens, 4 runs 1 wicket ~ although it should have been two because after the game the batsman told me he did touch it and other umpire too.*

*

Sandy greatly enjoyed the game and had more to say about cricket in his letters home than I did. In June of 1951, his first summer term, he wrote, *I like the cricket team best of all. I am in 9 game for crickit and the[re] are 13 games. So it is my best sport. My bowling average is 6. To Daddy !spechly! [= especially] our gams master duse [= does] not tell us what mistakes we macke in crickit ~ shull I say frome you that he is very bad at teching us for games and how ourt too [= how he ought to]*

~ we scored 116 for 9 and they scored 110 for 10 and we won ~ the other mach was lost by 5 runs; but the cricket season was nearing its close,, making way to field sports and swimming sports - to Sandy's irritation, *The[re] is a mach today between the Rugby club and the 1st 11 ~ The[re] was a staff mach yesterday and one of the masters took a lovely left handed cach ~ cricet has stopd now and I think that it ought not to stop till the very end of term.*

Sandy only reports one match for the summer of 1953,

I mit [= might] have told you already but on Wedndsday the[re] were four matches against Summerfields and all of them we won ~ the second was won by 75 to 118 ~ we declared for 0 wickets and 118 runs ~ won boy called Michel Evers who is in my dorm made 62 and the other boy who is in my dorm made 34 ~ You would be surprised because that only made 94 runs but the[re] was a very good bowler who kept on bowling no balls and the[re] were lots of byes.

In May of 1954, however, Sandy could report good progress in his own game, *I am in second game for cricket. In the first game on Friday Thursday I bowld 2 people and caught one in [the] slips. Mr Willey [= Wiley] said first person to hit [t]he middle stump reasonable length gets the penny and I got both pennys but yesterday I only got one wicket and I was only hit for 2 runs.*

In early June there were puzzles over competing claims of an expedition to the Farnes and the Fathers' match, *I think that the ex to the farnes is on the 12 of June[,] the day of the farthers match.* But again, in the end my father was not able to visit the school. The next letter combined news of rain and left-handers, *We played cricket Yesterday afternoon until it rained (second game) ~ I bowled 2 people for about 8 runs and caught one. Last Saterdag not yesterday a team played against us and 8 out of 11 were left handers.* But at the end of the month there was at last some good cricket at Cothill School, *On Wednesday I played in an away match v cothill. It was wizard fun We played 2 matches ~ 1st the proper one we won ~ the second a friendly one they one [= won]. It was a boiling day and we were on the field of play without refreshments or an Interval from 2 o'clock to 6 o'clock.*

Invented informal games were also on the menu that year, *On Wendsday evening I played a funny game of cricket called 'Paires' each pair bates [= bats] for 18 balls, 9 balls each and scores as any runs in these balls ~ Every time you are out you are 4 runs and you see who gets the most. Each bowler bowls a over and a half and you see who gets the best average. It is wizard fun.* Sandy was also increasingly playing tennis that year, and cricket ended in mid-July as usual to make way for athletics, *finished cricket and I am [in] 2 game 1st XI ~ on Wed I made 17 runs and took 2 wickets. On Friday we had the last game this term.*

Looking back, I find I had forgotten that mid-week cricket matches apparently only took place on Wednesday afternoons (and evenings). But informal games and cricket practice, as Sandy wrote at the start of the 1955 season, were held more often, *I am in 1st game cricket. We play every day except Friday and when we can't play cricket we have fielding pratise. I have only taken one wicket but it was Evers'es and he is the 2nd best chap in the game.... Yesterday we played cricket from 2.15 to 5 o'clock, then tennis from six to 20 past 7 - a full afternoon's exercise indeed.*

1955 proved another good year for Sandy's cricket. On his birthday (4 May), he wrote, *This week I have taken 3 wickets. No clubs have started yet ~ the boat club should be starting soon. As I am in 1st game now it does not mean I will be playing in the Fathers match for I may go down or be a scorer.* A week later there was a enjoyable mix and match event with masters and boys, together, *On Wednesday I*

played for the 2nd XI against a team of four masters[,] 4 chaps from 2 game and 3 from 2b game. I took 4 wickets[,] two bowled and two me bowling and some guy catching it. I was cuaght by a master for '0' ~ They one [= won] by 12 runs. Note the Lynam subtleties in the use of sub-games.

A third possibility of a Father's Match appearance did not occur that season, no doubt on account of my father's travelling duties in the FO. (And I had forgotten that the fathers fielded two elevens for the occasion.) *If I am in the 2nd XI you will play against us won't you. Don't forget to send this form ~ Yesterday the 1st XI were playing a match so I could not play.*

Meanwhile Sandy continued to take wickets and make catches throughout May, *On Wednesday I played in a match v St Lousis we won by eight wickets ~ they were 26 for 10 and we were 26 for 2 ~ I took 2 wickets and caught someone at square leg. I did not bat. On Saturday I played v Horace Hill for the 2nd XI ~ they one [= won] ~ we were 64 all out and they were 108 all out. I took two wickets and caught and bowled someone. It was smashing fun and they were all jolly 'D' chaps.*

At the beginning of June there was more of the same, *Yesterday I played v St Hugh's ~ we won by 8 wickets. I took two wickets and made 4 runs; and on 20 June, there was a heat wave, It is a boiling hot [day] and yesterday it was also boiling. I played v Salesyam [Salesian] Collage yesterday. I did not bat and I bowled badly ~ I did not take a single wicket. They made 120 for 6 declared. Then we made 128 for six and therefore won. But Sandy had better luck in his last game of his last season at the beginning of July, I played v Blue coats school on Wednesday. We won by 94 runs. We declared for 4 for 100 and something and got them all out for 29. I took 3 wickets.*

Sandy may have played less cricket that July because of an increasing interest in tennis; in any case cricket stopped as usual in mid July as the pitches became drier and harder and athletics and swimming took precedence.

*

Watching university cricket in the Parks had a high place for Sandy and me when we were at the Dragon. We went direct from school, and at weekends, sometimes went with my grandfather who was an enthusiastic follower of the game. Most exciting of all was going to watch the Australians practising in the nets in 1953. Among them were some great players (one was Keith Miller). We tried to get their autographs (on our bats?) and I took some rather bad, overexposed photos of them standing around at the nets.

In those days Oxford and Cambridge University teams played against county and touring sides there was quality cricket on tap, as in May 1951, *I saw on Wendsday D. Compton, L. Compton batting in the parks, and a week ago I saw Hutton, or in May the following season, I have been watching OUCC v Gloucester and v Yorkshire. Hutton made 3 4s running and a six after the last 4. And later that month, I watched the Indians in the Parks ~ Cowdry made 209 not out and Unrigar made 229 not out ~ the same Indians won ~ they declared at 4 wickets for 400 and 50 something.*

Sandy was a keen follower too, In May 1952 he saw the Indians play, *Cricet has not star[t]ed yet. I saw Omega mack his 221 runs and H. Gary make 100. They were both in together ~ Omegas hit 2 sixes in sexseshion. And to go with this interest, we both invested in or received as present cricket handbooks and annuals, I have got a book abut Englan criceters and it shows most of the things you want to [k]now ~ it has 24 pages of six by nine*

And in his last summer term, in May 1955, Sandy went with other senior boys to

watch the Varsity play South Africa. OUCC, it seems, were outclassed, *On Wednesday last the chaps in games 1-6 went in 3 parties to watch Oxford University play v the South Africans. One party went in the morning, one in the evening and one in the afternoon. I went in the evening. we watched from 4.15 to twenty past six. We saw 3 wickets[,] 7 sixes being hit and millions of 4s by the south Africans.*

In July 1954, for the first time ever I think, I saw some top class cricket on television, *Yesterday afternoon I watched the M.C.C v. Pakistan on T.V. Simpson was 'slogging' the Pakistan bowling all over the field and PRH May, Sandy's hero of the pitch, made quite a score of runs.* It is the only mention of watching sports on television - and perhaps it was specially allowed because it was a test match?

This wonderful mix of cricket for us to watch at the Dragon, included some high class cricket played on the school ground, possibly at the instigation of the young master 'Minnie' J.C. Marshall, rugger international, skilled cricket and hockey player too, and of course natural hero at the school. I referred to the match in advance, *This afternoon, which I am going to watch some members of the staff are playing some Oxford University chaps. It ought to be well worth watching,* and Sandy reported on it afterwards, *The[re] is a ma[t]ch today on our school ground of men[,] Cowdrey's XI v. Mr Marshals ~ Cowdreys xi had 4 players in the univ team (preety [sic] hot) and Mr Marshal 4 masters not quiet [= quite] so good but preety hot.*

SUMMER - OTHER SPORTS

I (Alan) do not ever remember playing at the Dragon or even owning a tennis racket, which was, of course, an expensive item. The only reference in any of my letters is ambiguous. On 23rd May 1951 my mother wrote of me *His letters have been a couple of scrawls saying when is half term and the end of term and could I send him a tennis ball and some lemonade powder!* But tennis balls were coveted for many games, including 'bad eggs' and various games of catch, so this is no evidence that I played. Nor do I remember playing tennis at the Christian boys camp at Swanage to which I was sent in two of my summers, even though its prospectus mentioned, other outdoor games, like tennis, padder-tennis...' and so on.

*

Jamie, on the other hand, along with his brother, was a keen tennis player. He learnt to play tennis both at the Dragon and in the holidays. My father was a keen and good player. The only other small court games we played at home at Dragon age were deck quoits (first learnt on board the ship by which we travelled to Canada in the summer holiday of 1952) and badminton of the garden variety rather than as a serious court game. At home we also had now and then one of those tennis balls on a string which swung round a stand. You swiped at it with a bat as it sped up to you, and in theory hit in back, even harder, the other way. It was quite difficult to get the hang of it, the pole fell over easily, the string bust and the kit soon had to be abandoned.

At the Dragon we played tennis on hard courts at the south-west corner of the playing fields. According to Sandy, in July 1955, Dragon tennis players were using *all the school six courts and Noraham [Norham] garden club courts.* I had forgotten and cannot place the latter. We played in gym shoes or plimsolls, brown or black, I think, rather than white? I doubt we were allowed to play in our first year or two. We boarders played among ourselves after school or other games, and most of the time we just knocked up or played practice games. It was pleasant exercise, a

congenial way to pass time in company you had chosen yourself and to escape the pressures of work and school life generally.

I think I first owned a tennis racquet quite early on, and certainly by my fourth year at the Dragon. It came with a wooden press with wing nut presses at the corners, and the stringing was heavy gut. And I recall presents of tennis balls received, three or four beautiful new, clean white tennis balls in an attractive tin can or box. Of course they soon became soft and hairless like all the others.

I suppose we were encouraged (by staff at school and father at home) to practice constructively, and were taught a few basics about stroke play, serving a ball, positioning on a court and so on, but I do not remember any intensive coaching. I think it was more a matter of some supervision, guidance and help, and practice sessions mostly involved hitting the ball backwards and forwards to each other, as if against a wall but with a lot of extra running around. My father was something of a purist and tried hard to improve our method, but I suspect that at school we generally just found our own way forward for better or worse.

Tennis was played by staff (and Joc himself I think?) on the shady grass tennis lawn in front of School House, so there were opportunities to watch the game being played at a decent level; and in summer evenings we could watch from some of the dormitory windows. Boarders were occasionally allowed to play (see Sandy in July 1955, below) on the grass court by themselves, or with masters.

My first mention of tennis dates to May of my third summer, *I have been playing a lot of tennis I beat Plewes [nickname for P. Lewis I think] 6-1 and again 4-3 ~ I beat another boy 5-2, I was beaten 5-0 and in that game we had deuce 8 times. I am looking for a partner for the Junior doubles.* Indeed, I joined in the competitions that June, *I was beaten in the Tennis singles by my partner for the doubles 6-3. In the doubles we are in the semi finals. I have played lots of tennis ~ I played some doubles where we won 6-1 and I have played lots of singles but I very really [=rarely] played a game.*

The few letters for summer 1953 had no references to tennis, but in June 1954, my last term at the Dragon, tennis figures again in letters home, *This evening I played tennis and won 6-2 in a very tiring game and then my partner and I beat our opponents 6-4. I enjoyed it all immensely.* In July I reported that I even got a couple of games off tennis champion Tom Stanier (gifted player of all games) and a chum; *I have played a lot of tennis and in the comp.. I got to the 4th round loosing to Stanier the champion last year 6-2. Up to then he had 6-0 wins always.* All these games were played on the hard courts, *We seem to have had a fairly good weather except yesterday when it simply poured most of the day, but it cleared up all right to use the hard tennis courts.*

Although I remember well playing on the hard courts, there was not enough time for tennis as I would have liked, specially in my last term, given competing interests - cricket, swimming and athletics, not to mention the school play and scholarship exams.

In May 1952, his first year at tennis, Sandy wrote that he had, *been practising playing back strocks against a tree with another boy;* and in June his interest was growing, *Very often I wach masters play tennis.* In May 1954 he was getting down to it again in preparation for the new season *I have played tennis twice but without scoring only practising.* By the end of the month he was playing a lot, *have been playing tennis a terrific amount. Yesterday afternoon the[re] were [n]t any games for me and my partener so we played singles without scoring. And after tea (this was a friend's birthday tea) I played doubles with my partener and we only played one set because our opponents had to go ~ we won 8-6 ~ then we played singles until we*

had been playing to[o] long and got blisters.

By July it was time for competitions, *I have been playing lots of tennis and me and my partener are in the competition.* On 4 July, he wrote, *I am playing a terrific lot of tennis[,] every moment of spare time. My serving is improving immensely [sic] and is pretty fast now. Tennis is a simply wizard game,* and on 11 July, *I am in the semi-finals of the Open doubles in the school tournament.* And finally he reported that, *I am playing in the American Doubles to-day, with Hugo as my partener, which will be fun* – but we do not know how they did.

In the summer of 1955, Sandy started playing tennis on the very first day of term, *I very much enjoyed the hols. I am in 1st game and the same form. I have just played tennis with Hugo.* By July tennis was a regular part of his life, *I am going to play tennis this afternoon if it dose [sic] not rain. I am going to play on the masters court which is an extremely good grass court,* and the following week there was a whole afternoon of tennis, this time with Gerd Summerhoff figuring too, *played tennis all yesterday in the afternoon 2.15 to 4.15 then from 5.0 – 7.0. From 6-7 o'clock I played with Hugo and Gert ~ he is not terribly good but has a really really fast service and hits the ball jolly hard... Also talking of Hugo I am playing American doubles with him today from 2 o'clock non-stop except for tea till 6.30.* This year he could later report success, *Me and Hugo got second place in the American doubles*

We followed national or international level tennis rather less than cricket or rugby, and I do not remember attending any university tennis. In mid June 1952 however, but I was listening to Wimbledon on the wireless, *Yesterday I listened to the Finals Open doubles or some Doubles ~ it was very good,* and on 4 July 1954 Sandy watched some Wimbledon finals on television,

It rained very hard yesterday so me and my partener watched the tennis finals in the womens singles and the Australians v the Yanks doubles at Wimbeldon on T.V. ~ it was very good. I am playing a terrific lot of tennis[,] every moment of spare time. My serving is improving immensely [sic] and is pretty fast now. Tennis is a simply wizard game.

As with other sports, watching top level tennis could be instructive and an encouragement. Once again it was all intermingled; and clever of Joc and his team to put the opportunities our way.

*

When I (Alan) went to the Dragon it was something of a shock to learn that I had forgotten how to swim. I believe that everyone, including myself, thought that once one had learnt to swim, like bicycling, one would always know how. But I did not. So there were sessions in the River Cherwell on the end of a kind of fishing rod contraption – with a rope harness – re-learning. This is one of my most vivid, unpleasant, memories – the water was slimy green and very cold, I often panicked and never really mastered the breaststroke which we had to learn. I would find myself sinking and gurgling in nasty tasting water and feeling I was drowning.

Gradually, however, I managed to get the hang of it and my letters chronicle the progress. In the Summer Term 1951 I note in a letter *We started swimming for the people who had done there river length, and clothes test.* But I seem still to have been struggling with swimming by the start of the third summer at the Dragon for my mother wrote to me on 3rd March 1952 from India *We're hoping to make a small swimming pool during the summer, Fiona was beginning to swim on the boat*

and could do half a dozen strokes or so before she finally drank so much water that she sank - and if you get a decent summer you should be flashing around in no time.

The summer of 1952, when aged ten, seems to have been the turning point, perhaps partly because the water was really warm. On 15th July I wrote to my parents *I have been swimming lately. The water has been 75.* A month later I seem to have been able to dive, as I wrote on 12th August *I am glad fiona can swim now I will help to teach her how to dive. Lots of love Alan.* Two weeks later on the 26th my mother wrote to me *Your school report arrived this week - good on the whole, especially French, Cricket and Swimming - some subjects could be improved upon but I daresay you know them!* Indeed my school report for that term notes 'Swimming: Well done!'

Major events were swimming across the river and back on my own - the river test. And finally swimming across the river and back with a set of old clothes on - the clothes test. I passed these in 1953, aged eleven, noting on 6th July *I did my clothes Test yesterday wich is swimming across the river and back with some old clothes on.* After that one was supposed to be safe to be in a boat on one's own - though I do record in a letter on 8th July 1952 that *A boy was drowned in the river yesterday he could swim but the canoe tipped over.* Whether he was a Dragon I have not yet established.

I also learnt to dive. There were three boards, a very springy one which allowed people to do somersaults, a middle board with a long run to it, and the high board reached by climbing a ladder. This was particularly fearsome and if one dived badly the scorching of the 'belly flop' left a red mark for weeks. On 6th July 1953 I noted *I did my running spring and my Middle, which is diving off the Middle...*

There were also races - relay races between forms, though I don't remember inter-school competitions. On 2nd July 1953 I noted *We have had swimming relays. I am in our third boat each boat is composed of 4 people and there are 3 boats in our form. There are eleven divisions each division has 5 boats. We were second in the 8th division. Lots of Love Alan.* Four days later I wrote that *We have started relays and M3 did very well.* My contribution was noted in the termly report: 'Swimming: Excellent effort in relays.' In the fourth year the weather was bad in the summer and the 'Term Notes' mention that it was 'not even possible to make a start with swimming relays', an 'ill wind which at least blew some relief for tender ear-drums', which brings back the memory that my ears were indeed tender, one reason I never really took to swimming later in my life.

In my final year, I was clearly still keen on competition swimming and the 'Term Notes' mentioned that 'Swimming relays, which last year never started, this year never stopped.' Towards the end of the term I wrote *There has been lovely weather lately and their have been swimming relays and our form was top of the river.* My own contribution was noted in my final school report: 'Swam with zig-zag enthusiasm in the 3rd Boat'. This summarizes my memory - I tried really hard, doing an energetic sort of crawl. But I could not work out how to both swim fast and see where I was going at the same time, so constantly bumped into the guiding ropes in the lanes.

One special feature of Dragon bathing was noted in a letter on 6th July 1953. *We have early morning bathing now in the charwell.* This was something I half enjoyed in my last years at the Dragon. One leapt out of bed with just a towel and raced across the Bardwell Road (it would no longer be permitted for lots of almost naked little boys - accompanied by equally scantily clad masters - to run like this I suspect), and then across the dew-covered playing fields. The mornings were often

beautiful, but the gravel on the road cut my feet. Throwing aside our towels and holding our noses we would leap into the icy waters and swim as quickly as possible to the shore.

The idea was to wake us up and make us commune with nature I suppose. Cold water in the morning, of course, was an article of faith in boarding schools. In School House there was a large bath for all the boys, described as follows ‘the Plunge Bath, 10ft by 10ft and 4 ft deep, lead-lined and strictly non-heatable. A narrow ledge enabled the shivering plunger to make his way, crab-wise, round to the far side whence a good standing jump would get him back with enough bounce to get him out again with the period of total immersion reduced to the possible minimum....’¹ This bears out the memory of Julian Hunt that the trick was to leap across so that one bounced out without getting more than half or so of one’s water in the freezing water.

I had not realized that this ‘Plunge Bath’ was not a special feature of the Dragon, but was probably quite a central feature of many preparatory schools. This is indicated by Orwell’s description of his experience, which makes the Dragon plunge bath seem, in memory, less horrible. ‘And there was the slimy water of the plunge bath – it was twelve or fifteen feet long, the whole school was supposed to go into it every morning, and I doubt whether the water was changed at all frequently – and the always-damp towels with their cheesy smell...’²

I think that associations – the distinct unpleasantness of the English sea-side, the cold baths, the dank river, the unpleasant taste of chlorine in public baths, the stinging eyes and the blocked ears, together meant that swimming became one of the least attractive of my dabblings in the world of water sports, though I am surprised on reading these accounts to find a much more positive picture than I remember.

*

I (Jamie) came to the Dragon as an already confident and quite competent swimmer (after lessons and much use of beautifully equipped swimming pools in British Forces sports centres in Germany). I was lucky: I was at home in the water; and I had never had suffer the agonies of learning to swim in dirty indoor public baths, freezing sea-baths or murky rivers, or coping with nasty stony beaches or stinging sea pools.

Swimming was thus an important and hugely enjoyable summer sport for me, especially in my last two years at the Dragons – but I began straight away. In July 1950, my first summer at the Dragon,

I past my clothes test on Saturday ~ It’s when you jump in with your clothes on and swim across the river and back ~ I now get a shilling from Mr Woodhouse my formmaster ~ I can swim in the relay races now I’ve done my clothes test ~ it will be good fun. I am taking a boy out called Nigel Williams, a very good swimmer and diver and he’s only nine ~ he’s third fastest in the school and second best diver ~ jolly good I call that ~ I’m not fast but I have beaten quite a few people with giving them a start.

The clothes test was an important rite of passage on the river, promising many and varied enjoyable activities ahead. This was chiefly because you were allowed down

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 59

² Orwell, *Essays*, 432

by the river, including the diving boards, any time by yourself, but also because a few responsibilities came your way, e.g for helping at swimming competitions, regattas or in clothes tests for others. The clothes test was an entrance ticket to a magical world.

Down the steep banks of the Cherwell at the end of the playing fields stood an old rowing 'barge'. This served as the changing rooms where you got into those cold, soggy, itchy, woollen swimmers still wet from the day before. Along the river bank were wooden stages and three diving boards. The decks were where young non-swimmers were taught to swim dangled from a canvas strap at the end of a huge fishing pole. Of the diving boards, I liked the middle one for its long run and got used to its height over the water, but I especially enjoyed the spring board and became a neat diver, although I could never quite get the knack of backwards diving. I think, however, I only attempted the high board (so high, it seemed almost lost in the tops of the willow trees) once or twice, for the sake of competitive results.

The clothes test was a memorable day. You wore old shorts, shirt and jacket and old gym shoes; and the secret was to tie them tight with string so as to form a bubble at your back to help keep you afloat. The test was, thus kitted out, to swim across the river and back. But a particularly happy memory is early morning swimming in the summer term. I can almost smell today the cool, damp riverside air and still water. In high summer it was an exciting and pleasing change from the usual getting up processes.

Then there was all the fun and excitement of competitive swimming and diving, described in letters home. Swimming competitions were between forms, and held in the form of relay races, known simply as 'relays', starting around the end of June. Each form produced as many teams or 'boats' as it could muster. The boats competed in different divisions (it seems there were as many as ten of them?) your team got promoted or demoted between them according to performance. The racing involved swimming as fast as you could, by any stroke, across the river to a moored pontoon near the other side (there had to be room for Timms' punts to pass) and back. In July, *we had relays on Thursday morning ~ it was second time our lot came in first.*

Of other swimming activities, I do not recall anything much of the popular School waterside regattas (was there a greasy pole?) but I do remember the fun of swimming in unknown waters on private expeditions which Nigel Williams, James Carslaw, Charlie Carmichael and other strong swimmers and I made up river towards Marston. We tried to dive under canoes and punts, pretending we were attacking them, and operating as submarines breathing through reed pipes. Halcyon days.

*

Coming to Sandy's and my letters, we can see how the start of swimming, so eagerly waited, was of course weather dependent. In my second season the weather was still cold in mid-May, *I am going boating on the river ~ There is lovely sun and the Cherwell is warm. But swimming has not started.* In 1952, however, there was a heatwave. At the end of May, *The river temperature started to rise, the water temp had risen terrifically 61, 64, 65, 63, 68 ½, 70 ½, 73 and it is usually nice in now.* In June, it was becoming too hot for anything except swimming, *There have been voluntary games but I have not played ~ it has been really too hot in the sun 81° in a place where the sun never sees the thermometer... We have been swimming every evening. It really is very warm now.*

There was a new high board that year and a family friend from Germany who appeared out of the blue at the Dragon, to see about his son going to the school,

took a dip, *He also had a swim and dived off the top. The first of the season on the new board.* My chief interest, however, was preparations for relays and refinement of technique in preparation for relays with my chum James Carlaw, *I have decided that during the swimming relays I will do four strokes to a breath which quickens my speed like anything, so J.A.C says.*

In mid-June I reported that, *We might start relays next week. I think you know what they are. We have 3 boats and 2 spares. I [=We?] will probably get 4 boats soon.* In late June I was pleased to report, *On Wednesday we had relay practise ~ I am Captain of the 2nd boat;* and in late July I could proudly claim, *I am now one of the fastest in the form swimming. We have had the Stobie swimming cup which is for style and also the Diving comp.* Sandy reported the results, with a predictable win by Nigel Williams, *The diving competition took part [= place] yesterday and for the under 12. N. Williams came first. Carmichael came 3rd [= 2nd] and Monro and A. Ware came 3rd equal.*

By that time relays were in full swing,
We have a lot of swimming. We have relays on Monday and Friday ~ I am in the 2nd boat

<i>1st boat</i>	<i>2nd boat</i>	<i>3rd Boat</i>	<i>4th boat</i>
<i>2nd div</i>	<i>4th Div</i>	<i>in 7th div</i>	<i>in 10 div</i>

<i>Wynne</i>	<i>Guinness</i>
<i>Houghton</i>	<i>Scott</i>
<i>Thompson</i>	<i>Charles</i>
<i>Stanier</i>	<i>JBL</i>

We hoped to get a 5th boat but are [= our] other person cannot swim properly yet.

That summer Sandy was becoming very involved too. In May he passed all his river tests, *I am very glad that I did my tenths and river cloths test and diving so I can go down the river bank and on to the bo[a]rds because it is so nice when it is hot and you can sit on the diving bords.* In early June, he reported home, *I think bathing for non swimmers is starting on Monday ~ My form master tacks [= takes] most of the people in our form.*

At the beginning of July he was advancing still, *I am diving a lot now and I passed my running spring and middle [tests] and my form master gave me 2 pence because if you pass anything you get a penny;* and in the middle of the month he had a new and superior role in things, *I helped do the cloths test [= clothes test] ~ that means that I went across the river with all the people who did them [illeg - to grab them out] ~ It was good fun.*

On 20 June 1954 Sandy reported the start of the season, *Swimming started yesterday for the 3rd Suppers and if it stays fine it will start today for us.* [I had forgotten about the ranking of the suppers. I think the Third Suppers were the most senior, i.e. in their fifth year at school.] The next day they were off, *Yesterday evening we started bathing. The water was pretty cold though I did enjoy the bathe.*

Then in mid-July came some warm weather at last and Sandy, *started early morning bathing, that is getting up and bathing at 7.10. It is very refreshing and wakes you up. It is intirely voluntary and you arn't forced too [= to].* A week later, it was hotter still and Sandy making yet more progress, *I am learning to dive ~ it is jolly good fun but I am very very bad at it. also I am try[ing] I [= a] backwards dive ~ which is jolly hard but I always do a back flop.*

But there were no Relays that year, as I explained in a letter home in early July,

This year we aren't having swimming relays as the water is really pretty cold still. That reminds me Thankyou very much for sending the swimming suit. A pity about the new swimming trunks, but other swimming and diving competitions apparently took place – though swimming had had to take a lower priority in my last year. But my school reports confirm the general line of my progress over the five years,

Jul 50 *quite good*
Jul 51 *swam well for the form in the relays*
Jul 52 *a keen swimmer*
Jul 53 *much improved & rapid swimmer in a*
successful team; a keen & improved diver
Jul 54 *swam well in the competitions*

Similarly, Sandy's swimming gets no mentions in his letters home in his last term, devoted chiefly to cricket and tennis. But there were many other sides to life on the Cherwell and the Thames in our Dragon years such as rowing and boating or merely messing about by the river – which both Sandy and I enjoyed a great deal. These are discussed in Chapter 10 below.

*

Alan comments that at the Dragon there were all the serious forms of athletics, running, jumping, hop skip and jump in the long sandpit near Bardwell Road. On 2nd July 1952 I gave some details. *We have started sports practice. I have don 3 ft without failing so far. But I only did 21ft 6 ins in the hop, step, and jump.* I obviously had some success as on 4th August my mother wrote a P.S. to a letter *Jolly good winning the high jump and relay race.*

We were urged on to stronger efforts by the example of larger boys and the occasional rousing visitor. For example I note on 1st March 1953 *We had a lecture on Saturday about the Olympic games with lantern slides and the lecturer was Harold Abrahams who is a very fine athlete and who won a race a few years ago.*¹ We also had the inspiration of watching professional athletics in the nearby Parks. On 3rd May 1953 I wrote to my parents *We had a Lovely choice yesterday of what to do. (A) we could see the Oxford University Athletics club have a completion against the Ameteur England team and we could see people like bannister and Baily all afternoon...*

I only comment once more in my letters about athletics, noting on 18th July 1954 *Our form is in about 12 finals so far and I am in two running finals.* But my school reports from 1953 note my progress. In July 1953 July I was said to be a 'Very keen and useful jumper.' In July 1954 I 'Ran and jumped well for the form ' and in my last summer I 'Performed keenly and well in the sports'. Commendable, but without distinction, I suspect, as I was a bit too small and slow to do more than average.

As for boxing, I don't remember that this was a sport that the Dragon participated in, though I now find that Julian Hunt mentions boxing in his interview. I am pretty certain that I did not box at the School.

Nor do I remember being involved in shooting, which, according to the 'Draconian' was taken reasonably seriously. For example in the issue in my second term, Easter 1951, the report mentions that 'We have had two good terms of shooting by a small group of enthusiasts...'. We are told that A. Gardiner won the Roderick Haigh Cup, and that another ten boys scored 50 or more out of 100 in the

¹ Abrahams won a gold medal in the 100 metres sprint in the 1924 Olympics

competition.

*

I (Jamie) remember field sports more clearly than running races, and recall well the long jump pit under the trees at the turn of Bardwell Road (after the gardens) which was used for hop step and jump as well as the long jump. I remember the greyish sand which had to be dug to keep soft, and of course raked for competitions. And the high jump I did on the same playing field, rather on the Timms Lane side. But essentially I was the wrong shape and build for athletics being naturally chubby, with short legs and low centre of gravity.

I don't recall any boxing at the Dragons at all. As to shooting, Sandy did some .22 shooting for a year or maybe two on a serious indoor range under Tubby's care (see below). We also shot at home (in Surrey) with a small air pistol with pellets of some kind, in my last Dragon year, using cardboard targets pinned up against trees., and were hotly competitive.

I remember practising long and high jumping. I was not too bad at hop step and jump, maybe through some coordination, and I remember the fun of trying to get the run up right so you started on the board or marker. But my long jumping was weak, and when I tried to do a faster run-up, my steps got muddled and I missed the marker! The high jump I could only do by the scissors method (like most of us), and I didn't get very far - although I think some boys had started experimenting with a Western Roll?

So far as I can remember, races on sports days were about the only track running I ever did, and I do not recall any practising for the day. We had a go at hurdling too, which might have been rather a Dragon thing. Clearing the hurdle was all right, but the knack was in keeping up momentum; and because balance came into play, not just speed, I was in fact better at hurdling than at straight running.

Nor can I remember how the running races worked. Did we compete between teams (forms or dorms)? I vaguely recall bands of coloured material slung over the torso round one shoulder. And I think I remember 'Sports Day', with bright colours, (flags?) and grown ups everywhere; staff smartly dressed and boys in light summer games clothes. Were these occasions linked to Speech Day? Perhaps the sense of fun I recall related to Sports Day as a signal for signalling the approaching end of the summer term. I wonder what it all was actually like?

I did not refer in letters home to any form of athletics until my last year. Sandy similarly took only a mild interest. He lacked the speed for running races and the build and strength (at prep school age) for jumping. His physique suited him more to gym and cross-country running, of which he had a first taste at the Dragon (see below), and excelled at Sedbergh.

In his second summer term, in July 1952 Sandy wrote that, *reallys [= relays] have just started for running and so have atletics, high jump, long jump, hudals. I cleared 3' 5 ins in high jump and 10' 1 ins in long jump ~ There [is] only 1 day that is 1 day in practis ~* Then later in the month, he added, *I took part in the finals on saterday for the high jump and the heats on Friday for the long jump... Yesterday G. Guinis did 70' [= 17'] 1" in the hop step and jump wich is good.*

My first and only letter reference to athletics was in July 1954, in my last year, when at least I proffered some comment, *We have started atletics practise now. I jumped 11' 7" and cleared 3' 4" but that was as far as we went.* So ended my undistinguished athletics career. I think that my reports are better than I deserved, and I fear I also see a descending curve of interest here, but as the master in charge said, drill was perhaps more my thing

July 51 ran and jumped keenly in the sports
July 52 ran and jumped well in the relays
July 53 ran and jumped quite well
July 54 good drill leader - useful in the sports

Sandy confirmed the start of the 1954 season in mid July, *We have started Athletics yesterday. We have finished cricket;* And the following week, he reported, *All Mon-Thurs we have having sports practises.* There are, however, no further references to athletics or Sports Days in his letters.

Sandy did very well, however, in his first experience of cross country running one rainy day in March 1955, his last term. Oxford was drenched, *The fields are still unplayable[,] partley because there are snow forts on them. On Wednesday 20 chaps went for a run. It was from school to the Parks, across the Parks, across the Bridge down to Marston ferry on the far Bank, up to the Olotments [sic] and back to school. It was sonic fun. There were two groups ~ I came second in our group.*

So far as I know we never watched any athletics, gym or shooting at senior level, (although I see from a letter that we did once watch some lacrosse , Oxford versus Cambridge in 1954). I rather think, however, that some of the school may have joined the crowd of 3,000 at Iffley Road sports ground on 6 May 1954 to watch Roger Bannister (paced by Brasher and Chataway) run the first recorded sub-four minute mile. It was a much heralded attempt and a major event in the world of athletics, and Old Dragon Harold Abrahams did the live broadcast for BBC. It was of course all the talk of Oxford, but I don't think I attended.

*

In 1954, Sandy found shooting. In January he wrote a cunningly persuasive letter home on the subject,

This is a little note to say - You don't mind if I learn shooting at school this term. It's free because Tuby's [= Tubby, member of staff] brother left some money for boys shooting here. It will be good fun and it will teach me a lot about guns. It is in free time. You don't mind do [you] because I have put my name down because I knew you don't mind.

But if you do - tell me.

I hope you are having a nice time because I am having a spiffing time

~~lots~~ of millions and billions of love from Sandy

PS VERY VERY IMPORTANT

PPS Send arnser about shooting very soon and as quick as posiple [sic] (quam cellerime) Please!

It worked! At the end of the month, he gave a detailed account of how it all went.

Sottin [= shooting] is simply supper sonic. I shot on Thursday. You go down to the shelter in to the Range. First you are taught to handle it[,] then to lie in the right position[,] then to hold it for shoting[,] then to aim straight[,] then the safety rules with the Breach[,] then to load then to aim again then to fire. When he has taught you this you fire five shots (cardriges) at the target which I am sending mine. (The ones which have cardridge holes sourrounded with a sircle of bleu birrow [= biro] or ink are the ones that hit out of somebody else's five. The ones that are not surrounded in birrow or ink are the ones that are out of my five

*shots (look at target) ~ the range is 25 yards
shoot at them from 25 yards).*

**You*

*While you fire you[r] five shots tubby sits at an enourmouse telescope and tells
you what you have hit. Please let me continue Daddy. It is korking fun.*

In February he confirmed cheerfully, *I am shooting now and I hope to shoot
down at the range this afternoon.*

*

I (Jamie) commented in my first term at the Dragons that gym was done *only in
the summer term* - but I must have misunderstood or been misinformed because it
seems there was no formal schedule for gym. After that, however, I make no
further mention of the activity at all, although I do remember some of the
equipment and that vaulting was difficult.

Sandy, on the other hand, enjoyed his gym very much and was good at it. He
wrote in January 1954,

*I think it is the biggest swis under [the] sun that Jamie cant do gym (or PT) this
term [because I had been in hospital]. You have Volting [= vaulting] horses, volt
benches ~ type of lilo eydie downs the [= that] you stack on top of each other
and term [= turn] summersaults and do hand stands etc ~ jumping stands which
you put these type of eidi downs on top of each other for a soft landing. Best of
all ropes to climb up and Trapezes from the beams to swing on which are safe
and the block [= bloke] who takes us don't let us do anything rash in the
trapezes.*

In June of that year he reported, *You know the high rope going up to the beams
in the place where the gym equipment is kept ~ I climbed up to the beams on
Friday.* And in February of 1955, in his last term, he wrote, *Yesterday afternoon
there was no games because of snow. So me and 15 other boys spent the afternoon
with a master on the rings and ropes and vaulting horses etc it was absoulotly sonic
fun.*

He got a lot of pleasure from gym at school and at home too. Roping down the fire
escape chute at School House came to him quite naturally and I can see him in my
mind's eye climbing ropes and trees at Dragon age at home. In March 1954 he was
toying with the idea of asking for a climbing rope for his thirteenth birthday,

*I have been thinking of a rope to climb as you suggested when you were here. I
would very very much like one to climb but a) they are very expensive and b)
w[h]ere woud it be hung, for if we hang it to a tree it would be hard to get up
because of the branches are to[o] far apart to climb to get it up ~ and we would
have to put it up and take it down every time we climbed it or rote [= rot][,] go
mouldy in the rain and might snap when we[']re half way up.*

It was a very sensible response. I think we did get a rope in the end. And after all
the gym work and climbing, it was inevitable that Sandy should come to take an
interest in rock climbing as well as fell running which he reached Sedbergh. It is a
pity indeed that there was not a more extensive gym programme with coaching and
competitions at the Dragon. He would have enjoyed it and benefited from it.

10. PLAYGROUND WORLDS

Skating, Easter 1955



WINTER GAMES

One of the best ways into childhood worlds is through children's games. The world of imaginative games was not strictly separated between home and school. A number of imaginative games were played in both. The Dragon, however, was the place for particular games and crazes. As I (Alan) have come to look back upon this phenomenon, I have realized that this only very partially recoverable world was enormously important in my development. As a retired Dragon master, Bev MacInnes, noted after describing some of the games in the playground, 'My travels in the playground are the most important part of my journey. Again the Headmaster took the risks and left play to develop and become a central part of what the children learned and retained when they left us.'¹

The scene can be set by a description of playground in the Christmas 1952 issue of the 'Draconian' by M.J. Harrison, aged thirteen and a half and in class A.3 entitled 'The Playground'.

'The playground is void of boys. A gentle autumn breeze softly carries the leaves, which kick and struggle, to the tarred surface below. Those on the ground run along, trying to get back into the friendly branches of the surrounding trees. The dragon sunning himself on top of the Old Hall smiles down on the school. A tom-cat eats out of a dustbin.

Suddenly someone is fool enough to ring the bell. The golden silence is shattered. Out come hundreds of very noisy little boys, all shouting 'Roll up, non-swindle marble show,' and 'Anyone on conkers?' The dragon puts his hands over his ears. The wind carries the leaves back up again. The cat runs away.

At last some clever person rings the bell again. After about five minutes, all is quiet. The wind knocks the leaves down again. The cat resumes its meal. The dragon smiles down. Suddenly, without warning, a P.T. class comes out to do its exercises in the playground. The cat is sick. The wind goes elsewhere, and the dragon looks at the scene below in disgust.'

*

Jamie writes that the sight of children messing about in a playground looks sweet and innocent, but in reality the whole of life's complex warp and woof is present in the myriad of games that are being played.

Such games, crazes and leisure pursuits had their being at school breaks (with the whole school present of course) and in the evenings and at weekends (for boarders). School breaks came at elevenses, straight after lunch and possibly at tea time too (I am not sure). These breaks provided, as well as a refreshing glass of milk and a bun in mid-morning, a vital opportunity for rest and recreation. It was sometimes sufficient merely to mill around in the yard and catch up with friends - with a bit of play and a bit of noise (breaks could be a bit rowdy and crowded for my liking, but I do not recall any nasty behaviour or bullying). But in the end what boys wanted was something to do. And thus the habit of crazes, hobbies, games and other leisure pursuits, played in groups large or small or alone, emerged in every school as at the Dragon. Old favourites were taken up with feverish excitement and new games were invented.. Many of these games and crazes were seasonal, so let us start with the playground games and sports of autumn and winter.

¹ Bev MacInnes, *A Sense of Purpose* (no date), 138

*

On 20th October 1952, at the start of my third year, I (Alan) wrote to my parents. *We are playing a jolly good game with search lights.* Behind this lay many evenings spent either in the school hall, or out on the playing fields, with huge torches or even semi-professional spot-lights from army and navy stores which consisted of a separate light, a large box of batteries, and a device for sending Morse-code messages in light. The two teams would have their lights and others would try to creep up on the opposing team without being spotted.

I still remember the joy of holding a monstrous long silver torch which was fed with six or eight batteries and could reach trees at the other end of the large playing field. I also remember the terror of being picked up by the lights and 'deaded', or the thrill of picking up some crawling figure. The game played into an under-current of memories of the Second World War evoked through stories by relatives and returned teachers to the Dragon and old Boys who came to the school, of the Second World War, which was only over five years before I went to the school.

*

Jamie writes that the autumn brought the Dragon boarders special crazes of its own. First were the pea-shooter games, enabled by the appearance of ammunition, the haws on the bushes around the Museum and down the centre of the playing fields. Even more exciting, however, were the games for the dark hours of winter evenings, especially after the end of Summer Time.

I remember it all so clearly still: the frosty nights and puffs of frozen breath on the air; exciting darkness ahead penetrated by torches; the glow of school building lights behind; running with torches all over the fields, or gunning people down from hideaway corners with giant ex-wartime service signalling lamps housed in portable, khaki, metal cases, the size of a small kit bag. They came with three coloured filters, a hand-operated shutter for Morse code and huge batteries. They worked as spotlights across the field. One could almost light the stars with their beam on a foggy November night. Where did we get the searchlights? I would like one now. I had long loved torches of all sorts and sizes. They had a magic about them, whether they were small ones for reading with under the bedclothes, (with which you could light up your hand from behind and see the bones as in an X-ray), comforting little pen torches at the bedside, torches designed as immense chrome tubes, large thick ones covered in heavy duty rubber which were waterproof or bicycle lamps with small bulbs and a modest glow.

*

Bonfire night combined all the great mystery and excitement of the playing fields in the dark with dazzling lights and fascinating smells of cordite. I don't recall any great displays compared with today's shows - few whizzes and bangs, noisy rockets, showers of sparkling golden rain and a great build up to something exotic and rare. I remember Catherine wheels on a post in the dark, and you could not see who (which staff member) was lighting them. I think there was usually a bonfire involved but I do not remember a Guy, but maybe there was. Furthermore Bonfire Nights were often delayed till a little later than half term, so came to be part of that exciting feeling of a build up to the end of term.

And I imagine that Guy Fawkes Night fireworks were already familiar fun from before the Dragons. A letter from Sandy in November 1950, in his first term, implies that we had. For instance, enjoyed them in Germany, *I went to the play on saturday ~ it was very funny I will send you the program ~ did you have fireworks on Nov 5th?*

That December I gave an account of an exciting scene of fireworks in the snow, *yesterday on Monday there was a terrific snow storm ~ everything was white ~ in the evening we had no prep but an hour of fire works in the snow ~ the ground looked beautiful when the fireworks gave a red light then changing colour to blue etc. ~ otherwise we've had very good weather.*

Fireworks seems to have been something of a moveable feast. In 1954 it took place on 24 November, *On Wednesday we had our firework day. It was absolutely smashing, really bang on. The whole field was alight with fireworks. Then we had an absolutely wacking bonfire.* In November 1952 we could only watch distant fireworks, in the Parks perhaps or North Oxford, *On Guy Fawkes night we were watching through the dorm window - because the usual school Guy Fawkes Night fireworks had been postponed on account of bad weather, and was held the following term, We have last term's fireworks next week. It will be a very good show for many boys took there's [= theirs] home and used them in the holls.* I must confess I do not quite understand the logic of my last point there, but in any case it was a good show when it was duly held in early March, *On Friday evening we had fireworks, which we ought to have had last term. They were good fun to watch. There was an immense bonfire which kept us very warm while we were watching it.*

Fireworks could of course also be attached to various celebrations, the biggest show being on Coronation Day in June 1953, described in Chapter 4 above.

*

Alan comments on Guy Fawkes that it was, of course, an event, shared with most children around the country. On 5th October 1952 I noted in a *letter It will soon be Guy Fawkes day and all the shops have fireworks.* Whether the last was a hint to my parents, I am not sure. Nowadays, of course, boys would not be allowed to let off their own fireworks due to health and safety regulations, but during this period it seems there was a more ambivalent attitude, with a major display run by the masters, but groups of boys letting off some permitted fireworks.

In the 'Term Notes' for my second Christmas Term in 1951 it was noted 'This year the night is moonlit, frosty and still. As soon as the school bell gives the signal, from each of the countless crouching groups, dimly torch-lit, dotted about the two fields, comes a bang or a flash, or both.' The following year the authorities were more severe. No boarders were allowed to light fireworks so, according to the 'Term Notes', 'a Day-boy firework party in a garden opposite the School entrance drew a capacity crowd...' The following year the 'Term Notes' mention that 'Fog threatens, but fails to blot out, an evening of post-dated fireworks...'

In my final Christmas term I noted in a letter of 2nd November that *Guy Fawkes day was yesterday.* We clearly held it on a week-end rather than necessarily on November 5th. It was clearly back to the arrangement of allowing the boys some minor fireworks of their own. The 'Term Notes' mention that 'Right up to the final bell crouching figures can be seen all over the field, oblivious of the display, bent low over the last of their squibs as it lowly expires in the mud.'

Gerd Sommerhoff gives a summary of some of the features of the Fireworks. 'To illustrate the school's policy of fostering a sense of responsibility through freedom, I should mention Guy Fawkes night. Whereas most schools choose their autumn break so as to be rid of the boys on that hazardous night, the Dragon School actually welcomed the event, partly as an exercise in responsibility. On the morning of November 5th, the school's Tuck Shop would have small fireworks on sale to the boys. Days before we had already manufactured sparklers and "jumping jacks" in the Science Club. At Morning Assembly the boys would be given a talk

about the necessary precautions and warned to behave responsibly. After dark, then, they would flock onto the main playing field and light their bits and pieces. At the same time the official school fireworks were run at the end of the field by the school prefects, who were allowed to smoke at those occasions "since they need the cigarettes to light the fuses." (That was in the 'fifties!)"¹

*

Jamie writes that according to our letters home, the searchlight season started in early October. On 10 October 1953 Sandy could not wait to get going; he was in sickroom with flu and feeling miserable, *But on top of all that the news about my smashing[,] wizz hog[,] bang on[,] korking Searchlight is Either stolen or lost is the last straw as you can emagane [sic]. Please write and tell all about it as soon as possible.* In fact all was well, he had left his searchlight at home, *Thank you for your letter. I am so glad you have found the signalling lamp.*

He reported the start of the searchlight season, the following year on 6 October, *We have had a good time this week. Especially on Sunday with Searchlights. Please bring mine.* And on 15 October 1955, he explained the start date *Serchlight games start to-night as the clocks have changed back* - note the earlier end of British Summer time than today.

Autumn brought a number of other informal games and entertainments out on the playing fields before they got too wet. Messing about with a rigger ball was instructive as well as just plain good fun. We invented games on the lines of the master's 'golf' when they drop-kicked a ball around all the different goalposts in succession (described above). I remember one Sandy and I invented, which we called in code (in this case German) 'Zum Baum'. The game could be played by any number but was usually confined to two or three enthusiasts aside, and was simply a question of winning ground by punting the ball over or round the opposition to push them back, as if taking penalties kicks (but without going for a goal). Where they held the ball fast was the point from which they took their kick. But the tiring part was that there were no touch lines, and the try lines were simply the ends of the field - or when the other side gave up. The aim was to kick the ball to areas which the opposition had failed to cover; and we played it down the Bardwell Road side of the pitches - hence the trees in 'Zum Baum'.

In June 1955 Sandy described another invented game,

On Monday because of scholarships and Whit Monday we missed prep and I and Hugo and six other boys played a game we made up. We call it 'spaces' because you have to chuck a ball into a space. It is like touch rigger ~ you play it with my softball. The goals are about 5ft apart and an imaginary line knee high. You start off like a rigger line out. You run and dodge with the ball but when you are touched you pass. The passing is much longer than rigger[,] normally about twice as long as a rigger pass sometimes three times. It is a sonic game and very exhausting.

*

Three of the winters were very cold during the first half of the 1950's and the Dragon masters, and particular the Head Master Joc, seem to have been very keen on skating so that in several big freezes we were given a succession of half or full holidays to skate.

The earliest mention of winter sports is in a letter I (Alan) wrote from the Dragon on 27th January 1952 to my parents who had just left for India. *I hope you*

¹ Sommerhoff, *Consciousness*, 81-2

are enjoying the trip and it is not too rough. It has been snowing quite hard and on Saturday we had half an inch of snow and we had some nice slides and it has been nice. I am keeping my diary up so I can tell you what is happening when I come out. We had games in the snow which was nice but when you fell down it was very cold.

This does not seem to have led to skating, but the following winter was one of the two really cold ones I experienced at the Dragon and the 'Term Notes' give a vivid picture of how the whole school schedule was adjusted to this.

The temperature began to drop in late November and 'The snow began in earnest at mid-day on Saturday, November 29th'. The icy weather 'gave time for the skates to be got out, and Operation Wintersport to be set in motion, in short for the clock to be put back to February 1947. For it was now obvious that from an academic angle the term was wrecked beyond repair. The labour of slide making in the playground was lightened by the momentary thaw, which converted the whole area, and most of North Oxford into one vast slide. The tennis court was trampled, hosed, and skated on, all in the space of some sixteen hours. And then came reports of many acres of perfect ice on Port Meadow, and for nearly a week morning school ended almost as soon as it begun.'

The next spell of skating was in the early part of 1954. In a letter on 2nd February 1954 I wrote to my parents from the Dragon. *Dear Mummy and Daddy, we have had freezing weather. And I have not played any games (except ice hockey). We have had a wizard time except for the cold as I have lost my gloves. We have been doing a lot of skating lately and I am absolutely thrilled I can go quite fast, faster than most people could run... I am going skating this afternoon.*

The 'Term Notes' for this term describe the background to this.

'Hoses and floodlight appeared round the tennis court... The Port Meadow season opened on January 28th, and the lawn was "isolated" and ready for use only one day later.' The effects were dramatic, and I wonder how many preparatory schools would have reacted in this way. 'A skating season means disorganisation; but this time the disorganisation was rather well organised. School stopped at eleven on each whole-school day, and skating followed till lunch. From lunch till 2.30 furious inter-form ice-hockey matches were played on the lawn', then some more school (when everyone was asleep) later. 'Skates were available for all, better skates and more of them than ever before.... Joc-skates...'

A year later I wrote on first February 1955 *On Monday Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday morning there was skating.* Three weeks later on the 20th I wrote to my father *The weather here is pretty awful snow every day and then it thaws in the afternoon. But today the latest news is that there is skating this afternoon* and on 13th March I wrote *We have not played hockey this term hardly but we have had plenty of skating.*

The 'Term Notes' mention that at the end of the school holidays there were hard frosts but no snow, so newspapers were laid on the tennis court and soaked in water. Then other opportunities opened up in the first spell of icy weather.

'The ice on Port Meadow was unsatisfactory, but Dragons settled down to a good spell of skating on an adjoining field placed at their disposal by a kind farmer called, believe it or not, Giles. Meanwhile the School House lawn had been made ready in record time by laying trestle tables on the snow and getting the staff and the more circular boys to jump on them.' After a while 'skating faded and soccer faded in.' But there was a blizzard at the end of fifth week and 'And this turned out to be the opening of the term's second Ice Age.' - but this second spell was confined to the lawn' in the period before bun-break. Furthermore, 'the playground offered a very good official slide...'

The events round skating are amongst my most vivid flashes of childhood memory. We used to go down to the seemingly endless flooded fields of Port Meadow by the Thames and I remember first awkwardly trying on my skates and flopping around, and then gaining confidence, as described in my letters. As I did so, I moved out with my friends over a magic landscape, studded with little islands, but full of lagoons, narrow passages and great expanses of ice. Often I could look down through the ice to see the frozen grass, or an ominous deep blackness below.

A teacher had invented the method of laying down newspapers and soaking them and then the water froze so that an ice rink was formed on the large front lawn at School House. This meant that we could skate at night with torches and lamps and perhaps some food - a particular pleasure, almost carnival-like.

I anticipated the move to the Lake District in a letter of 29th November 1955 to my father, commenting that *I am very glad we are going to the lake district as there is lovely fishing and skating and lovely country around*. It was indeed true that there was wonderful skating. William Wordsworth in the *Prelude* describes the moment when he suddenly came to a halt and the hills rushed past him for a while. This was at Tarn Hows where I began to skate when we moved in 1955 to Hawkshead. The skating there and at Sedbergh will come in the next volume.

The additional joy of skating was ice hockey, which we played at the Dragon as I note. I particularly remember the serene wonder of sailing along with the puck (if that is what it is called) on the ice at Tarn Hows in the later 1950's. The weightlessness and mastery is the closest I have ever got to flying. It was totally entrancing and was a continuation of the pleasures of the Dragon.

There were also other winter sports, in particular sledging, snowball fights and making snowmen. The Dragon was really too flat for sledging or tobogganing, so it was only when we moved to the Lakes and at Sedbergh that I engaged in tobogganing and serious fights with snowballs. There are hints of these activities in my letters of the last winter at the Dragon. Back at the Dragon at the start of 1955 I wrote on 27th January to my mother. *On Thursday it snowed hard and there was snowballing on the field and people made forts and giant snowballs*. Strangely, I do not remember this at all.

*

As I (Jamie) estimate it from Sandy's and my letters, the spells of seriously cold weather at the Dragon occurred in November and December 1952, January and February 1954 and January through to March 1955. In 1950, 1951 and 1953 there were lesser spells of frost and snow. Perhaps Sandy and I, like other boys of our age, were to some extent accustomed to the cold after the extremely severe winter conditions of January to March 1947, but the prospect of snow and ice was always exciting beyond words.

My first mention of winter sporting activities in Oxford was 12 Feb 1950. It tells of frost and that and burst pipes, and r(ather curiously) going sliding with my 80-year old grandfather, Bishop Hone, *In the new hall there are floods all over the place now but port meadow is not flooded yet ~ I went sliding two Sundays ago on the canal with G[r]janpa*.

At school beautiful ice slides were laid across the main playground, apparently more than one. In a letter with the dateline *Sunday 27 Jan, 1952, 9 o'Clock*, Sandy wrote, *Yesterday we had snow 1½ inches deep and played football in it and it was very cold.... Yesterday we made slides about 23 feet long and in the night Mr Wylie port [= poured] water on them and now they are very slippery*.

There were no further reports on winter pursuits that spring term, but in

November 1952 I reported with a high sense of anticipation the arrival of a new season of snow and ice,

We have had snow. It started Wednesday. There were not games so I listened [sic] to records... - It was 1" deep ~ the next morning it was all slush. On Sunday we had another fall which was good. It froze hard and they made slides in the playground ~ on Sat morning at 12.30 it started to snow ~ the slide melted and snow came thick and fast. It went on snowing after lunch. There was a cine instead of games. ... When I came out it was still snowing at 5.15 ~ it was snowing [at] 8.40 when it was lights out ~ this morning it 6-4 inches deep. Mr Wiley says that [this] afternoon those who like may change into games clothes and have fun on the field. And have an organised snowball fight. Sandy and I are going to do that and before lunch were going to have a snow ball fight in Gran's garden.

At the beginning of December 1952 there was mayhem on the school playing fields,

Last Sunday afternoon we had a snow fight. We built forts (the masters arranged it all and played) ~ Ours was taller than me. First of all we battled Mr Gover and made him surrender his fort. We allied and attacked one another but we were driven back and beaten ~ But we attacked them again and captured there [sic] fort. Then they got allies and attacked us, We were driven back. The Bell went so we went back to change. Sandy was too cold and went away early.

And on 7 December I could write,

We've had wizard fun this week. SKATING on Portmeadow. Monday we just had playground slides ~ Tuesday the same ~ but Wed we were fixed out with boots and skates and we skated. The masters were all very helpful and I got on quite well. I had 48 falls. Sandy could not get the hang of it. On Thursday we had a half and skated again. Sandy started off[] and could move about & [4 words illeg], anyway he got along ~ Friday we stopped school at 11 and skated till lunch ~ we chased sledges pulled by two boys and one boy on the sledge. The pace raiders' on skates were much faster. I became 1 body guard. Yesterday we stopped school at 11 and then skated ~ I had races galore. I won two out of about 10 or 12. I never came last though.

There are some boys who are really good at skating. Our Austrian master is really terrific. He says he has skated many competitions and races, He is teaching the Boys ice hockey. There are many who are quite good. In the afternoon I toured port meadow. We went over a mile.

The letter contained a small sketch of a skating scene on Port Meadow, with a hole in the ice and a notice saying, Danger - Halt.

I remember well going skating on Port Meadow with its cold and exciting open spaces, and the terrible old rusty screw-on skates provided by Joc, which we somehow managed to fix onto our shoes with clamp devices and a small key to fit them tight. I think of sitting freezing on frozen grassy banks on Port Meadow fiddling away for ages and trying to fix them on. And surprisingly they did not come off the whole time but somehow worked all right, even if one's ankles didn't.

Sandy had his own reports to send home too, In late November he wrote of

games cancelled by the cold weather, *all this week there has been [no] games day and now the earth is hard as iron but it was the forest [frost] [word illeg.] and we could catch cold. But today (it is Sunday) Mr Willy is organising a very very big snow man for us.* And at the beginning of December he could announce, *This week we started scatin. I am getting quite good ~ I find it is lovely fun scating and quite hard to[o]. The[re] has not been games for the last fortnight because of snow and frost.*

The following term, however, the snow and ice disappeared, and with them winter sports,. The only note in Sandy's and my letters is my remark that *Snow fell all Friday night and was about 3 [inches] deep. Snowballing started but was immediately put down.*

On 6 February 1954, however, I was only three weeks out of hospital and anxious that the snow and ice would last until I was back 'on-ex' again, *Throughout this last week we have had skating. We had had some most lovely weather. Bright blue sky and sun but only just over freezing point. It might just keep on till Wed ~ I hope so because I'm allowed to skate then. !! Hooray!! But I doubt it.*

Unfortunately for my skating plans, the school doctor was cautious and in mid February I reported on the fun and games at Port Meadow as an observer,

Throughout this last week we have had frost. Sometimes 12-13 degrees of frost. We had quite a snowfall on Thursday and on that day the school stopped work at 11.30. We went down to Portmeadow where boys skated (chizz-boo I'm not allowed to) ~ practically froze to death walking around down there but I had good fun watching and helping people.

On Friday the same thing happened but I threw snowballs at masters on the field (mark you, I was very careful not to 'rag') ~ I got our form master one which trickled down his neck...Yesterday (Saturday) school stopped at 11.0 ~ and again [to Port Meadow]. I watched some of the more expert boys playing ice hockey with mr Marshall and Mr Gover. It got fairly crowded. But the game of ice hockey was well away from the crowd..

Sandy provided another angle on the opening of winter sports at the Dragons in January 1954, *It has been snowing quiet [sic] a lot here and it has been 1000 times colder than the top floor at Sedburgh. I am wearing 3 big long sleeve sweters most of the time. The[re] are slides in the playground which are very good ones, and at Port Medow the[re] is lovely ice. Joc lent me a pair of scates and I go to port medow every day now. Scating is sonic fun.*

Then there was skating on an ice rink created on the tennis court at School House. Sandy describes the method of manufacture in a letter of February 1954, *On the tennis lawn at school house Joc made an ice rink whith a howse [= hose] ~ it is very good ice indeed ~ Joc says it is about 3 ins deep all around. In the day we take some of the surface off[] and from about half past six to about half past nine the master take turns in flooding it with a howse and the rest of the night it freezes hard. Then in the morning we have lovely smoth ice and we scaet there or at port medow in our free time.* I remember well watching from the windows of the dorms, and the excitement of checking out the ultra-smooth ice in the morning. The ice was grey and translucent rather than transparent like the ice on Port Meadow.

The next week, it was much the same,

We have had smashing fun scating all last week. I am quiet good now. We have started ice hockey last Monday. They are only form matches. I am captain of my

form and we won our match. It is super fun. But unfortunat[e]lly it has been raining hard and I think the[re] will be now [= no] more skating at all. Though if we do[,] we play another ice hockey game tomorrow. Yesterday there was a ice hockey match between the boys and the staff. Joc played and so did a new Austrian master player called Seckfried. He is very good indeed because he played an awfull lot in Austrai. It was a very good match ~ the staff won 4-6, some boys are jolly good indeed.

The spring term from January to March 1955, according to Sandy (I had moved on to Sedbergh by now), brought further good opportunities for winter sports. First it was skating, *We skated on Tues, Wed, Thurs It was great fun[,] spiffing Your skates are just perfect with those extra socks. I played ice hockey, good fun but jolly difficult. Joc was lent a big flooded field for Dragon Private skating. It was jolly good ice.*

Then snow came in the middle of February, *It has been snowing here and there were no ordinary games. On Friday there was a snow fight on the field.* And in late February, Sandy wrote home that, *There have been no games this week because of the snow. But on Thursday we put on games cloths and had a marvellous snowball fight. We made a form fought [= fort] out of snow balls up to my shoulder and some up to my waist. There were about 11 chaps holding it and about 70 attacking us. It was jolly hard to get in but in the end they one [= won] ~ It was spiffing fun. There was another fight on Friday, but my cloathes were so soaking it was not worth it.*

In the first week of March skating was back on the agenda, *There has been lots of skating this last week, a [=on] Port Medow and on the tennis court[,] which has been turned into an ice rink. It has been jolly good at Port Medow on but the last day everybody was falling, not very far through. I fell in and got wet up to the waist... The fields are still unplayable[,] partley because there are snow forts on them.*

The spring term of 1956, Sandy's last term at the Dragons, was another good season for winter sports,

Have you had any skating?² we had one and a half days. Jock hired a field down by port Medow and we skated there. It is a jolly big field and we played ice-hockey ~ it was wizard fun. They put millions of newspapers on the school house lawn[,] then sprayed it with a horse [= hose] and flattened the papers with a roller. Then they sprayed on top of the papers for 2 nights 7 - 12 and then it made a wizard ice rink ~ it was jolly brainy idea and made jolly D skating.... There have been o games this week but if it had not snowed on Wednesday I would have captained the 2 XI. But I hope to get into the First

There was no return of football for a while, and on 12 February Sandy reported that, *It is snowing here and snow has been falling here for the last 4 days but it has not settled ~ it is just starting to settle ~ they started spraying the lawn again yesterday and it didn't work because the snow came ~ I don't know whose brainy idea it was about the paper on the lawn.*

One week later, he could tell my mother about his continued skating activities, *There has been skating for some of the week. on Thursday Fri Sat it was jolly good we went down to port medow. I played ice hockey most of the time which is super sonic smashing fun. Your skates are jolly good but some time they need sharpening.* And there followed yet another week devoted to the art, *There has been lots of skating this week and interform ice hockey matches which are wizard fun. But I only played in one because of my leg which is cut and has a bandage on it. I can skate*

ordinarily because I am not so likely to fall over, but in ice hockey I always fall sometimes.

Skating was certainly one of the most enjoyable parts of Sandy's last term at the Dragon, and how typical of him to see clearly the challenges in ice hockey.

MARBLES AND CONKERS

There were two autumn games which were special and deserve separate treatment. Marbles was the most interesting and obsessive of games. I (Alan) don't know of any serious anthropological study of marbles as a children's game though there is a good deal on the Internet describing the history of this most ancient of children's games (dating back to the Egyptians and beyond and famously depicted in one of Breughel's paintings), and we learn from examples the fact that over 400 million people in the world, apparently, collect marbles. It is curious that so much effort has been devoted to describing how you play the game, and so little paid to why people play and what functions marbles can have in the education of children.

In my letters to my parents during the 1950's there are two references to marbles. In a letter on 20th October 1953 I wrote: *We are playing marbles this term and I have got quite a few in fact I have got 16 big marbles (picture of marble diameter about an inch) and 50 small ones (picture, diameter about half an inch) which I will be able to show to the girls...* The following year I wrote in another letter on 27 September *The craze is marboils this term.* Behind these brief references lies a world of activity and excitement.

The marble season was circumscribed to part of the winter term. It was initiated by a number of boys who had brought back bags of marbles after the holidays. Those who had failed to do this would spend time in the ditch behind the fence [which is still there in 2009 and where marbles are still played I am told]. An assiduous hunt would usually uncover a few, often chipped, marbles with which to start one's game - or, I imagine, one could borrow a few from a friend and then return them (with interest, I wonder?) later on. Jake Mermagen comments that 'I think the main source of supply must have been the day-bugs, particularly if the market needed an infusion because of hoarding. I still have letters to my Mum asking for supplies, which of course weren't forthcoming as the postage would have been more expensive than the marbles.'

The marbles were graded in a complex system of value based on an intersection of their beauty, size, rarity and condition. There were many varieties - at present I just remember a few. There were 'bottle tops' transparent green, blue or with no colour and for the most part worthless. Yet Jake M. remembers that they 'were initially worthless, but at a certain point, for a reason no-one could understand, certain bottletops, possibly because of their colour or perfectly unchipped condition, became incredibly valuable.' In hindsight, this suggests that an older player had managed to manipulate the market by rumour, suggestion or other cunning.

There were agates, or 'aggies' as they were called, including those with a streak of red in them (blood aggies), but mostly a milky white. These were the humble pawns or main playing marbles. There were 'French' or 'semi' spirals. Jake comments that they were 'quite valuable, but then Woolworths started to produce them and they became common trash.' Now I have a box of such Woolworth's spirals which I use as the common playing marbles.

There were 'water glasses' which became valuable if they had some pattern inside

them, but their value was disputable, as Jake describes. ‘There were plain glass marbles with the minutest wisp in the middle which would classify as a spiral and be worth several hundred ordinary marbles, but without the confirmation of the wisp by the crowd, they were almost worthless.’

At the highest pinnacle of value might be a huge spiral – the size of a golf-ball, beautiful, unchipped, worth hundreds of ordinary marbles. These were graded according to the number and beauty of the colours that curled like the famous Double Helix of DNA round each other. (Did Crick go to a marble playing school one wonders!) Yet if these majestic marbles were seriously chipped they immediately lost much of their value.

Marbles could be swapped and exchanged off the site of the game – and exchanged for other things as ‘general purpose money’ (as anthropologists call it). But the main activity combined two principles which immediately links the activity to what adult play, namely the capitalist market described by Adam Smith (I wonder if he played marbles?).

There was a combination of physical dexterity and skill, temperamental control and perseverance, self-confidence and self-belief. Jake Mermagen had to perform the difficult adjustment of coming into the school as a boarder about half way through the normal five years. He comments ‘It really was a very good forum, in which boys could mix and gain their self-confidence. I remember as a newboy first finding my feet on the marble ground.’ It was also a place where one learnt the arts of making an assessment of risk, profit and market value. Above all, it encouraged the desire to accumulate in order to gain status with others.

A player could make profits, in other words accumulate, in two ways. The first was passive – basically to set up a stall or ‘shop’ in the market. Instead of putting out shoes or vegetables, we would put out one or an array or heap (there were many combinations possible). What we put out, how attractively it was displayed, the shop window, as it were, was important. There were other games, where the marbles were put in a ring drawn in the dust and one had to hit them out, or one person would throw and the opponent try to hit them, chasing all over the playground. (Many other types of game are described on the web).

The main action took place along the fence where up to fifty little boys, as I recall, would have their ‘stalls’, setting up little pyramids, or a line of spaced marbles. The ‘pricing’, ie. setting of the intersection between risk/reward was done by working out how far the person had to throw from. Calculating the value of the marbles on display and the skill of likely players worked out at a distance. If it were set too far, people would not be enticed to throw at the target. If it were too close, then one would soon lose all one’s marbles (‘to lose one’s marbles’ is an interesting expression, meaning to go mad!). Another variant is described by Jake. ‘I recall that some people made “houses “ with doors, through which the marble had to pass to get a prize, rather than striking other marbles.’

Once the distance (and price) was set it could not be arbitrarily changed to reflect the customer’s skill until they stopped playing. I remember several skilled throwers and if they approached my stall I trembled and foresaw disaster. Particularly formidable, as Jake confirms, was Julian Travis, nicknamed (like his father before him) ‘Pickles’. A demon player.

The distance varied from a few feet, if one had just put one or two common marbles to up to 50 yards if the target was a huge spiral of the best kind. Only a brilliant shot could get these – someone armed with a large bag of marbles. In pursuit of one of these whole fortunes could be gambled and won or lost.

So the whole process combined several human desires. Aesthetic appreciation –

the miraculous colours and shapes. Greed and avarice. The pleasure of making collections. The honing of skills. The excitement of the chase or hunt. The pleasure of taking risks and succeeding. Concentration and skill. There are distant echoes in Japanese pachinko, pinball machines and many other areas of life.

And of course it was educational - which perhaps our teachers realized. It taught me things like the assessment of risk, the quantification of chance and probabilities, scales of comparison between valuables, the function of bargaining and exchange, the social bonds created through competition, the delights of acquisition, sharing and abandoning valuable objects, competition for status in a hierarchy, the laws of supply and demand (sometimes a boy would flood the market and a certain kind of marble would rapidly drop in value). I also learnt when to hoard and when to distribute, conspicuous consumption and value given through giving things away.

Ultimately it taught me how to lose without losing myself, how to distance myself from objects, how to come to terms with winning and losing and, most importantly, the transience of worldly goods and their ultimate worthlessness. For, at the end of the brief rush of enthusiasm - as I remember the 'craze' would only last 6 weeks or so - suddenly it was over. Then, since such transitory gains cannot be stored up, like Big Men in New Guinea who have a large feast with their pigs, or the famous Potlatch of the North West Coast Indians, the custom was that the most successful would announce that they were going to throw away all their marbles. At an appointed time they would go to the top of the steps at the old Museum in the centre of the playground and cast their marbles off - and the attendant crowd of boys would rush for them.

All this was a child's world - and largely limited to school. I don't remember playing much at home. And I don't think that the masters played any part in this although Paul Watkins notes that he had seen masters rolling marbles in the '70's.¹ It all took place, and all the rules were worked, out by the boys. This was one of its most important features - it was an informal, almost 'black' economy, beside the formal one of the school and it taught self-reliance, self-organization, the ability to police and adjudicate without the use of formal sanctions. All very useful skills for supposed future rulers of an extended Empire with a minimal enforcement capacity. The anthropologist Haddon wrote a book on children's string games - a book on marbles would be just as interesting.

Some extra details on Dragon marbles are given in Paul Watkins' autobiographical novel of the 1970's. Interestingly, marbles features more than any other craze or game. He notes the way in which marbles acted as a convertible currency. 'Everything had a value at the Dragon. Each marble, each piece of toffee and each chair in the TV room. You knew how many toffees it would take to buy a Medium Triple Treble marble and how many Triple Trebs it would take to get you the best seat in the TV room. None of this was written down, but everybody knew.'²

He also notes the way in which there were fluctuations in the value of marbles relative to other commodities due to emotion and fashion, just like the apparently crazy swings in the Stock Exchange. 'Crisps were currency. For a bag, you could trade Big Treb marbles...in the frenzy of handing out, the crisps would grow in value. It was like a documentary on the Stock Market ... all the hands raised and faces twisted with want. You could sit back and watch the frenzy and make it work

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 32

² Watkins, *Stand*, 26

for you. I had sacks of marbles to prove it.¹

Watkins also notes the fluctuations in the values of articles relative to each other. The various crazes were complex and separate 'because each carried its own language and its own sets of values for objects. A bag of marbles that would not get you a cricket ball in trade one week would get you a whole set of cricket equipment, bat and pads and ball, two weeks later. There was no telling what the next craze might be or how long it would last.'²

Watkins suggests that the marble season was in the spring rather than the autumn term, and gives a vivid description of the game which amplifies but overlaps a good deal with what I remember, though there are names of marbles, the medicine boxes instead of bags and the version played with dustbin lids which I do not remember.

'In the spring time we brought our collections of marbles - Triple Trebs and Spirals and Big Reds and Big Blues and Big Greens. We kept them in military medicine boxes lined with cotton wool to prevent chipping. When class was over, we ran like hell to claim our spots in the playground and set up our Shows. We set the marbles down on a shallow bed of sand gathered from the sandpit and drew a ring round them. With a piece of chalk stolen from class, we marked out the distance that the rollers had to stand. Then we yelled across the asphalt - 'Roll up, roll up, two Spirals and a Jumbo Treb out!' When the boys came, and they always did come, they either knocked the marble out of the ring and kept it, or they didn't and they lost what they bet. The more valuable the marble, the more chances they had to roll... Or we dragged out one of the dustbins and flipped over the lid. We set a marble in the middle and let people roll their own marbles around the edge, to see if they could knock our marble out of place. If they did, they kept it. You could lose your whole damn collection in one Bun Break. I did it a couple of times.'³

It appears from the 'Term Notes' that marbles were seen as something of an addiction by the authorities and if the frenzy grew too great, or lasted too long, then they were prohibited. It also appears that the playing of marbles was at its most passionate in my first three Christmas terms and the craze began to decline in the last two years. This may be partly connected to the rise of other crazes, especially Five Stones, and also possibly to the degrading of the value of some of the marbles alluded to above through their mass production and sale in large stores. What is obvious, from the attention given to the subject in the 'Term Notes', is that this craze was recognized to be special - receiving three or four times more words than conkers or any other 'craze'.

In my first Christmas Term 1950 it was noted that 'Marbles had the mortification of seeing the umpire's finger go up before they had even taken guard'. The following Christmas 1951 the 'Term Notes' mentioned 'Marbles were given rather more rope than usual with which to hang themselves, and the announcement of their demise provided the only sensation of the term, revealing as it did the hitherto undreamt of depths to which human depravity, as represented by the marble addict, can sink.' The following year in Christmas 1952 it was noted that 'It is of course the "Marbles Term" and the 1952 marbles season had an unusually long run, dying in the end an almost natural death, so that the official ban, when at last it came, sounded more like a polite valediction. But there was an ugly rumour of an iron hand inside the velvet glove, and a plan for a drastic offensive next year.'

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 30

² Watkins, *Stand*, 65

³ Watkins, *Stand*, 66

My first mention of marbles had been in Christmas 1953, when the craze was already starting to diminish according to the 'Term Notes', which stated that '... the marble fever seemed to be a less serious disease than in recent years, with its victims running rather lower temperatures than usual.' In my last Christmas term it was noted 'marbles can be said to have passed their boom and be heading for a slump; they still need the eye of authority, but can now be left to die a natural death about the end of October.'

*

Jamie remembers the game as being rather less intensive than the form described above. Perhaps marbles as a form of capitalism was at a low ebb at the turn of the 1950s. with post war shortages and a difficult economic climate economic being reflected on the playground trading floor. I do not recall any such feeding frenzies. and perhaps the game only developed into a market boom in the mid-1950s as money began to flow back into the British and marble economies.

There is no evidence as to my or Sandy's attitude to marbles in our letters home. In fact the game barely gets a mention. Perhaps we reckoned our parents knew all about the game or perhaps they had indicated that they did not want to hear any more about it. More likely is that we felt that marbles was not for parents, just as it did not involve masters at school.

The aspects of risk taking and accumulation in the game were, I think, not really my scene. Perhaps this was because I was brought up in an atmosphere in which speculation was discouraged. During my upbringing my mother and my grandparents led frugal lives, and investments they had were in gilts and blue chip stocks. I wanted marbles all right, but that was because others had them, and owning a few was simply a way not to get left out.

I have nevertheless a few memories of the game. I loved the colours, the feel (and the clink) of good marbles. I wanted to possess marbles all right, but not at a cost. I remember some such as the water glass with wisps and the giant spirals, but the other names mentioned above do not ring bells. I (regrettably) never possessed a marble that could be swapped for a hundred ordinary ammunition marbles; nor do I recall the level of activity in swaps referred to above. I doubt I had 16 big and 50 small marbles; more like two thirds of those numbers. I kept them in a twisted handkerchief in a jacket side-pocket - bulging and clinking, a nice feeling. Some boys had small bags of cloth and the experts boasted something like a shoe bag tied with string at the top. I can see them swinging them, weighed down with booty, beside them.

I think of marbles being played in perpetual (autumnal) sunshine and I can almost smell today the dusty warmth of the playground. (One simple answer to that is, I suppose, that we did not play in the rain or on wet ground!). Nor do I always see the playground in my mind's eye as being crowded and frenzied. Sometimes it was occupied by just a few boys sitting out or strolling around, quietly comparing a few pitches that enticed and pitchers who impressed - all rather relaxed and peaceful.

I remember one or two details of the game, for instance the wooden garage affairs through which marbles could be shot - were they built in the Barsomry? But I should have said that the length of pitches was from 3 feet to about 22 yards (a cricket pitch) maximum, not fifty; and I do not recall the use of dustbin lids. I do not recall the economics of the game. And I doubt I was very conscious of it at the time. I assume that in principle a roller would want to roll nothing but chipped marbles and a stall keeper would want only high quality marbles rolled at his targets,

but I am not sure how this all worked out in practice. Nor do I recall whether the season ended with a bang or a whimper; which may reflect a habit of dropping out early as my interest waned ahead of the collapse of the craze.

I can see now that there was no place for masters in marbles. Indeed masters do not figure in my mental picture of the playground life at all - although they must have been around, if only walking past or behind the players and on-lookers to and from their class rooms (and maybe keeping a surreptitious eye on proceedings). Memory plays such tricks.

I imagined that the principle source of marbles were the day boys together with a few boarder experts who might have come prepared. I doubt whether in days of rationing boarders - think of your average Stradlings House yearling, guarding his 6d of pocket money carefully for sweets - would have risked large investments in marbles. Indeed I am not sure how we did acquire start-up capital. I do not recall scabbling around in ditches for broken marbles. What might I have swapped for marbles? What current and calculable pleasure might I have given up for a risky return in the yard?

I was not addicted, it is plain. I was not commercially motivated and was probably uncomfortable in an atmosphere of powerful accumulation - whereas gentle collecting, in slow time - stamps, books, records, coins or whatever might have appealed. I hated losing more than I liked winning. Thus I must have been a fringe player. Did professionals and amateurs come out to play separately at different times? I recall of course the risk assessments involved in setting up the pitches, and the stall holder's anxiety that either no one would roll up and you would squat there lonely and embarrassed or you would lose your stock in two minutes flat. I do not, however, have any recollection of manipulations of the market. I must have been an innocent on the trading floor.

Nor do I remember wanting, or feeling that others wanted, to accumulate marbles to gain status. I suppose marbles did teach something about hoarding, distribution, value given and conspicuous consumption, but as much as I respected (or even feared) the really gifted players, both the immensely skilled shooters and the subtle stallholders, I am not sure about how deeply the general community admired the holder of a lot of marbles. It was a very short season, and fame perhaps rather short-lived.

Perhaps Sandy was happy gardening and I was happier roller skating or playing Lurky in those bun breaks? I do not recall talking about marbles during the holidays, comparing types, showing off to each other our collections, discussing where to acquire supplies or noting attractive marbles in shops. But I do not think we were warned off in some way by anxious parents or solicitous grandparents.

On other aspects of marbles, I agree about the majority (but not all) of the skills developed and arts learnt through playing marbles - although I am not sure, however, about 'confidence gained'. Thinking back on it, marbles may have developed or changed my character in some respects, but I sense that it was actually the other way round: my attitude to marbles reflected my existing character. I am not sure which came first. In any case, I think marbles did help me learn a few things, for instance,

- to value something relatively every day as being a beautiful object - and not only the giant spirals. I can see in my mind's eye lots of marbles of different patterns and sizes and if I saw them again today could very quickly and easily sort them into ones I like most and least. So I learnt to form my own judgements of taste, to differentiate between the excellent and the ordinary.
- that what I enjoy about gambling is more the occasion, the cheerful

atmosphere and the good company than the gambling itself which has an alarming aspect. (We have smelled danger at gambling - those sudden urges to have another go which lead to recklessness!

- that I am not interested enough in accumulation to take risks. I hate losing money more than I like making it. The marbles experience must have confirmed my lack of skills as an entrepreneur.

- to act on a ranking of preferences. I may have preferred other activities to marbles (such as Lurky or kicking a rigger ball around); or perhaps preferred no activity at all and a retreat to quieter spaces for a break and to escape the proximity of classmates and the unmitigated atmosphere of school.

- that I have a general preference for squaring up to testing conditions in a team environment rather than being exposed singly.

- that I sometimes enjoy watching and observing as much as participating - another valid way of sharing in a game or activity, involving analysing and understanding (think of football crowds).

There are only a couple of references to marbles in my letters home. I tried explaining the game in my second letter of my first term at the Dragon, but I seem to have been rather at a loss to do so, *I have one [=won] 14 marbles because it is the marble term ~ we have every sorts of games of marbles like this - - [drawing, showing Toe Line and Marbles] - - Now if you hit the marble you win it ~ if you get in front of the line you get it back [word illeg.] ~ if it's behind the line the other people get it [2 words illeg] you take some back on ~ if you hit their marble you win but if they hit your marble they win it ~ if its in a square you get the marble back.* I confess I am confused by all that!

On 6 November that season we were required to send our marbles home for safe-keeping, ...*Mummy I am sending my marbles to you because Joc said we are not allowed to have them any more at the school because people bag them... P.S. I am sending them to Sandy realy as I can't have them.* And to Sandy I wrote the same day, *I am sending you some marbles (75 of them)....* Evidently the marble trading pits were closed around the end of October, before half term, and the edict went out that boarders (or at least junior boarders?) should remove them from school to prevent theft by other boys, and all the complications that might well entail. I had forgotten that step in the process.

In Sandy's very first letter home on 24 September 1950 he too reported on the beautiful game, *we play a lots of marbles.* But it was four years before he offered one further comment (26 September 1954), *This term it is marbles. I have got 100 big ones and 169 Frenchies ~ 100 big ones means 100! not 99! or 101! but 100! -* and that was his last remark on the subject in his school career.

I on the other hand, made no further comment on marbles after my first term. Maybe I never understood the game?

*

There are only two reference in my (Alan) letters to conkers, both at the start of my third year. The first was on 5th October 1952, writing to my parents before my anticipated visit to India in December. *It will soon be guy falkes day and all the shops have fireworks. I have got thousands of conkers I will bring out a few big ones and I will bring out a catapult.* Two weeks later on the 20th I wrote *I have got hundreds of conkers this season and I have got up to a 86. Then it was smashed by a 4.* I know that playing conkers, or the more appropriately spelt 'conquers', was always a major occupation for a few weeks of each year.

The 'Term Notes' for each winter term mentioned conkers as one of the crazes,

though not in such detail as the marbles which accompanied it. While marbles were disapproved of, the school authorities seem to have approved of conkers and it is implied that even some of the masters played. The first reference in Christmas 1950 notes that 'any conkers present at the Hymn that morning must have blushed glossily at hearing themselves described as a game of skill in the finest amateur tradition, untainted by sordid financial transactions....' and the headmaster even offered to lend people skewers to make holes in them.

The following Christmas 1951 'Conkers still exercise some aesthetic attraction for the collector, but as a game they can not be described as moribund ...' It appears that a television company came to the school to film the sport the following year, so we hear 'The despised conker acquired some much-needed glamour from being televised.' The following year, 1953, it is just noted that 'Conkers had a short season', and in my final winter term that 'Conkers continue to appeal to the more discerning boys and the less hard-working masters.'

The nuts of the horse chestnut had to be ripe and falling, so conkers could only be played from October onwards. North Oxford and the area round the Dragon were, as I recall, well supplied with beautiful horse chestnuts (though walking down behind the classrooms, where I remember a number of such trees, only one remains now). I still remember the joy of the progression of their growth - now echoed in trees in my own garden. The sticky buds even before the winter ended, then the candled flowers, then the hedgehog balls on the trees. And when they fell and split or were opened like magic caskets, inside the magnificent chestnut colour - so brilliant and glossy and set like a jewel in its little nest of white softness. To watch the chestnut trees through the year and to gather the chestnuts and to begin to wonder about their future success was part of the pleasure.

Once gathered, the chestnuts were prepared for battle. It was no use putting an entirely fresh conker onto a string (through a hole bored with a meat skewer of which there seemed to be a large supply) for it would split on being hit. Minimally the conkers should be left for a week or two when they would lose their sheen but become harder. The process could be amplified by various techniques. One was to heat the conkers - leave them on a school radiator or even contrive to put them in an oven at the school or at home. Or they could be heated, as I dimly recall, by being held for long uncomfortable hours in one's armpit. Or, I seem to remember, they could be made rock hard by leaving in vinegar for a few months. Afterwards one took off the skin and left the wizened, miniature, brain-like conker kernel exposed.

When ready they were pierced and put on a string and we would challenge or be challenged. Here that was some option. One did not need to accept a challenge - if one were a venerable hundreder 'it was hardly worth while to accept the challenge of a oner or two-er - I obviously regretted as an 86-er being defeated by a humbler 4-er as in my letter. The numbers were reckoned by adding the total of the two conkers in combat, plus one for the victory. Thus a fiftier beating a thirtier would become an eighty-oner. I don't remember myself ever getting more than over one hundred, but I think that there were several conkers with several hundred wins attributed to them.

Yet the question of when a conker ceased to exist, which anticipates many adult debates about angels on the head of needles was present. Jake Mermagen wrote: 'I do recall disputes as to whether a conker was still a conker. Some were damaged to the point that there was only a fragment left - which became harder to hit because it was smaller. But so long as there was a visible fragment it did qualify. The disputes arose over whether a fragment was indeed still there! Bits became embedded in the string and were claimed to classify as a conker. I don't recall microscopes being used

in the analysis but it sometimes came close to the point where they were needed.’

Of course the game was based on trust. It would have been relatively easy to add a few victories and proclaim one had a much higher score. But such ‘cheating’ would have been pointless. As with all school games, there were rules and if one got the reputation for cheating that would have been disastrous as no-one would have played with you again. The kind of trust in the maintenance of internal rules – upon which civil society and a capitalist economy rests – was being taught to us in this, as well as other games.

This must have been one of the main lessons I learnt at school. My mother recounts how I wanted to win at anything I undertook so desperately that I would, before I went to the Dragon and in the family circle, cheat to do so. My wider family, especially my uncles, began to wean me of this a year or so before the Dragon. But when I found myself cheating in a game at the age of 67 the other day, I realized I had not been completely cured!

I do think that in marbles, conkers and other such games at school I found that honesty was the best, and indeed the only policy. A valuable lesson. One learnt to separate oneself – one’s reputation and honour and integrity were bound up with the small object on the end of the string, but they would survive its destruction. It is possible to hazard oneself in public contest and to win, or to lose, without one’s own inner *amour propre* being destroyed.

I also learnt a good deal about others by how they played – just as one can learn about people by how they drive a car. Normally mild people became almost vicious and highly competitive when a small nut was tied to the end of string – other large and threatening boys became courteous and almost timid.

Conkers, like marbles, was a game of skill as well as of chance – indeed it was the blend of these which anticipated much of future life. A good player knew exactly when and how hard to hit the opponents, often after a careful examination of the opponent’s conker for tiny cracks or weaknesses. I became reasonable at hitting, but not outstanding.

I went on playing conkers I think after the Dragon. But I don’t remember the same deep excitement. And again I learnt that the game itself and the competition was the important thing – the small, brown, hard object had no intrinsic value, but like many objects the history of the object being exchanged and potentially destroyed became a legend and the holder of the object accrued status. In the highly communal school world, a way of externalizing, negotiating, playing with status in games like conkers and marbles were invaluable. It would be interesting to know what its modern analogy is – and what games children play that fulfil a similar function nowadays. It may be that the iPod, virtual games on the web, may have more or less privatized play and destroyed such actual, real, communal activities.

Paul Watkins only mentions conkers once, but gives quite a full description. ‘In winter, you brought out your radiator-hardened, two-year-old Conkers. You drilled holes in horse chestnuts and hung them from pieces of string. You found yourself some Little Man with a big fat, new and shiny conker and challenged him. He’d hold up the string and let you take a swing. You watched his face as your shrivelled rock-hard Conker blew his prize into white chips across the playground. When he cried, you’d tell him – don’t Blub, Little Man.’ But then you’d meet a senior whose Conker looked strange and transparent. He had hollowed out the middle and filled it full of glue which hardened into something stronger than rock, but you didn’t know that yet. Your conker disintegrated when he swung at it. And he told you not to Blub even though you weren’t Blubbing – you were tougher than to Blub – at

least in the middle of the playground.¹

This account by Watkins shows the more aggressive side of the game (toughening up the character), which was part of it but certainly not all. I am pretty sure that the technique of putting hard glue into the centre was not done in my day – and would, by turning the conker from a natural to an artificial object, have been considered cheating. It takes away the element of sport. A game which we are told started in France using snail shells needs to be played with something which is not too strong.

*

Jamie writes that he enjoyed conkers, and has happy memories of the conker season. First came the business of supply. Conkers could usually be collected in the chestnut-tree-lined lane behind (to the West of) the school buildings which led to the Parks and North Parade area. But you had to be alert, because everyone went there. I can remember now the smell of the damp leaves underfoot and colours turning as we hunted around or threw sticks to bring down the new chestnuts; and can recall the excitement of finding a partly open prickled nut with a large and shiny chestnut showing. And in our wide-ranging hunt for supplies I think we identified other sources – for instance from the chestnut trees in other side roads off the Banbury Road around St Margaret's Road?

Then there was the care and preparation of the chestnut. Lucky was the boy who sat next to a radiator in class and could cook his conkers well; otherwise one kept them in the armpit for days! Some of us suspected day boys of cooking them in ovens at home, basted with vinegar to strengthen them. And when it came to threading them on to string, you needed a skewer. I expect Sandy and I begged one from our Hone grandparents or their housekeeper. The string had to be of the right strength and length for holding and swinging; and the strike was an art form itself, using both hands skilfully to get maximum force accurately placed on the target.

Conkers was quite a different sport from marbles. It was a freer and happier game without the pressures of unbridled competition and market forces. Some boys took it quite seriously and became specialists, using pickled wizened nuts which hardly looked like conkers at all (on short, grey, equally tough pieces of string, as I recall) but on the whole it was played for fun and a laugh. To see a shiny conker break into smithereens was more commonly an amusement than a cause of despair. You knew a conker would not last. There was no capitalist element because the stock was regularly destroyed; and there was little sense in collecting, hoarding, swapping when scoring was unreliable and the claims for a conker could so well be exaggerated, forgotten and fabricated. Perhaps a large part of the fun was in the ingenuity used in trying to create novel and reliable ways to age and strengthen the conker and make your winner. But this required patience of a kind which I generally lacked.

The only reference to conkers in Sandy's and my letters is to a school impromptu debate in December 1955 where the third motion was (as Sandy put it), *Marbels is a better game than conkers*. Interestingly, the motion was defeated.

SUMMER – BIKES AND RIVER

Summer time at the Dragons brought out the bicycles. I (Jamie) think of most of them being second hand, but am not sure; and as I recall, all were black or at least dark, no funny colours. Most had a little leather tool bag attached to the back of the

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 66

seat with the repair kit, spanners, glue and rubber patches to mend punctures and so on - which regularly got lost, borrowed or stolen. A rear lamp (by law on the streets?) was rather a nice thing, but mostly we had a reflector. And various front lamps were used. I remember a rectangular black tin or metal box, with battery and bulb. Did we get the bikes from home, or might there have been a school stock? There are certainly references to taking bikes home in the holidays (by train or passengers luggage in advance).

Once the fields were declared dry enough, boarders could bicycle all over on the playing fields, except protected cricket pitches of course. Various games were invented, mostly chasing games, but some team or group games were possible, such as experiments with primitive forms of polo using a football or something of its size. Hunting and scouting, cowboys and Indians pursuit games, especially round the edges of the playing fields (thorn trees and tall trees by Bardwell Road), and when permitted river banks, and dark bushes at school end, and preferably in the dusk and dark.

Much of the time, however, we just messed about developing our biking skills, and showing off to each other our skid stops and turns, especially satisfactory on wet grass. (I found it virtually impossible to do a skid to the right; it was always to the left.) Then as we became more expert we biked with no hands, or did wheelies (which were not quite so fashionable then as nowadays). Then there were variations for two riders, with the pinion riding on the handle bars (common) or at the back of the seat while the rider stood forward to bike. Many tricks were tried.

We also went (probably not permitted in our first two years) for longer bike rides away from school, round Summertown or Marston and the upper Cherwell or the Thames areas, In March 1952, for example, I recorded one longer trip, *Yesterday I went for a lovely bike, past Sheila's house to the Trout. I fished a bit there with J. Turner and then I went on up the thames to the Boathouse (north of the Town) on the tow path. We watched some coaching. I saw coot and some babys in the reeds. I looked but could not find their nest...*

Sandy's and my letters give a small picture of bicycle life at the Dragon. I reported on the second Sunday of my first Summer term, *We have started bikes now. It is so wet & nasty that we cannot ride them on the field which is a pity. We haven't started swimming yet.* A week later, the bicycle season was in full swing, *We play on the field nearly all the time and ride our bikes ~ there are some good cyclists here*

In 1951 the season started in mid-May, *Bikes are now allowed on the field. There is lovely sun and the Cherwell is warm. But swimming has not started. When are you going to bring Sandy's bike over? Yesterday I made a jump for bikes in the sand pit it was lovely fun*

[Sketch of bikes circling round and over...

Sand jump grass]

And the following week, sure enough, enthusiasm had led to trouble, *I had an accident 2 days ago with my bike. My bike wasn't hurt but I have my knee in plaster and my hand.* Knees can apparently be more easily repaired than bikes.

In 1952, bicycling had started before the end of April - *We have been doing a lot of biking on the field* - and a long season meant much wear and tear on the bikes. Repairs were often needed and overhauls before and after term, for instance at the very end of September 1952, *We took the bike up to Sumertown to be repaired, We went to school and played with the boys. End of holls;* and similarly on 2 May 1954, the bikes having arrived from Herons March two days earlier, I noted, *Bicycling has started already, terribly early. I have not had mine mended yet.*

In April 1952 Sandy was practising biking at Belbroughton Road before term

started, and then field bicycling started in mid May, in the heat, *Bicling has started on the field. I find it mutch nicer ridng a bicke in a sin [=sun] hat on the field than walking across half of them*

In 1954 Sandy's bike arrived from Surrey on 2nd May, *My bike arrived on Thursday Tartor-toon [= joke slang for afternoon] and so did J's*. But a week later repairs were needed, *Yesterday evening I played a wizard game on my bike and mended its back brackes*. The repairs did not work and the following week Sandy had to turn to an expert, *The[re] is a boy here who is in my dorm and is very nice. He knows more about a bike than a chap in a bike shop so he has mended my brackes which was very hard to mend*.

Sandy's 1955 season began on the first day of term, *I had a very good journey and no difficulty with the porter of bick [= bike]. Yesterday we played cricket from 2.15 to 5 o'clock, then tennis from six to 20 past 7. There is nothing else because we have only had two days to tell about. And we started bicking [= biking] on the field yesterday afternoon*.

One week later Sandy put a satisfactory birthday present into action, *I have fixed the cyclomiter on my bike*. I remember those attractive gadgets well - which had to be attached to the wheel somehow. Also attractive was the metal padlock with revolving numbers. It was normal practice to put padlocks on our bikes - rather basic, small, cheap ones with shiny chains - at least to start with; then they got lost, and we made do without.

Other summer games made an appearance on the playing fields. After our holiday visit to USA in the summer of 1952, for instance, Sandy and I brought to school a baseball bat and glove and a baseball - a children's soft version I think. We were soon teaching others, as I wrote in June 1953, *Yesterday I played baseball with 18 boys. They all thought it was a 'wizard' game. Joc thanked me later for bringing up the game so well*. Sandy was still playing variants in May 1955, *Yesterday after tea me and Hugo and some other guys played a mixture of baseball and softball and Rounders until the rain and hail stoped us*.

Rounders were quite common, but rather informal, as Sandy pointed out in his next letter, *I played rounders on Sunday last which is jolly good fun but nobody knows all the rules. So sometimes we all stop and have a conference on weather [sic] a chap has scored or has been run out*. They must have been using a tennis ball or similar, because at the end of the month Sandy had sent off for the real thing, *Thank you very much for sending the baseball. It was very cleaver of you to send it. I played a game of softball yesterday*.

*

Jamie writes that above all else summertime at the Dragons meant halcyon days on the Cherwell River. We were very lucky to have a river right beside the school and we spent a great deal of our spare time in it, on it or beside it. The river offered a number of wonderful leisure pursuits and interests alongside more formal school river activities and competitive swimming and diving. Once we had passed a Clothes Test, we could mess about down by the river as much as on any other part of the school grounds. It had a magic of its own.

There were strange incidents, such as in November 1953 when Sandy and Hugo Rowbotham encountered a tramp asleep in the Barge. *Last Tuesday Hugo Robotham and me went down to the bardge at a quarter to seven when in the tea at half past fo[u]r joc gav[e] out that after prep nobody should go out side. When we got to the bardge we found an old boy sleeping so we shined out torches and ran off[] ~ then we got some friends and we did the same ~ And we went and told joc*

about it ~ he only laughed so we laughed as well.

Or there might be intriguing activities, such as bank cutting and clearing operations to observe, as in May 1954 when Sandy was down by the Cherwell,

Yesterday an old crane [mechanical digger] came [= came] and dug a hole in the river bank (not touching the river) and it [the hole] was about 10x by 5x [yards] and Daddy's h[el]p[er]. It [the digger] had a great metal type of bucket on the end with teeth sticking out, and it crashed [=crashed] down into the ground and came up tearing away the ground and putting it in the pucket ~ it was super-sonic watching it ~ I think the bucket and teeth thing could go through a lorry's roof and what was inside and then out the under caridge.

He was clearly quite fascinated by unknown, modern mechanical apparatus.

And there were tragic accidents too, which were talked about by the whole school, as in June 1952,

Yesterday 2 boys 11 and 15 said to the boatman at Timms [boatyard next door Dragons on the River Cherwell] can they have a canoe ~ he asked whether they could swim ~ they said they could ~ They had just rounded the first bend when the canoe capsized ~ the younger boy really could just swim and got to the bank ~ the other was hit on the head by the canoe and drowned. 4 police men and an Ambulance came round ~ they are waiting for the body to rise. The boy who got to the shore ran away (I don't know why).

There were swimming expeditions upriver of all kinds, such as those I made with Nigel Williams and James Carslaw (see Chapter 13E), and simpler occupations such as playing Pooh Sticks on the bridge in the Parks, as Sandy and his friend Andrew Hunt did in February 1952, *Yesterday I went for a walk in the Parks with Andrew Hunt, he is the boy who I told you we call elephant. He is very nice. When we got to the big bridge we played Pooh sticks, Oxford against Cambridge, Cambrig one [=won] 8-7 On oure [sic] way back home we saw that the pond was frozen at lest [= at least] 2 inches. [I imagine the pond was the one in the north-eastern corner of the park where I fell in as a small child and had to be hauled out by a passer-by.]*

More serious than messing about by the river were the boating activities on offer at and through the Dragons. The Cherwell offered a wonderful introduction to a boating life which appealed to Sandy and me - and fitted with our holiday activities.

A boat club was initiated in May of my last year, *The Boat club now has started which I joined. That means you can use any of 2 punts, 2 double oared, canvas canoes, or two rowing boats for the whole term whenever you like. It is well worth the 2/- as it would cost you 2/6 an hour at Tim's Boathouse!!* In June I made further use of it the day after return from scholarship exams at Sedbergh, *On Friday we got the whole morning off so we went on the river (that is J.A.C. and I) and we went up to marston Ferry and then to the By Pass bridge. We had jolly good fun...And then I went on the river in a Rob Roy * and I was caught in a thunderstorm. I got drenched right through.*

** so far this week had I not been in the boat club I would paid 6/9!*

I can imagine it was popular with many, and certainly Sandy was a keen member in June 1955, *We went on the river on Tuesday evening for 2 hours. It was in a Joc punt. We had a wizard time and made a sonic crew.* And the following week he took out a kind of simple kayak paddle canoe, *Yesterday I went on a rob roy and*

had wonderful fun ~ Wizard [sketch of figure in kayak canoe on river, and title 'Rob Roy'].

It would be surprising if Oxford had not in some small way introduced us to rowing, and indeed a handful of opportunities arose. Rowing on the summer picnics on the Thames was one. The expedition at half term of June 1952 offered a chance to pull an oar,

On monday was the half term holiday. At 9.40 we started walking down to portmeadow and arrived at the boat house where the boats came. The boats were Derwen (4 oars) which I was in ~ Thames (4 oars) ~ Shannon(4 oars) and 1 other four oared boat ~ and the Spray 6 oars and the Snipe 6 oars. We went through 2 locks on the way up ~ we rose in them and coming back we dropped in them... We then changed boats and I was put in the launch. But the launch did not start. So we took up all the cases, now empty but used to be filled with food[,] in a boat 6 oars. I helped put in the food cases in the Brake which one master drove down and then I was rowed back with another boy by 3 masters[,] 2 of whom rowed for their college at Cambridge and one who coached at Cambridge. We arrived back just in time for another bathe at School.

There was another river expedition in mid-July of my last term (described in Chapter 4), and there were of course also opportunities to watch university rowing, though the principle college boathouses were rather far from the school. As good Dragons we knew all about the Varsity Boat Race from an early age, as did Sandy in his second term, *The boat races was on Saturday, Oxford sank. But the warter was to [sic] rought too go on ~ we are having them again on Monday. Yesterday I went down to the Parks but they were flooded.* Note the use of the Oxford 'we'.

And the next spring term I reported being taken to watch rowing training by Grandfather Hone, *We saw some college men rowing with grandfather ~ also the Leviathan acting not like this* [Sketch of ordinary rowing eight from above with oars on alternate sides]: *it was like this* [sketch of large boat from above with 8 oars on both sides positioned opposite each other]. And at the end of May that year, activity options on a free half included watching first class cricket or high class rowing, *On Thursday we had a half holiday (free) ~ some boys went to watch the Indians or eights on the Thames ~ or they could play cricket like I did.*

In July 1955 Sandy had that day at the Henley Regatta with the Rowbothams, described in detail in Chapter 6 - a day which finished back in Oxford, *We left at 4.15. Then we went and had tea at Linters and watched wimbledon on the TV at Linters (we have not had TV here at school).* Once again, Dragon life had moved seamlessly from one sport to the next, whether playing or watching.

In October 1954 Sandy joined a group of boys who were taken rowing by staff on the Thames, *Today we went on the river with Mr Parnell who is a very nice man about 25. We had wizard fun It was simply spiffing. And a jolly good crew. We went on to row and had smashing fun rowing. We won the [word illeg.] 4 boats. We have just come back 5 minutes ago. Me and a few pals beat the car back from Port medow on a race (we were rowing on the Thames).*

Then, at the end of his final term, Sandy joined a river expedition of a different in small party taken by Gerd Sommerhoff on a 22 ft launch from Oxford to Henley and back. A postcard home reports, *I am having wonderful fun. The boat has 2 aft bunks[,] a Gally, a dinning room + 2 bunks and 2 stern bunks. It is simply smashing. We are taking watches at the helm each and it is mine next. We are going very gently and stopping very often. The boat is about 22' long and 9' broad.... PS It has*

a big deck top.

And in July of my last term I nearly got as far as having a go at sailing. While there might seem to be little space on the Thames, dinghies were often sailed there - but unfortunately the plan was cancelled by bad weather, *Yesterday afternoon I did nothing because it poured with rain. I was going to go sailing on the Thames with a master* and my housemate Waddilove.*

**Sandy's form master [= 'Putty' Barraclough]*

It was a pity because I was terribly keen and already armed with a great deal of technical knowledge by Arthur Ransome.

OTHER PLAYGROUND GAMES

There is practically nothing in my (Alan's) letters about other playground games, but I know there were many other crazes and games. I imagine we must have played skipping and jumping games. I don't remember 'elastic', which may have been more popular with girls than boys at this time, and I don't remember skipping ropes, which may also have been thought 'sissy', the sort of thing our sisters played with. But I think I remember a craze for yo-yos, and perhaps for spinning tops.

A game that took up a lot of time was 'bad eggs'. This was played with a tennis ball or a softish ball against a wall of the old school building - the one facing towards the games pitches. I seem to remember it had no windows, but certain pieces (a chimney?) stuck out so that a good thrower could get the ball to bounce in odd directions. Assembling several boys, you would throw the ball and either shout the name of a boy, or a pre-assigned number and that person had to catch the ball, either with both hands before it bounced, or with one hand after it had bounced once. If he failed he lost a point. After a certain number of points he became a 'bad egg' or rather the target for bad eggs. This meant that he would have to go the wall and bend over so that his backside would become a target. From about twenty yards each of the play were would throw the ball at him. Obviously the trade off was whether to throw very hard to sting the target, and risk retribution later or be moderate ('Do as you would be done by') and expect leniency.

I seem to remember we played this for hours, but I note that that wall has now been covered over by a new extension so don't know if the game is still played. It also appears that the school authorities were ambivalent about this and other such games, for in the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1952 it is noted that there was a 'gradual whittling down of those areas of the School buildings against which tennis balls could legally be thrown.'

Another game which we played incessantly was 'Tig' or catching another boy, exclaiming 'Tig' as one touched them. Someone was 'he' and the boys scuttled off. One could play it with one other player, and one of the moments of lightning memory at the Dragon was when I was playing with another boy and he started to run round a clump of bushes and fence near the entrance of the school. He was a faster runner than I and I chased him for what seemed hours, never able to catch up. It was like a terrible nightmare that would never stop and I still remember the panting exhaustion and the sweat trickling down my legs and the dust. Finally I had the brilliant idea that I would run round the other way. So I suddenly met him head-on, looking as exhausted as I. Did I learn a lesson about counter-intuitive or lateral thinking to solve a problem from this?

One could opt out by saying 'pax' or peace - now my grandchildren call it 'squiggs' I think (check). A variant was 'off the ground' tig, where one could find

refuge on some branch or wall. I still remember playing 'Blind Man's Bluff' where one boy was blindfold and think I remember that part of our teasing of a wheel-bound boy occurred when he was 'Blind Man'. There must have been 'sardines' where one person hides, to be joined, like sardines, in his hiding place by others as they find him.

Finally, there was a popular game called 'Lurky', which I had forgotten until I was reminded of by Jake Mermagen. He wrote on 14 November to me that Lurky was a variety of hide and seek. A piece of wood, usually gleaned from the Barsonry, [woodworking room] was placed inside a circle. Someone was chosen to be the "guard" of the block and everyone else went and hid. The game was for someone to kick the lurky block out of the circle before the guard got to them - or something like that.'

Another description by an old boy, Andrew Hunt, describes it thus. 'Of course I must not forget Lurky, that matchless game which depends for its success on a yard containing dustbins, piles of planks and other builders' debris. As these are cleared, the game becomes duller... The idea is to lurk unseen by the He, then to rush out with a cry of joy and kick a tin out of the ring before He can spot you and get back to the centre to call out your name. If you do this, all the previous prisoners are released and rush away before He can "lurky" them back again.' This clearly put a large strain on shoes, for a 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1953 mentions that 'the steady popularity of Lurky can be gauged from the entry under the heading "shoe repairs" in any Boarder's House account'.

Three other crazes not mentioned by me are noted in the 'Term Notes'. In Christmas term 1952 "Handkerchief parachutes" occupied one of the wet weekends, but by bed-time on the Sunday matrons were in full cry, and the kill followed at 9 o'clock next morning.' In Christmas Term 1954 it notes "I spy" - fairly solid through the year'. And finally, in my last term, Summer 1954, the 'Term Notes' mention that 'the one noticeable 'craze' of the term was stilts.

Andrew Hunt mentions two other crazes which occurred after my time. One was 'bombs. These were lead balls, cut in two, quite small, and you inserted a "cap", as used in toy pistols, between the two halves. The two sections had a groove in which string was fixed, so that you could hold the bomb and swing it. When you dropped it sharply on a hard floor, the cap exploded with a satisfying bang. This craze was ultimately outlawed as the staff got tired of the bangs. Another craze which was eventually put down was flying propellers. These were about the size of a saucer: they were pushed up a twisted rod and whizzed off into the air unpredictably, occasionally hitting someone rather hard.'

*

Jamie writes that yard games were a central part of Dragon life as he recalls it. They were mostly great fun, and were excellent forms of rest and relaxation from work and more serious games but some also entailed one or two challenges and were surreptitiously character forming too in a number of ways.

All year round we played Lurky, a great favourite - also known by some as 'kick the can' it was normally played at the Dragons with a block of wood in a circle. The usual pitch (the only pitch, as I remember it) was beside the dilapidated evergreen bushes between the rink and main school buildings. I generally enjoyed it. It required a certain length of time to play it meaningfully and a little bit of

¹ Andrew Hunt, *Oxford to Zimbabwe; A Life's Recall* (1994), 4-5

² Hunt, *Oxford to Zimbabwe*, 4

organisation. It was not just a simple time filler like some games. You needed to play with people you liked and trusted, because unnecessary and unfair advantage could be taken of slow hunters and runners. I remember the chant, 'Sitting on her eggs' for a keeper who insisted on staying on guard beside the circle, and never allowed the others a sporting chance to kick the block. In that sense Lurky was about choices of reliable and agreeable companions - a preparation for choosing say golf or sailing partners in later life?

Also enjoyable but containing some potential for mishap was a wall tennis ball game called Bad Eggs. A tennis ball was thrown against the wall of a building. In this case the pitch was also beside the rink and the shrubbery, but playing against the east wall of the Old Hall (or Old Hall lavatories). You stood in a group together, and when one boy threw the ball hard and high at the wall, you called out the name of another who was to run and catch it on the rebound, first bounce maximum, or lose a life. You had to be quick off the mark; the group jostled for position; the thrower by common practice rather than rules threw it back pretty quickly after catching it. The loss of three lives meant being put up against the wall and everyone else threw a ball at you from a fixed distance - hard. Some advocated lying flat on the ground, others reckoned it safer to roll up into a ball to present a smaller target. Either way you wrapped your arms round your head. A well thrown ball could hurt.

Once more, this was a game where you had to know your partners, because the herd (or the best throwers) could pick on someone who was a weak catcher or slow off the mark. Thus the game required a certain degree of pre-arrangement, and selection of partners by invitation. You did not just turn up and join in with any old gang. It was a game of medium duration; one got bored if it went on too long.

Then of course there was Tig which could be played anywhere but usually around the same regular play areas (by the rink and shrubbery, or on the fields (and could be played on bicycles there too). You had to be able to run quite fast and be quick at turning and dodging; and there was a high chance of falling as you twisted to escape being touched, and with it grazing of knees and elbows. It was an amusing game for a laugh and exercise with companions, and could be played for short periods of free time in breaks and to make a break. Tig was another game where the person playing 'He' or 'It' could get tired and infuriated or depressed when he could catch nobody! But the risks of things going wrong on account of poorly chosen partners were not as high or serious with Tig as with some other games.

Perhaps my general comments above reflect some bad experiences, e.g. from playing too early on with boys larger and faster than I was. Further, I was not shy but I did not like noisy, beefy crowds. The playground was crowded, the playing fields were not. I therefore preferred some activities which took place on the playing fields - hunting, scouting, bicycle chases, skidding turns on wet grass.

At Dragon stage we no longer played children's games such as 'What's The time, Mr Wolf' (where the wolf turns and chases the crowd to find a victim), or Grandmother's Footsteps (where you must be quite immobile when the grandmother turns round to look at the players creeping up on her) but some other games mentioned in letters I had forgotten.

In October 1950, for instance, at the start of my second year, I refer to Rescue, but give no description, *On Tuesday there was no games but I played a game of rescue*. And one month into his Dragons career, Sandy was getting involved, *I nou [= know] hou [= how] to play lots at new games ~ they are lurky Bad eggs air try tatiks and Reskyou ~ they are all good fun to play but the air try tatiks is not so sporting ~ sily rouls [= silly rules]*, but he offered our parents no description of the games. [Tri-Tactics was of course a board game, a modern adaptation of L'Attaque,

but not nearly as good as Dover Patrol.]

Fortunately Sandy made up for our omissions with an excellent account of Rescue in February 1955,

There has just started a craze of Rescue, which is a game. You have 3,4,5 chaps on a side and two sides. One side runs away any where ~ then the other side goes after them, and only get one chap probably. You get a chap by touching him and sometimes it means a jolly long chase. When he is caught he goes back to the place which has been decided, then the other blocks try and free him by touching him. when they are all caught the other chaps go away. It is sonic fun and you get jolly hot. You use all the school grounds and about 100 yards outside them

There are several points to note here; first the 'team' element is stronger in Rescue than in Lurky - which is one against a crowd; second, (possibly a result of the team element) is the use of a much wider territory than Lurky or Tig; third is Sandy's reference to a craze. In the spring of 1956, his last term, Sandy is playing again, *We have started playing Rescue again which is corking fun*. I imagine that running, hunting and chasing games (whether using a ball or not), went in crazes as much as other games and leisure pursuits- and might even have been left aside for a year or three until someone reintroduced them.

*

A wide variety of other games were played, some invented. A regular craze and absorbing pastime was hopscotch, played on pitches marked out on dusty areas of the yards. There was a standard seven steps (two of them double) pitch, but I think it could be extended too, and you had to throw a stone in to the correct box to start each set of hops.

In February 1952 I had enjoyed playing in the main playground (as I understand the letter) what was presumably a made-up game, with notional goal posts, *I played playground Hockey (ordinary Hockey with a tennis ball instead of hard ones) ~ I played (by myself) [v.] Sandy and another boy ~ I won 10-3*

Allied to yard games were the rink games. The covered rink was an enjoyable place to play sheltered from the wind, rain and cold. Some games are mentioned elsewhere, such as in connection with soccer or hockey; but there was also roller skating. The skates were rather heavy clunky things, with four wheels on ball bearings on a metal frame. The skates were screwed on to your shoes, with some supporting leather straps buckled over the forefoot and round the heel. Some considerable practice was needed to make them fit on well, and quite some skill involved in keeping keep them on while dashing around the rink and turning at speed. Once mobile, several games could in theory be played - such as in January 1954 when, *I spent yesterday evening playing roller skate hockey. It is a smashing game but very tiring* - but mostly, as I remember, it was chasing games and messing around.

I rather think that more junior boys also played forms of 'French cricket' using a racquet or bat and tennis ball (and with the lower legs forming the wicket) as well as rink cricket.

Sandy was a great one for creating new forms of play; I think I stuck to more traditional ones. Sandy's games were essentially a kind of ragging with a theme plus a lot of exercise. In February 1952, in the middle of his second year, now at Jacko's House and nominally part of School House, he was in the thick of it, *Now the[ere]*

is a game called *King of the Table* ~ one chap goes on the table and is king and the others go on a side board and then jump on the table and try to throw him off[] ~ if he dose he is king and if he dose not and the king throes him off[] the king is still king and so on ~ it is a very good game

A fortnight later there was another variant, *We have a game when we are on the field* ~ *One of us holds the fortress while the other is the challenger. The challenger has to get the holder down off the fortress and get up himself (the fortress is the shelter). It is great fun to play. The weather here is steaming hot. Another game we play is bicycle chase where we chase one all over the field.*

And the following week a change of venue was introduced, *[When] we play a game one of us gose on the shelter and one on the ground ~ the one on the ground climbs up while the other chap trys to push him off[] and if he is not push[ed] off[] they have a fight at the top and push the other off[].*

The same letter Sandy introduces us to another good yard game, ... *Yesterday we flew parachots they went very well.* As I recall it you made a parachute out of a handkerchief, without which we never were in those days before paper tissues. You tied a piece of string to each of the four corners, and knotted the loose ends together some eight to twelve inches away from the handkerchief; then you tied a weight, say, a stone of the right size to that knot; You folded and rolled the lot carefully into a ball and hurled it skywards; and if well constructed it floated gently down like a parachute.

There were also various shooting games to be played on the fields or in (or near) the yard. This was where the famous hawthorn berries came into their own. In February 1953, *We had a battle against MIB1 our next door form, garters as catapults and Hawthorn berries for Ammo.*

And Sandy refers to catapults which we used a great deal - and which could lead to trouble In November 1953 he explains, *The Prefects have been on the job this week and about 20 real! catapults have been conveskated. The rubber of the catapults you get down N. Parade. I was just starting to make mine when I got the news about them all bang convascated.*

Then we had peashooters. They might be home-made, from a particular shrub (was it elder?) with a hollow stem or cut from reed stems, but far more satisfactory was a tin one bought in North Parade or similar shopping spot. For ammunition we used hawthorn berries, and possibly some other materials?

Other activities which were played outside included hoola hoops, yoyos, and then one year stilts appeared. Sandy wrote in February 1950, *lots of people have stilts this term ~ there is a boy called Warre [sic] who is not in our house but in Plummer's [Plummer's] house ~ he is a very good stilt walker.* I can see this boy in my mind's eye still, very mobile, and capable of running and turning on his stilts like someone from a circus.

Most of these 'games' were, of course, essentially solo leisure activities. Obviously there could be elements of competition but for the most part the competition was against oneself, and a matter of mastering a skill or beating a previous personal best performance.

And for Sandy and me some of these yard and field games were carried over into the holidays, especially when there were plenty of young(er) cousins around who were keen to join in and who could accept instruction and usefully make up numbers, or other boys of our age nearby, as during our holidays at Sedbergh in the early 1950s (described in 'Different Days').

11. SERIOUS PLAY

The school playground with boys doing Physical Education. The building at the back was the old hall and the windows on far left an early classroom. The building with weather vane was the school lavatories and to its left the fence against which we played marbles. Much of our life happened here.



PLAYTIME

Alan's thoughts on this subject are essentially based on his home life and his remarks are accordingly to be found in *Dorset Days*.

Jamie on the other hand has one or two thoughts to offer in connection with how his and Sandy's interests in the equipment of play and in the business of collecting fared at the Dragon. He begins with some general considerations.

Play is indeed a serious business and covers a multitude of activities of quite different character. Some are solo pursuits (patience, solitaire) or pastimes which are hobbies rather than games; some are companionable leisure pursuits (such as playing with toys, train sets) or group activities with a low competition quotient (dressing up, murder in the dark) whereas yet others involve direct competition of varying degrees and type.

In terms of helping a boy grow up these different leisure activities fulfil different functions. It would serve no purpose to try to identify them precisely one against another, but of the pursuits described some developed mental agility (chess) or physical skills, (construction kits), encouraged decision taking (some board games) or forming of aesthetic preferences, (collecting crests and badges) and some taught us lessons about people and life while others were sheer fun or merely helpful in letting off steam. What is most striking of all, however, is the breathtaking diversity of the games which boys at the Dragon played on their own initiative or with encouragement - it does not matter which. This whole ethos, the enthusiasm with which we fell in with it, and its transferability to holidays and home life, was surely one of the School's greatest assets

Every child's experience of playtime at home must be different - which is why the right framework, opportunities and encouragement for play at school are a vital part of education and in the growing up process - especially in terms of learning to come to terms with one's own self and one's identity and learning to relate to other people. The environment for play is important and a variety of factors can influence each child's experience, such as:

- Company at home. I had a brother younger than me by one year and six weeks; we shared all interests and were so like minded as to be in some respects almost twins. This was rather a different situation from that of Alan who had a sister substantially younger. Sandy and I, in effect, grew up together and were pretty much self-sufficient (see *'Different Days'*). We did not play much with other children, especially if there was no pair to match us in ages, when a third child alone might have felt closed out.

- Position in the wider family. For example I was the oldest at home and the first grandchild on the Bruce Lockhart side of the family; also the first boy of my generation in the extended Hone family. I had to blaze the trail.

- The practicalities of play: space in which to play, lay out games or make a mess indoors. During Dragon days we benefited from a good deal of space at the home of our Bruce Lockhart grandparents, lots of space at my parents home in Germany (1948 to 1951) then in Surrey (1953 onwards), and some space, disciplined but not cramped, at Belbroughton Road. The detail is described in *'Different Days'*.

- Family environment: Home traditions in free time and games; competition from other pastimes, and other parental expectations of their children. My father

was a born school prefect, schoolmaster before the war from a family of schoolmasters. He believed in the tremendous importance of formal games, as did my Bruce Lockhart grandparents; my mother was more of a horse-riding, tree climbing, hill-walking sort of person ready to make free-wheeling use of her spare time, as were her parents. My Hone grandfather was aged 76 when I went to the Dragons and an element of peace and quiet was necessary in their home.

- Parental presence and time available to join in play and the practices of play. My life was quite organised by both sets of grandparents (each in their different way) and there was little pure 'messaging about' at home until our parents returned to England in 1953 and moved to Ockley in Surrey where we were surrounded by a large garden, woods and a lake. My father was very busy in London, evenings and weekends, and travelled a lot, and with our mother occupied with a daughter born in 1954, Sandy and I became pretty much self dependent.

- Other role models. In our case Sandy and I lacked an easily accessible leader to follow in or near the nuclear family, such as Alan's young uncle Robert; someone who could show us the way, and who might have been a valuable contributor in various aspects of prep-school age life, such as in constructive play. In the holidays, I had to blaze the trail myself; I was the eldest at home, the oldest of all my Bruce Lockhart cousins and of my Hone cousins too bar one girl one year older, who lived in Bournemouth and whom I saw rarely.

- Influences of the period. My box of toys and animals in a period of post-war frugality was a modest affair compared with the rooms full of the toys of my nieces, great nephews or nieces today. We made do with less, and might therefore (possibly) have been more inventive or imaginative (but I am not sure that is true?)

- Existing personal attitudes. There is the chicken and egg question here: did I have an existing preference for ideas and people over things, or did I acquire such a preference through school age - and found myself to be not much good at, for example, construction kits.

*

With toys, collections and equipment for making and building things there is the all important issue of acquisition. At Dragon age this meant presents, pocket money or swaps. I do not think I was greatly in to the swop culture, other than for the usual minor swaps or Quiz/Egos for sweets in the locker room. At home through Dragon age, Sandy and I had no close holiday friends - we were self-contained - but as the oldest cousin, I may have twisted younger arms into swapping this or that to my advantage. Anyone other than Sandy was pretty much fair game.

Nor do I recall much in the way of shopping for toys, but obviously that was what we used our pocket money for - until we progressed to gramophone records and books. Did Ellistons and Cavell down town have a toy department? I know from our letters that we on occasion visited Hamleys and bookshops on London visits, but my chief memories from Dragon days are of spending pocket money in little general stores and newspaper shops in North Parade and Summertown, where we got those necessities of life, sweets and comics.

But what would we have wanted to acquire? I have reviewed in 'Different Days' what in our family we called 'greedy lists' for birthdays and Christmas presents. These lists provide some hard evidence of what two particular Dragons, Sandy and I, were really interested in during our prep school years. Of course some limitations applied, such as parental approval and expense. In addition, it is worth noting that since both our birthdays fell in term time, birthday, as opposed to Christmas, presents requested were things we expected to receive and hold at the Dragon.

My early lists included such 'wants' as Wonder Books, a luminous watch, magnifying glass, photo album, wallet, padlock with numbers; and next year's Letts Schoolboy Diary was a perennial favourite. In our middle years at the Dragon, Sandy and I were both after such things as Dinky toys, a bird book, torches and comic annuals and, more ambitiously, a bow and arrows and signalling lamps. In our last years our wants became rather more sophisticated, tennis balls, golf balls, gramophone record tokens, a speedometer for a bicycle, the latest Burnham pen, or a camera and films for it. And in 1954 Sandy's interest in gym inspired him to ask for a climbing rope to have at home.

References to other presents received and other objects mailed to school pop up throughout our correspondence, such as tips in cash (5/- acceptable, 10/- generous and 15/- for birthdays) from aunts, other relatives or godparents, or the arrival of cakes and parcels of sweets. Presents received also led of course to follow-up information or requests, such as that *the torch bought in New York was very powerful*, or news that *the rigger ball needs repairing again*. In June 1952, *Out of my pocket money I got a book all about cricket ~ it shows all the counties and their averages and also lots of other facts about cricket. 4/6d? What club(s) did Daddy play cricket for?* I remember that small Annual well.

Not only birthday cakes, but other things had to be sent for from home – typically things we had forgotten and left behind by mistake at the beginning of term. And Sandy had one important request in his last term (perhaps with Common Entrance Exams in view), *Please will you send me in the next envelope you send my four leaf clover which is in page 500 of the Big red English to German Dictionary (it might be English French),] But I don't know which volume*. And finally, Sandy's first letter of the Spring term of 1953 acknowledges receipt of vital supplies, *Thank you too for the parcel of tuck*.

As the Dragon years go by, the presents requested are clearly more about games and activities than toys or possessions, reflecting both the direction of our actual interests at school and also, I would guess, an instinctive recognition that our parents would be interested in what we did rather than in what we owned.

*

We had a few soldiers, Sandy and I, but not whole cohorts. In the holidays a handful of old lead soldiers – with twisted heads and broken bayonets, last played with many years before – lay around the playroom at Sedbergh, and there was a token presence of soldiers, in rather better condition, and a fort in the toy box at Bellbroughton Road – presumably kept from earlier days and held ready for a rainy afternoon for visiting children. But toy soldiers were not really a Bruce Lockhart or Hone family thing. This might seem slightly odd given the quite numerous military and colonial-imperial connections in the wider family on both sides, but perhaps it is typical anyway of the late Victorian-Edwardian view of the world not to make a fuss about a profession of arms. It is just something chaps do.

As to 'war' at the Dragon, I don't recall conversations with masters in our early years on lines of 'what did you do in the war, Sir'. No doubt as juniors we played at planes outside – buzzing around like Molesworth – but in a way innocent of war culture. But after a year or two we started to become more involved in war through reading and films such as 'Colditz Story', 'The Wooden Horse', 'The Cruel Sea' – but not I think through lectures. In the early 1950s, memories of World War II were still too close, and Remembrance Day services were the school's sufficient memorial.

*

There was a small selection of toy farm animals at Belbroughton Road together with a few farm buildings. We quite liked putting them out on weekend visits there, but it was not a favourite game; and they did not come to school with us. Toy animals of all shapes and sizes, however, and enough to make up two cricket teams, were very much present in my and Sandy's lives right through Dragon years.

In a world of imaginative play the animals had a role in all sorts of games. I wonder if these games took the place for us of knights in armour games. If so, it is interesting that we preferred the once-removed element of using animals, rather than being ourselves the protagonists. These games are described elsewhere, and some were rather inventive. For example, when I was sick in the Christmas holiday in January 1952, no problem for Sandy, he had company and was *playing monopoly against Fuzzypeg my new monkey. I am playing because Jamie is in bed. It is great fun,* and in March, *James and I have been macking a play and a opera for our animals.* And one or two came to school with us in the junior houses - a favourite battered old dog, Towser, certainly came with me to the dorms in Stradlings in my first year.

Other Dragons could join in too. James Carshaw, for example, had a large collection of toy animals at his home, and was as keen as we were. In May 1952, *I am taking out a great friend who has animals like us (64) ~ he makes rugger, cricket and all sorts of teams out of them. He likes animals very much. We played cricket with ours on a Sunday's ~ Barker's side made 195 all out and Keith's made 184 all out ~ We used a squash ball, sticks and a hairbrush.* Sandy noted the occasion too, *Last Sunday when we took a boy out he played a lot with our animals and we had a cricet mach with them on the lawn at Granny's house.*

And in July we were in action again, *I have been playing code cricket a lot ~ our animals are [= versus] James Carshaw's animals. We've just picked the idea.* We may have picked the variation on the theme out of the blue, but these games with toy animals formed a small but rather important part of the bridge between home and school.

*

Sandy and I had a small collection of dinky toys which grew spasmodically through the odd purchase or present. Such little toys were rather convenient presents for relatives, as for our Bruce Lockhart grandmother at Easter 1952, for example, *Dear got us a car each ~ I had a land rover so did James.* I can remember a few and some were favourites by their colour, solid feel or ease of movement of the wheels. I do not remember proper garage(s) used but we played with them occasionally at weekends in Belbroughton Road and one or two I think came to school.

We had no train set at home ourselves, but both grandparents had very basic, pre-war sets with clockwork engines to run on a small circle of old and twisted track. Nor did we ever graduate to electric trains at home - although we might occasionally have a chance to see one in action, as Sandy did in February 1955 at the house of a friend called Wigram *~ he is a very nice chap and he lives in Woodstock... He has an electric train set and he is a very keen fisherman and he makes his own flies.*

Trains obviously did not come to the Dragon - there was no space to lay them out. On the other hand a favourite model aeroplane, made of a hard material like Dinky toys and good to handle, might have been in a boy's locker. I do not remember owning one, but I have a vague memory of pre-built glider cut-out kits of balsa wood or similar light, perhaps plastic material, with rubber band powered propeller flight which you wound up; or some I think you just fired with strong

elastic like a catapult. Reasonable flights could be achieved on playing fields in the right wind (or was it no wind?). And I think we owned and played with these at school.

On the other hand I have no memory of model boats of any kind at the Dragon, although I wonder whether I tried my hand in term time as well as in the holidays at boat like objects of wood, hollowed and chiselled into shape with a penknife, a mast contraption and some cardboard for sails, or matchbox coracles and similar to float on the Cher. There was always hope that one day one might work.

*

I do not think we had kites at the Dragon, which is rather odd given the potential space to use them and our general interest in all sorts of other things that flew - parachutes, paper darts, small gliders or a kind of flying plastic wheel which could be accelerated into flight by pulling on a string with some kind of geared rack and pinion system. But perhaps kites were banned because of potential nuisance value. In any case Sandy and I never got very far with them at home either, regularly losing to breakages and tangled string.

We all made from time to time one or two very simple toys of our own, however, such as whittled sticks, helter-skelters of earth or sand down which to roll marbles or even dinkies; and I recall contraptions we made from stiff card which whistled and hummed when you wound them up and accelerated them by pulling on a pair of strings.

*

I tried Meccano at home but I was not terribly interested. My efforts to fasten pieces together with the fiddly bolts and nuts regularly failed - and I regrettably never reached a level of competence where I could see how to be inventive with Meccano. I think we had a pretty basic set, and recall that some kind of crane went with it - a pleasing winding apparatus with spindles and spreaders, wheels, string and hooks and things.

We did, however, attempt to build model aeroplanes both at home and at the Dragon - grey plastic affairs which certainly broke if you stepped on a part. But nice as the diagrams and pictures on the box looked, everything nearby was soon covered with glue, and the wrong bits got stuck together the wrong way. But I remember the smell! The same was true for me of balsa wood constructions but Sandy persevered longer, and was, or learnt to be, quite good with his hands. In November 1953, he wrote, *I have just taken up a new hobby of making things out of balsa wood ~ it is very very good fun.*

Sandy and I played with building bricks at home and weekends only at Belbroughton Road and I think we had some Leggo at home by our last year or so but I do not recall using any of these at the Dragon. Essentially I had little interest in putting things together and preferred my games pre-prepared, or was ready to make do with toys and games that were simpler.

*

Jamie was nearly a keen collector but not quite. I could not sustain the effort, and suspect that ultimately this lack of perseverance reflected a lack of interest. There were a number of false starts.

I remember being intrigued by little collections at the homes of relatives and family friends at home, butterflies, birds' eggs and wondering and occasionally helping to look for such things, but I never took up any collecting of objects of natural history, and certainly not at the Dragon.

I did, however, start out on stamps, encouraged in part by the Hone

grandparents, who had quite a number of friends and relations in the colonies (wonderful stamps from East Africa) and friends who toured Europe on holidays, sending back postcards and letters with rather boring Italian, Swiss and French stamps on them. In May 1950 in my first summer at the Dragons, I could write, *My stamp collection has grown enormously.* And in October 1952, my great aunt, sister of grandmother Hone, was helpful, *Aunt Mary sent us some very nice journey stamps and with them a 5/- Australian stamp witch is very rare to get.* Amazingly, I still have that collection from my Dragon days - it is very small and, I fear, quite worthless. But it brings back happy memories.

I had an occasional passing shot at collecting some other objects of aesthetic or other interest. I gathered in cigarette packets for a while. There were plenty of smokers in my near family and because in those days they used cigarette cases, and boxes on tables, the packets were thrown away clean and unspoiled. But with hindsight it is odd that the grandparents apparently did not mind children collecting cigarette packets.

What I liked about cigarette packets were the same things that appealed to me in heraldry and badges, a sense of symbolic statements, neatness, clear design and pleasing colours. I recall being intrigued by cigarette cards too, but do not think I ever took an active interest - perhaps there were not enough smokers of the right brands of cigarettes in the family to produce a supply. Were there were also white sucking, sugary sweets in cigarette form which had cards too?

And apparently I did at one point try to collect chocolate wrappers. It was in January 1951, *I am collecting choclate covers. If you have some will you send some to me.* It just rings a very faint bell and again it was maybe to do with the quality of paper and attractive designs - not to mention the thought of chocolate!

*

Heraldry was a great and continuing interest of mine in several forms for a number of years. I think I see my strong tribal instincts at work here! I liked all badges - including both the Dragon and Sedbergh ones themselves. I collected by pestering all relatives for Christmas cards. In the early 1950s institutions of all kinds boasted their crests, coats of arms or badges (often with a ribbon of appropriate colour) on their Christmas cards, be they regiments, military units, Oxbridge colleges, city institutions, naval ships and depots and so on. I made a considerable collection of the front covers, neatly cut off.

I took an interest in heraldry at the same age and still have a couple of books on the subject acquired at that time. This also led on to an interest in tartans and crests of Scottish clans; and finally to the heraldry of pub signs, the names of which I used to collect on long car journeys after my parents returned to UK in 1953.

I began collecting crests and badges in early 1952, and by April my interest was expanding into ancillary fields, *I have been copying badges ~ I have copied the Brougham and Sedbergh school and a make up of one by me.* At the Dragon in May,

I read ...a book called romance of Heraldry ~ It has got country badges and clans. The Macgregor's is this [sketch: At side: A silver shield green oak red crown and a sword

The motto : E'en do and spair nocht]

There's a story which the badge and motto come from. A Scottish King was in the highlands with his men when a wild boar charged him, A macgregor said to the king when he saw the boar shall I defend you. The King said ' E'en do &

spair nocht'. MacG climbed an oak and killed the boar when it passed under the tree. Hence the badge. The sword protecting the King from an oak ~ That book is very interesting indeed.

In October that year I was hard at work inventing a coat of arms,

I am trying to make a badge. In it comes a stags head because of Daddy being in the Seaforth but it facing sideways

[Sketch of badge

Top: Stag with stars in the background

Left: Union jack and crown in centre of it, and an eagle's head

Bottom right: Macgregor crest (sword crossed over oak tree)

Banner: Go hard now.]

Go hard now means don't say oh yes I'll play well work hard tomorrow. Rather Presbyterian, that motto.

Then in January 1953 another haul of Christmas cards had boosted my collection, *I am collecting badges. I have 49 off Dear's Xmas cards. Do you possibly think you could send me some?* The following week I could add that *My collection of crests amounts up to 70 something already. I have stuck 26 in my scrap book.* And at the end of the following November I remembered to ask my parents in advance to keep for me any Christmas messages received with crests on them, *PS. It will soon be the hols now and only 17 or 18 days more!!! If you get any crests on letters please could you keep them for me.*

My interest persisted, and in February 1954 I was still interested and still drawing crests and heraldic animals at school, *I have just started a craze for heraldry. I find it terribly interesting. I am spending quite a lot of time drawing heraldic lions, leopards etc etc. I have found out quite a lot from some books at school Do you know what the Bruce Lockhart one is?*

*

Collecting autographs was rather more traditional; and I like other boys, had a small book (with pages tinted in various pale hues) in which we tried to induce anybody of any importance to us to sign: relatives, friends of family, masters at school, visitors at home, sports players of renown if possible and so forth. Sandy was working away at it too in March 1952, *When the masters sing [= sign] their Autographs the[y] write the name in very posh writing in red or green or purpal or blew ink.* And at the end of that term I could boast, *I have got one of the master's autographs wich is very hard to get and only about 8 boys in the school have got it.* On the flight back from New York at the end of our summer holiday in 1952, *I gave my autograph book to the steward. She said she would get the crew's autograph[s].* I recall that I also got some autographs of cricketers, including Australian star performers visiting Oxford, when they were practising in the nets - but I cannot find a letter reference to it.

A rather different collection I made was of dates of birthdays of friends, relatives and acquaintances and well known persons, living or historical. I entered them in a pocket diary (probably a spare, unused one received as a Christmas gift) and as, Sandy writes in April 1952, *James is trying to find sombody's birthday on every day of the year.* I remember compiling this, and asking everyone I could find (when I remembered) to give me their own birth dates and the dates of others they knew. I got quite a long way (maybe a hundred or more entries) before giving up the game.

And today of course it would be no fun, being already available on the world wide web through search engines.

*

Jamie thinks of dressing up and acting games as essentially a home and holiday activity, along with other enjoyable group activities such as charades, murder in the dark and the pleasures of old nursery equipment such as rocking horses. They are discussed elsewhere – as is the case with Alan's experiences and views of the same – although one point interesting point here crosses over to school life. It strikes me with hindsight that these 'group' games function rather differently if played with older or younger children. In our Sedbergh school holidays Sandy and I, for instance, benefited from being surrounded by a pack of cousins of similar age, and a handful of boys who were sons of masters at the school and were our exact peers. In a curious sense therefore it was a kind of extensions of school and we were creating at home an atmosphere of life in school free time.

*

My (Alan) enthusiasm for Chess and similar types of games must be set within the context of the time. They were used to fill up many boring hours. It was something which my grandparents and parents had learnt in the long hot days in the Tropics with not much to do and long sections of their diaries note nothing but 'played whist' or some such. So cards were very central to the gaming of the Raj.

Similarly at the Dragon and on wet days at home time had to be filled. There was no television in our home and only in a very limited way at the Dragon towards the end of my time, and few gadgets (mobile phones, iPods, computers etc.) which fill the lives of my grandchildren. So the problem was how to fill the hours. I remember now that one of my most annoying habits was to trail about the house after my parents or grandparents plaintively asking 'what shall I do now?', my mind a blank. My mother notes on several occasions my inability to concentrate for long on anything, so this may all be part of it.

Chess was considered very important at the Dragon from the start of the School. Both the Skipper and his brother Hum had played Chess for the county and it was widely recognized that it was extremely good for the brain. I was never much good at chess, but in my letters I refer to it once or twice. On 7th April 1952 my grandmother noted *He reads quite a lot to himself and has been playing chess with me.*

In the 'Term Notes' for Christmas 1952 it is mentioned that the first ever award of ties for chess was made, putting it on a level with other serious sports and games. The chess team regularly appeared in a photograph in the 'Draconian', alongside other major games.

A useful overview of the game at the school is provided in the report on the Chess Club in Easter 1952.

'The headquarters of Dragon School Chess is the Silence Room, around the walls of which are the results of competitions. Here, due to instruction from members of the Staff and to much competitive play among themselves, the Dragons have now reached a standard of play comparable with the great days of Swinerton-Dyer and Galbraith. As proof of this the Oxford City team stated that on all boards the School team put up a very good performance against them.

Perhaps the most encouraging factor in Dragon Chess is that the enthusiasm and initiative for the game, to a great extent, come from the Dragons themselves. In some continental schools to-day chess is directed by the State and has become part of the school curriculum.... Here we stoutly defend the amateur and voluntary status

of the game, but perhaps one day a sound knowledge of chess will be an essential qualification for a scholarship, and our headquarters will become the classroom of some Russian or Yugo-Slav chess master. Incidentally chess 'prep' might give rise to some interesting diversions.

Two books well worth reading are: *British Chess* by Kenneth Matthews and *How to Play the Chess Openings* by Znosko-Borovsky.

The School team was: W. Johnson, P. Palme, R. Hoare, M. Elvin, W. Turney, D. Wisset, N. Marston, A Montgomery-Smith.

Results:

v. St. Edward's School	-- Draw 3-3
v. Oxford City	-- Lost 0 - 6
v. Magdalen College School	-- Won 6- 0
v. Salesian College	-- Won 4 - 1
v. Staff	-- Draw

Senior Tournament: 1, P. Balme; 2. W. Johnston; 3. R. Hoare.

Junior Tournament: 1. A Montgomery-Smith; 2, D. Morgan

Draughts: 1. E. Auckland; 2, D. Balme.'

A special event, which was repeated on a return visit, is mentioned in one of my letters home. On 8th March 1953 I wrote *There is a chess match this after noon against the champion of Isreal*. This is described in the Chess Club notes.

'The highlight of the term was the visit of Mr. Persitz the Israeli champion, on Sunday March 8th. Mr. Persitz played a simultaneous match in the New Hall against fifteen Dragons, and, without any delay whatsoever, won all matches in an hour and a half. He then astonished us by playing Paul Balme, without looking at the board, and beat him without any difficulty. It was a new experience for all of us who watched Mr. Persitz playing blindfold chess...'¹ Despite these defeats, the school was excellent at the game. Thus the Christmas 1954 'Draconian' noted that 'Since March 1951, the School has played 25 matches, of which 21 have been won, 2 have been drawn, and 2 lost, in each case to Teddy's.'

The only other board game I mention at school was one called 'Dover Patrol', writing on 15th February 1953. *I plaid dover Patrol yesterday wich is a game wich you have two navies and you do not know what the other persons piece is and the higher one wins*. A simpler version of this played on paper, 'Battleships', is a game I have played until recently with my grandchildren.

*

Jamie and Sandy, however, played board and card games avidly both at home and at the Dragon. As to chess, Jamie writes, I quite enjoyed it but was not particularly good at it. I enjoyed draughts more - which seemed to suit my temperament and mental ability better - and of course played Fox and Geese endlessly, a nice gentle pastime for a few minutes rather than hours. I have never much enjoyed playing games where the outcome was certain (either way). I prefer equal chances (in most games, tennis, squash or whatever) bored or embarrassed if I cannot help winning or frustrated if I can never win however hard I try. This may also be why I enjoy games of pure chance. But fortunately, as in most things, Sandy and I were well matched and fiercely competitive in our own games of chess and draughts, and had

¹ There is a photo of Persitz at play in Christmas 1954 *Draconian*

a lot of fun with both.

I enjoyed the paraphernalia of chess too, the chess men and boards of all sizes and kinds. (Never got as far as a clock!) In School House we used the classic wooden set of chessmen (kept in a wooden box with a drawer-lid, like a pencil case) and board of a decent size. The men had a good feel and pleasing simple design, which helped the game. I also had a miniature portable chess set, which I remember using on a train sometimes. It was rather fiddly, the pieces were white and red plastic and it was not nearly as satisfactory to use. I also admired other large, ivory or ornate chessmen in homes of friends.

There was a set and we occasionally played with visitors (not our grandparents) at Belbroughton Road, according to my letter of February 1952, *Last Sunday a boy, man? aged 20 came to Tea ~ I played chess with him and won.* But I remember better playing draughts with the Hones. I don't think there was time for chess in our holidays at Sedbergh where the focus was on outdoor activities and team games.

I seem to have started more consistent efforts at chess and draughts in my third year at the Dragon, writing in February 1952, *I played chess with Michael Evers ~ I won the first and last game ~ he won the middle one.* Apparently I joined in a draughts competition that March, *I also played my first match in the draughts comp this afternoon.* At that time I also took enough interest to report on school chess results; chess was very much a Dragon thing, and like others I was proud of our achievements, *Yesterday our chess 6 played St Edwards ~ One of my friends who is in the team beat his opponent ~ we won altogether 4 matches [word illeg] 2 matches!*

In School House was a Quiet Room or Library where chess, draughts, fox and geese, battleships and other games on board and paper could be played; some other boys had travelling chess sets, rather admired. It was necessary to find boys of the same level, because some were very good indeed. School chess matches were held, I remember some champion coming to take on the leading two dozen boys progressing round a series of tables in the new hall. I would guess the Dragon had some first class junior players. At the back of my mind I can see one boy getting into the national (or maybe Oxford) press?

* Card games were more my natural habitat - perhaps the element of luck as well as skill counted for something with me (once I had overcome the miseries of bad luck in dice games like Snakes and Ladders or Ludo). In any case Sandy and I played a huge variety of card and board games with great keenness mostly at home but also at the Dragon. Both Hone and Bruce Lockharts played card games of different types and we soon learnt them all.

At Belbroughton Road Sandy and I played Whist, Hearts, Bezique, Piquette and Pinnacle, and at Sedbergh we were taught several games of Patience (such as Clock Patience) and introduced to Nap and then to the great Bruce Lockhart game of Racing Demon, usually played on the floor rather than on a table and with a great deal of panache and noise - a game of psychological warfare. I have no clear memories, however, of games of cards at the Dragon, but we evidently took packs of cards there, and it seems there were crazes for cards, at least right at the end of my Dragon days. I am surprised in fact that it was not sooner, because the war generation were great card players, as a way to pass time when waiting in difficult times.

No doubt we played patience from time to time, for instance in sick room, and another and rather exotic, card game which we played at home - and may have played at the Dragon - was Rummoli. It was played on a small board of hexagonal

or similar shape, using cards and lovely, feely plastic 'chips' (red and white I think), and was potentially a gambling game. And there were card tricks. These were fun to play on your friends, to exchange, to learn and to practice - and cross connected of course to a regular, if in my case, slight, interest in conjuring and slight of hand tricks.

Many of these things are reflected in our letters. In March 1952 Sandy wrote, *last night we played pinacall [= pinnacle] and it was great fun and grandfather won with an amazing hand. Your cards have come in use.* In October, it was hearts with Granny Hone. In March the following year I was passing on my knowledge to others, *I have learnt quite a few more tricks (with cards) - I am teaching Carslaw some games (Hearts, Piquette, Pinnacle);* and in December 1954 Sandy ended his letter home, *I can not think of anything to say except that the latest craze is cards.*

*

Table games such as backgammon (played a lot with the Hone grandparents) did not figure much if at all at the Dragon; they were rather pastimes for home and holidays. Mah Jong, however, which was a great favourite at home, was apparently played at school too - in May 1951, *Yesterday I played two games of Mah-Jong, with another boy. He won both by 1 turn, because what he through [= threw] would of [= have] made me mah jong.*

Bagatelle was an enjoyable and challenging game and pastime. I remember miniature bagatelle boards at school, although I preferred using the full-sized board at Belbroughton Road. It was an ideal occupation for a limited space, and we often played rainy afternoons when we took other Dragons out to lunch there. Furthermore, although it could be competitive if scored properly, it was mostly about skill (with an element of luck) and beating your own previous best performance.

I don't remember playing played Subbotoo or such miniature football games either at the Dragon or at home until Sedbergh age. But there were variants of blow-football. One was called Puff Ball, normally two played but you could probably field more boys per side. The pitch was a rectangular box with low side walls and goals cut out at each end. You leaned over this and huffed and puffed the ball to try to defend and score. Sandy played in November 1952 at Linton Lodge, *We stayed in the games room most of the time playing ping pong or darts or puff ball and backing [= baking] eating chestnuts.*

*

At home Sandy and I had started at a tender age on board games with dice - many of which were horrifyingly character forming, such as Ludo and Snakes and Ladders. We may have played some of these in early years at the Dragon, and I rather think we even played Tiddlywinks with a saucer as a goal.

Some board games brought into play skills of different kinds, awareness of space, forward thinking and so forth - on the lines of chess even if simpler. A great favourite at home was Halma, but we soon progressed at school to the L'Attaque family of strategy games. My favourite by a long way was Dover Patrol, known, according to fellow afficianado 'Plep' (Patrick Lepper), as 'Duv Pat'. I played a huge amount in the quiet room or Library at School House with various friends, and at home with Sandy. We were all soon familiar with many combinations of positioning of forces for good attack and defence; so the fun was being inventive and creating surprises. Tri Tactics I quite enjoyed too, but I do not remember an Air Force game if there was one. Sandy, writing in October 1950 in his first term, did not like Tri-Tactics apparently, *air try tatiks is not so sporting ~ sily rouls [= silly rules].* I think

we may have played L'Attaque too at the Dragon but do not remember.

I think of Monopoly chiefly being played at home (although not so much at Sedbergh where my grandmother disapproved and eventually confiscated the set.) I think we did play it at the Dragon, but I wonder where and when. A game lasted rather too long to fit into Dragon schedules? Maybe we played it in the sickroom, or on certain long rainy weekends? I quite enjoyed the game (and all the paraphernalia) but I was not fanatically keen. It was slow moving and I easily got bored with it. On the whole I did not like joining in a board game with many players, with the agony of having to wait even longer for your turn to come round, and opportunities seemed to slip out of your grasp. I do not like losing. I don't think I really understood sufficiently the principles of financial risk and accumulation that made it so fascinating to many – and of course Monopoly is another of those nasty life-teaching games where you learn to wrestle with misfortune

Totopoly I do not recall at all but evidently I knew the game and played it while convalescing at Belbroughton Road in January 1954, *I expect we'll do something other than stew inside playing totopoly, monopoly or such a game.* And Sandy was playing it at School House in March 1954, *Yesterday evening I played a game of Totopoly with some pals it was supper [sic] fun and we just finished before supper*

Cluedo on the other hand I remember well and played it both at home and at school. Sandy refers to it in a letter of October 1954, *In dorms we played Cluedo which is a murder game[,] very very good ~ the idea is to find out the murdee by lots of ways ~ it is made by the makers of monopoly and totopoly,* whereas I make no mention of the game in Dragon days. I guess I joined in sometimes, but I have a faint memory that it got boring after a while and I would have turned for preference to other games such as Dover Patrol.

Another board game at school and home was Battle Royal. I recall the name clearly and very faintly the game. Apparently it was played with some two dozen pawns each side which were moved onto and around a board (rather like Halma) by a series of 'movement cards' with instructions as to what kind of move could be made, or awarding a free move. The aim was to advance your men to capture the opponent's capital. As with the L'Attaque family of games there were strategic and tactical decisions to be made.

Which brings us to a great dice game, poker dice. Sandy and I played endlessly at home from late 1953 onwards (the time of return of our parents from USA) and we each had long had a set, nicely housed in a little brown leather cases with snap fasteners. There were three forms of play, poker dice proper for an outright win in three plays; or adding up points scored; and finally liar dice. I enjoyed them all, and we played with parents, relatives and any partners we could find – but chiefly together. I am not sure what age we started liar dice, maybe after the Dragon, and I do not remember playing it at school but it seems that Sandy was responsible for introducing it at School House after I had left..

In December 1955 a poker dice set was on his Greedy List, *By the way if anyone does not know what to give me for Christmas and [= I] would like some poker dice,* and in his last term, January 1956, he got authority to set up a table, *Joc allows pocker dice and I have taught other friends how to play and we play in dorms after we have bathed.* By the following month he had got a school going, *I have still got my poker dize ~ it is becoming a craze now and about 7 or 6 other blokes have got them now. We mainly play lier [= liar] dice which is much more fun.*

Can you picture the scene: rolled up sleeves, baize cloth table and green glass eye-shades?

CRAZES AND TOYS

Watkins writes that 'At the Dragon there seemed to be about one craze every week. Sometimes you would have to have a Rotring. They were drafting pens which used black ink that never washed out.... Then over the space of a few weeks, Rotrings went out of fashion... Instead all they heard about were Yo-Yos, especially the glow-in-the-dark kind, because it had become the latest craze. Stamp collecting took hold one spring... Skateboards gave us permanently bloody knees and elbows.... Then the interest had gone and we moved on to gliders.'¹

In my (Alan) letters I only mention one or two crazes which involved collecting and swapping things. One was the keeping of white mice. My mother wrote to me on 3rd March 1952 asking *Are you going to get your white mice next holidays?* I am not sure whether I took any action, but a year later I wrote from the Dragon on 22 March 1953 that *There is a craze of white mice in the school and I might buy one in the holls and I will call it Donald.* [Donald was my father's name] I remember the excitement of owning my own pet, the strange smell of mice in their nest, the delight of feeling their tickling exploration under one's clothes, and the amazement of seeing the tiny, blind, pink, slug-like new-born mice. They became part of the currency, like marbles and conkers. But one advantage (as my wife Sarah discovered in her first ventures into capitalism through the keeping, breeding and selling of guinea pigs) was that one could make profits by expanding the stock through breeding - something one cannot do with a conker or marble.

It appears that the teachers knew about the craze for the 'Term Notes' for Summer 1953 noted that 'Life in fact went on, and nowhere more noticeably than in 2B cricket pavilion, where it included mice, golden hamsters, and even a rumoured guinea-pig or two.' I was on the edge of this, for in a letter on 10th May 1953 I wrote home that *One of my friends bought Two mice and a hampster and I am having lovely fun with them...* The breeding of the mice seems to have been tolerated, for the Headmaster Joc even mentioned in his Prize Day speech in the Summer Term that while the staff were to be thanked for many things, they could not be held responsible for 'the multiplication of white mice'.

My enthusiasm for small rodents obviously lasted for a while, since just before starting my last year, on a holiday in Scotland, we went to stay with close friends who had mice. My mother wrote in September 1954 *Nicky and Fiona got on well too, so Alan was a bit left out, but amused himself with a couple of white mice which he was teaching circus tricks, the poor things were worn out by the time he left, he even took them to the Botanical Gardens in a chocolate box. We went to see "Chu Chin Chow" on ice on Friday and we were surprised he didn't try to fit skates to their poor little pink feet.* Later, aged 13, just after leaving the Dragon there is film of me playing with Hamsters - Bubble and Squeak - which my sister Fiona had received for her 11th birthday.

Another craze was for making little tank-like devices from cotton reels. The cotton reel had a rubber band threaded through it with a piece of candle and a small piece of stick at one end. One wound it up and then it trundled along. Some had the wooden edge cut into a zigzag pattern. Others had rubber bands or 'tyres'. They would climb steep slopes and could be made to fight.

The only other craze I remember was rather odd. There were obviously some

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 65-6

entrepreneurial boys at the school. One of them somehow got hold of what looked like small diamonds - little crystals. They were dazzling and we were convinced they were real. So we desperately tried to acquire some, but when we proudly showed our hoard to grown-ups at the end of term we were mortified to hear that they were fakes.

There is also description of a new craze which arrived in my third Christmas term. Now that I am reminded of it, I remember playing it a great deal with little wooden coloured squares and other objects. But before being reminded, I had completely forgotten it. It seems to a certain extent to have usurped marbles as the main craze of the winter term and the authorities seem to have seen it as amusing rather than, as with marbles, a threat.

In the 'Term Notes' for 1952 it is noted 'then came "Five Stones" one of the oldest games in the world but a new line in Dragon "crazes", which, despite the fact that it contained no suggestion of any threat to either morals or property, took such a grip that it saw the term out, by which time the real addict could clean his teeth with one hand while proceeding from one-sie to crinkle-sie and beyond with the other.' The following Christmas it was noted that 'the closing weeks saw another big run of Five-Stones'. Then, in my final winter term it noted 'And Five Stones, coming in about the middle of November, get such a grip that by the end of term quite a number of boys cannot be handed anything at all, from a face flannel to a second helping, without throwing it up and catching it on the back of the hand.'

*

Jamie recalls that most indoor games, entertainments and pastimes, like so much of school boarding life, took place in the Locker Room at School House, but crazes could be played anywhere (except the dining room); certainly in classrooms during breaks - a key location; then in the shelter club, the prefects' room, to a smaller extent in the dormitories, but very much in the Quiet Room and Library, when more peace and quiet was required (as for chess).

Five stones (not jacks, although we had some at home) was perhaps the number one indoor craze in my last years at the Dragons, although, oddly, there is not even passing mention of it, however, in my letters. The 'five stones' were five wooden blocks of different colours, about 1/2" cubes, with indented or wrinkled edges. I remember playing for ages. You took turns to attempt to go through a set of manoeuvres, each had a special name - made while throwing one of the five stones into the air and catching it safely again. It was the loose pieces which had to be manoeuvred, picked up in groups (twosies or threesies), thrown over a low wall (one hand) high wall, (two hands) passed through a garage (the open fingers of a hand). We became experts of course at the first throw - which determined how the next hand in the series would be played - by throwing up all five stones and catching them on the back of the hand - with fingers arched, and extending a little to form a good catching cradle. Any stones dropped then had to be played at the next step in the series, each step being carried out while you threw one stone up and caught it again.

Yoyos require a great deal of practice too and some boys became very skilled at it, but not I. The weight and balance of the Yoyo was all-important - heavy wood or metal edged wood were best. All kinds of tricks could be performed (each with a name), such as making the yoyo stop at the bottom of its movement and stay there spinning until flicked to move up again, or walked along the ground and back ('walking the dog')

Some crazes, however, could be more instructive. There was a time when

everyone went in for Italic investing in Osmiroid Italic nibbed pens. I have described this writing craze for several kinds of pens in the section in Creating Meaning on writing and calligraphy. They were nice to use and good for drawing doodles, fine writing and caricatures with a bit of flow and flair to the lines. But pens were very important in our lives generally; and happily we were allowed (and no doubt encouraged) to experiment and use different pens of our own choosing. This made writing more fun and more personal and encouraged pride in one's handwriting and written work, both.

I refer to receiving a Burnham pen as a present, and remember mottled Waterman's, silver Platinum (very modern and hi-tech looking). We had them engraved and inscribed with our names in gold lettering - which looked very smart on a pen of a dark colour. The only kleptomania to which I fell prey was purloining a beautiful pen which was left lying around, when I knew perfectly well to whom it belonged - no names, no pack drill please. The trouble was I then found myself in the position of a thief who cannot fence his goods, and I dared not use it in public. So I eventually disposed of it in a discreet corner to be 'found'.

One craze as harmless as it was usually ineffectual was making cheese from milk shaken for hours in ink bottles. This cropped up now and then, and must have irritated staff. The highest point I reached was I think a bad smelling slop. More refined was the growing of watercress on blotting paper in little boxes on the window ledge over the basins in the School House bootroom (where there were a couple of cracked white china mugs for drinking cold water)

Then there were the mainstream indoor games and leisure activities - interest in which rose and fell as with crazes. Some were games which could be played in the Shelter Club. I am not sure when this was formed (or built) or at what age a boy was allowed to join. I remember playing billiards in my last year or so. Sandy made more use of it apparently, joining in January 1954 to play *darts snooker ping pong when you have nothing else to do*.

I remember playing snooker, but preferred billiards which seemed to be a purer game. Perhaps I could not think far enough ahead to be good at snooker. I do not mention joining the Shelter Club as such, but was there in November 1953, *I played snooker in the Shelter twice and won both times ~ once I won 47-46 ~ the other I won 38-26 (against the same man) ~ I watched the school champ, at Billiards, play a member of staff*,

At billiards you could win lapel badges (from some billiard organisation) for verified breaks of 50 or something? That seemed to me to be rather smart - but I'm not sure if I ever won one, maybe for 30 or a small figure? And I had completely forgotten that we ever played darts at the Dragons - but maybe we did. The same goes for ping pong. I certainly recall playing at Sedbergh in the holidays, but do not connect it with the Dragon. Maybe it was introduced just at the end of my time there?

Some board games transferred from home to school. Scrabble was for holidays (and not a favourite of mine) but Solitaire I think was occasionally played at as a 'patience' game at school. Solitaire was another case of a game which appealed to me on account of the equipment used, for example at Sedbergh, a beautiful, large and solid wooden board with a set of matching spiral glass marbles.

Prefects had access to a wonderful board game also to be played solo. The important step of becoming a prefect for a boarder brought new quarters and new occupations in School House life. I was appointed in early February of my last year, *This term I have my locker in the 'Dark Room' ~ that is a small room which 8 boys share. It is the warmest room in the boys half of the house. It is a great advantage. In*

Sandy's time, Autumn term 1955, it seems to have been even more exclusive, *I am a Prefect and in the dark room which is a Private Room which has only 6 Prefects allowed in it.*

The game (name forgotten) we played in my time was a tilting maze game. By using wheels at the front and one side, an inner board could be carefully tilted in two dimensions to make a metal ball of some weight travel round a maze of stopping boards and holes in-between down which it could all too easily fall. It gave us endless fun. It required a steady hand and a challenging mixture of caution and confidence. What was fun was that by practice, failure and more practice you slowly learnt to go a little further each time round the board of 80 or so holes.

Other games were organised for us, such as the wonderful progressive games competitions for boarders, played as I remember it in the Old Hall. Sandy describes one session on 12 December 1954,

Yesterday we had smashing fun. We were split up into 10 Teams of 12 people each[,] Each Team having 2 team leaders ~ I was a Team leader of No 12. Each Team went from classroom to classroom. In the Classrooms were 1st darts, you had three darts and tried to score, I scored 85, then there was a drawing game, then a card game, then Gessing Advertisements [sic], then a game with a matchbox and bottle. Then gessing noises which were a stick breaking, a book closing, a letter being torn open and pulling your finger down a comb. Then there was Kim's game. Our Team came second.

And apparently some games were forced on us collectively. The idea may not have been such a good one, according to Sandy in March 1955 - but he was in a critical mood that day, *On Wednesday it was a lovely day but the fields were out of bounds, so we wasted the half holiday by doing prep in the afternoon which is a mad idea, and in the evening there was a housey housey, which is a silly game.*

On the other hand, some pursuits, which became mild crazes, were merely a natural part of the school year 's cycle. such as a 'gloat' (a calendar on which you could cross off every day the next in the number of days to go till release from prison). Sandy explained in mid-July 1952, *people are now macking things called cloats [= gloats] ~ they say how many more days till the end of term.* At the end of the winter term a gloat almost had elements of a schoolboy Advent calendar. On 30 November 1952 it was time to start one, *when we came out it [a film] was still snowing [at] 4.10 ~ then we had amusement ~ after tea I went and played in my form and made a gloat.*

*

There were quite a number of other patience games and puzzles of our own to play with at school. There was a lively craze at one time for little plastic boards or trays about 2" square (which you could purchase quite cheaply) with normally twenty four interlocking square pieces, say with numbers on, and one empty space. The game was to exploit the one empty space on the tray to shuffle the pieces around until you finished up with them (numbers or letters) in a chosen order.

In the Quiet room we also played with coloured wooden tops which you span competitively on a smooth table surface. They felt nice and were solid and beautifully balanced, and with a good finger spin you could make them run for a couple of minutes on one spot. I remember a mild craze in School House for them once. Similarly we competed to spin pennies with a flick of the finger.

Some of our entertainments from home we occasionally took to school too, and

they would create a little murmur of interest and a perhaps even a minor budding craze. Example of curious mobile toys were an articulated snake made of wood (I liked them), or a bird of roughly ostrich design (with a bulbous backside with feathers and a long neck to a porous beak) which nodded forward to a glass or tooth mug and drank water in perpetual motion until the water evaporated. There were also articulated animals (dogs and giraffes I remember) built on circular boards with a spring loaded base by means of which one could make them move their joints.

Other mobile toys included a wooden figure of a man (dressed as a pierrot) on a ladder which you could make climb and descend acrobatically head over heels; and there was a plastic man which moved, drawn by a weight, in clumsy steps across a table. Another game was to make a roll of tightly curled, rings of slim metal, a contraption with a name like Slinkies, climb down a flight of stairs (of the right fall and width). They made a rather satisfactory metallic buzz or ring as they stretched and unstretched on their journey. Then we had (received perhaps as birthday presents) and shared around puzzles constructed of wood or metal of interlocking shapes and rings which had to be taken apart or put together again.

Apparently we also had jigsaw puzzles, presumably in the quiet rooms, at school. I was doing one, for example, in January 1953, , *I did a puzzle last night of the U.S.A. it was cut up in the states but Ohio, Missouri and one other, I forget, was missing*; but I doubt there was space to leave out on a table the giant puzzles popular with the Bruce Lockhart family at home.

Then of course, there were all the paper and pencil games on offer, including our own inventions, which we played in quiet times. I enjoyed them all, and some went in crazes. Battleships, for instance, was endless fun; then there were games where you had to put letters, or numbers into small crossword type of squares so they made words, or added up correctly, in both directions; and an old favourite, dot cricket. Rules needed to be clear and were probably agreed by tradition. (There is a reference in a letter of April 1952 to playing 'Jutland' at Sedbergh. Was this Battleships under a different name?) Then, better still, came a cricket game using two brass six-sided dice, which you rolled along the table, one for bowling, one for scoring. This was a thoroughly absorbing game and great fun making up teams; and boys even had proper scoring books to go with it.

I think pick-a-sticks (contained in a nice cardboard tube) transferred to school , but carpet bowls did not. Nor do I remember at school the wooden block tower game, from which pieces had to be removed without causing the tower to collapse (re-marketed under a new name today). Then there were magic sets and conjuring sets; and glove puppets and other wooden puppets on strings for which a properly constructed cage was really needed. And I had a detective set, with magnifying glass, powder to show up finger prints and so forth - good for murder in the dark - which I know I had at school for a while since I was given it for a birthday present. The list of games for indoor fun was endless. I do not think we did much at the Dragon by way of pasting things into albums, cut our, say from magazines according to personal interests, but I did keep different diaries at different times, a food diary, or a sports diary. Likewise there were various forms of origami (described elsewhere) learnt from adults or peers, in classrooms during breaks, as I recall.

*

Finally there was one game with many variations and a wide range of potential equipment which could be played anywhere: ragging. It was a vital way for prep school boys to let off steam, and it was enjoyed as an activity as much as if not more than most games, formal and informal. Sandy was a dab hand, I was perhaps a bit

more cautious.

Ragging was great fun and offered lessons for life of all kinds as well. It could take the strangest of forms, such as accepting to act as someone's robot. In March 1952 I reported that, *I am Kelly Hislop's robot which is great fun* ; it was a kind of a 'dare' (in the dormitory for example) where you had to continue carrying out instructions regardless of the consequences.

One could rag on the river as in June 1952, when, according to Sandy, I was on an outing with the Burleighs, *James went out to Mr and Mrs Birlghy [= Burleigh] on the river and James and Robin (Mrs Birghley's son) splashed some high school girls on purpos by mistake*; or on a train. Returning from Sedbergh to school in January 1953, ragging received some unofficial official blessing, *At Carnforth we met Mr Yates and continued the journey with him. We ragged and had a fight under his eyes, then he joined in!* But back at school the following week, there was trouble in store, *We had a rag in dorms last night and in the morning . Hawley's torch was confiscated which he had been using to see to unwrap sweets. I hope he gets it back.*

Later that month, building material lying around was asking to be exploited, *The pipes in the huts bust so we had to have our lessons in Mr Yates house for 3 days. Now they have mended them and put in new ones. The glass fibre which is used to protect them had another job. Some of the boys jammed it down others' necks and very painful it is. I got mine out before it was rubbed in.*

And in early October 1953 Sandy reported proudly that he was

in a very nice dormortry ~ it is every term the most raggy dorm. It is divided into 2 different halfves ~ the first half witch I am in are the Redscins and the second half is the Palefaces. We have super prize fight[s] with pillows and war clubs made out of hanckeyes with a sock stuffed in the heal and towes [= toes] of your other sock and slippers and flannels and towels. On the first night after lights we were caught fighting and talking once in the evening by a master called Kit Kat and in the morning Miss kay then Joc.

I am so sorry that the post card that I write to you did not arrive telling you in witch form I am in and [illeg.] but I was in sutch a hurry to join in a fight on the Lawn that I forgot to address it and I just remembered after it had fallen in the Pillar Box

And then there was an autumn excursion, which Sandy knew might lead to trouble,

Yesterday me and some friends were bat[t]ing appeles [= apples] off[] the trees witch is forbidden when a prefect came and took our names down on a piece of paper, He went over to school house and we tracked him all over the place to see if he told.Joc ~ then we did not think he would but now I am not to[so] shore about it.

The same month, fate caught up with him, *On Friday night we were caught raging and talking after lights for the sixth time so Joc waked [= whacked] us. My new rigger boots are real korker - punishment accepted and spirit unbowed.*

A year later Sandy reported a different kind of trouble into which ragging could land you, *On Tuesday I was fighting on my bed and I fell over backwards and hit my bean (bean is head) on the bar of somebody else's bed and got a wacking Easter egg.*

It was a sport for all seasons. Even in a holiday with friends, ragging was all part of normal life, as I reported from Stamford at the Horderns in April 1954, *I slept very*

well last night and in the morning I ragged around with John and Michael aged 10. And Sandy and I certainly devoted much holiday time at home to 'ragging around', that mysterious but beneficial occupation which was slightly less unruly than true 'ragging'.

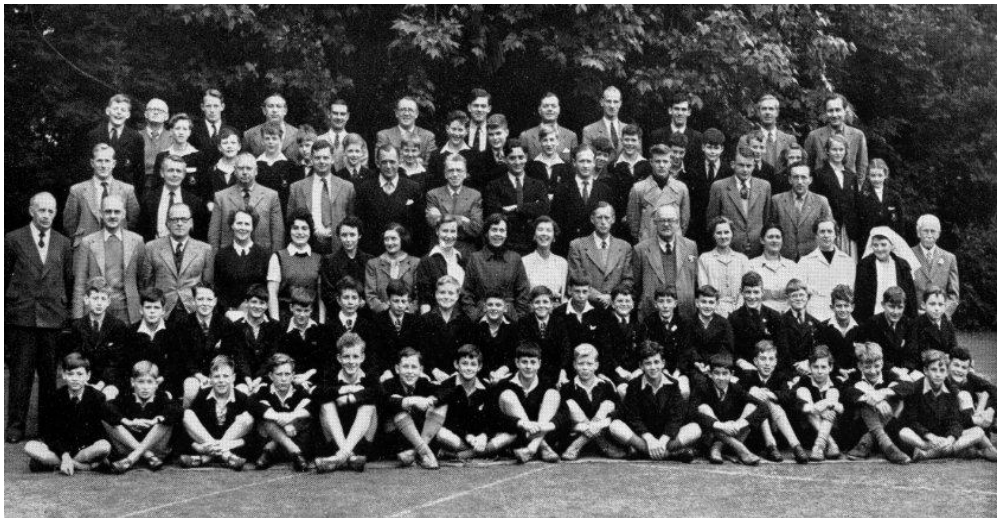
Back at school in June 1954 Sandy was having difficulty concentrating, *At the moment it is like the blitz ~ chalk is wizing over your head and shaving your hair ~ the[re] is an anormous chalk fight on between the two halves of the room.* That letter prep was probably being held in the Locker Room, but in October 1954 Sandy reported ragging in the huts which resulted in more breakages and trouble yet again, *Our form has jolly good fun rag[g]ing, & lots of people crowded round and a few masters came along. And yesterday we got in a ~~row with~~ a mess and boys tried to get in our form so the[y] bashed the window down ~ it was their fault the row started.*

So it continued throughout our Dragon years. Ragging could take place anywhere at any time, even on return journeys from expeditions to distant places, as for Sandy in November 1955, *we had a slap up tea as well and had some wizard fun fighting on the return journey in the bus.*

It was clearly a very satisfactory way to end the day.

12. THE CHILD AND THE MAN

Leaver's photograph Summer 1954 - Jamie third from left, second row from back



School Leavers 1955, Alan six from right, second row from front



ALAN'S REFLECTIONS

My overlapping life at home is explored in 'Dragon Days'. Here it is worth noting a couple of particular features. One concerns the fact that the fact that my parents went off to India twice during this period added to my loneliness - though, as explained elsewhere, my mother's love and the warmth of my grandparents greatly mitigated this.

The second is the nature of the Dragon school. The particularly open, relaxed and familistic atmosphere that the Skipper had initiated in the School meant that even though I clearly found life a strain and seldom smiled for several years, in the end it was a positive experience. The Skipper was right about hindsight in a Speech-day address in 1900. 'I am delighted to feel that one of the chief features of the School is the affection which the old boys retain for us. I am not sure if they do not like us better after a few years of absence, when distance has lent some enchantment to the view, than when they are actually here as present boys.'¹ Yet my letters show that I did enjoy a good deal of my time there and, by the end, was smiling quite a lot.

This, in fact, seems to me to be one of the main psychological devices which bound us to the system and gave a deep internalized loyalty and ultimately self-confidence. We would start at the bottom of the heap. Gradually, as in some long tunnel, the light would appear, then flood in. By the end we loved it. This happened to me three times in my life - at the Dragon, Sedbergh and, to a certain extent as a teacher at Cambridge.

That this was what was happening to many of us is shown by Paul Watkins. He started in tears, misery, loneliness and desperation. Much of his book is somewhat negative. At the end, however, he realized how much the Dragon had meant to him.

'I knew that I would probably never return... The places we had owned and called secret would now be secret for somebody else.... the smell of everything that kept us warm and fed and clothes would be bitter and strange in our nostrils the same way they were for the parents... I realized too, that I would miss grumpy Pa Vicker, and the boggy-smelling river-bank and the peg-legged shuffle of M Blek coming to wake us up in the mornings.'²

He continues that 'In the farewell ceremony, as I collected my Leaver's Book from the Headmaster, I still couldn't believe it was ending. Something caught in my throat in a way that had never happened before, the morning that I woke early to be on the bus that went up to Heathrow Airport.'³ When he returned a couple of years later 'It seemed to me that in the time between, the Dragon School had faded to a mass of echoes in my head. But when I got there, I realized it was not the Dragon which had become an echo to me. It was I who was now nothing more than an echo in the school.'⁴

I have felt the same. We end up as ghosts, in the same way as we feel when we go back to other places which have deeply affected us. Jan Morris is right to describe the school as a place with 'a personality so pervasive that when its old boys grow up

¹ *The Skipper*, 43

² Watkins, *Stand*, 87

³ Watkins, *Stand*, 87

⁴ Watkins, *Stand*, 88

to be Hugh Gaitskells or John Betjemans, you can still see its stamp upon them'.¹

*

The enchantment that grows after one leaves takes many forms. It has even perhaps fuelled my love for a projection of this crazy world of North Oxford in one of the richest seams of English literature, namely children's fiction. The area is associated with Lewis Carroll, J.R.R.Tolkien, C.S.Lewis and Philip Pullman. The intensity of this world, its strong rituals, the clashes between powerful ideologies which are reflected in it, the encouragement to independence go into the mix which led to Alice in Wonderland, the Hobbits, and the Narnia heroes and heroines.

I realize at the end of writing this book that in the fantasies and friendships of the Dragon I was constantly slipping into parallel worlds, and then being dragged back into this one. So I have explored some of these overlapping worlds - games, hobbies, crazes, toys, models, plays, pantomimes, comics, films, all sorts and kinds of reality which co-existed with the apparently rather humdrum life of a little boy.

*

My mother and grandparents' views of what I was like at home, especially in the period before I went to the Dragon, are described in 'Dorset Days'. Here I will describe how my teachers, contemporaries and my own letters, mainly from school, seem to portray me as I grew from six to thirteen.

My early teacher's views are recorded in a report of 19th February 1948 after my first one and a half terms at a kindergarten, when I was aged just six. The general report noted: 'He is a favourite with the other children. We are very sorry he is going and feel sure he will do well wherever he is.' In my first term at my proper kindergarten, aged six and a half, the General Conduct noted 'Good, but he is inclined to dream.' My headmistress noted 'He is a shy but very pleasant little boy.' The following term in Autumn 1948, my General Conduct was 'Excellent. He is a very helpful little boy'. The headmistress wrote 'He is a very able and a very attractive little boy'. This, incidentally, was the very time when my mother was despairing of me as a likely child delinquent.

The following summer, aged seven years and seven months, nine months after my mother had left me, my General Conduct was 'Excellent. Alan is always willing to assist quietly and cheerfully'. And my headmistress noted 'He is a particularly nice little boy'. The following term the General conduct was good and I had reputedly worked very keenly and well, and the same was true of Spring 1950 when I was aged eight years three months. My last report, in Summer 1950, when I was aged eight years seven months and would soon be leaving for the Dragon, stated that my General Conduct was again 'Good'. The headmistress concluded that 'Alan is a delightful little boy and quite capable. We wish him all success.'

*

When I went to the Dragon there were termly reports on my general conduct and progress by the Headmaster and Housemaster, and sometimes form teachers and others would comment on my character. Comments on other things, such as games, also indicate something about my attitude and spirit and have been included.

Though I have quoted some of this before, it is worth drawing together the impressions from my teachers. In the first report in December 1950 when I was almost nine, my form mistress wrote 'A quiet little person who promises well' and my games report noted that he 'Plays Rugged with incredible dash'. My housemaster noted that 'Has settled down very well'. The following December 1951 in Rugged it

¹ Morris, *Oxford*, 160

noted 'He is very plucky, but seemed to lose much of his dash toward the end of the season.' There are various references to lack of 'colour' both in English and art in the following term and things were going down somewhat.

I bumped along for a few terms, with some improvement as I reached the end of my third year. The housemaster Joc noted at the end of my third year 'does well in his quiet way.' Things improved in my fourth year and at the end of the Spring term the Latin master noted 'Good, steady work and progress - and there have been more smiles than last term!' Joc, the housemaster and Junior Headmaster, also noticed 'Doing well and smiling more.'

In my last year I improved considerably. In Rugged I was 'A fearless and intensely plucky full back in 1st XV, his tackling has been a feature of every game and when he grows a bit (and can kick a bit further!) he will be a more than useful player'. The housemaster Joc wrote 'A thoroughly good term all round - with the smile emerging most satisfactorily!' The penultimate term was full of praise, as was my last report. The Junior Head Master, Joc, who was also my housemaster wrote 'Alan has done very well all round, and the smile has nearly ousted the frown! Best of luck to him at Sedbergh.' The Senior Headmaster, Hum, wrote 'Highly satisfactory. We all wish him a happy and useful career.'

A final overview was provided by my house and head master Joc to my mother. She describes in a letter on 14th November

He was very charming, gave me a sherry, and said Alan would definitely get through his Common Entrance but didn't think there was much hope of a scholarship but he would discuss this with his masters at more length. He said Alan was very popular with the other boys and with the staff which pleased me as Alan never introduces me to his friends or in fact mentions them! He also praised his rugged, especially his tackling which was marvellous he said, poor Alan, he told me he never enjoyed a game of rugged till it was over! Joc said there was terrific excitement over his Colours, much more than over the average boys, all of which pleased me a lot and will you too I'm sure, apparently he isn't the problem we have always imagined him to be!

The over-riding impression is that, as at my kindergarten, I was subdued and anxious, with a marked frown, for the first three years. Then I brightened up and started to smile, which coincided roughly with my progress through the school and the afterglow of my visit to Assam and the prospect and actuality of my mother's return in the summer of 1954. The other impression, also to be found in my mother's letters, was a dogged determination to win at games and especially bravery in tackling large boys.

*

I am gradually re-encountering a number of my contemporaries at the Dragon. My very first school report at kindergarten suggested that I was a favourite at school. Joc's comments to my mothers suggest that I remained popular. But my mother was always fretting that I did not make friends easily. What those friends thought of me, of course, I do not know. But a couple I have met recently recall a couple of features.

One is the view of my cousin Jake Mermagen. In an email of 3 December 2009 he writes: 'Your memories of rugged are very similar to my own. In fact one of my outstanding memories is of your tackling! You showed us more timid brethren how it could be done. Like you I was small and slow.' Jake also wrote on 4th

November 'Dear Alan, I first glanced through your website, and confess to being amazed that you had become an academic, and such an eminent one! Please excuse this reaction, but I had no recollection of you being brainy (to use a Dragonism). I was therefore somewhat relieved (and emboldened to reveal my surprise) to discover in your essay that you were in the fourth stream, or whatever it was called.'

A second witness is Stephen Grieve. Stephen was a friend at the Dragon throughout my time there, and our friendship grew closer when I moved to the Lake District where he was already living. There are a number of mentions in my mother's letters of going to his house, and his coming to stay with us, during my last year at the Dragon. We remained friends when I went to Sedbergh and went fishing together. We picked up our friendship again about twenty years after Oxford and are still friends and visit each other from time to time. When I invited Stephen to my retirement party he wrote back by email on 9th May 2009: 'How did the mild shy trout fishing boy I knew become so famous?' 'Mild' and 'Shy' fits other accounts, though it is very different from the over-all impression of the rather rude, bullying, sometimes lying and generally a rather disappointing little boy whom my mother was trying to bring up.

*

It is strange to look back through the reversed time telescope at myself as I moved from the five year old who arrived back from India in 1947 to the nearly fourteen year old who prepared to go to his Public School at Sedbergh in 1955. The evidence for my shifting and sliding identity and personality is contradictory and patchy. There are impressions of others, as set out above and in a chapter on my home life. There are photographs and a few paintings. There are my activities and enthusiasms.

Looking through my letters complements, from the inside, the observations from outside of my parents and teachers. In using them thus, of course, I am fully aware of the various forms of distortion that occur in this art form. Orwell is at least partly right when he comments that 'Not to expose your true feelings to an adult seems to be instinctive from the age of seven or eight onwards.'¹ Yet, allowing for all this, I still think that there are some often unintended clues to my developing character in these letters from which I can draw some conclusion. Again some of this has been quoted before, but it is worth repeating it here as part of the final portrait of my character and its development at this time.

There is a certain amount to suggest a sense of humour, including the use of irony and mild invective. I clearly found certain films and books amusing, for example on 17th January 1954 aged twelve *I have read an extremely funny book wich I advise you to get. It is called down with school or your might get "The Horror of St Trinians". They are very good and I think the girls would love them.* It is obvious that these famous characterizations of boys and girls boarding schools exactly captured the kind of humour I tried to emulate.

As an example of the humour I enjoyed in films, I wrote in March 1955 *Last week there was a film called 'Les vacances de M.Hulo' which was about a crazy Englishman [sic!]/who went in a mad care to a holiday hotel in the south of France and the typical holiday camp sort he meets there. And it was extremely funny.*

Then again, of course, we were great fans of Gilbert and Sullivan. Singing in *Patience* and then *Iolanthe* must have helped give me a sense of that irony and

¹ Orwell, *Essays*, 450

teasing satire which is the basis of both of these shrewd observations of English pretensions and class snobbery.

There are examples of my Molesworth-type humour developing on 10th May 1953 when I was eleven, I wrote about playing against *Radley Midgets but Realy they were much bigger than our side*. Eighteen months later, on 25th October I had improved this to *another against Radley Midgets (Jolly big midgets!) Real, somewhat clumsy, Molesworth humour led me on 17th March 1954 to write *By some bad luck I am in the sick-room because I was sick on Friday morning but I have been perfectly alright since but the old hags (Three witches from Macbeth) have been trying their foul concoctions on us in the form of many coloured gargolls (of course I have not got a sore throat)**. This is, incidentally, as far as I can see, the only indirect hint of any class, gender or age snobbery in my letters.

I attempted self-mockery or irony of a kind from about the age of twelve. For example on 18th July 1954 I laconically remarked *I haven't killed anyone with that dagger* - obviously referring to some dangerous instrument my parents were aware of. I sugared my requests to my parents by turning them into semi-humorous exchanges. Thus when I asked for pin-ups and some more tuck for my prefect study when aged just thirteen, I wrote on 20th February 1955

By the way if you have not sent the tuck could you cut the front Pictures of the "Picture Post" and the big double page ones inside of film stars and send them along some time next week because we stick them up on the walls of the Dark-room (the special room of the prefects) Lots of love Alan

P.S. don't forget the tuck?

P.S.S. Don't forget the pin ups?

P.S.S.S Don't forget either?'

In the following letter in March, I wrote

I am not spending any money on the tuck shop and so I am nearly out of tuck (just dropping a hint). I know if you have nothing to do I expect you like to make stations and tunnels for Hornby I have a terrific craze for electric trains and I am going to make some electric signals they cost about 8/- in the shops and about 4d in the science club I hope you will make some things that I can look forward.

I doubt whether my mother, though perhaps amused, rushed to start making me Hornby add-ons.

There are other occasions where I am not certain whether I was being deadpan humorous, or serious. Both were in my last year. One was on 13th March when I described how *Today there was a service at St Phillips and St James with thousands of long hymns and psalms*. A week later on about 17th March I described *a talk by a women from the N.S.P.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). And it was all very stirring. But next day I was sick*. I suspect that I was being mildly cynical, though the deadpan juxtaposition was probably unintentional. Finally, I was not beyond teasing my parents. In an undated letter of July 1954 I wrote to my father *I hope you are not getting too fat*, which I accompanied with a picture of an obese gentleman.

From these hints, it looks as if I had developed the usual arts of irony, satire, self-mockery, exaggeration and all the elements of English middle class humour by the age of eleven or twelve. One final example of this is the mock school report which I wrote and which has been quoted fully above. The report was supposedly written in

May 1953 and states that A.Macfarlane, Aged 11.2 is a scholar of incredible talent. From the contents and the hand-writing it is clear that I got one of the little report forms and filled it in a 'Down with Skool' jokey way. Whether I sent it to my grandmother or parents I don't know. What interests me about it is that it showed a clear understanding of what I should be aiming at and even the initials of the principal teachers in the top classes.

*

A good deal of the humour depended on seeing the situation from outside, from the point of view of both myself and the person to whom I was writing. This is perhaps what strikes me most about the letters, namely that my sense of self-awareness, combined with an awareness of the other - the recipient - and their needs and lives was very early.

Indeed from the very start when I was aged seven I was showing interest and often polite concern for the recipient. A letter on 14th July 1949, when I was seven and a half, started *Dear Mummy, Much love for your birthday*. This was no doubt prompted by my grand-parents, but this may not have been the case in the very next letter when I wrote to my parents, starting *I liked your nice letter*. I then wrote to wish my father *Many happy returns of your birthday. I hope you will have a very happy day*, in October 1949 when still aged seven.

The concern for the other and his or her life is one of the central features of the letters. Aged just nine I wrote to my father at the end of February 1951 after my mother came home, *Dear Daddy, I hope you are very well and you are not so lonely without mummy and ann*. I was constantly asking after the health and well-being of my parents and sisters, as well as politely thanking them for gifts. In the following month, March 1951, for example, I wrote,

Dear Momy and Ann and fiona, I hope you are better know after that flue. I love the comics and are enjoying your letters. Thank you very much for the lovely sweets you sent me. The time is flying I am looking forward to the hols and Daddy coming home. I am just recovering from flue myself. It will be quite write to come on the second thank you. I am very sorry that I didn't send this sooner than this. We are lucky because we are going to have three birthday partys in a week. This is the kind of [? boat] I would lik to go on the Broads in [picture of a very smart sailing boat]. I am afraid I havnt any more time now I will be writing soon I have just joind the cubs chub lots of love Alan.

I quote the whole letter since almost all of it is concerned with inter-acting with my mother - making plans, asking about health, apologising for the shortness of the letter. This is quite interesting from a nine and a quarter year old.

Other examples of my projection through empathy and sympathy, particularly into my parents' life in Assam, are scattered through the letters. When aged ten, on 11th February 1952 I wrote *I hope the girls will enjoy you teaching them*. On 7th April 1952 I wrote *It must be awful with all that lightning tell fiona I could not give her anything but I will bring something for her when I come out to you... I expect Daddy was furious about the 2-1 defeat of Scotland yesterday lots of love to fiona and Anne and all of you Allan*.

When my mother had rabies injections, I wrote on 29th September of the same year *Dear Mummy, thank you so much for your letter. I am so sorry to hear that you had to have injections and that they made you feel ill I hope you are better now...I liked to hear about the Performing elephants. I wonder if daddy saw any*

more wild ones. I am getting excited about my trip to India. How nice it will be to see you all again. Best love to you all Alan

After I returned from the trip to Assam my interest and queries about the parallel life in Assam increased. In my first letter on my return on 18th January 1953 I wrote *I wonder how mopsy is getting on and candy too... I hope you are well and everything is going well. Lots of love Alan* In the next letter on 27th January I wrote *I got your letter today and I hope Fiona's finger will get better quickly. And I hope your cold will get better. It is a pity Sonari did not win but I hope they will have better luck next time... I expect mopsy will be growing into a big dog now.* There are many such enquiries and comments which show clearly that the life so vividly kept alive by my mother's brilliant long letters from Assam was a parallel world for me throughout my time at the Dragon. When the two worlds suddenly merged, I was intrigued. Thus on 39th April 1953 I wrote *Mr Swift came today and gave granny the passel you sent. Its funny to think I met him in India and again here.* The following year, on 17th January 1954 I wrote *How are the horses getting on? I hope they are still in favour. I wonder whether you have started the holidays. I should think it is the cool wheather still but it will be the monsoons fairly soon.*

Likewise the world in Dorset remained alive during the term time and in my less frequent letters to my Grandparents, or to my mother when she was home, I enquired frequently about how things were going. For example, on 17th February 1952 I wrote *Dear Grany and Grandpa, I hope the chickens are getting on okay and no more hens have been caught by fox.* A month later I again wrote to them *Dear Granny and Grandpa, I hope the chickens are getting on allright and none of the chiks have died. I wonder wether any of the chicks have been caught by pudy yet or wether pudy has caught any nice yet.*

The competitiveness of my life at the Dragon, the other side to empathy and concern, comes out indirectly in the accounts of competitions and sports, but is not phrased in an aggressive way in the letters. The passionate desire to win games has become muted into a hope that we would win games and regret at loss. And an interesting feature of my socialization into becoming 'a good sport' is the way in which I was inculcated into the habit of avoiding boasting by making any success into an accident or, in Dragon jargon, a 'fluke'. This was especially marked with high honours, like school colours.

Thus on 18th July 1954, aged twelve and a half, I wrote *By some fluke I have got my tie for cricket.* Earlier that year on 17th January 1954 I had written about football *I have been back at school two days and so I have not much to say I am in 1st game and with considarable luck I might get into the first 11.* The following year, on 1st February I wrote: *last week there were the first games of soccer and on Saturday I played in the 1st XI [football] match against Salesian College (Some fluke)...* In March I wrote *On the Wednesday before last there was the first game of hockey (because of the snow) and it was a match against new college which by some fluke I was in and which we won 3-0.* On 10th July 1954 I wrote *We began to look as if we would draw when by a fluke I hit 10 in 3 balls then Westrup hit 3 fours. But he was out for 25 but we managed to win with ten minutes to go. I made 33 not out.*

It is games which are perhaps the most widely described feature of my life at the Dragon, almost every letter having some account of some sport or other. The other major themes which obviously both interested me and I thought would interest the recipient, were the weather, health and frequent references to films and outings.

*

There are signs in the letters that my self-confidence, as well as my happiness,

increased. One thing which encouraged and reflected this was travel. That I went on my own by train to school from Dorset and also up to Scotland, without any indication that I saw this as anything of a problem, is interesting. For example, when aged ten and a half, my mother noted in a letter of 6th May 1951 *Anne and I took him by train to Bournemouth station and he didn't seem at all worried at the thought of the 3 and a half hour train journey.* Such a journey would have presumably involved going to London and changing at Paddington onto the school train to the Dragon.

Or again, at the end of my tenth year, I travelled alone to India and back by air. I wrote a postcard to my grandmother from the flight as follows: *Dear Granny this is the Argonaut I am flying in it is very comfortable and we get wonderful food. We are about 2 hours travelling and I have not been sick we got a shower bath at Karachi and I am feeling nice and cool lots of love Alan.* There is no sign of anxiety, though I was told later that I went missing and held the plane up for a while on one of the stops.

There is very little sense of fear or anxiety in the letters – about things that might happen to me in the future, of dread of any kind. Oddly, the only thing which really worried me, and practically the only example of any mention of national events (apart from sports) was to do with two famous murder cases. On 25th March 1953 I wrote that *I have been rather frightened the last few nights as a Mr Cristie has disappeared from a place where a man knocked down the wall and found 5 women and the Police dug up the garden and found two more women on of witch was Mrs Cristie.* This, of course, was one of the most notorious cases of the twentieth century. The other was a year earlier when on 18th February 1952 I wrote *Last week there was terrific excitement because Bentley was hung because he helped Craig Murder P.c. Miles Lots of Love Alan.* What exactly excited us, I do not know.

Apart from this, the only other events outside the family or school to be mentioned in all my letters were that on 27th January 1953 when I noted that *A jet plain crashed into a pylon last night and the lights went out.* This was, of course, something which affected me directly. And on 11th February 1952 I wrote *Jock made a very good speech on the day the king died and he was nearly crying and he was faltering. And lots of people were crying.* It is worth noting that I called my junior headmaster by his nickname to my parents.

*

Much of life in a boarding school revolves about friendship (and enmity). Learning about how to make and break friendship, how to cultivate it and what it means, is one of the most important things which schools teach. Watkins writing of the Dragon some twenty years after I was there notes that 'It seemed to me that you had to figure out people pretty quickly at the Dragon School. Who you could trust and who not. You measured them up fast and went with your instincts. And you knew that at the same time, people were measuring you up and it would take a lot to change their opinions.'¹ This is something I remember.

Being a boarder, with my parents away in India, I was particularly dependent – as my mother pointed out – on friends who would take me back to their homes for a few weekends. Some of these events are mentioned in my letters. I remember being very close to a few boys, including Arber and Mermagen and a few on whom I suppose I had minor crushes. With them and with others I began to develop that ability and pleasure in discovering an equal, mutually dependent and voluntary

¹ Watkins, *Stand*, 7

relationship.

Often these friendships were developed around a shared interest – the English have friends about things. The friendship was a marriage of true minds and emotions. We were like William and his Gang, Frodo, Bilbo and Sam Gamgee, the children in Narnia and many others in the literature of the time. Life could be lonely, but with friends it was not. The patterns of friendship in later life, and there have been many, were incubated in this period – a template for friendship was laid down which would see me through Sedbergh, Oxford, London and finally Cambridge. It would feed into my pleasure in writing, on academic projects with small groups of ‘friends’. It would help turn my students into friends, and it would soon incorporate girls.

The threat that I would not develop the ability to make friends and be absorbed into a wider world worried my mother when early on she seemed to think I had few friends. In fact, both at home and at school, it is clear that I had a number of friends. An early letter to my parents, when I was aged seven and a half, on 14th July 1949 mentions *We are in Scotland and I have a boy friend. His name is John.* And there are quite frequent references in the Dragon letters to friends with whom I would do things or who took me out to their homes. For example, on 17th February 1952 I wrote *I am going out with a friend to his birthday party he is Dunken Cooper ... and I am going to see the tellivision.*

I clearly selected my friends sensibly. I commented on Jamie’s younger brother Sandy, who would late in life become a well-known politician, when I wrote on 3rd November 1952 I wrote *I am going out with Sandy Bruce Lockhart who is a very nice boy.* Another useful contact, whose background I quickly sketched in for my parents, was when I wrote on 16th February that *I was asked to a birthday tea on Thursday and the same person is asking me out today his name is David Walters and his father owns a silk factory.* Finally, on 1st February 1955 I mentioned *Then on Sunday I went out with a friend and we played with his trains... Yesterday I went out again and had duck and roast potatoes and peaches. We mucked about with his air rifle and his Trix trains.* That Joc should tell my mother when she went to see him that I was a very popular little boy may be true.

Towards the end my mother described the deepening friendship with Stephen Grieve who was not only at the Dragon but lived nearby when we moved to the Lake District. He is never mentioned in my letters, but nor are many others whom I now remember, particularly when I look at the school photographs, were close friends.

*

From the letters, I seem to have been fairly balanced and lived within a social world in which space and time co-ordinates were pretty well adjusted. I knew where my parents were and what Assam was like; when at school I could visualize their world and that of my home. I was well aware of time, how long they had been away and when I would next see them, how long it was to the end of the term or holidays. I lived much in the future and the past as well as in the present. All this would have helped to mute any sudden conflicts or pressures from school and reminds us that the supposedly closed physical world of the boarding school was not really a prison. Our minds could travel freely in all sorts of directions, not merely into sub-worlds of friendship, games, fantasies, literature and films, but away to our families and friends.

One letter in particular shows my awareness of what was going on around me, of time future and a wider world of India, of hopes and dreams and parallel lives of

relatives and others. On 12th August 1952 when I was ten and a half, I wrote

Dear Mummy and Daddy, I hope you are not feeling the hot weather too much. I am so looking forward to flying out to you in December. The other day Richard drove me in his car to Swanage and we had two bathes wich I enjoyed. I have been having good rags with Robert. On the 15th robert is taking me to London and is putting me in the train for SCOTLAND. It will be fun seeing the Cowans again. Granny has just got a new lot of baby chicks and last night she won first prize for her eggs. We are hoping to hear the result of Roberts Exam this week. Richard cut down a big tree at the bottom of the Garden yesterday and I cut down a small oak. I am glad fiona can swim now I will help to teach her how to dive. Lots of love Alan.

*

It is worth noting the growing maturity of my style and observations in the letters, even if this means repeating a few extracts. I notice the improvement and some rather more adult ways of writing things from about the age of twelve. On 11th January 1954 I wrote to may parents from Scotland where I noted that *I went out to a pleasant little town in Peeblesshire and a 6 course dinner*. That autumn in an undated letter at the end of November *I spent a very enjoyable week end* at school. Perhaps one of the best graphic pieces of writing was on 20th February 1954 in my last year at the Dragon.

In the afternoon we had a half holiday and it was lovely weather. Yesterday we woke up to a sprinkling of snow but we played the return match at home against Bluecoates school. In the first half we were pretty equal. Then we kicked off and scored a goal straight away then there was a ding-dong battle in which their were several scrabbles in their goal mouth and in one the ball went over their line but it was quickly kicked out again and the referee did not see it. (I think it is true [I wasn't there] because they admitted themselves that it was a goal). Then in the last few minutes they managed to score and so it was a draw.

This was beginning to be dramatic writing and the use of the word 'sprinkling' is apposite. I cannot but have been influenced and encouraged by my mother's excellent writing style.

The letters and the occasional paintings or drawings are contemporaneous instances of my voice, however, stylized. The photographs record my body and expressions. My speech, however, is not recorded at all except in my letters. This makes the very few instances of my recorded conversations in my mother's letters even more tantalizing, though all of them, fortunately, occur in the few months before I learnt to write and my first letters survive.

On 13th April 1948 my mother wrote to my father *Alan and Fiona have met some children up the road and are picking up dreadful habits, they come back chanting "Ha, ha, hee, hee, you've got a face like a chimpanzee" and then shriek hysterically!*

At the end of the same month, on 30th April, when I went to my first proper kindergarten aged six and a quarter my mother reported *he said he told the small boy next to him that his daddy had shot a tiger, to which the boy replied that so had his Daddy. 'Ah" said Alan after a moment's thought "but my Daddy's tiger was a mad tiger"* A month later an aged Aunt came to visit us and my mother described on 6th May

She is a nice old thing, large and rather downright, Alan followed her round everywhere, he even went to see the people next door with her, and came back with his eyes popping out of his head "D'you know what happened to her sister?" he said "She had three-quarters of her stomach took out" and then as an after thought "But I suppose they put it back again"!

In the same letter she described how

He came back the other day, bristling with pride because he had been made Captain. "Captain of what?" we asked. "Oh nothing". "But you must be captain of something - what do you have to do?" "Oh nothing". "Well why are you captain then?" "So that when I go out of the room somebody else can be vice-captain". Quite logical to him!

*

One of my central characteristics was a desire to excel, or at least to win and succeed in whatever I was doing. This had the good effect of making me persistent and determined in certain respects, as can be seen in the accounts of learning to ride a bicycle and playing rugby. Later I applied this to my academic work. I really tried and knowing myself to be very small and not particularly intellectually talented, I came to believe that effort could overcome natural lack of talent. I really wanted to win, to succeed, and to claim victory. I was ambitious, keen to prove myself, and never really contented by what I had achieved.

There were negative sides to this. One was that I was a bad loser - I minded too much. There are a number of accounts of this feature, of sulks and tears in various games. I did gradually learn the art of losing and this was particularly something which a boarding school like the Dragon drummed into one - being a good sport, modest in victory, resilient in defeat.

Another negative feature was that wanting to win I was and am competitive in a way which partly reflected my father (in sport) and my mother (in academic ambition and argument). If I could win by dominating I was prepared to use all my weapons, including physical force.

I am not sure that I either bullied or was bullied at kindergarten or the Dragon or with any of my equal friends. But there are a number of accounts of my bullying of my sisters, 'laming them up' as we used to put it, and this continued right up to my thirteenth birthday. On the other hand there were quite long periods of contented play and my sisters seem to have been fond of me which suggests it may not have been malicious - more a matter of trying to assert superiority.

The fact that neither Jamie nor I remember bullying as a serious problem at the Dragon may be because we were lucky. Yet, on the whole, I suspect that the delicate mechanisms evolved in the relations between boys and teachers, and between younger and older boys, made it a rather unusually bullying free school.

The absence of serious bullying may again be partly explained by the Lynam headmasters. The Skipper set his face against it and realized that part of the solution might be to encourage the boys themselves to stand up against it. In his 1908 speech he said that teachers had failed if they let the boys 'take refuge in that cowardly subterfuge of "schoolboy honour" when they see bullying or cheating or vice, without protest.'¹ Yet there must have been some bullying and a friend of my own

¹ Jaques, *Century*, 48

age mentioned recently to me that he remembers standing up to and fighting 'the school bully' in the playground, watched by over fifty boys - and winning. Yet it is not something which, unlike many unfortunate children, deeply affected my life.

*

The desire to do well which led me to concentrate hard on sports and games does not at first seem to have extended to academic work. Here my mother frequently described me as intelligent, but unable to concentrate or work hard at things like reading and writing. These things did not grip me and I was perfunctory in my attention. What I do remember is that I had a rather short attention span, and when I moved on to something new, threw over the old quickly - for example I hated clearing up the toys I had been playing with before I went on to another game.

On the other hand I seem to have been imaginative and able to construct and enter many alternative worlds. This was later to feed into my imaginative game playing and reconstructions within academic life. For example, like many children, I created many micro-worlds, with toy soldiers, animals, dinky toys, and electric trains, as well as a number of games - Robin Hood, King Arthur, Cowboys and Indians, which I describe in *Dorset Days*. Although I was not peculiar in any way here, it did require effort and imagination.

I gained much of the sustenance and models for my imagination from things other than books, although it is clear that I also enjoyed being read to and later reading for myself, despite my mother's impatience at my slowness. The radio was important, but it was the imaginative worlds created by pantomimes, musicals (including Gilbert and Sullivan) and above all films (TV only came in late in the period) that stimulated me in my games of Arthur, Pirates and so on, as described elsewhere.

*

My social attitudes seem fairly predictable and conventional. There are no signs of being a particular snob, though my derisory comments on the Windermere Grammar School production of 'Yeoman of the Guard' may have had something of snobbery behind them. My attitude to women seems pretty standard. My remarks about the school matrons who looked after us when we were ill and we termed 'The Old Hags' or some such was a rather feeble attempt at humour. My attitude to girls seems also pretty standard.

My first, unexpressed and unrequited love is described by my mother - a little girl I wanted to sit next to. I seemed happy with little girls I met until I was about twelve. Then I thought them 'fleeb', weak and unexciting and made sarcastic remarks about them. But this was a time when I was asking for Pin-Ups for my study wall and noting how pretty Pantomime Chorus Girls were. So the ambivalence is understandable and I suspect that being brought up surrounded by a number of strong and intelligent women - grandmother, mother and sisters - made me respect and feel at ease with women.

*

The theme through much of this is one of contradictions, hence my delight even at the Dragon school in Pope's 'Essay on Man' - 'to deem himself a God or Beast', 'his mind or body to prefer' etc. I was often both/and, warring sides as my mother often commented, partly sweet, charming and gentle, partly a brute. Even in my worst offences, for example when I repeatedly stole - it was often for a good reason, to buy a stamp for my mother's letter to my father, to buy plants for my garden, and I would genuinely share my pocket money with my sisters.

Another contradiction was the fairly aggressive sports I liked, air guns, archery,

fishing, with the fact, as my mother noted, that I was really too soft-hearted ever to want to kill an animal or bird – and do not remember ever stealing bird's eggs or enjoying killing any animal (though this did not apply to fish). In fact I seem to have been fond of animals and there are accounts of my relations with rabbits, white mice, 'puddy' and other animals, which later would turn into a deep affection for various dogs. I fed wild birds with pleasure when I was little and seem to have been unusually enthusiastic about gentle pursuits like gardening. The model of my courteous and gentlemanly, poetry loving yet distinguished military grandfather no doubt helped.

*

Travelling and reading about Assam gave me a sort of pride in India, and in the same way our summer trips to Scotland, my Scottish relatives, my father's stories of how our family was descended from Rob Roy McGregor (a fiction as I have now found out), and hearing about the family tartan, homeland at Loch Morar, war-cry ('Loch Sloy', after which I named my first sailing boat), and of course tartan, all emphasized my pride. My name, Alan Donald James Macfarlane, was Scottish enough.

It is clear that I felt identified with the Scots and not the lowly Sassenachs around me. In the summer of 1954, when I was twelve and a half, my mother notes my pride in Scotland. On 16th August she wrote about a country show:

The jumping was very feeble but Anne was entranced, and afterwards we had a display by the Dagenham Girl Pipers, they weighed about twelve stone apiece and were incredibly plain poor things with enormous chests and calves due to blowing and marching I suppose but were quite good, a small boy in front greeted them with the remark "Oh lor, here comes the cats chorus" which made Alan white with rage but he consoled himself by saying that they were mostly English anyway in a tone of unutterable scorn.

Two weeks later on 30th she wrote *The children are very pleased with the idea [of a trip to Scotland], Alan feels that he will at last be among his own kind again instead of the weedy English whom he has to put up with so much of the time.*

I am reminded that my pride was linked to my feelings for my father, whom I believed to be a true Scot (though only now do I discover that he was in fact brought up in Texas until the age of 12). Sent home to a boarding school in Scotland, my father emphasized his Scottish roots, and I identified with this. The enthusiasm was particularly marked in sporting events and there are quite frequent references to shared delight (or irritation) when Scotland was playing its various foes at rugby or football. My mother, I suspect, was ambivalent about whom she supported. She was mainly English, but as I grew up I was relieved to find that her middle name was Stirling which was linked to Scottish ancestors. She used to say that she was a quarter Scottish, which was better than nothing I felt.

*

It is difficult to tease out my belief and attitudes towards religion. I dwelt much in the imagined worlds of *The Jungle Book*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, *The Meeting Pool*, various types of fairy stories and the adventures which my mother used to write and send to us and later became partially incorporated into her *Children of Bird God Hill* and some unpublished works. All this was much stronger and more meaningful, it would seem, than the formally Christian religious side, which was rather unexciting.

I was sent to a number of boy's Christian camps on the south coast, starting when I was about ten. I don't think this was because my mother was particularly keen on organized religion, though she clearly went to church with us. Rather it was because her brother Richard, my uncle, was a devout Christian and a 'master' at such camps. I needed to be sent somewhere in the long summer holidays to take the pressure off my grandparents and these were a good solution for a period.

Yet there is no sign of enthusiasm for religion in my writings. I note visits to various churches from the Dragon, but without comment except to say that some of the services were too long. I did quite well in Divinity, according to my school reports, but this tells me little about my faith. In all, I suspect I was quite unquestioning and still believed in fairies, Father Christmas, the Tooth Fairy and magical worlds through much of my time at the Dragon. Enchantment has been a theme which has interested me all my life, but the enchantment of poetry and stories rather than the rather un-magical version of protestant Christianity which was my environment at home and at the Dragon.

JAMIE'S REFLECTIONS

Thanks to good prior preparation, I got off to a quick start in both school work and life at the Dragon - a start which was followed by some periods of acceleration and some of stand-still as described in Chapter 4C, Progress through School. I did not at all creep like Shakespeare's Jacques, 'unwillingly to school'; on the contrary, I enjoyed school. From nursery school onwards, I was keen, well behaved and ready to absorb what was on offer. But growing up is far from easy and there is so much to hoist on board between the ages of 8 and 13. We set off surrounded by uncertainties; and the pace and strength of our mental and moral development very much depends on the confidence with which we can tackle all the complexities involved. The key to acquiring that confidence is a happy, comfortable, safe and supportive atmosphere at home and at school and a framework of discipline, encouragement and good example. The Dragon provided these for me.

I had bounce and good cheer as a small boy combined with a certain amount of circumspection and anxiousness, although my first school reports focussed on the bright side. In my last terms at Greycotes Middle School, Oxford, the Headmistress reported, *very intelligent and interested in all his lessons. Pleasing progress* (December 1947), and, *intelligence and ability above average child of his age; an excellent pupil* (March 1948). One year later the Headmaster of the British Forces Education Service School in Bad Salzuflen commented similarly on my last term's performance there, *Willing, and satisfying pupil to teach. Well ahead for his age in standards and keen participant in any class activity.*

All of this augured well, and the 'intelligent, eager and biddable pupil' theme continued in the background, with a few exceptions, right through my Dragon reports. Thus, Yatto at Stradlings, writing as house master in charge of me through my first year, observed,

Dec 1949 *his keenness to do well in everything will take him a long way. Has made an excellent start*

Mar 1950 *does well in many ways - must learn to let others have their share of the limelight*

July 1950 *highly satisfactory term - has demanded much less of the limelight*

Jacko, writing reports jointly with I.K., presumably the Matron saw the brightness again but also some backsliding in my second year,

Dec 1950 *Of an irrepressibly cheerful disposition, he has been a most pleasant and entertaining member of the house. Looks after himself extremely well*
IK

March 1951 *Bright and cheerful. Not yet entirely reliable* CHJ

July 1951 *A good term apart from a tendency to lose clothes*

For the rest of my time at the Dragon Joc Lynam, as housemaster at School House, provided the overview of my development - in a series of messages of encouragement on the lines of his report in March 1952, *does well & is always cheerful*. He offered similar comments in my last year,

Dec 1953 *James is gaining in confidence all round and is a most friendly member of the community*

Mar 1954 *James is always friendly and helpful and has had a good term*

July 1954 *An excellent term in every way. We shall greatly miss his friendly smile.*

These reports are not very revealing, but unfortunately I have little external evidence about my personality and development in my Dragon years beyond occasional asides between quizzical parents or summaries by generously prejudiced grandparents - neither necessarily reliable.

Points arising in two letters by my (different) grandparents, however, go to the nub of the matter. The first is a diary entry by my Bruce Lockhart grandmother when Sandy and I were visiting Sedbergh for the Christmas holidays at the turn of 1947 to 1948. We were shortly to accompany our parents to Germany, and this was the first visit to Sedbergh after a couple of years' absence. I was aged six and three quarters, Sandy five and a half, and my grandmother's telling comment was, *I am remaking the acquaintance of my charming little grandsons. James quiet, studious, polite & a little fearful. Sandy charming a little comic more noisy & enterprising. Both very nice looking.*

The second point was made in April 1955 and concerns the Dragon, which I had left the year before. It comes in a letter written by my Hone grandfather to my father at the end of Sandy's last term, looking back with typical generosity on our time at the school and at Belbroughton Road,

It has been a very real pleasure and interest for us to see so much of Jamie and Sandy while at the Dragon and to welcome you and Margaret when you have been able to come over. Your boys are delightful, so full of life and varied interests & real affection, a very great pleasure for us & never a bother - an objective opinion not the meanderings of fond grandparents! We miss Jamie and shall miss Sandy dreadfully when he goes. The Dragon is certainly a happy school.

These remarks confirm that while I arrived at the Dragon as an anxious little boy, five years later, thanks to the school's happy atmosphere, I was well armed for a positive continuation of the process of growing up.

Of course it was not quite as simple as that. If I were to attempt today a general view of myself in my last year or so at the Dragon, based on the evidence collected

in 'Dragon Days' and 'Different Days', it might be on the following lines,

friendly, cheerful, smiling; intelligent, but can be a little conceited; able but often slapdash in form work; better at appreciation than grammar; languages, both ancient and modern, compromised by carelessness; maths and science went well until concepts became too complex for him. Enjoys arts, music and drama and has a small gift for music. Not a strong speaker or debater.

Always keen, he is ready to muck in, find compromise and accept leadership by others; he is a conformist not a rebel, and not assertive (enough at games). Enjoys games a lot and has some skills of eye and hand coordination; he is keen and enthusiastic rather than determinedly single minded about winning. A team player with strong tribal instincts (identification, loyalty) rather than an individualist. He likes to please and fit in rather than go it alone.

Essentially extrovert, but he is happier in small groups than in noisy crowds; sometimes lacking in confidence. Prefers conkers and five stones to marbles; lacks competitive edge and risk taker's spirit for the marbles pit. Always content playing solo games, watching films and reading - and happiest just messing about with friends.

But 'enuff said', to quote Molesworth.

My school reports from the age of three and a half to the end of my Dragon years are described in Chapter 4. Perhaps the most striking thing in them, however, is the identification of some key character traits by my teacher at Greycotes Nursery School on the Banbury Road when I was aged 3 years and 9 months! *December 1944, Charming character, anxious to please and not hurt others, lacks self confidence, has plenty of intelligence.*

The picture is clear enough, and a lack of self-confidence had to be overcome. While I have no accounts of myself written by contemporaries when we were still at the Dragon, a present day comment by my Upper 2A comrade in arms Tom Stanier, after seeing that Kindergarten report, tells a similar story,

I remember that I thought you were good fun, always cheerful, and (on the surface at least) relaxed about life. I also enjoyed playing scrum half to your fly half, and was rather disappointed when you were moved to full back and I was moved to fly half.

It is interesting that your report says you lacked self-confidence as I think that I, too, was less sure of myself than most. Perhaps all my friends had this quality in common. The reason I was so keen to do well on the games field and the classroom, was that I needed the reassurance this gave me. When Hum handed out his interim two-weekly reports, I adored it if there were red ticks on the report - all was well with world.

I'm sure your Lady Macduff was superb but I can't offer a detailed critique as, to be frank, I can't remember anything about it!

*

Having said these things, my general development and attitude to school life seems to have progressed at a normal rate and certainly I do not remember any nasty falls or strange detours on the road. I was growing up, as we all do, without being aware of it, and learning both at home and at school from direct teaching, absorption and example - and gaining all the time in that self-confidence necessary for the absorption of deeper lessons for life.

Judging by my relative position at my next school, Sedbergh, I was well taught at the Dragon both in terms of learning to learn and in the acquisition of knowledge. I was potentially able to tackle O levels in one year, although it took two to cover the syllabus and to iron out a bit more my natural tendency to carelessness.

Academic ability and progress at school I have discussed in Chapter 4 and elsewhere. I was helped forward at a good pace, with a fair amount of prompting from time to time but without stress in an atmosphere which was conducive to learning. At the Dragon it was not regarded as a crime to be a swot. I admired (many of) those who were 'brainier' than I was and I certainly did not look down on or disparage in any way those who (like Sandy) were in low classes for their age. There was no question of shame. Here is Sandy in November 1953, aged eleven, accepting with equanimity the prospect of bad reports, but warning our parents, *My Report this week will be a bad one because in English I will be about 10 or even nearer the bottom and about 15th in Classics and bottom in French and Second bottom in maths!* I worried in fact about Sandy before he arrived at the Dragon on the grounds that he might not fit in and would be unhappy because he still could not read fluently or write at the age of seven. But I need not have been so concerned. By the age of eight and a bit he was still stumbling badly but the Dragon did not mind, helped him along and progress was quick to follow.

Development of self-awareness and learning how to come to terms and cope with emotions are other vital parts of growing up. It is difficult to comment with any confidence of memory on my emotional states at the Dragon. I imagine that like everybody else I underwent painful or strong emotional experiences now and then - whether from feelings of loss, sympathy or anger at perceived unfairness, or through feelings arising through imaginative activities such as theatre, films and books. It might have equally have on account of anxieties about school life such as prospects for success or failure at work or in games or over problems in personal relations with friends. I remember too the miseries of homesickness which attacked (albeit with decreasing frequency) at the beginning of terms but could also suddenly arrive at unexpected moments, especially if you were feeling low and sorry for yourself for other reasons.

I do not, however, recall nightmares, asthma or similar symptoms of prolonged psychological stress. Perhaps I was lucky; or perhaps memory is playing tricks. Nor can I see any confessions or reflections of such feelings in my letters home. Sandy was perhaps more able to write about it, as when in sickroom in October 1953, *Yesterday was a simply horrid horrid miserable day ~ I had to lie in bed not reading or doing anything exept [sic] lying down ~ I had one more person with me but we could not talk because we were too sick ~ just steyed there...*

Some have argued that boarding school stunts emotions. I find the proposition rather sweeping. No doubt I learnt, as did many in a boarding prep school environment especially in the immediate post war period, to suppress or at least disguise in some measure the outward expression of my emotions vis-a-vis my friends or, naturally enough, in letters to my parents. But this was part of the ethos of the period - applying to adults as much as for schoolboys - when you did not wear your emotions on your sleeve. It was not the done thing to go overboard with excitement or joy or to lose your temper and throw tantrums. If you needed to have a blub, you did it in a private corner, and good friends were sympathetic - brave little man! Happily, attitudes have changed since those days. At the same time boys no doubt vary in their emotional being as well as in the ability to control it. I may have been instinctively less given to showing the emotional side of my nature than some, even if my feelings ran just as deep.

Modesty operates similarly at two levels. In the sense of humility and the opposite of conceitedness and condescension it was a virtue taught by explanation and example at school as at home; and as with other emotional feelings, awareness and control of pride comes with growing self confidence. Again the ethos of the period applies. The need for humility was strongly underlined in the muscular Christian tradition of education of the late Victorians; and also lay behind the liberal attitudes to empire of the Edwardian period and the 1920s-1930s..

Thus we were clear at the Dragon that it was not the done thing to boast and any projection of an individual as opposed to the tribe was very much frowned upon. A propos, the phrase 'by some fluke' was a kind of external confirmation between boys that you knew the form and were not a boastful chap. I wonder, however, whether the term also involved some inner hedging of bets - a kind of reinsurance against failure by recognition that the lucky situation in which you found yourself might not last.

Directness has also to be learnt in growing up. In letters home Sandy and I were both reasonably direct - and Sandy particularly so. A letter of May 1952, for example, tells of my hopes for a difficult exam in prospect, and for getting into the third cricket XI, *Next week we are going to have a geography exam ~ I hope it will not be to [o] difficult. Also we have the Summer Fields match which I have a little chance of getting in.* And half way through my last rigger term I was getting close to getting my 1st XV colours, but not certain, *Yesterday we had the first game trials ~ I scored two tries and drop kicked a goal from a pass from the scrum half. I think I played my best game then. I think I might get in.* I was not boasting so much as offering a realistic assessment, as was Sandy when writing in 1955 about his chances for the XV, *In rigger I am playing on the wing now but I don't think I will get into the 15; or about chances of getting into the Gilbert and Sullivan play in October 1952, I have past the test to go onto the play but about 30 people pass that out of 100 people and only 16 people get in or 19 out of the 20 people.*

At the Dragon I drew a tremendous amount of confidence through friendships. Some were based on shared interests, others merely on propinquity, but all were anchored in trust. Trust came from finding a companion to be straight forward, reliable and agreeable, someone without side and who would come when he said he would and not go off and do something different (like Thomas Mann's Tonio Kröger). Friendships revolved to some extent around common interests and shared likes and dislikes; and as propinquity increased, nicknames were used (a British form of the familiar second person singular of Du or tu). Friends might be made in clubs (gardening, films, bird-watching, snooker), and some friendships arose through a chance partnership, as in games (scrum half/ fly half) or at desks side by side in a classroom.

In my view, however, most friendships emerged from continued propinquity and messing about together. Messing about, be it 'Pooh sticks' or kicking a rigger ball around on the playing fields, itself produced further common ground as you found out that you saw the world the same way and had the same attitudes, preferences and opinions - whether about forms of tuck, masters or other boys or about subjects in form which you liked or disliked. It was I suppose, as in later life, partly about finding your self in another person and jointly defining what you considered to be alien, disagreeable or the Other.

It was not very complicated; and such friendships appear frequently in our letters home, as for example in my first summer term, *I think I now have had all sports we have here. I prefer cricket best. I am going out this Sunday taking a boy called Robert Acland ~ he is a nice chap I like.* The same concept of a 'nice chap' appears

in a letter of Sandy's of February 1952, *Yesterday I went for a walk in the Parks with Andrew Hunt, he is the boy who I told you we call elephant. He is very nice. When we got to the big bridge we played Pooh sticks, Oxford against Cambridge, Cambridge one [= won] 8-7*

References in three consecutive months to James Carlaw show affectionate companionship at work. In May 1952, I noted, *We have had a horrible thunder storm ~ it kept me awake until 10.15 and then Carlaw snoring kept me awake.* Then in June 52 there was a chance to pull Carlaw's leg over parts he had been selected to read in Hamlet in form, *J. Carlaw was reading in his form when another boy had to take the part of the ghost. He was made fun [of] and called thin air and he was as you might say c.c. (not cricket club but confined to Coventry). Next day Carlaw (who had made fun of Williams had to take the part of Gurtred [= Gertrude] the Queen and the Day afterwards Ophelia! We now call him G.O. Carlaw.* And in July we were evidently messing about with a game using the names of our toy animals, *I have been playing code cricket a lot ~ our animals are [= against] James Carlaw's animals. We've just picked the idea.*

In some cases a common background might have played a role. It may have been more than coincidence, for example, that a number of my regular companions had distant parents: both James Carlaw's and Nigel Williams' parents lived in Egypt, John Turner's in Canada, David Milner Moore's in Malaya. Similarly, in November 1952, Sandy found common ground in Alan's Scottishness, *Yesterday I and a boy calld Alan Macfarlane who is Scotch we played matches by ourselves against England for Scotland.* Friendships could also be underpinned by going out together at weekends. Sandy and I were lucky enough to be able regularly to take other boarders out with us to our Hone grandparents round the corner at Belbroughton Road, and the list of friends we invited to join us for a meal there at weekends through five Dragon years was a very long one.

Also noticeable about friendships at the Dragon, and no doubt other prep schools, was that friends could also drift apart comfortably, without necessarily hard feelings or sense of betrayal. New friends would be found, new groups formed, and I do not remember any sense of negative exclusion about it. Perhaps this applies to pre-puberty friendships generally - the puppy stage in life - and once more the relaxed family atmosphere of the Dragon community removed any special barriers or pressures.

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The traditions of the Dragon with respect to competition in games, both formal and informal, were also conducive to bolstering the confidence of those in doubt. As has been discussed elsewhere, games were not the be all and end all of school life. There was a wide choice of activities - from chess to shooting - alongside formal school games, and there were role models and helpers available for those who were interested, and for boarders sometimes out of hours as well. In the playground, I recall anxieties about not being up to the level of other players or about assertiveness turning into aggression - and sometimes preferred not to offer battle rather than risk losing - but I do not recall any unfair or unkind treatment.

Nor do I have any recollection of bullying at the Dragon in the general sense of calculated or persistent picking on someone disliked or an easy target for some reason. Some teasing could turn nasty, such as when taking advantage of a boy who was slower or quick to get into a bait, and on occasions it may have come close to bullying. I fear I might have joined in rather too easily; but as to being bullied, I only recall being under pressure of roughness - a kind of implied threat of bullying

through peer pressure to do this, or do it in that way or else, or to keep out of the way. But I don't remember being teased or beaten up behind the bike sheds, unreasonably tossed in blankets, endlessly whacked or being picked on for dormitory jokes. I think the norm was jocular, as in November 1952, *Yesterday was 2 boys birthdays in our dorm We gave them the bumps and all of us wacked them ~ together they got 40 wacks But they weren't hard.* But maybe pulling punches like that still demonstrated in some way the power of the tribe?

At games and sports of all kinds winning or losing mattered to me a certain amount but not in the exaggerated way attributed to the team games of proud Victorians. A passionate desire to win was not quite my way; it was the game and the taking part which I enjoyed most. I probably disliked losing more than I liked winning. I was proud of winning, but only on very rare occasions did I really mind badly if a side in which I was playing lost. It was all soon forgotten, but I was hurt more by losing in individual games such as tennis, or in suffering apparently unfair experiences in individual activities such as being called out LBW or run out by silly error in cricket. It was a bit too much like Snakes and Ladders. Here is an account of a cricket game in my last term, *v. Summerfield I made a duck but took 4 overs, 3 maidens, 4 runs 1 wicket ~ although it should have been two because after the game the batsman told me he did touch it and other umpire too.*

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The Dragon's familistic atmosphere was a vital ingredient in fostering self confidence and central to helping us grow up. Alan and I have written about its positive effects in several contexts and at length. Let us call it for short here the uncle system - whereby masters acted as elder brothers or friendly uncles out of school, while maintaining respect, discipline and control in classrooms. It was one of the most positive attributes of the Dragon, and in the early 1950s differentiated the school from a boarding school system where cultural traditions generally dated back to the pre-war era.

All Dragons benefited, especially the boarders for whom the staff were in some sense surrogate parents. Sandy, for example, who was at first physically and psychologically frail, was pulled through difficulties encountered in his early years at the Dragons by staff who acted as uncles in his life. Examples in our letters home of such uncles at play are legion (see Chapter 5). Here is one written in December 1952,

Last Sunday afternoon we had a snow fight. We built forts (the masters arranged it all and played) ~ Ours was taller than me. First of all we battled Mr Gover and made him surrender his fort. We allied and attacked one another but we were driven back and beaten ~ But we attacked them again and captured there [sic] fort. Then they got allies and attacked us, We were driven back. The Bell went so we went back to change.

Yatto similarly joined in ragging on a train journey from the north in January 1953, *At Carnforth we met Mr Yates and continued the journey with him. We ragged and had a fight under his eyes, then he joined in!* Another example was at a boarders' picnic in July 1952, *First of all we had a bathe then the lunch started. After lunch we were allowed to do what we liked. Some masters joined in in cowboys and Indians.*

I think I held most Dragon masters pretty much as uncles too even if I was more wary of some and more respectful or more admiring of others - the same can apply

to one's near relations. I saw the staff generally as my wider family and would have had little hesitation in turning to most of them for help or support in times of trouble and need.

Another part of the familistic traditions was reflected in the well devised structures of the school. We started in houses with fewer numbers and smaller dormitories, more like bedrooms at home, before progressing to boarding life on a larger scale at School House. And there too we were graded by age into two (or was it three?) 'suppers'. This system kept younger boys apart from those who were bigger and possibly rougher; and a lack of some privileges which went with being a junior (such as not being allowed to go to certain entertainments) was an acceptable small cost. Similarly the inter-games system (described in chapter 9) prevented exposure of a younger boy to the pressures of playing formal games with others who were larger and more capable - and saved him from potential physical or psychological damage. In playground and most informal games, boys were left alone to get on with it by themselves, but accounts of staff show that a kindly eye and supervision, even if long distance, was present.

The Lynams also had a wonderful knack of recruiting staff capable of inspiring enthusiasm not only in classrooms or on the playing fields but across the board of school life, from chess to gardening, or model aeroplanes to Gilbert and Sullivan, as Patrick Lepper, OD, commented in a letter to me in May 2011, *...the Dragon was the most marvellous nurturer of that eagerness that exists in most boys of prep-school age. This was the key thing, and it was adapted to boys of vastly different abilities and interests. The Dragon drew something out of everyone. It was a phenomenally successful exponent of comprehensive education... I thought of this when I sent my son there as a dayboy, and I dare say it was my parents' view too.*

Another spin-off from the friendly relations between boys and staff, was that young Dragons could learn how to deal with grown-ups, and how to be direct without being cheeky - a rare environment for an English preparatory school in the early 1950s.

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Some other particular factors contributed to the development of my confidence in my time at the Dragon. I had been brought up in an atmosphere of school-mastering on both sides of my family (see Chapter 1, Whence Jamie Came) and I had absorbed by osmosis a lot about boarding school life prior to my arrival at the Dragon. In addition, two months spent with my Bruce Lockhart grandparents at Sedbergh, in the summer of 1949, gave me some practical idea of how a boarding house worked as well as experience of being away from my parents. A family background of school-mastering, however, may also have had a subsequent downside in heightened pressures of expectations - something of which I may have been particularly conscious as the oldest of the next generation. Another factor in acceptance of the boarding school way of life was that many of my acquaintances at home in Germany, the children of my father's diplomatic and military colleagues, were also going off to boarding school. It was what you did. With respect to boarding school as an option, I sometimes wonder whether I might have developed differently, or in other directions, had I been a dayboy (with parents at home). I rather doubt it because so many other factors apply, but in any case the option was not on offer.

As already mentioned, I benefited from having my Hone grandparents living only a quarter of a mile away from the school, and being already well acquainted with North Oxford. Sandy and I were quasi-dayboys, and we were on familiar territory. And 2 Bellbroughton Road was in every way an attractive and comfortable second

home. You can sense my pleasure in returning there aged just eleven after a holiday in Sedbergh, *Granny's garden is now looking absolutely beautiful with flowers and blossom. It looks just how I've imagined a garden in spring time, with the blackbirds singing ~ the apple trees half hidden with blossom.*

The proximity of the Hones allowed me to coordinate realistically in my mind all the elements of home, absent parents and school, and to see the connections in a positive light. Belbroughton Road formed the vital link, and helped me gain confidence quickly in my first terms at the Dragon - in comparison, say, with some other boarders who might have suffered feelings at that stage of dislocation and disorientation.

Another aspect of Dragon life was the possibility of identifying with Oxford more widely; and we followed Oxford University rugby and cricket teams to which there were connections through Dragon staff, just as schoolboys everywhere in England support their local football team today. There were also Old Dragons at schools, for instance at St Edward's, nearby who carried the Dragon name with them for us. This was one advantage of being in a school which was part of a town, and a university town at that; in addition we had our train station with its direct and relatively close London link and our own local but nationally known industries such as Morris Cowley, Pressed Steel and Cooper's processed foods

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Another source of support, especially in difficult times, came from accessing diverse imaginative worlds - through reading, films, hobbies and all kinds of creative games. Class work and life at school is testing and tiring, and relief from the pressures involved by recourse to such parallel private worlds of the imagination helped us develop a sense of balance. Some boys are more receptive to them than others, but for me I think it was not so much the destination that mattered but the pleasure of being absorbed in the process itself. When I was down with a serious bout of 'flu in December 1953, for example, I reported home, *I am reading all kinds of books, 3 Buchan, 2 Agatha C. All jolly good.*

As is described in Chapter 6, the Dragon enthusiastically encouraged reading of all kinds at all stages of our progression through the school - from the *Dragon Book of Verse*, a wonderful companion, to all kinds of serious literature and even to (certain) comics. There were also plenty of richly imaginative hobbies and games we pursued indoors or out, at school or at home - board games, solo games, table games of all kinds, games with toys and a host of private hobbies, pastimes and interests (described at length in Chapters 10 and 11). All of these contributed to a rich interior life as well as representing important forms of rest and recreation.

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Part of developing a sense of identity, perhaps more at later than in earlier years at the Dragon, came in the form of responses to worlds outside ourselves - and outside the Dragon, but explored at the Dragon through our peers, the staff and our life and school work there. As we grew up we began to identify with some things and reject others.

In the first place there was our own family. I was proud of my parents, of the sporting prowess of my father of which we saw something (he was a regular winner of golf and tennis tournaments in Germany), and of his seemingly important job with staff who deferred to him. I was proud of my family and of the sporting achievements of many Bruce Lockhart relatives, and Uncle Logie was still playing rugby for Scotland when I was at the Dragon. I was proud of my mother's good looks, her smart appearance, quick wit and humorous friends, and her gifts as a

horse-rider, and formerly as a gymnast (she enjoyed showing off at vaulting gates). I was proud of my grandfather Hone, tall, elegant and distinguished in his old age, and of Granny Hone who was wise and always beautifully turned out. This sort of pride engenders confidence. Sandy's and my only regret was that my father never played in a Father's match, despite our efforts to get him on parade.

As to outsiders, we became conscious of what we were not in a couple of ways. I think I was a kind of snob, not in the Jane Austen social sense but in the sense of seeing and accepting differences as part of life. I saw the structures of society as being preordained and fairly immutable (and was accustomed from Germany to having several servants attached to the household). At the same time I was aware of a duty to help the less fortunate, for instance with respect to the Boys' Clubs of Rugby or Bermondsey.

I suspect I was a snob with respect to 'oiks' in the town but without really knowing what the distinction meant, or what if anything I was going to do about it. I was reasonably enthusiastic about revolution in history but in a romantic rather than practical sense. I am not aware, however, nor see any evidence in the letters, of having had racist tendencies.

There was also identification with the Dragon itself. I was proud of the school and the achievements of its boys and Old Dragons. I was aware of it when going out from school, especially in a group - whether to church or to a play, down town, to Portmeadow to skate, to the Thames to picnic or as Dragon ambassadors to companies and institutions on school expeditions. I liked the Dragon badges, the gold and blue colours, the paraphernalia of first teams. I felt pride in ODs fallen in two great world wars, and in the achievements of current staff (such as J.C. Marshall's sporting career, or Gerd Summerhoff's nationally celebrated inventions). I made these things my own, and thereby derived another form of support in the process of going through school and growing up.

With respect to girls, I was probably on the male chauvinist side of the scale. Having a brother with whom I shared everything and no sisters at home, and only one girl among the half dozen cousins I spent time with at Dragon age, I did not have much knowledge or understanding of girls. My attitude at the Dragon probably shifted slowly from not being aware of any difference, through thinking they were 'fleb' and not very good at games, to finding them companionable and then to being intrigued and wanting to know more. Time came when I wanted to sit next to them, overcome by strange longings - all those curls, freckles and shapes with bumps - but without fully knowing why or how to express them.

Without doubt I identified with my country. I was not tested as to whether it was my country right or wrong, but I was a convinced patriot. The Dragon, like most private boarding schools in the early 1950s was traditional in outlook and slow to change. It needed Suez in 1956 to kick-start post a change. Thus the atmosphere reflected, perhaps more than some day schools, the wishes of parents and staff as formed by the Zeitgeist of the 1920s to 1930s and moulded by the experiences of two world wars, in particular the recent war and its immediate aftermath. There may indeed still have been a hankering for Edwardian days. The Lynams were liberals compared to, say, the Arnolds and Vaughans of Rugby School, but the ethos of the Dragon School still reflected the precepts of Gilbert and Sullivan and Remembrance Day and a world outlook of the heroes of Buchan or Henty. This tendency was of course also reinforced by the fact that the parents of a good number of boys worked or were involved in the British Empire.

If the Dragon was yet one other institution formed in the late nineteenth century to create and train rulers of empire, I doubt that we thought about it very much as

boys at the school. We may have taken it for granted by the time we left the Dragon that many of us were likely to take leading roles in society, state and government; and we saw ourselves as superior and headed for careers of note. In that sense we may have seen ruling the empire as being a rather normal Dragon destiny – and some of our lectures and lessons (history or geography) seemed to reconfirm our natural place in the Empire. For myself, my cousin Sir Evelyn Hone was at that time governor of Northern Rhodesia, Great Uncle Rob Lockhart was Director of Land Forces in Malaya, a former Commander in Chief of the Indian army. The concept of empire was also linked in our minds with the glamorous world of exploration – in which my mother's cousin Sebastian Snow had established the source of the Amazon and my Hone grandmother's cousin Sandy Irving had perished on Everest with George Mallory in 1924. In a vague way I think we hoped to follow in those footsteps, rather than become a potter or poet, business executive or scientist. Indeed, one of the problems for our transitional generation of the 1950s was being left with aspirations that could no longer be valid.

In a small way, I felt a Scottish identity too. I was an Anglo-Scot, but my Bruce Lockhart grandfather's generation were most definitely Scots and my father's considered themselves Scots. It was easy to believe, and I was taught to be a proud Scottish nationalist by my father and Bruce Lockhart grandparents. I had indeed worn a kilt as a child and was measured up for one in my last summer holidays before going to Sedbergh – in Scotch House in Knightsbridge. A proud day.

And what about God? I was for him. At Dragon age I was a bit overcome by the thought of an omnipresent, all seeing power which watched over us, and occasionally liked the comforting thought of a benevolent deity who could help and understand. I was an old fashioned traditional English churchman, and liked to worship in a recognisable House of God with Gothic vaulting, stained glass and echoing music. I wonder whether religion was perhaps in some confusion in the early 1950s; whether the war years might have caused a revival which overtook the earlier Lynam preference to exclude religion from the Dragon agenda, even Low church Anglicanism.

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In all these ways the Dragon provided a structure of traditions and practices which allowed space for growing up and finding one's own way to self awareness and a sense of identity. A boy needs space, support and self-confidence to tackle those more elusive but more important aspects of development of mind and morals.

We learnt by direct lessons and example about use of language and communication skills. This was a weak suit for me, and I benefited from practice in supportive surroundings to get off to a start. Sandy's letters give a good account of how he came to terms with giving talks in school and reading the lesson in the Dragon's Sunday services. The Dragon was also very good at teaching boys how to observe one's surroundings, ask intelligent questions and draw their own conclusions, all part of making up one's own mind about the world we lived in. The General Knowledge and Seek and Find tests described in Chapter 5 are good examples; so in a sense were the expeditions for boarders (Chapter 6)

The Dragon actively encouraged an interest in social and political issues of the day through lectures, debates, facilities for reading newspapers and listening to the wireless as well as in lessons and opportunities to quiz masters. Some boys were more interested and attuned than others, and day boys perhaps more so than boarders on average, but I suspect that the level of my interest in and understanding of the world beyond Bardwell Road was in general rather low.

I paid some attention to current affairs as presented to me at school even if they get few mentions in letters home. On a more routine basis, however, my interest was probably rather superficial and directed chiefly to events of national note, such as King George VI's funeral or the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, or sensationalist interest - the sinking of great ships, the last hanging in Britain, the drama of the 1953 floods on the East coast. It was much the same at home where my father would complain, 'Don't you boys know anything about what's going on in the world?' and we would then be made to listen to the news, and be questioned and given explanations. But such lessons did not last very long. We no doubt learned something about social conditions and political life in Britain from discussions round the table at Belbroughton Road or at Sedbergh (although I suspect that both grandparents aimed off for our age.) The father of my friend Robert Acland was an MP, which was impressive but I do not recall any interest on my part in his or any other parliamentary politics. In short, I do not think Sandy or I were much aware of social, national or international political issues while at the Dragon. In this area I was not very grown up at the age of 13.

Perhaps typically for our age, our interest was more in practical and physical things we admired in the grown-up world such as Mr Hornby's 2 ½ litre Bristol or his enticing collection of rare and complicated watches with many dials and luminous hands.

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As we grew up through these processes we were slowly learning all the time how to address problems, and solve them, starting in a small way, observing peers and staff, while confidence grew.

A similar process was at work, at home as well as at the Dragon, in the more intangible and equally important aspects of growing up such as learning how to address problems and solve them and in the acquisition of a set of values. In both areas we began by observing the actions of staff, and of our peers, and subconsciously making up our own mind. We were helped towards an understanding of values indirectly through our lessons, history and literature as well as through chapel and divinity studies. Or indirectly through games and sports on the playing fields or by the Cherwell, such an important training ground for life, as described in Chapter 9.

The Dragon also provided a solid framework for learning to accept discipline, self discipline and responsibility and to understand the need to be direct and honest in dealings with others. It was built into the affairs of house and dormitory, class room and playground through supervision and encouragement by Dragon staff. These are delicate areas for the personal development of a growing boy at home as well as at school and lie at the very heart of what education is all about. The Dragon provided a firm foundation and did us proud.

* I have already given an account of my journey to self awareness as seen through my (and Sandy's) letters home in Chapter 4, and will therefore confine myself to only a few remarks here.

In the first place I faced a puzzle over my name. The use of nicknames at school and at home, and choices in referring or speaking to other boys by first name, family soubriquet, second name or nickname, are not insignificant issues for a growing boy. In my case I arrived at school as James but left as Jamie. The change took place at the start of my fourth year.

When I was an infant my mother referred to me as James (chosen by her after James Montrose, a biography of whom she was reading at the time of my birth, and

to counter my father's preference for more abstruse names of his Seaforth regimental colleagues). My Bruce Lockhart grandparents however referred to me as Jamie, perhaps emphasizing the Scottish dimension, At the Dragon I signed myself as James in all my letters until November 1952 when I had occasion to write a thank-you letter to Kate Shands, my mother's closest friend in Virginia, USA, and signed it rather formally as 'Yours sincerely, Jamie Bruce Lockhart'.

There was an American factor here. I had come to feel in our American holiday that in the USA, the name James was essentially a music hall name, applied to a butler or chauffeur; and the proper American name was Jim. But the latter name, though fashionable in Britain in the earlier part of the century, was not so popular in the 1950s. I don't think I knew any Jims. But during my holidays at Sedbergh my Bruce Lockhart grandparents continued to call me Jamie, pronounced by my grandfather with a light Scottish burr. This provided me with a solution to the James-Jim-Jamie problem; and since my parents were abroad, consultation was not possible. Thus I signed myself as Jamie in my first letter home from Sedbergh in the Christmas holiday of 1952; and James never reappears.

Sandy, in a mirror image, referred to me in his letters as James until December 1952, after which it was Jamie, with only a couple of exceptions, perhaps when a little formality with our parents was required, such as when describing a birthday present he had given me and when reporting in November 1953, across the top of the page in capital letters, JAMES HAS GOT HIS COLOURS FOR THE FIRST XV. After that I remained Jamie at home and at school until later in my Sedbergh School years when Sandy and I began to call each other 'J' and 'S' (touched no doubt by public schoolboy embarrassment over use of first names), and our parents eventually succumbed to the habit.

Judging by my letters home, I think I can say that I was developing some self awareness and beginning to create my own identity vis a vis the world outside me by the age of eleven and a quarter. I had started to take decisions about my place in the world around me - in the school dorm, form or playgrounds and with respect to my preferred activities, choice of friends or sense of humour and of what was worthwhile. I was thus starting to see that I was part of a wider social network, and was finding my place in the tribe - and reasonably content with it. By the age of thirteen I think I was well conscious of being a certain person, having empathies, dislikes, and a place somewhere between the leaders and the led. I was becoming aware of how I fitted in and was conscious of an identity.

Two small points strike me as interesting here. This change from 'puppy stage' to the building of an identity coincided with the period when my parents were furthest away (in USA) and unlikely to visit out of the blue. This fact itself may have contributed to the growing up process: you know you cannot refer, so you have to decide yourself. Second, Sandy's letters reveal his arrival at the state of self awareness at almost exactly the same age - despite the fact that he was dyslexic: another proof if any was needed, that development of personality and development of the ability to read and write are not related.

Our letters home (see Chapter 4) give a fair account of our progress to self-awareness. A striking example is a parenthetical remark at the end of a report home in June 1952 of an incident on the Cherwell which led to the drowning of a schoolboy (not a Dragon), *They had just rounded the first bend when the canoe capsized ~ the younger boy really could just swim and got to the bank ~ the other was hit on the head by the canoe and drowned. 4 police men and an Ambulance came round ~ they are waiting for the body to rise. The boy who got to the shore ran away (I don't know why).*

In that term at the end of my third year there were other signs of budding self awareness in my letters home. For example, *On Friday there was a half Holl which was a great surprise to everyone*; or in being realistic about the late hour of a 'midnight fast', *In our dorm last night we had a midnight feast ~ only it was really about 10.15*. And then there was a question of whether the form could raise four swimming relay teams, *We have 3 boats and 2 spares. I [=We?] will probably get 4 boats soon. But the trouble is we have not many fast swimmers*. And soon there followed little jokes and irony, such as signing off *Love from James (fairly obviously)* [the signature with many baroque underlinings].

A sense of achievement in one or two fields by my last year no doubt contributed as well; for example in coming to terms with the clarinet, *Also I have got a new piece for the clarinet. A minuet and trio. It's a very nice piece though the minuet is rather difficult*. By 1952 my progress in form work was steady and I had grown well accustomed to boarding life in School House. I had developed an awareness of time and space in the sense of being conscious of dates of school events ahead and separation of term and holiday time, school and home in my mind. And my letters, even if composed in an unordered stream of consciousness, had something rather businesslike about them, such as at the end of that summer term,

Yesterday we had the fathers match. Pity you could not play. The fathers were in the first 128 runs - 124 both all out. The second was a draw. I went out with Robin Burleigh last on Saturday ~ we had great fun on the river. I've just finished Little Lord Fauntleroy. I thought is very good ~ I vaguely remembered it from before - What date will Daddy be here? Granny has sent for the Hamlet tickets. My match in the tennis comp was cancelled because of rain. This week it is reports. Out of my pocket money I got a book all about cricket ~ it shows all the counties and their averages and also lots of other facts about cricket. 4/6d? What club(s) did Daddy play cricket for? We are going to read through Hamlet next week in form.

Travel to and from school played a role in learning to cope with the outside world. I travelled alone to or from Germany two or three times (both by air and by train and boat) and was in charge of Sandy's and my travel a further couple of times. Even in my first term at school (October 1949) I seemed (or pretended) to be relaxed about it all, *Thank you very very much for your letter. I would prefare to go by ship and train but I don't realy mind*. I handled the tickets, passports, dealings with the travel representatives and authorities in a mature style. A photograph of my arrival at Düsseldorf Airstrip, aged ten, carrying a brief case and chatting up the air hostess, tells all.

Through these experiences I learnt to be responsible and to take charge of someone else. My questions about travel in later letters home become more grown up, looking for clarification rather than help - more on the basis of an equal partnership with parents. I wanted clearly agreed arrangements, and was worried if I did not have them, but Sandy was disadvantaged in this area, at first by having to cope with these matters less and then from a mixture of nervousness about arrangements, hyper-excitement about holidays ahead and understandable fear of travel sickness from which he suffered badly. He had grown out of it, however, by the time he moved from the Dragon to Sedbergh; and our frequent subsequent journeys together from Surrey to Yorkshire were sheer enjoyment, full of interest and fun. I enjoyed a somewhat similar progression between my first term at the Dragon and my last in the whole business of growing up.

EPILOGUE: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE DRAGON

So what, then, was the Dragon school, and behind it our families, trying to impart in a concerted effort to shape us in these important years? Alan's reflections on this are as follows.

The goal which was set before me was to become over a period of twelve years or so, between six and eighteen, an effective adult. What I was learning was how to survive and, hopefully to survive successfully, in any situation I found myself in. This was an explicit goal of both our family and our school. Yet I don't recall ever finding a detailed checklist of what it was that others thought I should be learning. Nor do I recall seeing any explicit account of where I would learn these qualities, especially the more ephemeral ones like identity, hope, and tolerance.

There were four arenas where I was to learn how to become a reasonable and responsible adult. There was the formal, classroom, teaching, first at kindergarten and then at the Dragon School and later Sedbergh. These were the lessons and 'preps' where I would learn skills and information which it was thought would help me. I was to learn to read, write and do arithmetic. I was to develop my abilities with foreign languages, to start to understand the history of my country and parts of Europe, to learn to appreciate literature, to learn the basics of geography, of science and divinity. This was what 'school' was officially about. Yet this is only a tiny part of what it was really making me absorb.

There were a number of areas where I was both formally taught in classes, but also practiced and explored outside class, both at the Dragon and at home with my family. These included drawing and painting, musical appreciation and singing, dancing, making things in wood and clay, acting and making speeches. These were subjects on which I had termly reports but were more widely practiced.

These various formal lessons were also meant to teach me to think and act in a way which would make me effective in whatever I later did. Much of the application of what I learnt was in the playground or other public space, in the arena of games and sports, and at home. So I was to learn to be persuasive - rhetoric - to be analytical, to be able to compare and contrast, to summarize and synthesize, to be logical, to concentrate for periods on a problem. Many of these skills were as useful in marbles as in Latin.

I was to learn a number of skills and virtues which were encouraged and practiced in all of the settings I inhabited. I should be self-confident - but not arrogant. I should be ambitious, but not too directly assertive. I should be full of hope about the future, whatever my experiences of the past. I should be filled with curiosity and delight, but also prepared for long periods of tedious and boring effort and patient waiting. So I should be dogged and persevering, yet realize when further effort was futile. I should be resilient, so that minor and even major setbacks did not destroy my will. I should strongly desire to win and overcome if I could, yet I should also be prepared to concede defeat graciously and without bitterness or self-doubt. I should be ingenious and original, yet be aware of the rules by which effort in any sphere must be guided.

I should be highly individual, confident in my own identity, self-conscious about who I was, keeping my private counsel, not dependent on others to prop me up. Yet I should also be a good team-player, sociable, affectionate, knowing when to share and when to keep to myself. I should be serious about serious matters, but also have a developed sense of the ridiculous, a humour which could tease and reduce

tension, and an ability to attack power or stupidity through irony and satire.

I should be charming when charm was needed, but also be prepared to be stern and to say no if that was required. I should be certain of my own values and priorities, but also tolerant and understanding of others who did not share them. I should manage my time carefully so as not to waste it, yet also be able to relax, to conserve energy and re-charge myself, to forget the internal clock and to enter timelessness. Thus I should learn how to save time, and how to spend it, how to prioritize what was important, how to do several things quickly one after the other, or even at the same time.

I should learn to appreciate beauty in all its forms, in art, poetry, music, nature, and people. Yet I should not be dismissive of the poor, the ugly, the deformed, and the miserable. I should value people for themselves and not for their externals, whether of wealth, success, force of character, family background. I should learn the art of friendship and the judging of character and how to face the loss of friendship. I should treat people as ends and not as means, how to separate head and heart, how to tell the truth, but also to refrain from telling the truth or to tell lies with good intent.

I was to learn how to handle relationships with people who were very different from us – girls, adults, foreigners, and people from other social classes or different occupations. In these I should show generosity, courtesy without condescension, interest without prurience. I should not think of myself as either superior or inferior, but equal, though through pure chance I might have more material and social advantages.

I should be able to assess the likely outcomes of my actions, the general degree of risk in any activity and whether it was worth taking. I should be courageous and ready to do dangerous things, but not foolhardy and so that I put others or myself in unnecessary danger.

So, to summarize, we were to be filled with good emotions. This was especially important. Good emotions included things like self-confidence, cheerfulness, overcoming of loneliness, the art of attracting people to one's personality, and of being attracted by them, the arts of love, hate, detachment and attachment. This is a complex web and particularly difficult because the natural place to develop these emotions, the family, was largely replaced for boarders in an artificially generated settings, the new 'quasi-family' of the school. Something which was constructed and non-family had to take on some of the warmth and intensity of the blood family.

Given the huge emphasis on the physical disciplining of children, the games, sports, toughening up and beating, it is clear that much of school life was to do with toughening the body. This made sense in a world of pre-modern medicine, inadequate heating or cooling, limited food in many remote parts of the globe. This meant that the body had to be really tough and inured to pain to survive. It should be trained to enjoy the physical excitements of sports and games if one was going to overcome the stultifying boredom and loneliness. We should strive hard to be good at games, and respect those who were. But again we should keep this in moderation. Modesty in our achievements, putting more emphasis on commitment and effort rather than attainment, was encouraged. Sport and games were a necessary part of growth, but they could be over emphasized.

I should learn how to swim, how to run and jump, how to walk, how to sit, how to sleep, how to go to the toilet, how to wash and keep myself clean. I should learn to be nimble and balanced, poised and pleasant to be with. I should learn how to eat properly and to speak properly, that is appropriately for my social background. But equally I should not scorn those who did these things differently.

I should learn how to shoot, how to boat, how to ride a bike and many other practical applications of bodily skills. I was to learn how to face pain and sickness without flinching, how to accept nakedness and being with others when I was naked. I should learn how to deal with sexual desires, as well as hunger and thirst. I should learn how to be confident in travelling about - whether it was from room to room or from England to India.

I should learn how to compete fiercely, to defend myself, to fight and to conquer. I should become physically strong, yet gentle with it, not to be a bully or too competitive. I should learn how to give and to receive graciously and with gratitude. I should learn to share my good fortune with others, but also not to boast or triumph over those around me. I should learn not to envy others or feel hurt by their successes, but rather enlarged by their happiness. I should learn how to say no and how to say yes, without giving offence or causing jealousy. We should learn how to mourn our losses, to feel grief deeply, yet also to be brave and able to comfort others.

I should learn how to remember things that were important to remember and practice the art of memory, but equally I should be able to forget, or at least lock away what I needed not to remember, a kind of constructive amnesia. I should learn to see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil, like the three wise monkeys. Yet I should also enjoy the pleasures of gossip and shared intimacies.

Complementing all of this, though different, was the good spiritual life which I was being gradually introduced to. This was wider than formal Christianity, though that was a part of it. We were to learn to believe in the value of the human spirit, wherever it was manifested, and to ponder on the meaning of life. We should try to spread good Christian values through practice rather than precept, or as Gandhi would say, a rose does not need to advertise itself, it just smells sweet.

So I should espouse a set of broadly gentlemanly, Christian, ethics and moral standards. We should learn love, hope and charity, turning the other cheek, honesty even when no-one was looking, doing 'small, unremembered acts of kindness and of love'. Our moral system should be within us and not followed because of fear or external controls. This might lead to loneliness, but we should learn to face loneliness. It might lead to lost opportunities for gain and advancement. But we should remember that our rewards were a better sense of self-worth, as well, perhaps, in heaven. So we were being taught the deepest qualities - how to love, how to hate, what to value, what to scorn, who we were and what we should become.

In all this striving and balancing of contrary ideals of feeling, thought and action, we should never lose the ability to slip off into the delights and ecstasies of imagined and imaginary worlds which had been created by a host of great thinkers and artists. A land of delight which we could also learn to create for ourselves through our developing skills, whether a beautifully executed football shot, a small fish extracted from a stream, or a moment when we wrote something of which we did not think ourselves capable.

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Several things surprise me about what I now realize I was learning. One is the degree to which many of the values and goals clashed and therefore how much judgement had to be exercised. One should be strong and competitive and brave and forceful, but also not bully, not worry about being defeated by someone better, be co-operative and kind. This is just one amongst many of these clashes alluded to above. So we were always learning how to walk tightropes, the sorts of middle way between unacceptable extremes which Pope dissects in his 'Essay on Man'. 'Placed

on this isthmus of a middle state', 'created half to rise and half to fall, great lord of all things, yet a prey to all, sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled'. We were indeed, as I learnt Pope's poem in the 'Dragon Book of Verse' in these years 'the glory, jest and riddle of the world'.

The other thing which strikes me is that we were learning all these skills simultaneously in so many ways and so many places. A game of football taught honesty, co-operation, courage, humour, risk assessment, logic and perhaps even rhetoric, just as much as playing marbles in the playground, or a part in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, or our formal classes or the sermons and lectures we heard. And what happened at school was complemented by our home life, where we would practice and develop many of the skills - bearing pain in illness, bicycling, shooting, dealing with girls, learning friendship and how to deal with adults. So it was a very complex package, where the example of others, the ethos and ethics of the institutions, the organization of different activities, the encouragement and disincentives we received, all influenced us in a multi-dimensional way.

At the time, of course, I had little clue of what was happening. I just lived it and had little time or comparative knowledge to understand what powerful pressures were being put on each of us. Only now, after a life of studying the anthropology and history of doing all these things differently, can I begin to disentangle a little of what was going on. As I do so, I realize that I was fortunate in many ways since I was probably given as good an education as was possible at that time.

On the other hand, I can see why I wandered around with an anxious frown, was small and quite shy and quiet, except on the rigger field. I was undergoing a vast battering with new ways of thinking and doing which I had to learn fast. For me, in the end, the effect has been mostly positive. But some boys who went through what was a crash course in the creation of imperial rulers found it too much and never recovered. Probably I was saved above all by the warmth and support I received from my family, especially my mother and grandparents, and my young uncle Robert. So I survived - and here I am.

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In these and other areas the child was being shaped into a sort of model of the English gentleman. He (and sometimes she) was to be tough, trustworthy, humorous, self-deprecating, clever, a leader of men, individualistic yet a team player, able to overcome obstacles in the most difficult situations, a survivor and a true Christian Knight. Bits of these models are in Chaucer and in Shakespeare and through our teaching in literature we were given instruction. But much of it was to be instilled into us more indirectly. And against all of these models we could set the model of the bad life - the bad sport, the liar, the fanatic, the bully, the libertine, the toady, the swot, the cheat.

Two portraits of the ideal type written by old Dragons fill out this picture. The first is part of some notes written for his daughter by Pat Cotter in 1939. Cotter describes the ideal set before him by one of the teachers, Gilbert Vassal ('Cheese'). 'Cheese's standard of conduct was a simple one; his Good Man was one who was generally believed to be faithful to his wife and reasonably sober, who looked you in the eye and told the truth at awkward times, who was either good at work or games or had enough sense of humour to make you forgive him his incompetence in either (preferably not both) of these respects. This Good Man could be modest about all these accomplishments, and Cheese in his turn was modest about his athletic distinction, his looks, and his prestige both in the school and in the University. My description of his standards may be cynical, my feelings about

Cheese are not. He was and is a gentleman ... and boys from the school do not commonly lose their respect for him as they grow older and discern his failings.¹

The other is John Betjeman's 'Percival Mandeville', whom he encountered at the Dragon School.²

'Percival Mandeville, the perfect boy,
Was all a schoolmaster could wish to see -
Upright and honourable, good at games,
Well-built, blue-eyed; a sense of leadership
Lifted him head and shoulders from the crowd.
His work was good. His written answers, made
In a round, tidy and decided hand,
Pleased the examiners. His open smile
Enchanted others. He could also frown
On anything unsporting, mean or base,
Unworthy of the spirit of the school
And what it stood for.'

As for whether my family and the Dragon succeeded in filling me with these lofty ideals and emotions, many conflicting and some of dubious value, I leave others to decide. Certainly it was a compelling vision of the supposed good life, and one which would continue in somewhat different forms into my public school and university education.

Jamie's reflections

There is not a great deal of direct evidence on the subject of Dragon education in the 1950's in Sandy and my letters home and I would prefer to avoid discussions of theory, so my thoughts below must be considered little more than reasonably informed speculation. But the absence of comment in the letters of a prep school boy on classrooms, lessons and learning, teachers and subjects taught or on the inwardnesses of teaching and management of a school, is hardly surprising and probably rather reassuring - fascinating as the subject of omissions from letters home may be.

Remarks in our letters home are for the most part genial references to staff, to masters reading books, telling ghost stories, patrolling dormitories, joining in games and sports, organising picnics, sports or evening entertainments, handing out impots or setting yet another stinker of a grammar test. I make very few mentions of the core subjects, Latin, English or Maths, but a little more about the minor subjects such as geography and science. Comments occur on the maintenance of discipline, such as the acceptability of a score of 14 out of 20 in Yato's tests. In fact the absence of comment shows that we regarded classroom life as all very ordinary. A contrary case certainly would have been worth writing home about - outbreaks of leniency, failure to set prep for example and unusual events, such as or absences of a teacher through illness, of reading instead of having lessons, do get remarked upon. So we

¹ *Our Father. Pat Cotter*, Compiled for the Dragon School by Helen Stell, younger daughter of Patrick Cotter, October 2005 [Dragon School Archive]

² Betjeman, *Summoned by Bells*, 43

have to read between the lines a bit.

It seems to me that the basic aims of education at the Dragon were in essence those of other boarding preparatory schools of the time. Nothing in the content and tenor of my school reports for example stands out as odd. But the Dragon was not an average school. It addressed those aims sometimes in different ways from other schools, and it pursued new or additional objectives and used new and different means to achieve them as well.

All British prep schools in the early 1950s stressed upbringing as much as school work; education thus dealt with emotional and spiritual training as well as the training of the mind and the body (*mens sana in corpore sano*). Middle class parents of the day endorsed this aim. But parents with a few exceptions tend to see education in the context of their own upbringing; and our parents were brought up in a very particular environment in the years between the two wars. Britain, gasping for breath after the First World War, was working hard to re-establish its imperial past and restore its international power at the same time as struggling to come to terms with modern social and cultural concepts. It was a period of anxiety and change, and there was probably a natural preference for education to be soundly embedded in the Victorian muscular Christian tradition.

Education at the Dragon in 1950s was also elitist. Parents, staff - and boys - saw it as a first step along the road (via a decent public school and university, probably Oxbridge) to producing a new generation of men and women able to run the country. The upper middle class wanted more people like themselves to man and administer Britain's institutions - the civil service, law, city and industry, armed, imperial and foreign services, the church, academe - and of course yet more talented educators. Ideas of empire and the international projection of British military and economic-commercial power were live and well notwithstanding the withdrawal from India and the scoffing of imperial instincts by the Goon Show (first shown in 1951) - at least until the Suez debacle of 1956. This was the setting for my school upbringing.

Within this framework, however, another strand of thinking was becoming more influential, a new post-war liberal outlook. Michael Frayn referred in an essay on the Festival of Britain published in 1964 to the division of vocal British society at this time broadly into two classes, the 'Herbivores' and the 'Carnivores'.¹ The Herbivores (The Guardian, Observer, the BBC and the signers of petitions) he saw as happily munching the grass on the rich pastures which were their natural station in life while guiltily conscious of their advantages and full of sorrow for the less fortunate; the Carnivores on the other hand (the Daily Express, the cast of the Directory of directors, the Evelyn Waughs) were those who believed they had a God-given right to prey on weaker and smaller creatures (at home or abroad).

North Oxford of the early 1950s was Herbivore heartland - an environment which probably influenced educational policy at the Dragon where the Lynams were already on the liberal wing of the inter-wars variant (as carried out by their friend W.W. Vaughan at Rugby) of the traditional muscular Christian outlook and principles of Thomas Arnold. And yet, the school was not fully Herbivore; it was more geared for instance to producing critics of literature, fine art and music than poets, sculptors or composers. The Dragon's cultural heritage was perhaps, like much else in Britain, a little confused in 1950, and Joc was no doubt finding his own

¹ Michael Frayn, 'Festival' in *The Age of Austerity 1945-51*, eds. Sissons, M. and P. French (Penguin, 1964)

way forward in the post war world.

The traditions of Arnold did not fit comfortably into the second half of the twentieth century. At the Dragon there was no jingoism and no school chapel. On the other hand, our geography lessons were still largely about the economic resources of the dominions; principles of *pro bono patriae* and patriotism were strongly endorsed in lectures, many films and on national occasions as well as on Remembrance Day, and there were readings from the Bible and prayers every morning in School House. Thus the prevailing mood of North Oxford - dispassionate, a little sceptic, a little agnostic - counted for something but not everything at Bardwell Road. The upshot was that the education I received in 1949-1954 was probably somewhere between Carnivore and Herbivore.

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If you had asked my father at the time what he wanted for his children from the Dragons, he would have said 'the best education today that money can buy'. He would have turned to the Dragon on the basis of references from people he trusted, and the reputation of the school, especially in schoolmaster circles from which he came (both he and his father had taught at Rugby), as the best Prep school in the country.

As to his aims for us, I think he wanted his sons to go into the professions where they could 'make a contribution to what makes the world go round'. This meant a career running things that mattered at home or quite possibly but not necessarily abroad (say, a colonial police force for Sandy, the Royal Navy, Hudson's Bay Company or schoolmastering for me, but architecture he thought was rather too wishy-washy). To this career we would bring integrity, decisiveness, fairness and firmness. He expected the Dragon to instil in us high moral standards, gentlemanly virtues and sporting instincts - and at least a small gift for games.. These were the terms in which he spoke to Sandy and me in around 1955. We need not go into the detail here.

I do not know how much further his thinking went at the time, nor how he got on with Joc, although a message to the latter at the time of my arrival made it clear that he expected the school to kick me into shape - I was too self centred. From letters to my mother as well as to Sandy and me he seemed to generally endorse what was on offer at Bardwell Road, even if he was rather surprised by the amount of time we spent on films or dancing lessons rather than prep.

* The Dragon was different from other prep schools in three important respects - its very large size, the high proportion of day children (about half) and its Oxford-home counties catchment. In addition, even if obvious, nothing succeeds like success: the Dragon was very successful.

The Dragon was not strictly comparable with the average English prep school because it was far from a closed society. The whole school, and boarders in particular, were directly and indirectly influenced by the daybug factor. Sandy and I ourselves indeed were in a kind of half way situation having grandparent guardians barely half a mile from the school in Belbroughton Road.

Second, the school benefited from being able to muster resources on an enormous scale in comparison with the average small prep school with typically something between 70 and 120 boys - and it used them extremely well. Most significantly, the school's resources combined with its special Oxford connections allowed the recruitment of staff of the very highest quality.

The Oxford dimension was enormously important. The University provided the Dragon with an academic, social and cultural hinterland not available to a lone

standing prep school in the depths of rural England. Some of the leading members of the next generation of men and women with a vocation for teaching came to the Dragon for a spell as assistants. Oxford also provided potential overseers, connections and consultants from the colleges or through visitors (my schoolmaster uncles, for example, appeared in Oxford for HM Conference meetings, or for deliberations on, say, the teaching of French). In addition, the proximity of other high quality preparatory schools (Summerfields) and public schools (St Edward's, Radley) drew young educationalists, and pupils indeed, of quality to the region.

As to attracting high quality pupils, the Dragon catchment stretched easily to central London (one hour by train and a regular service) and across the western home counties where dormitory communities were expanding into the countryside in the post war boom. Its size and Oxford location appealed in addition to distant parents not only from the empire. The Dragon was a big school which could afford to think big, and that is exactly what Joc did.

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What was on offer at the Dragon? I doubt whether Joc, Hum and their senior staff or other advisers were thinking in terms of preparing boys to run the empire or man the colonial service - even if a fair number of parents assumed this was an aim. The Lynams could, I believe, see technological change round the corner, the importance of science and business in Britain's future, the new economic realities and the rapidly altering social fabric of Britain. In that post-war dawn they were most likely already (if only half-consciously) aware of the world's move into structural functionalism with its emphasis on modern biology, economic, technological and scientific structures and its relativism in place of ethno-centricism. Faced with such changes, the Dragon rightly concentrated its efforts on offering a first class, rounded, broad based education. And that is precisely what the majority of the parents wanted too.

The key ingredient in such an education was, in my view, to teach the pupils to take responsibility and to see things as they really are. Central to Dragon education an emphasis on clear thinking, rightly considered essential for both academic progress and moral understanding. At all levels in the school and in all subjects, there was, I believe, an insistence on learning to face the facts squarely - in every sense (in life and in class) and to think clearly in making assessments and identifying the real issues underlying any problem. This attitude lay behind the school's approach to learning grammar, writing summaries or appreciations or tackling mathematical puzzles. Similarly in questions of morality, we were taught to try to go to the heart of a matter realistically aware of difficulties to be faced and overcome. (I do not think that the Dragon called us more subtly to quizzical questioning, a subversive attitude to the establishment or skill at lateral thinking.)

This was a preparation for any walk of life, as were the other important ingredients of a 'broad based' education, such as learning how to learn, how to develop an enquiring mind, to be constantly observant and to rely on empirical evidence; how to select and recall, not merely to parrot. Here there was an issue of choice. The school excelled at showing boys possible new interests or fields for endeavour and fanning small sparks of enthusiasm or aptitude - but it was nevertheless essentially left to us boys to choose and follow up or not. Spoon feeding was not the Dragon way. It was a very grown up school.

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At a narrower level, we learnt of course by rote and recitation, by following and repeating explanations, by (endless) repetition of points of Latin and French

grammar, slow patient steps through scientific experiments, by tests, prep and corrections in class, by debate and discussion in class and in other activities. (Were cyclo-styled notes issued for several subjects?) But how did the Dragon help form my mind and outlook, sense of identity, personality, beliefs and interests? Sandy's and my letters point to a few other essential ingredients.

There was a culture of elitism and meritocracy. We learnt instinctively to endorse Dragon excellence in any field; we respected or admired equally those who excelled in any subject, chess, cricket, classics, general knowledge, skill with marbles or on the stage. There was also a strong group culture. We were proud Dragons; proud of our tribe and its achievements, a side to be supported and not let down. This culture was fostered through the many 'bonding' activities in which school, boarders in particular, became involved - from school plays to playground games - and strengthened our motivation to succeed in other activities and walks of school life.

Joc had an enlightened sense of priorities. For example, he was willing to take half holidays several days running to allow boys to enjoy ice and snow and winter sports rarely available to us. There was no question of attending classrooms for the sake of the letter of some law or norm. The same sense of proportion applied in many fields, for instance in allowing cricket matches and preparation for school plays to continue (possibly at a lower tempo or with some minor breaks) in the run-up to the scholarship exam season (Robert Acland broke his arm while at Bryanston in 1954 and had to play *Lady Macbeth* with his arm in plaster). A sense of proportion was also shown in the calm way of taking 11+ exams, but, more importantly, in presenting Common Entrance examinations not as momentous turning points in life, but as routine steps to be taken as a matter of gentle course. Keen encouragement never turned to unfair pressure to succeed.

The familistic character of the school played a vital role, maybe unique among prep schools, in easing the pressures of everyday school life and lessons. The possibility of being able to call masters by nick names, to treat them like uncles not as remote figures from a different, adult world, fundamentally altered a child's attitude to school. Staff who had kept tight discipline in class were well able to join in snowball fights and build snow forts the same afternoon. If there was pressure in class but it could be lifted outside class very quickly just as would be done by fathers, grandparents or other understanding close relations. Jocularly with the staff, in School House, in the dorm or on the playing fields, was quite in order - but not in form of course - and we knew where to draw the line. Sandy's letters contain several examples.

Pressure on boys at the Dragon was light in other ways - prep was not too long, lessons not too exhausting, impots not too harsh. We were never held down to breaking point. A slipper or hairbrush was used occasionally but not the cane. Prefects took on a small amount of cautiously delegated authority to help run the house and look after juniors, but never represented a hierarchy under which you suffered in early days and to which you aspired in your last terms as at a public school. At the same time spirits were lifted by the enormous range of activities, formal and informal constantly offering something for everybody.

This positive mix of work, games, play and hobby pursuits was a true Dragon phenomenon. The sheer size of the school, and the dayboy factor too, probably played a role. My letters show that the cheerful mix of ultimately indistinguishable ingredients gave strength to each part. Work and play became one. In other words the curriculum addressed the pupil holistically - long before the term was in vogue. Part of this mix were the multiplicity of hobbies and crazes which were not only permitted but actively encouraged - board games, solo games, rink and playground

games - the list, as we have seen, is enormous. Even ragging was acceptable up to certain agreed limits. It was your job to find out the limits. I think Sandy's dorm got into trouble after being caught ragging six times. And these activities brought us a) vital rest and recreation and a break from the mundane round and b) a grounding in a whole variety of life skills - arts of winning, losing, sharing, assertion or compromise.

Learning went beyond dry rehearsal of facts. Imaginative support came by way of background reading (historical subjects), films and lectures. Expeditions fulfilled similar functions. Extracts of Shakespearean speeches to be learnt were taken from plays being performed. In Greek, ancient history provided a welcome break from grammar. Poetry read and learnt included humorous verse as well as poems from excellent collection in the Dragon Book of Verse. The diet of learning was varied.

Another special emphasis in the Dragon educational method is reflected in the wide ranging content of the annual General Knowledge Tests - namely, learning by absorption. We learnt to pay attention, be observant and to take an intelligent interest in everything around us; we were expected to mark, learn and understand, and to ask if we did not - whatever the subject.

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I am disinclined to see Dragon education as something special to the English upper middle class. We are talking about the ingredients of excellent junior school level education by standards applied anywhere in the world. Nor do I think that the Dragon boarding education of the early 1950s was fashioned for reasons of imperial tradition or requirements. Quite simply, my parents and those of several friends who lived abroad chose high quality education and a degree of continuity at home rather than an option available to them locally in far away places, Egypt, the Gulf, Malaya, Assam or even Toronto. I doubt whether any question arose of society taking children away from their homes. The issues and motivations here are such individual matters, I do not think any general rules can be applied. (My wife in fact was enormously grateful to have been taken away from home aged about eleven because her parents were going through a divorce and she thrived in a long and successful boarding school career where life at school came to matter more than life at home.)

But what was the Dragon not so good at? It cleverly continued to cater for the adherents of the traditions of Arnold and Vaughan of old, while opening its door to a new culture. It was not so good, however, at science, engineering, modern technology, or show any leaning towards natural history, biology or medicine. Nor was the school very good at exploiting Oxford's collections of natural history and archaeology. It was better at producing thinkers (barristers, judges, administrators) than makers (engineers, inventors, designers, architects). It was not very good at producing creative artists in any sphere; it was better at making critics of the arts than sculptors or film makers. And perhaps it was in the end not quite rough and tough enough? A bit too quizzical? Too much herbivore, not enough carnivore?

Yet since I can remember only three of the classrooms in which I received it, perhaps I am not so well qualified to offer any further general comment on Dragon education. In my last year in Upper 2A I was in the first classroom on the left in old Hall and the year before that in the classroom above the Science Room at the back of New Hall. And, so far as I recall, all my other lessons took place in the wooden huts on the south side of the playground - low dark rooms with dark desks and a wide blackboard. Happy days they were, but why, I wonder, have I wiped the other classrooms from my memory? I don't think it matters: I have the letters.

AFTER THE DRAGON: ALAN, JAMIE AND SANDY

So what happened to the three of us after the Dragon - what did we make of this privileged education in our later life? Here we will give a brief account for Alan and Jamie and a longer one for Sandy.

Alan

In September 1955 (like Jamie and Sandy around the same time) I went on to Sedbergh School in Yorkshire, where my three uncles had also been. This was a tough northern boarding school with a tradition for rugby and running, set in magnificent country near to my relatively new home in the Lake District.

At Sedbergh I changed again. I grew by a foot, broadened out and my calf muscles expanded. I soon found that effort alone was not enough to take me to the top of sports and after the age of sixteen devoted less energy to rugby and cricket and dropped into the second stream. Instead I developed passionate hobbies, in particular fishing. I could fish both in the Lake District and Sedbergh and learnt the joys of fly-fishing and the excitement of the deep shaded pool and the struggle with sea trout.

I also learnt the guitar. These were pivotal years with the end of after-war austerity and the rise of electronic music and the start of youth culture. All was changing and I became an enthusiastic part of it, playing rock, skiffle, blues and 'folk' in an enthusiastic if amateurish way. In parallel I started to love classical music.

My academic work suddenly took off too as I began to be involved in poetry, drama and history. I had wonderful teachers, especially in my last two years in the Upper Sixth with Andrew Morgan and David Alban. They opened magic casements on the past and parallel literary worlds. There seemed promise of University entrance and perhaps more. I began to organize my work meticulously and to hoard my paper archives, throwing away very little from the age of sixteen.

The joy of living in Esthwaite Dale, Wordsworth's childhood valley, and wandering where he had experienced the scenes described in the 'Prelude', and then at seventeen following his footsteps on the continental tour to Italy, added to my widening sensibility. So did a second visit to Assam for my seventeenth birthday, to visit my parents who were still away for the majority of these years. I saw the horrors of Calcutta and the beauties of tribal India and both altered my life, bringing back memories of my infancy and the earlier visit from the Dragon.

With my two sisters at home, our house became a social centre for the new be-pop scene and when I got my first motorbike I suddenly started to feel the excitement of adult freedom. The search for young love added spice and I began to go out with girls. My grandparents, loving and energetic, gave me a solid home environment.

In 1960 I went to Worcester College, Oxford, to read history. If the Dragon and Sedbergh through much of their time were purgatory, or preparation, then Oxford was paradise. I made my own choices, had my own room and coffee set, was treated as a 'young gentleman', had my first serious girl friends. And the world of the Dragon slightly to the north of the College fused back into my being. I tried to retain something of the innocence and delight of pre-adulthood by reading a great deal of poetry and children's fiction. But I also began to be interested in international affairs

and politics. The religious enthusiasm of my last two years at Sedbergh increased for a while and then began to fade.

Through the winter of extreme cold and the fears of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the imminent end of the world, I kept my head down and continued to work in a highly organized and intent way. I just missed a first but did well enough to win a county exhibition to do a doctorate in history. So I stayed on another three years and under the superb guidance of Keith Thomas I wrote a thesis on witchcraft prosecutions in Tudor and Stuart England. I started to attend anthropology lectures and at the end of my doctorate felt that I should add to my training by doing a two-year Master's in anthropology - which I did at the London School of Economics.

Then came the time for my final training in anthropology - intensive field research in another culture. As I had always wanted to return to the India of my infancy and two subsequent visits, and Assam was closed because of political troubles, I went with my wife Gill to spend 15 months in a high mountain village in Nepal. There I studied the culture, economy and demography of the Gurung peoples, which, some years later, was turned into a second doctorate at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

A year after my return in 1970 I was elected to a Research Fellowship (in history) at King's College, Cambridge, so in 1971 went to take up my Fellowship. My marriage broke up and my wife and daughter set up another family. Meanwhile Sarah and her daughters joined me and we later married and continued to work together through the years.

In 1975 I started work as a Lecturer in Social Anthropology at Cambridge and subsequently became a Reader and Professor of Anthropological Science. We moved to our fenland home outside Cambridge in 1976 and have remained there since. I remained a Fellow of King's College for most of the period from 1971 and am now a Life Fellow.

In the forty years in Cambridge I published nineteen books and numerous articles. I taught generations of undergraduates and graduates from many countries and played my part in the administration of my Department and College. Sarah and I were involved in many research projects. We undertook the reconstruction of the history of an English village over five hundred years from original records.

We made an exhibition, videodisc, database and book on the Naga peoples of the Assam-Burma border. We documented the social history of the Gurung community of Nepal over a period of forty years, using film, photographs and diaries and based on eighteen visits. We visited Japan and China at least half a dozen times each. We worked on computer retrieval systems and visual anthropology. We interviewed over 180 leading thinkers in a series of films and developed a large personal web site.

The period between 1990 and 2003, in many ways the most exciting and fruitful were shared with Gerry Martin, deep friend and co-author.

Now, at the end of all this, it is time to return to the beginning. The papers I have hoarded since I was sixteen, including additional archives from my family and particularly the sparkling writings of my mother, need to be sorted out. So 'retirement' is a mixture of sorting all these out, trips down the willowed river in our small boat, wandering through the large memory garden, and enjoying our friends, family and trips to China, Nepal, Japan and elsewhere. Sharing all of this with Sarah over the years has been my greatest pleasure.

Jamie

Likewise I went to Sedbergh, following in the steps of two previous generations of Bruce Lockharts to School House. I did classics until I was four terms into the Lower VI and much enjoyed the subject under the baton of A.C. Reynell (also assistant house tutor at School House) and then switched, at parental recommendation, or was it insistence?, to modern languages, French and German. The switch over was not altogether easy, but I surprised myself and everyone else by getting to A level German in four terms, thanks to the wonderful teaching of (Jack) A.E. Hammer, and greatly enjoyed learning French with Bertie Mills and Bill Gairdner. I have the happiest memories of my last four terms in Upper VI Modern, with Graham McGlashan, Tom Boyd and Chris Marks - 'die Vier im Schweisse unsers Angesichts' [the four, by the sweat of our brow] as Tom inscribed on the back of a picture in that attractive, bright and light class room over the staff Common Room in the Old School.

I was a middling to good player of Sedbergh games. I captained the 2nd XV in my last winter, and had the added pleasure of joining some 1st XV away matches as 16th man. I exchanged cricket for tennis after Juniors level, but most of all enjoyed playing, and coaching, fives whenever I could (one trainee being my second cousin, fag and later Hart House house-master and School second Master, John Morris.) I was not a runner; in the Ten Mile race I was (just) in the middle of the field and soundly beaten by my younger brother Sandy; and on the track I did best at the 220 and put the shot reasonably well. Otherwise I had no sporting claims to fame, although I did come second in the breaststroke swimming. I was a House and School prefect, alongside my close chum, the late Colin Matthew, who was head of both. Apart from playing games and having a great deal of fun in every aspect of school life, I spent a lot of time playing music. Playing in the orchestra was a considerable commitment (and excluded a boy from other arts and crafts) but I preferred chamber music in inter-house competitions or fun.

I got a closed Exhibition to St John's Cambridge, the Lupton Hebblethwaite Exhibition. The other Sedberghian competing was my good friend and later roommate in John's, Chris Heber-Percy. There may have been other candidates from other northern schools, I am not sure. At St John's I read modern languages and then switched to Economics, partly out of reluctance to engage with Middle High German and Mediaeval French, and partly on paternal urging to do something more 'useful'. My happiest memories of German are of being taught by the wonderful J.P Stern, and his wife. Economics intrigued me and I was soon deeply interested in the economics of less developed countries. My enthusiasm for the subject must have rescued me from a third.

At this point I tried to find work in the developing world, wasting a lot of time trying to find a job in Francophone countries where, in short, Anglo-Saxons were not welcome. The upshot was that I did a year as a trainee in the Credit Lyonnais in Paris where I learnt quite a lot about banking, and brought my French to complete fluency. In the autumn of 1964 I then went as a junior officer to Kleinwort Benson, merchant bankers in the City, for three very enjoyable years at the bottom of the banking ladder. In 1966 I got engaged to Flip, whom I had met at an Embassy dance held on a bateau-mouche in Paris. At the same time I resolved to try again to get into the field of developing countries, and duly got - through the Overseas Development Ministry - a three year contract on the (eight man) staff of the Central Planning Office of the Government of Fiji to help write the country's first Five-Year Plan ready for Independence in 1971. Flip and I were married in February and went out to Fiji (by boat - a glorious delayed honeymoon) in July 1967.

They were halcyon days. I had a job I greatly enjoyed, wonderful home life (two

sons born there) and many good friends. In the Planning Office I specialised in public finances, the transport sector and the flow of funds in the economy. I was offered further employment with or through the Overseas Development Ministry but decided I was not cut out for a career in international development economics, essentially for two reasons. I was not intellectually qualified for nor professionally trained in finer economics (statistics, econometrics); second, the most exciting part of economics seemed to me to be the value-judgements involved - which are of course not the business of the adviser; and third, given the country quotas applicable to middle level jobs contract choices in an international career might be sometime limited. So I decided to go home, and found a platform from which to look around for a new start by a return to banking, in Fiji for a short spell, as an assistant manager at Citibank, then opening its first branch in the South Pacific, with an onward posting to London.

In due course I found the opening I wanted, back in the public sector, but Britain-based rather than in the international sector, and joined the Foreign Office via a late entrant scheme at the end of 1972. I served, apart from in London, in Nicosia as Press and Information Officer from 1975 to 1979, in Vienna as First Secretary from 1981 to 1985 and then as political counsellor in Lagos, Nigeria in 1985 to 1988 and finally in Bonn from 1992-1995. It was an immensely enjoyable career, and each posting, in its different way, challenging professionally and exciting personally. I then took retirement in 1996 in order to try something different while fit and ready to experiment.

The following year I went to run a small charitable trust in London, through which I was able to develop pump-priming initiatives of my own devising in the field of international peace and security. I designed and established a forum for Greek and Turkish dialogue, bringing in the Royal United Services Institute in London, as a neutral umbrella organisation and the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) in a mediation role. This informal forum, which came to act in a public advocacy role and as a private back channel for contacts between the two countries, was composed of former senior diplomats, former and current politicians (including at different times four former foreign ministers), military figures and leading academics and journalists from both countries. With support from the governments of Norway, Britain, Greece and Turkey, the Forum, formed at a time of near-breakdown of relations across the Aegean, tackled bilateral questions and some issues relating to Cyprus between 1997 and 2004. I also worked at this period on, among others, projects for economic development through private sector operations in central Africa, and ideas for a scheme for cross border political contacts in the Arab- Mediterranean zone.

During this period of semi-retirement, I worked on a series of historical writings focussed on nineteenth century travel in Africa. I transcribed and edited in three volumes the collected travel diaries of Hugh Clapperton, Commander RN (1788-1827), across the Sahara and in West Africa in the 1820s and wrote several articles on Clapperton, the Lander Brothers' remarkable Niger journey of 1830 and on the pre-colonial Africa into which they travelled. As well as work on the methodology of editing 19th century journals of travel diaries, I published a full biographical account of Clapperton's life and travels in *A Sailor in the Sahara* (IB Tauris, 2007).

Flip and I now live near the coast of north-east Suffolk, where I have held a number of exhibitions of watercolour paintings. For the past twelve summers I have regularly sailed and raced my Loch Long, a fifty-year old, 21-foot classic keel boat, on the estuary at Aldeburgh; and have recently completed a history of the last quarter century of the Loch Long class for its 75th Jubilee year in 2012.

Sandy

This account of Sandy's life, written by Jamie, is somewhat different from the other two because, although we use a lot of Sandy's letters, his voice and character do not come out in the rest of the account and passages of comment in the same way as ours, since he was not here to share in the writing. Hence some readers might like to know more about him.

Dragon Days' gives a picture of how his life developed between the age of eight and thirteen, based on his letters home and indirectly through my contemporary letters and some additional comments. This memoir attempts to bring together the strands of Sandy's life after the Dragon. Sandy became a farmer and countryman and an important public figure in the affairs of local government in England and in conservative politics. His success in all these fields was based on a very strong home life and founded on principles acquired both through the family and in a happy education at the Dragon and later at Sedbergh.

Sandy started farming early. At the Dragon, he was one of the few who had a garden - hardly a major agricultural undertaking but an important plot about six feet square under the chestnut trees by the school fence, where he grew crocus, rock plants, 'daftidills' and 'Chisantians'. His feeling for the countryside was there from earliest days. In Germany when Sandy was aged from six to eight, we walked two dogs daily, with our mother or one of the staff (for there were many), into an endless Teutonic forest of massive beech trees and wonderful colours in spring and autumn. We were Wolfcubs then too, the most enjoyable part of which was the camping on the heathland, with pursuit games and sing-songs round the camp fire. And between the ages of 12 to 14 we lived beside a 11-acre lake in Surrey, and spent all our holidays on the water, teaching ourselves to sail in a canvas boat, chasing frogs, fishing and exploring the willow and alder denizens of its marshy feeder river in an aluminium rowing boat, poling through the vegetation and cutting our way forward with hatchet and saw - accompanied by the family's huge Irish Wolfhound balancing in the boat with us or wading alongside.

In those days we camped outside quite a bit - or at least Sandy did. I usually had to retreat to the house in the middle of the night, fed up with pebbles in the small of the back and pieces of straw sticking into the ears. But Sandy loved it all - the canvas, the torch light, the flies and ants: a first example of a haughty disregard for discomfort and pain, something we have all witnessed in the past year.

And then came Sedbergh, which gave Sandy a passion for the open hills. He was a formidably good runner, coming 6th in his last year, and in the top one sixth of the field the previous year, in Sedbergh's famous and gruelling Ten Mile cross-country race. His ability at running was not just a result of vigorous health - with a low heart beat and strong lungs - but also of sheer determination, 'guts' and an increasing wish and ability to count on himself. He played many games for his house, and tennis at school level, and was a vigorous squash player. He fished for trout all summer long and tied flies, but his greatest love was for the hills. In his last couple of years at school he went on many a long expedition to explore remote peaks, jogged miles to go fishing in the streams, or for ham and eggs tea in a pub five miles away from the school; or simply out with a band of friends who would disappear for hours to wander the fells in good company and perfect peace.

He enjoyed scrambling in the Lake District mountains, and would have been a skilled rock climber had opportunity allowed - and before leaving Sedbergh set off one holiday to tackle Mont Blanc, alone and unaided, in his school running clothes.

He got two thirds of the way up before he was forced to retreat. I remember climbing the Macgillycuddy reeks with him, when I had to go on all fours along a striding edge between the peaks, while Sandy danced ahead and back to urge me on. Hills had a special place and lasting influence in his life. Sandy believed that you can think most clearly when up high on the summits of hills, and I think something of the self-reliance and inner strength which was so obvious in later life came from his life with the mountains. Perhaps these distant uplands were also part of the foundations for Sandy's becoming later a very private person, and above all modest and unassuming. Faced with nature, you have to be.

Such outdoor activities made Sandy wiry and strong; and led in due course to other country pursuits. Graduating from bows and arrows and a small BB air pistol when we were young, Sandy became a very good shot with a 12 bore and skilled with a 0.22 rifle (first learnt at the Dragon). In wild teenager days we used to shoot anything in sight - not just game (including other peoples'), trees or tin cans but exotica such as door lights. Some of these expeditions held dramatic incident, including the very embarrassing loss of our father's gun confiscated by the police. And then we grew up; and later in life shooting came to mean a great deal to Sandy: I think of pigeons from the wood, walking up game around the farm (with the help or hindrance of various supposedly well trained dogs) and shoots with neighbours. And then, as with so many country sportsman, Sandy's interest increasingly became a love of conserving and watching birds and game.

Sandy's practical bent could be observed early too. He first became acquainted with the insides of cars in holiday jobs in the local garage in Rye; and then came the business of looking after his own first cars. It was a Sunbeam, black, open-topped, beautiful, and unreliable, which got us into trouble once in Hastings. Trying to start the car on a hill outside the cinema drew the attention of a passing policeman; he informed Sandy that the car was illegal on several counts - worn brakes, loose steering, broken sidelights, broken exhaust and bald tyres for a start. He would let us off now, he said, but he never wanted to see that car in Hastings again.

His love of competitive games goes way back too. He and I played golf, tennis and some squash, virtually daily through the holidays from the age of fourteen onwards. Sandy was at his best when danger lurked, and what he liked most was to come from behind and win.

From Sedbergh, Sandy went to Cirencester Agricultural College, where he spent three immensely happy years in Bledisloe Lodge and made many good friends, some of whom became friends for life, such as Chris Gosling. Chris spoke of those days at the Memorial Service for Sandy at Canterbury Cathedral in November 2008,

At that time, he [Sandy] introduced me into the delights of College life, enjoying oneself, and doing the minimum amount of work to enable us to pass the exams at the end of each year. He also introduced me to my first car crash when we hit a railway bridge in his old Sunbeam Talbot saloon, which was the pride of his life, until that moment...

After Cirencester Sandy and I agreed to go on a Gap Year around the world together. [The trip lasted from 1963 to 1965.] He left first and went to Southern Rhodesia to manage for its South African owner a Maize Farm with 60 staff. The experience stood him in good stead for management of people for the rest of his life.

When I joined forces with him I found that he had met two girls on the boat out to South Africa and had immediately become smitten with one of them, who of course was Tessa. We four then set off to travel

around the world together. We had an exciting and fascinating trip up the length of Africa - on the way Sandy and I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro - (those mountains again) - then we all continued on up the Nile on a paddle steamer through Sudan, and eventually via Ethiopia into Aden where we stayed with the British Army when they were fighting rebels in the mountains to the north.

Next came Australia, where we ended up in Sydney. Jobs we attempted included trying to sell saucepans to newly-weds, and then brick walls to suburban home-owners where houses were built of timber frames and weather board. The Brick walls were in fact plastic sheeting painted to make it look like brick. This as you can imagine didn't sell terribly well. I think in a fortnight, we sold one between us.

So down to our last £5 we tried our luck at the labour exchange and were employed by a share-farmer, who drove us six hundred miles out into the bush due west of Sydney and gave us work for four months on his business, which was to grow wheat on 2000 acres of land previously only grazed by sheep. Our base was two tents and an open fire - (camping out again!) - and our job was to clear the scrub, cut down and burn the trees and plough the land, and then plant it with wheat. Three months later we were paid to go back for the harvesting, - it was an experience unlike one we would ever have had in England.

During our time off we teamed up with the two girls to buy a car and travel round Australia in it, camping by the road under wonderful star-filled skies. There was room for three to sleep on the bench seats removed from the car, but the fourth had to sleep on the ground, snakes notwithstanding. We drew lots for it each evening.

Sandy organised all our travel arrangements and was very good at it. I was the gofer; and during that whole year we were away we had endless discussions and debates of course but I don't think we ever had a disagreement, or bad word. There was never a time that I would have taken back and many a time I would wish to have again.

On return to England, Sandy worked as a pupil on the farm of my mother's cousin, David Mure, at Pluckley in Kent, and the following year he and Tess were married. In 1967 with some modest family help and a large agricultural mortgage they bought Upper Boycourt Farm, a small cottage surrounded by 40 acres of fine land on the weald of Kent, and 14 Guernsey cows. They arrived at the farm on 25th March 1968 and set about working extremely hard to build the farm into a viable business and to turn the cottage into a large and attractive family home.

'The farm' as it was simply known in our family was a second home for me through the twenty years when Flip and I lived abroad; and there Sandy acted as guardians when our sons went with his children of the same age to Dulwich College Prep School. It was also a second home for our sister Sally, who boarded at nearby Benenden School when my parents were living in Warwickshire, and a regular point de repère for numerous friends old and new, as Chris Gosling remembered

Sandy loved taking us round when we came to stay, and having us help with milking, cleaning out the cowsheds and the bedding down of the cows, and looking after the calves and the lambs. We also shared days out on the shooting field, or on the golf course or tennis court, but I was never able to beat him at croquet on his home course... Home was

everything. Sandy's first love was for Tess and for his own family; but among the latter he counted a wider family and a handful of special friends, some living nearby and others who would pop up over the years from all over the world just to keep in touch. Sandy had a special gift for friendship, and you never knew who you would meet, but having Sandy in common was the bond.

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Sandy's interest in politics was forged in the milking parlour, where year in year out he listened to Radio 4 for three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening while attending his cows. He told me that, without recognising quite how it had happened, he had found himself at home with current political and social affairs and familiar with arguments on both sides of any issue. The result: he took to politics by absorption, and was able to make up his mind about the essentials of issues however intricate by concentrating on what he thought mattered and what he thought was right.

Sandy first entered politics through his connection with the Weald of Kent Preservation Society's rail committee. He accepted chairmanship of the committee and campaigned successfully against the proposed route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link which would have damaged much of his beloved countryside. This connection led to him joining the Conservatives. In 1989 he became a county councillor, soon becoming Conservative group leader and in 1997 leader of the council after the defeat of a loose Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition. "I thought councillors were not quite members of the human race," he joked later to Paul Hetherington, political journalist of the *Guardian*. Pressure from the Preservation Society had propelled him into a life's work, "They needed a stronger voice and someone said 'why not stand?' and I thought 'why not?'" His rise in politics was rapid.

The rise of Sandy's political career coincided with a (reluctant) decision to sell his dairy herd. Having started farming with what was virtually a small-holding, he had by now bought in another 67 acres of land, and built up the herd to forty milking cows plus some twenty followers. This he had had to finance through agricultural mortgage (including a generous unsecured second mortgage from the vendors) and other loans, but as gross returns came under increasing pressure from the European Milk Quota system, it was increasingly clear that his dairy business had a limited future. He invested instead in apple orchards at nearby Charing on the edge of the North Downs, buying and renting land to build up a viable farm, while trying his hand at raising sheep and then breeding cattle on the home farm. Actively engaged by now in County Council affairs, he did not have the time to pursue these sidelines. Thus he came to concentrate on his Bramley, Cox and Gala orchards, much of which he had to replant after the disastrous hurricane of October 1987, two weeks after his contract of purchase came into force, and the day after moving into the property. Twenty years later the fruit farm was a major enterprise on 300 acres, employing a manager and numerous employees with a large amount of equipment, cold stores, a packing station and seasonal pickers from Romania. For some years he ran a packing operation, packing fruit for other farms as well as his own, under contract to leading supermarkets.

At the council, Sandy was soon taking spells as portfolio holder for education, then for transport and development. He achieved a great deal in both fields, but his major contribution was in his ten years as Leader of the Council and in his deep concern for the well-being of 'my county'. 'King of Kent' we called him affectionately at home, but serious players in the county's affairs shared the view implicit in the

family joke.

Sandy took over the leadership of a Conservative group demoralised by being out of office for the first time in the council's history, and in 1997, a year of national humiliation for the Conservative Party, he took it back into power in Kent. Having started out as a critic of local authorities, he quickly became one of their greatest defenders. As leader of "England's most populous county, with an annual budget of £1bn, 45,000 employees and European politicians beating a path to his door" he was described by the *Guardian* "as probably the most powerful Tory in Britain".

In Sandy's first year as Leader, £27m was chopped from the council's budget, the number of chief officers axed from 13 to six, and "business units" established covering all services in a council that serves 1.3 million people - but Sandy gradually moved from 'slash and burn' to more centrist ground. As Hetherington wrote, 'he soon discovered the value of public service, delivered by people with a very strong ethic for helping others, deeply committed to their jobs ... "I don't like people being rude about local government, particularly our social services staff, who do a fantastic job".'

Sandy regarded stewardship of the county council as a template for progressive Conservatism combining firm financial management with a moral and social agenda. He reformed the council, cutting layers of management and making it one of the most efficient in the country, while at the same time introducing a sharper focus in areas such as care and education. And it was in that spirit that he gave early support to Iain Duncan Smith's Centre for Social Justice, certain that putting social justice at the heart of Conservative politics was critical to the future of his party.

During his leadership, Kent was the first county council to negotiate agreements with central government, pioneering a system that is now part of the local government scene. His pragmatism, however, did not prevent him from being controversial and at times provocative. In 2003, he opposed the scrapping of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prohibiting local authorities from promoting homosexuality, announcing the council's intention to maintain the spirit and commitment of the act in schools.

Sandy's office in County Hall at Maidstone, contained, as Hetherington recounted, an old Southern Railway poster extolling the "Garden of England" and proclaiming: "Live in Kent and Be Content", It became a mantra for his administration's "supporting independence" programme - a bold attempt, warmly embraced by New Labour, to break a "dependency culture", particularly in less-affluent east Kent, and channel more people into work.

Sandy was vice-chairman of the LGA for two years before becoming its chairman from 2004 to 2007, overturning a long period of Labour control and, as Hetherington put it, amiably negotiating with senior ministers as the public voice and face of English councils on radio and television. The press referred to his patrician manner, leavened by a wry self-deprecating wit and masking a shrewd and agile mind, and affectionately dubbed him 'the Silver Fox' - one to be underestimated at your peril. A strong supporter of taking power back as close as possible to the people, he vigorously defended council budgets in negotiations with ministers, pressing on with a determined and mostly successful fight to reduce red tape and central targets. His struggle to make the voice of local authorities heard, transcended party politics. He was just as much at ease with Labour ministers - forging close working relationships with John Prescott and subsequently with David Miliband, when he took charge of local government matters - as he was with senior members of his own party.

Sandy, who had been awarded an OBE in 1995 and was knighted in 2003, also

became a figure of considerable influence in the Conservative Party and close to successive leaderships. At the turn of the decade he was operating on a national scale. He was a member of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board from its inception; he presided over the Transmanche Euroregion in 1998-99, and chaired the LGA's Environment and Regeneration Executive 1999-2002. Among several campaigns, his fight for reform of the asylum system was notable. In conservative politics, he was not only as Chairman of Maidstone East constituency, but also first vice-chairman, then Chairman of the Conservatives' group of south-eastern counties. Internationally, he held strong views – particularly what he saw as the subjugation of the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza – and was keen to contribute his thoughts on the European Union dimension in Britain's affairs. He was created Baron Bruce Lockhart in 2006 and greatly enjoyed the few occasions on which he was able to attend the House of Lords before he fell ill the following summer.

Sandy stood down from the LGA in July 2007 to become chairman of English Heritage, where he battled hard in the annual spending review, securing a reversal of EH's real-term cash decline for the first time in 10 years. He also achieved a major breakthrough in English Heritage's plans for Stonehenge, convincing Ministers that a new, affordable scheme was worth Government backing – a campaign which he ran mostly from his hospital bed. It gave him pleasure to be able to get out to inspect or join in the opening of English Heritage's facilities around the country, but it was not to be for long. Sandy had great affection for Kent's rich historical heritage, with a particular affection for Canterbury cathedral where he took his family for a Christmas service for many years, but – as well as the grand places he also treasured, as Simon Thurley, Chief Executive Officer of English Heritage put it, the hidden heritage of ordinary people in the rural farmhouses and in the urban terraces, in the seaside at Margate and in the suburbs of Maidstone and Chatham.

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Alongside a wide range of charitable interests and commitments, Sandy enjoyed being on the Board of Trustees of Leeds Castle. He was delighted to be made an honorary Freeman of the City of Canterbury, *in absentia* in a ceremony which he watched later on a DVD at his bedside, and was tickled pink to receive honorary doctorates at the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich.

But what of his private life during these years of public success? Sandy took rest and recreation mostly at the farm, although there were regular family holidays to a cottage on the Halford River in Cornwall, and the occasional holiday abroad. Walking, golf, tennis on his hard court or swimming in the pool at Upper Boycourt was the order of the day, with some building of brick patios or walls or fixing nesting boxes for owls. He was happiest at home.

Reading was always important in Sandy's life. In our youth the diet was Kipling, Little Grey Rabbit and so on, and then came Teddy Lester and Bulldog Drummond, followed by old volumes of Punch and P.G. Wodehouse. Later in life Jane Austen had a special place in what armchair life he had time for, and at the same period he turned increasingly to biographies, often political and military, and notably Wellington and the British heroes of the Napoleonic wars. And Sandy's love of music was also deep, and similarly traditional in taste. Back in late teenage years we played not so much pop music of the day (just beginning) but songs from musicals, old family favourites, such as Bing Crosby, Burl Ives; and later it was Mozart above all who captivated Sandy's musical soul.

Over the years the farm grew and Sandy grew – in stature but never in size. He enjoyed a good meal and ate like a horse – but unlike his brother, never put on any

weight. Some of my happiest memories have to be of meals: of lunches under the willow tree, dinners on long winter evenings in the cosy kitchen and then the special occasions of celebrations of lifetime awards, lunch at the Savoy after receipt of his knighthood and in the House of Lords on the occasion of his introduction.

Sandy was a traditionalist: he was never modern or hip, no trendy slave to fashion or public prejudice. But he was not always a conservative. In his youth he was something of a tearaway, and notably unwilling to accept things at face value, or as served up to him by others. There was a strong streak of independence, for instance at the end of school years, and plenty of healthy question marks raised over some traditions and practices handed down by authority (in both school and home circles). Yet, typically, Sandy's revolution was never ungrateful or grating; it was inside rather than against the system, leaving essential ties and traditions quite in tact.

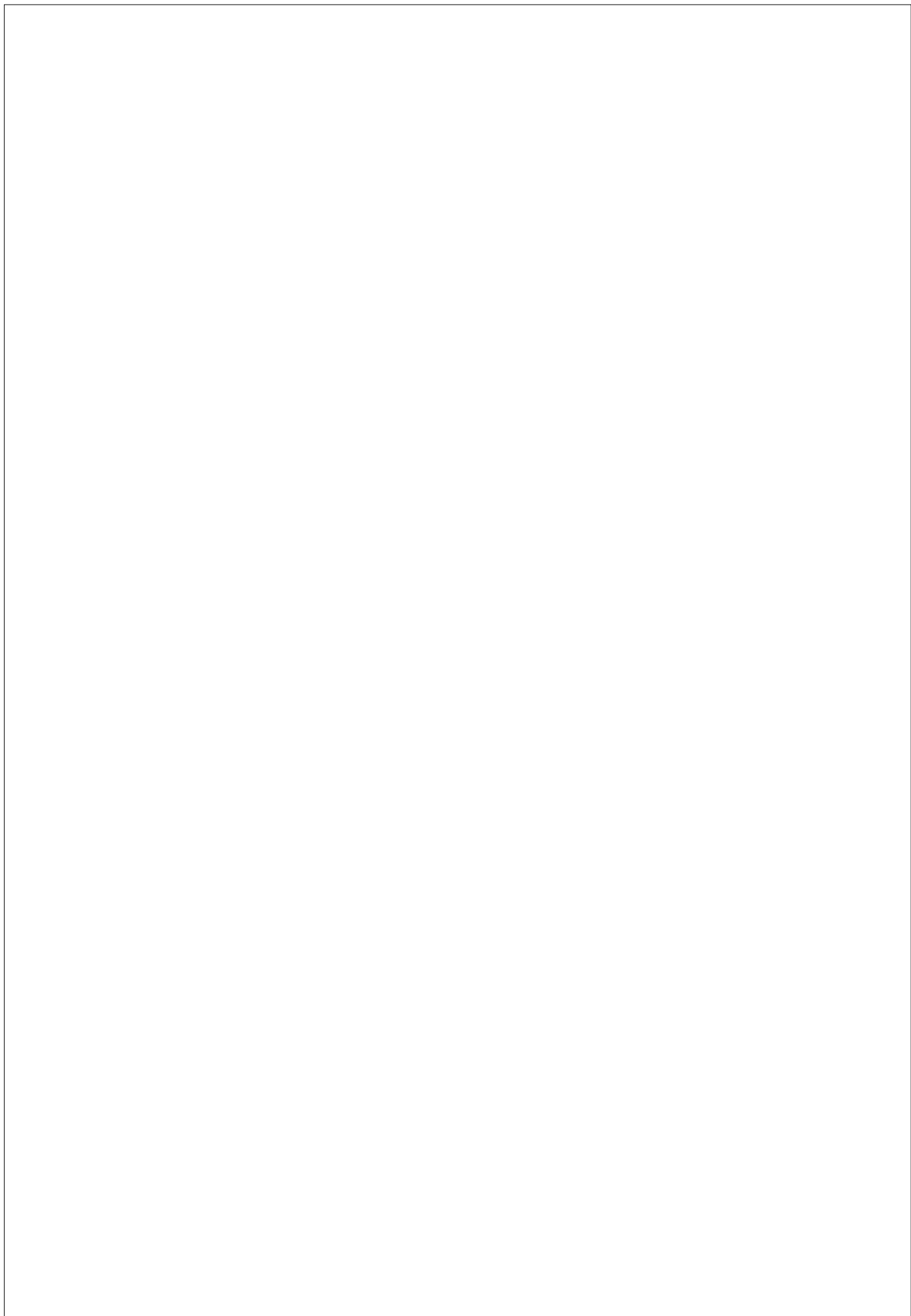
From teenage years on, Sandy wanted to make up his own mind about things. He was a good listener and liked to collect and absorb information and to be sure in his own mind what he thought before he was ready to do battle. This was what gave his arguments coherence and conviction and gave him confidence and self-assurance in dealing with others, either in instruction or debate. As a result, in a quiet unassuming way he gained his allies' respect and confounded his political opponents. There was never any need for bluster and posing, which would have been quite alien to his nature.

He was a rationalist, not given to theories or convoluted ideologies (perhaps a scientific bent inherited from the Hones) but making up his mind on the basis of observation and evidence; as was clear in the way he managed the affairs of Kent for so many years. In his dealings with others, Sandy was always generous, liking to think the best of others; never a cynic, never an unkind word. And for himself, similarly, he never groused, never complained; he had the real gift of a positive mental attitude, together with a lovely sense of humour, never raucous or cynical, which carried him through dark and difficult times.

I remember meeting Sandy, with Tess, fifty years ago at Heathrow Airport on their return from their world Odyssey. A happy day - and the rest was a fairy story. They were married, went farming, and lived happily ever after. Sandy was there at Upper Boycourt Farm for the next forty odd years, contributing so much to the affairs of his county and the nation, living at peace with the world and proud of his wife, their three fine children and six lovely grandchildren; a 'very gentle perfect knight' indeed.

*

Alexander (Sandy) John Bruce Lockhart, Baron Bruce Lockhart of the Weald in the County of Kent, Kt, OBE, politician and farmer, born May 4, 1942, died August 14, 2008



VISUAL ESSAYS

JAMIE'S LETTERS FROM THE DRAGON

First letter, 24 September 1949

Jan 24 Sept. 1949. HENLEY ON THAMES
24.9.49 OXFORD

Dear Mum and Dad.

I hope you are having a nice time. Thank you for the letter we have started to learn to play ruga yesterday I like it very much. We only take our bikes to school in summer term I have wrote to the general the day I got your letter I am going to write a separate letter to Sandy. Is the river Neckar a big river or a small one I am going to write a letter to Sam to-day can Sandy read properly yet I hope he can. We have great fun in the Dragon School I like

Letter of 11 February 1951

Dear Dad and Mum,

I am out of sickroom and quite well again. On Wednesday there was a match & I did not watch it because I was in bed. Thank you for the letter. Last night we had a debate on

The Amateur derives more enjoyment from sport than the professional. The motion won 44-24. What do you think? I am off games and will be for 5 days. I was a week and two days in sickroom. We don't have reports this week. I am going out with granny and grandpa today. If you could think of any debates which would be suitable for us, you will please send them to me or B. De la Mare same address as mine.

Sandy is writing a letter as well. He got up the same day as I did but he's been in for just over 2 weeks. Sorry I did not write a good letter last time. We had horrible weather it is raining now. What is yours like?

Love from
James. xx

Letter of 7 October 1951

7.10.51 ~~7.10.51~~ Sunday
DRAGON SCHOOL
OXFORD

Dear Daddy,

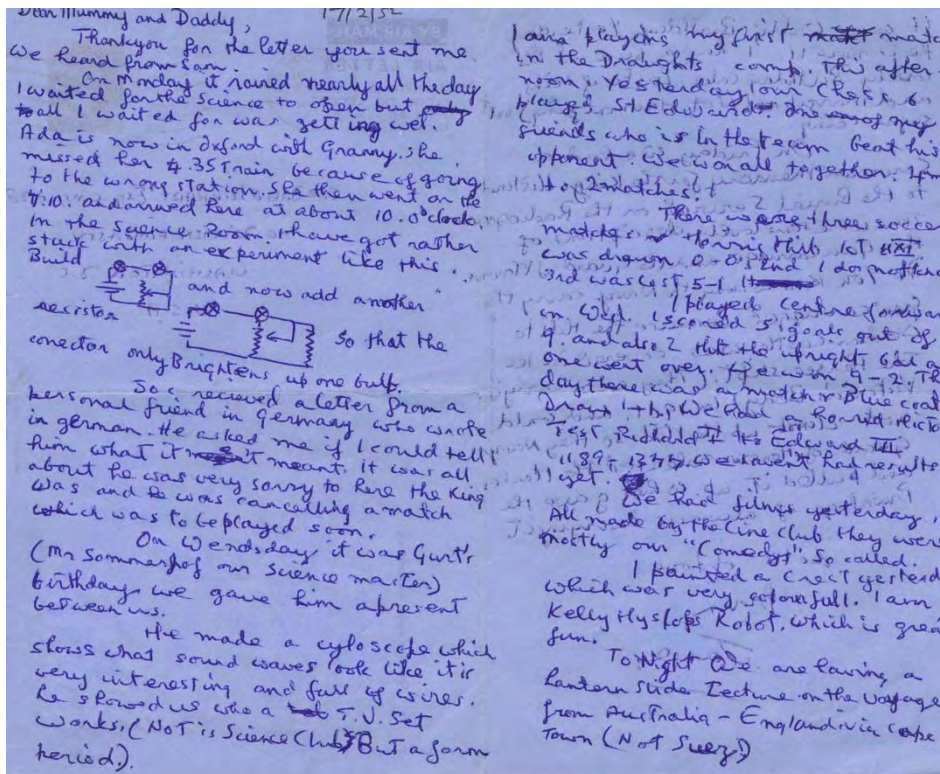
Yesterday we had a debate on Festival of Britain
has justified itself. The majority was with the notion
I have not yet been chucked out of the grounds we have
finished the first act. In English we've been learning
the Kings a queens of England and their dates. We've
had cold weather most of this last week. It's nice to go
to bed when it's dark instead of sunshine. I've done a
lot of kicking about. We go to the harvest festival
service. What date are you going to America?
The play is about the 5th Nov. to the 20th Nov I
don't know when. Yesterday Bollard, ^{captain of} captain of
the ~~club~~ ^{U.K.F.C.} some time ago, was playing for us. There
is very little to say this week. And I told you
some things yesterday. Will you ever play
american rigger when you are there. It looks
horrible by the films I've seen of it? When can you
play again?

Love from
James.

Advent card for Dad, Christmas 1951



Letter of March 1952 - front and back



Letter of 6 June 1952

Dear Mummy and Daddy,
 I thank you very much for the last letter. Panajaid the feather model is on the 14th of June. My batting ave. is now 46.5. My bowling is 2.52.

Yesterday 2 boys 11 and 15 said to the boatman at Tins "Can we have a canoe to asked whether they could ~~take~~ was when they said they could. They had just rounded the first bend when the canoe capsized the younger boy really could just swim and got to the bank the other was hit on the head by the canoe and drowned. A police car and an Ambulance came round they are waiting for the body to rise.

The boy who got to the shore ran away. (I don't know why).

We have had several matches. We won we made 227 for 8 and got them out for 16. We lost a match by 5 wickets and ~~was~~ one by 1 run in the last over of play.

We have been swimming every evening. It is really very warm now. Yesterday we had a horrible grammar test. Guess what in and the day before a history test.

In games we are playing a test match the dark haired boys

Love from
James.


Letter of October 1952

Dear Mummy,
 I thank you very much for the last letter. Daddy came down yesterday and we watched the matches. Daddy did not think much of some of the games but thought the first were good. The worst thing was that we did not play. Daddy showed me several things. We went down town in a bus and tried to have tea at the George. It was not open. So we went to Ellistown. We had baked beans on toast and (English) Marshmallows. We went back and played hearts with granny. We then went back to school where daddy was going to have a drink with Mr. Wiley. We went off and played. I took the book of Niagara Falls. Many of the boys were fascinated by it. We got the book Mr. Stands sent. It is a very kind of him. The matches, 1st lot 24-3 2nd lot 45-0, 3rd lot 16-11, 4th lot 35-3. Mark you they are a public school.

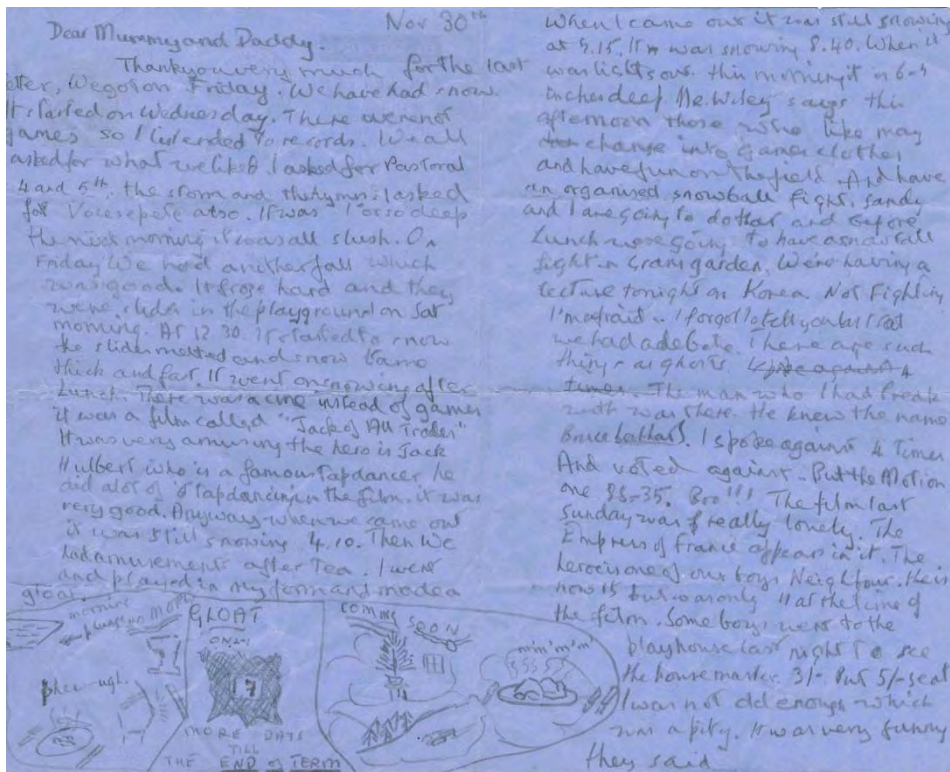
In dancing we are doing the black and white reel and the Gay Gordons. I thought that putting the "I like the" on one end and "Stevenson" on the other. Sandy doesn't think it's funny. Daddy is coming to our school service today. He is leaving I think after church.

I am not getting on too well in form but I think I may be better this week? I think I have dropped on Maths. We are doing something I just can't understand. My bird list for English birds is now nearly seventy. I'm doing well. I hope to be able to point.

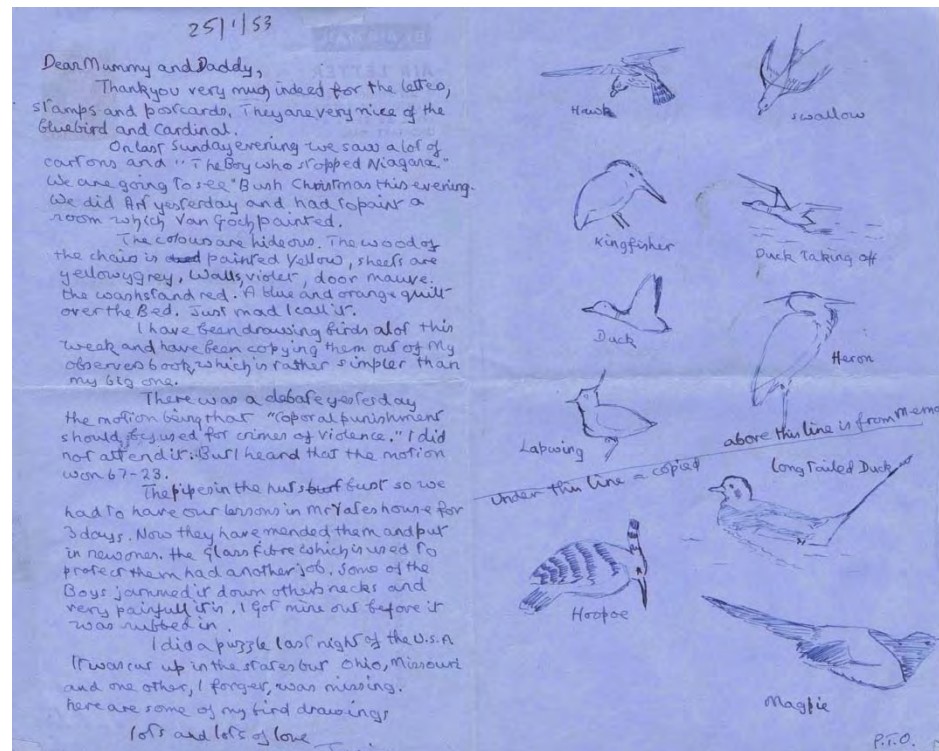
We had a grammar test yesterday. It was horrible on the one before I got 59 marks which is a record. We have the film "The Coronet and the Crown" next Sunday. Daddy says it is a good film and we ought not to miss seeing it. I am trying to make a badge. In it comes a ~~stage~~ ^{stage} lead. Because of the Daddy being in the seaforth. but it is facing sideways.



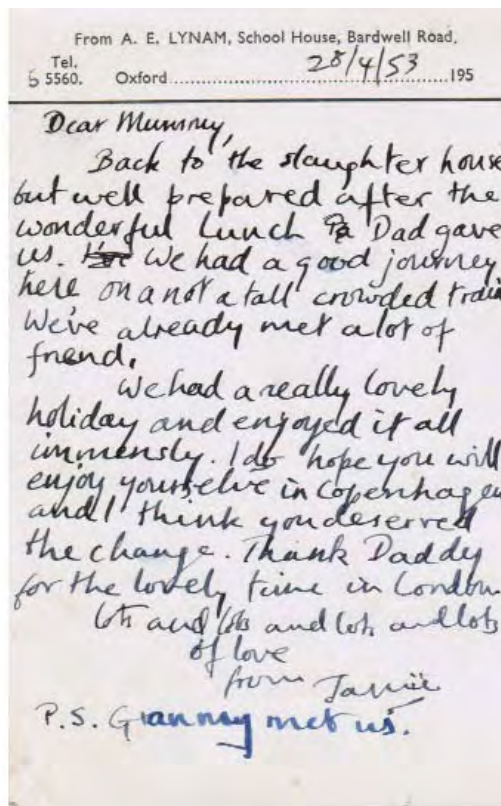
Letter of November 1952 - front and back



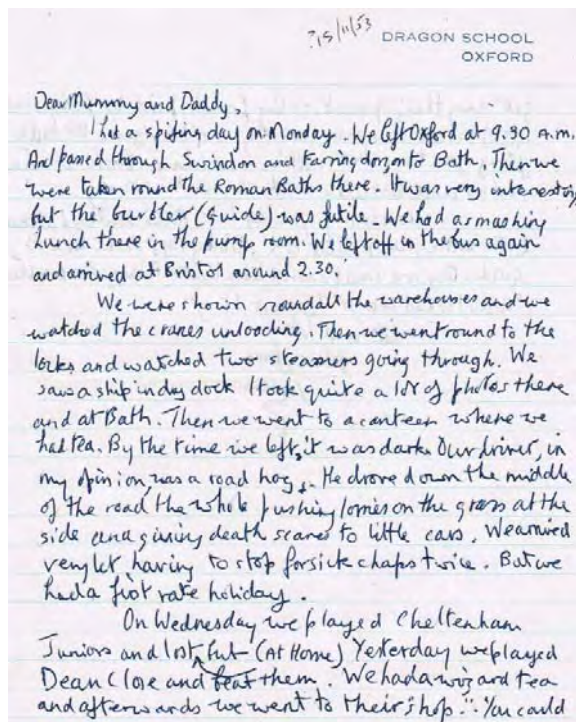
Letter of 25 January 1953 - front and back



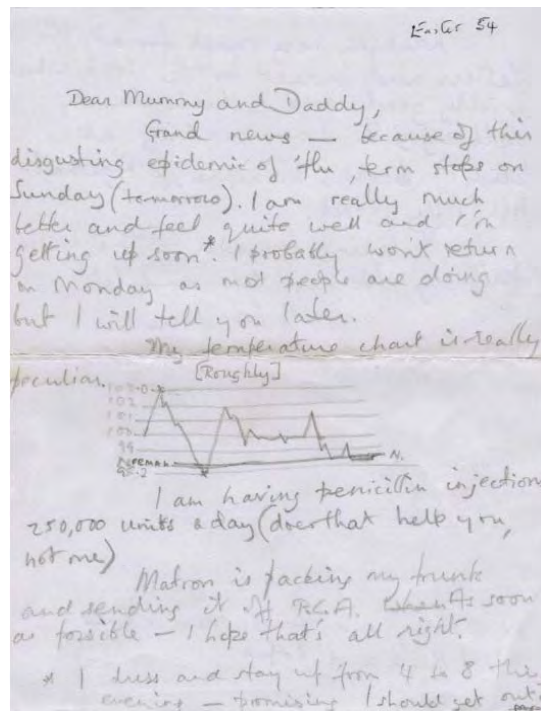
Postcard of 28 April 1953



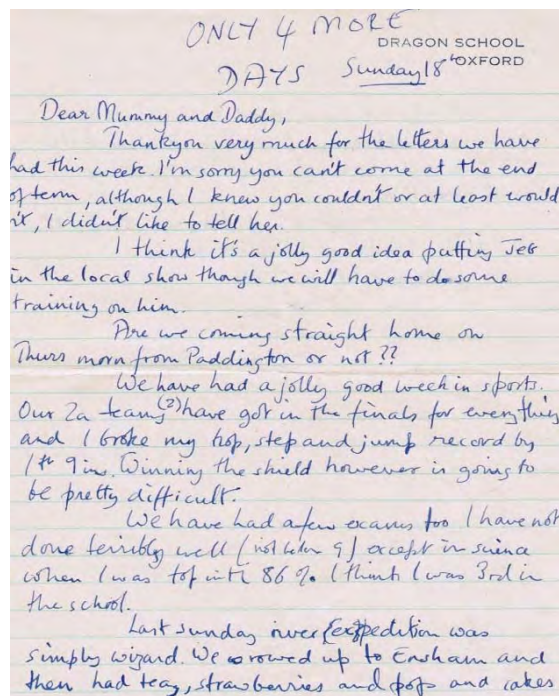
Letter of November 1953



Letter of March 1954



Last letter from Dragon July 1954



SANDY'S LETTERS FROM THE DRAGON

24 September 1950 first letter from Dragon

Sep 24th

Dear Dad

we had a honobel crossing
I wen sike 11 Times. I
am in midy Five, in Poomes
in games Tom. in 9. we play a lot of
marbles we saw a film of Black Aces.
we went to lunch with the
Dasilvers, móm both us Bookie
ondor 6/6 we went to see the
chanshing of Kha garedes we
went to hamles.
we went to the sinom
of micki mooss.

— Lond. it was grat fun
Love From
Sandy

Letter in first term, November 1950

Dear dad, I hope you are well.

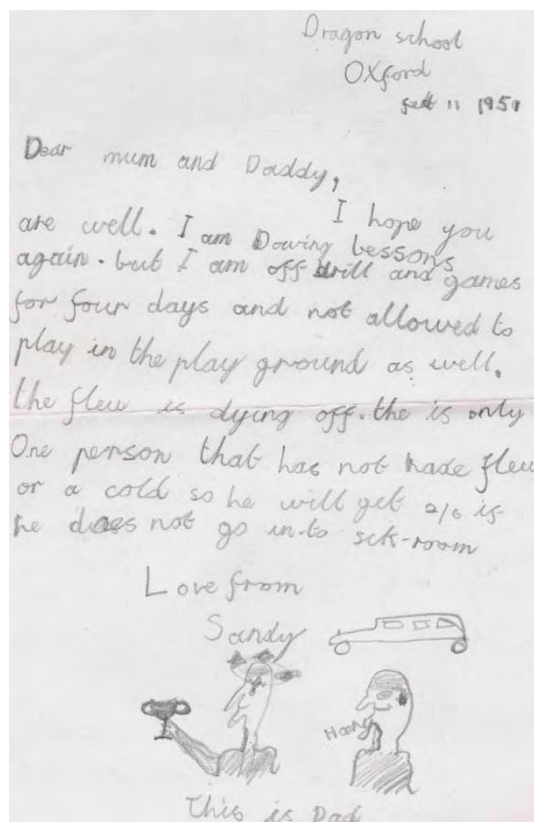
I am macking lots of crismas presents
in school. PLES KEEP MY LETES.

check the sums up and macth shoes
I now how to play lots of wive
games they are Lounkey, Bad-eggs
AIR-TRY-TATIKS and Biscyau they are
all grat fun to play but they
AIR TRY TATIKS is not so sporting
sily rouds i had a labor frome
SAM

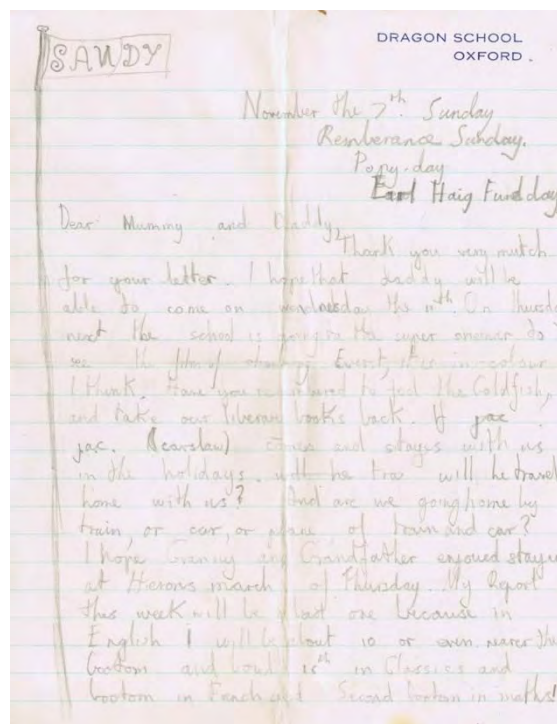
20243 X 548 ----- 285686019 X 5758 -----	More sums to be send my a hobby with the are ners in Love From Sandy
---	---

632185186771916322 ----- 612587

Letter with sketch, February 1951




Letter in November 1953



Yesterday I went out for lunch and tea
 to with a boy called Jeremy Burrow. And it
 was in a haunted old house like a mansion
 belonging to his Grandma. We got wonderful
 grub and we had a party for tea because it was
 Jeremy's brother's party birthday. There were 7 people
 there most grown ups. The grub was like
 on board the Queen Mary and so twice as good
 they have to very nice dogs one a cocker
 spaniel and one a dalmation which is a Great
 Dane just a little smaller. It was great
 fun me and Jeremy played in the fields and
 round the garden. And climbed highest pine
 trees and on stone walls till tea for the
 party started.

Love and M.M. me
 of 13
 1955



Letter of 4 June 1955, aged thirteen

DRAGON SCHOOL
 OXFORD

4th June '55

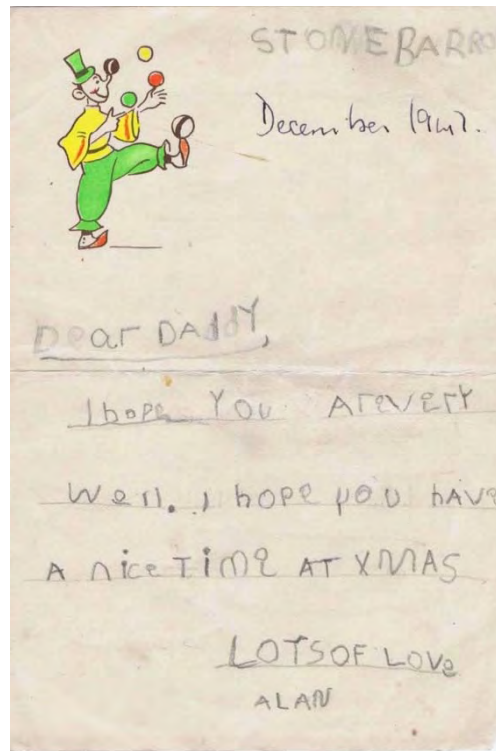
Dear Mummy and Daddy, Thank you very
 much indeed for your letter. We had some
 wonderful weather on Monday and Tuesday
 and Wednesday.

On Monday because of Scholarships
 and Whit Sunday and Whit Monday. We
 missed prep and I and Hugo and six
 other boys played a game we made up
 called we call it 'space' because you have
 to chuck a ball into a space. It is like touch
 rigger, you play it with my soft ball. The
 goals are about 5ft apart and an imaginary
 line three high. You start off like a
 rigger line out. you run and dodge with
 the ball but when you are touched you pass.
 The passing is much longer than rigger
 normally of about twice as long as
 a rigger pass sometimes three times.

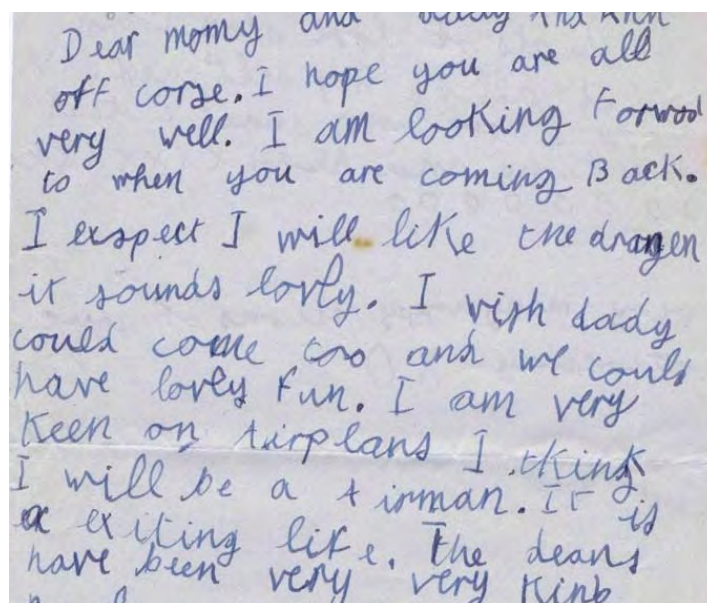
It is a sonic game and very
 exciting. Yesterday I played v Louis

DEVELOPMENT OF ALAN'S HANDWRITING

First surviving letter; aged nearly six, December 1947



July 1950: two months before Dragon



March 1951, after two terms at the Dragon, aged nine

TELEPHONE
OXFORD 47079

7.2.3.1951



6 BARDWELL ROAD
OXFORD

Dear mummy and Ann and Frank,
I hope you are are better know
after that flue. I love the
comics and are enjoying your
letters. Thank you very very
much for the lovely sweets
you sent me. The time is fly-

February 1952; half way through second year, aged just over ten

Dear Mummy and Daddy
I am sorry that this letter
is such a short one I have
been in bed just about a week
so I have not much to say
we started hockey on Saturday
but I was in bed. I have
found out I am in seventh out
of 13 or 14. I have got the stamps

October 1952: start of third year, aged nearly eleven

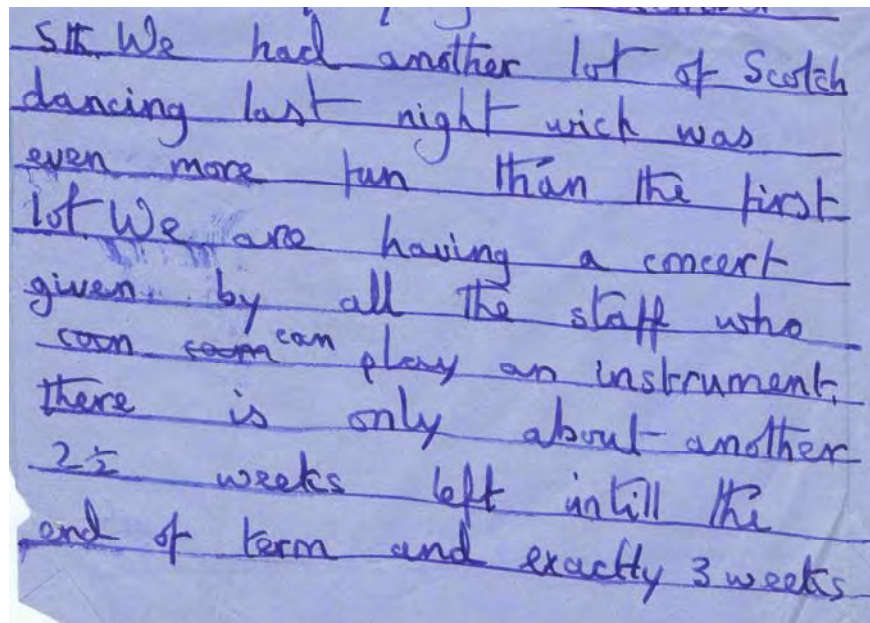
We are playing marbles this term and I have got quite a few in fact I have got 16 big marbles  and 50 small ones . Wich I will be able to show to the gitts. We are playing a jolly good game with search lights. I have got hundreds of conquers this season and I have got up to a 86 Then it was smashed. by a 4.

January 1953: postcard from the plane on return from India, aged eleven

Dear Mummy and Daddy
I am nearly at Rome I have had a nic. journey so far & I am sending another Postcard when I get to school and I am sending two Broachers. I hope that everything is going well and mopsy is getting on.
lots of love Alan

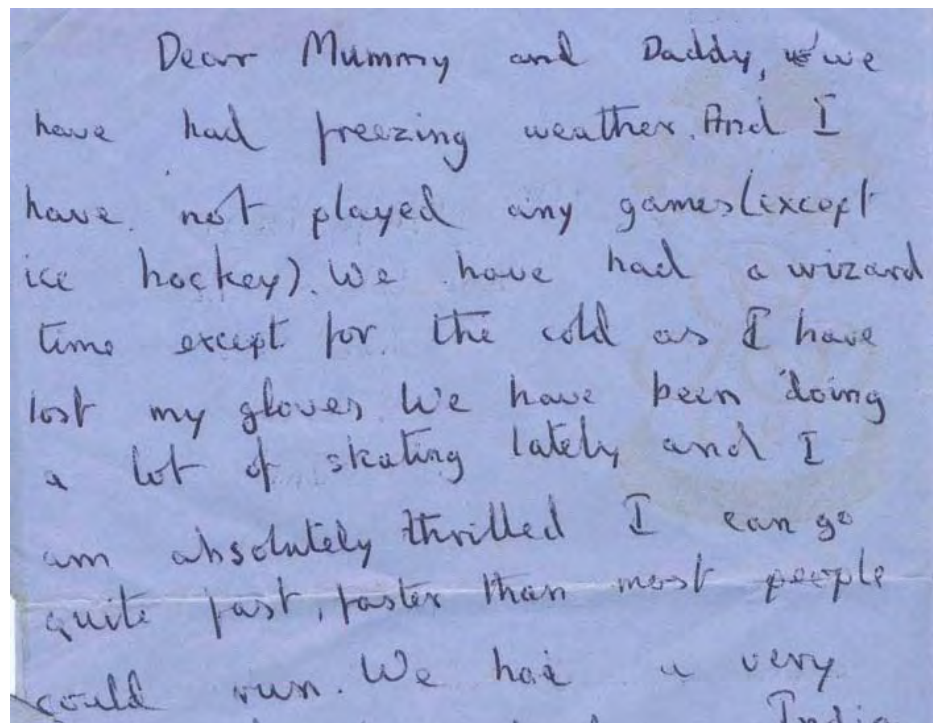
Printed in Great Britain

End November 1953; starting the fourth year, aged nearly twelve



Sit. We had another lot of Scotch dancing last night which was even more fun than the first lot. We are having a concert given by all the staff who ~~can~~ ~~can~~ can play an instrument. There is only about another 2½ weeks left until the end of term and exactly 3 weeks

February 1954; nearly half way through fourth year, aged twelve and a quarter



Dear Mummy and Daddy, we have had freezing weather. And I have not played any games (except ice hockey). We have had a wizard time except for the cold as I have lost my gloves. We have been doing a lot of skating lately and I am absolutely thrilled I can go quite fast, faster than most people could run. We had a very India

July 1954; end of the fourth year, aged twelve and a half

DRAGON SCHOOL
OXFORD
1954
18th July.

Dear Mummy and everyone at By-the-way,

By some Huke

I have got my tie for cricket. There have been a lot of sports but also there has been plenty of rain, which has stopped quite a few events. I am enclosing our General Knowledge papers this years and last years. In paper ① (last year's) Questions nos 17 is personal and you would not know know it. This year not nos 6 you might not know and nos 9. Please will you papers as I collect them. Packing is just going to start which is a nuisance even though it means we are near the end of term. Our form has is in about

Letter in late November 1954; start of final year, aged nearly thirteen

Dear Mummy,

I spent a very enjoyable week end, and on Monday I went first to the Imperial War Museum which was extremely good also I went to Harrods which was also good. There was dancing on Friday and Yesterday (Saturday) there was Scottish dancing. Pollez-glyde, Roger de caveleigh. Barn dance, valetta, Hoky polky and the Gay Gordons, Dashing White Sergeant. There are some cartoons tonight ~~in~~ instead of a long film. There were two matches the 2nd against

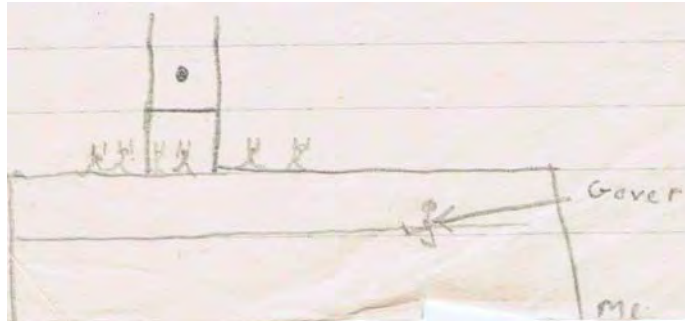
Letter 10 July 1955; last letter from Dragon, aged thirteen and a half

Dear ~~me~~ Mummy and Daddy,

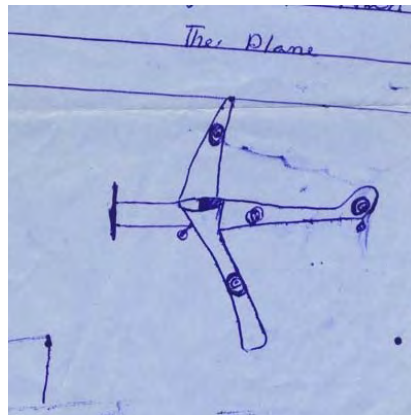
I am so sorry as this letter will probably not reach very soon but I think I might as well wait untill my results come and I have my papers back. I have played in three matches since Wednesday. Firstly I played against Cothill in which we won by about 70 runs I only made 8 runs but while I was in the score went from 44 for 5 to about 85. On Thursday

ALAN'S DRAWINGS IN LETTERS

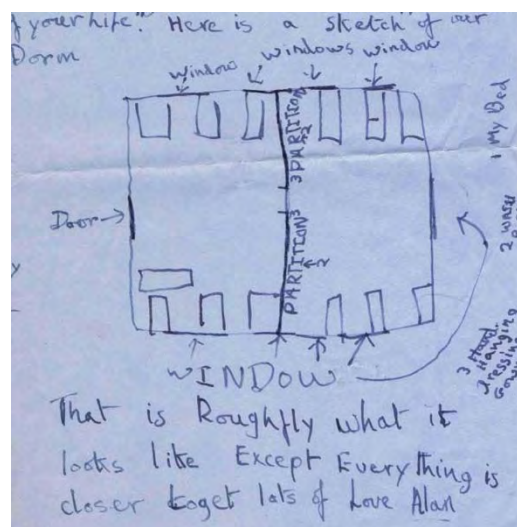
Aged nine

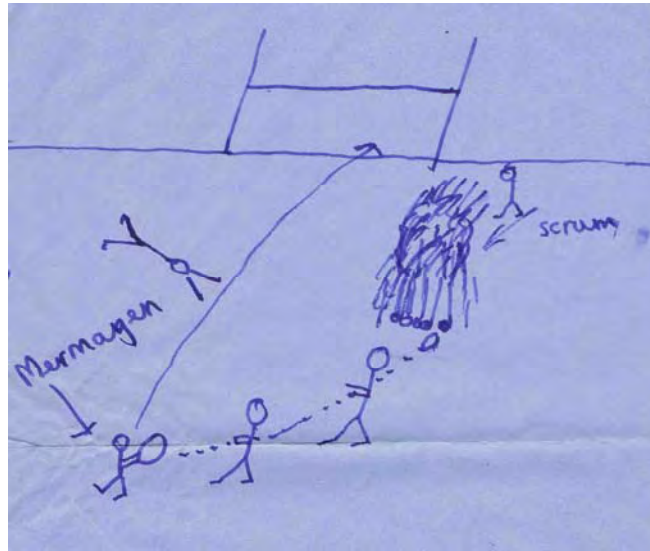


1952 aged ten

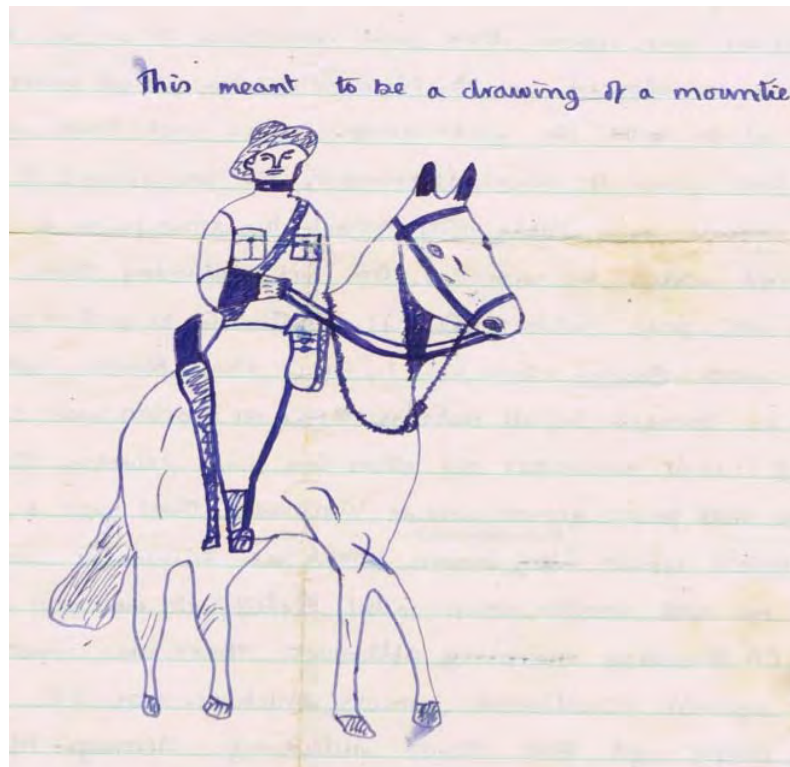


1953 Aged eleven



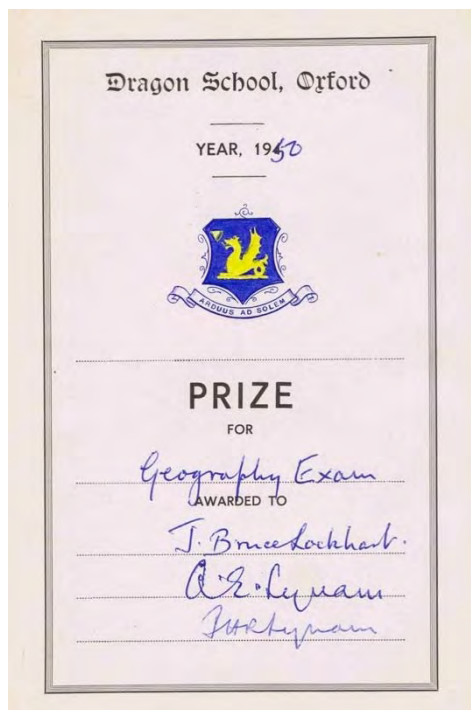


1955 age thirteen



DRAGON DOCUMENTS: JAMIE AND SANDY

JAMIE



Fortnightly report, October 1950

DRAGON SCHOOL FORTNIGHTLY REPORT

Name *Sandy Bruce Lockhart* Age *8.5* Date *Oct. 21. 1950*

	Form.	No. of Boys in Form.	Place last fortnight.	Place this fortnight.	Remarks.
Classics					<i>His writing is improving steadily & he is working very hard at his spellings. Very promising essays. M.P.S.</i>
English	<i>L6</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>= 11</i>	<i>15</i>	
Mathematics	<i>E4</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Some careless slips spoil otherwise good work. M.P.S.</i>
French	<i>L6</i>				<i>Thoughtful work. M.P.S.</i>
House	<i>Mostly good.</i>				
School					

A.E.L.

Termly Report December 1952

DRAGON SCHOOL, OXFORD

Name James Bruce Lockhart Age 11.9 Terminal Report December, 1952

Absent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> days	Form	No. of Boys in Form	Place by Term's Marks	Place by Exam, if any	REMARKS
	Form <u>CP 3.9</u> AV. AGE <u>11.8</u>	19	13	17	Has worked quite well & made satisfactory progress. RS-24.
	English ... Set <u>B1</u> AV. AGE <u>11.2</u>	17	14	10	Should have managed some a higher place this year. Some good work, but not enough. G.S. Excellent. G.S.
	Mathematics ... Geography Set <u>B2</u> AV. AGE <u>11.4</u>	35 = 4	3	1	
	French ... Set <u>B1</u> AV. AGE <u>11.4</u>	17	2	1	A good term's work and an excellent exam. With more attention to detail he can do better still. CW Seen but very careless since his last place. G.S.
	MUSIC AND SINGING ...				GAMES, P.T., ETC.— F.S. Rugby. Very fair.
	ART ...				
	HANDICRAFT ...				
	DIVINITY ...				
	SCIENCE ...				
	<p>House Report (for Boarders)— James has had a good term & continues to be a friendly and cooperative member of the community. <u>He must get down to all his work</u></p> <p>Headmaster's Report— <u>really hard next term. It</u> Much good progress, but <u>weakness in 2 subjects.</u></p>				

Next Term begins Saturday, January 17th, 1953, at 9.30 a.m.
 Boarders return before 7.30 p.m. on the day before
 N.B.—No boy may return to School without a certificate of freedom from contact with infectious disorder during the holidays

A. E. LYNAM

Holiday Prize Work:—See List.

Termly Report March 1954

DRAGON SCHOOL, OXFORD

Name James Bruce Lockhart Age 13.0 Terminal Report March, 1954

Absent <input type="checkbox"/> days	Form	No. of Boys in Form	Place by Term's Marks	REMARKS	
	Form <u>Upper 2a</u> AV. AGE <u>13.4</u>	17	=4	After some very promising work, he finished the term very poorly; he must make a <u>really determined effort to recover his best standard</u> G.S.	
	English ... Set <u>A1</u> AV. AGE <u>12.11</u>	14	=6	A good Term's work. He is making steady improvement. G.S.	
	Mathematics ... Set <u>A1</u> AV. AGE <u>12.11</u>	20	=16	He has worked hard and has made progress. W.K.W.	
	French ... Set <u>A2</u> AV. AGE <u>12.8</u>	18	=6	Very fair work & progress. RS-24.	
	Geography ... Set <u>A1</u> AV. AGE <u>12.11</u>	29	27	More effort required. G.F.T.C.	
	MUSIC AND SINGING ...			GAMES, P.T., ETC.— F.S. Soccer. bad luck. A useful inside forward at hockey in the 1st XI.	
	ART ...				
	HANDICRAFT ...				
	DIVINITY ...				
	SCIENCE ...				
	<p>General Report (for Day-boys)—</p> <p>House Report (for Boarders)— James is always friendly and helpful, and has had a good term. I hope he will work hard at the holiday work which has been set, and will go 'all out' from the start next term.</p> <p>Headmaster's Report— <u>James must note + act upon the remarks above.</u></p>				

Next Term begins Thursday, April 29th, 1954, at 9.30 a.m.
 Boarders return before 7.30 p.m. on the day before (April 28th)
 N.B.—No boy may return to School without a certificate of freedom from contact with infectious disorder during the holidays

A. E. LYNAM

Holiday Prize Work:—See List

SANDY

Termly report, March 1952

DRAGON SCHOOL, OXFORD

Name Sandy Bruce Lockhart Age 9-11 Terminal Report March, 1952

Absent	Form	No. of Boys in Form	Place by Term's Merit	REMARKS
3 days	Lower 2 Form AV. AGE 9.7	17	= 12	A great improvement this term, he has worked well and made grand progress. J.C.
	Set 65 AV. AGE 9.5	16	= 14	Work satisfactory. A big advance on last term's work. Composition very much improved. W.P.P.
	Geography Set 54-65. AV. AGE 9.6	31	= 3 [✓]	He has done very well. W.P.P.
	Mathematics Set 24 AV. AGE 9.6	18	= 8	Rather an indifferent term, but recently he has somewhat made up for some bad work earlier. J.C.
	French Set 35 AV. AGE 9.6	18	= 14	Still finds it very difficult but his work has improved. T.S. & J.C.
MUSIC AND SINGING	Continues to progress satisfactorily. Delightfully keen. J.C.			GAMES, P.T. ETC.— Soccer - 9 th game. Keen and hard-working. Hockey - 9 th game. A good player.
ART	Needs to use colour more fully. J.C.			
HANDICRAFT	Good. J.C.			
DIVINITY	Satisfactory. J.C.			
SCIENCE BROADCAST	A very neat worker. E.N.B.			

House Report (for Boarders)—Good. Friendly, cheerful & sensible. C.N.S.

Headmaster's Report—*Sandy is older than the form average — We hope to see rapid progress.*

Next Term begins Thursday, May 1st, 1952, at 9.30 a.m.
Boarders return before 8 p.m. on the day before
N.B.—No boy may return to School without a certificate of freedom from contact with infectious disorder during the holidays

A. E. LYNAM.

Holiday Prize Work:—See List.

Fortnightly report, March 1954

DRAGON SCHOOL FORTNIGHTLY REPORT

Name Sandy Bruce Lockhart Age 11.10 13th March 1954

	Form.	No. of Boys in Form.	Place last fortnight.	Place this fortnight.	Remarks.
Classics	M5	17	1	= 4	Still working well on the whole. J.C.
English	B3	18	11	= 12	Keen and satisfactory work. J.C.
Mathematics	B4	18	—	No places	Has been doing some quite good work. Addt. J.C.
French	B4	18	16	18	Very weak. Not enough effort this fortnight. J.C.
House	<i>Mainly good — but</i>				
School					

A.E.L.

Termly report, July 1955

DRAGON SCHOOL, OXFORD

Name Sandy Bruce Lockhart Age 13.2 Terminal Report JULY, 1955

Absent — days	Form	No. of Boys in Form	Place by Term's Marks	Place by Exam.	REMARKS
	Form <u>4F^B</u> AV. AGE <u>12.11</u>	17	= 1	11	A good term. He has come on well. It is a pity he failed to do himself justice in the exam. <u>C.P.T.</u>
	Set <u>A5 Up</u> AV. AGE <u>13.3</u>	10	= 8	Eng. 3 Hist. 7	His essays are getting better, but he must concentrate on being more accurate over <u>punctuation and spelling</u> . He can speak quite well. <u>F.S.</u>
	Set <u>A4</u> AV. AGE <u>13.1</u>	15	13	1	The exam result was most encouraging after a very fair term's work. <u>h.c.p.</u>
	Set <u>A5</u> AV. AGE <u>13.1</u>	14	= 3	= 4	Very fair progress. <u>C.P.T.</u>
	Set <u>A5</u> AV. AGE <u>13.1</u>	20	9	4	Satisfactory. A good exam result. <u>h.c.p.</u>
MUSIC AND SINGING	Very good program. <u>W. R. Green</u> a <u>violinist</u> - A very good effort to be able to play in the orchestra after only one term's tuition. <u>E.B.C.</u> Piano <u>A v. creditable</u> term. <u>EMS.</u>				GAMES, P.T., ETC.—
ART	Small output of well managed work. <u>EMS.</u>				Cricket - A member of the 2nd XI. Always looked well and got many wickets. He also worked himself into a good fitter. His looking and fielding would have given him a place in many professional 1st XI's. Swam well in the relays.
HANDICRAFT	Very good. <u>R.B.</u>				Quite a good drill-leader. ✓
DIVINITY	A v. f. exam				
SCIENCE	Very good result. <u>P.S.</u>				

General Report (for Day-boys) —
 House Report (for Boarders) — Sandy is coming on very well all round. Jc
 Headmaster's Report — Good.

Next Term begins Wednesday, September 21st, 1955, at 9.30 a.m.
 Boarders return before 7.30 p.m. on the day before (Sept. 20th)
 N.B.—No boy may return to School without a certificate of freedom from contact with infectious disorder during holidays
 A. E. LYNAM
 Holiday Prize Work :— Illustrated Holiday Diary

DRAGON SCHOOL DOCUMENTS: ALAN

Last fortnightly report at Dragon

DRAGON SCHOOL FORTNIGHTLY REPORT

Name: Alan Macfarlane Age: 13.6 10 July 19 55

	Form.	No. of Boys in Form.	Place last f'night.	Place this f'night.	Remarks.
Classics	<u>Up 2B</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>=12</u>	<u>=13</u>	<u>Good results in C.E. Exam. <u>W.A.W.</u></u>
English	<u>A3</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>=8</u>	<u>Well done in C.E.E. J.A.T.</u>
Mathematics	<u>A2</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>=1</u>	<u>No Place</u>	<u>Well done. J.H.S.</u>
French	<u>A4</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>=2</u>	<u>=2</u>	<u>v.g. <u>F.H.W.</u></u>
House	<u>food</u>				
School					

A.E.L.

A spoof report written by Alan aged 11

DRAGON SCHOOL FORTNIGHTLY REPORT (spoof)

Name: A. Macfarlane Age: 11.2 May 19

	Form.	No. of Boys in Form.	Place last f'night.	Place this f'night.	Remarks.
Classics	<u>Up1</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>=1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Extremely good indeed</u> <u>L.A.W.</u>
English	<u>A10</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>So good I can hardly believe it.</u> <u>J.E.P.</u>
Mathematics	<u>A1</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>His mathematics is brilliant</u> <u>W.A.C.W.</u>
French	<u>A2</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>A real scholar</u> <u>csj.</u>
House	<u>Extraordinarily well behaved and scholarly</u> <u>J.H.R.L.</u>				
School	<u>V.G.I. <u>R.E.L.</u></u>				

A.E.L.

The last termly report at the Dragon July 1955

DRAGON SCHOOL, OXFORD

Name Alan Macfarlane Age 13.7 Terminal Report JULY, 1955

Absent	Form	No. of Boys in Form	Place by Term's Marks	Place by Exam.	REMARKS
1 days	Form <u>12B</u> AV. AGE <u>13.4</u>	17	13	11	<u>He has made v. good progress with v. good exams to finish up. Best marks. H.W.M.</u>
	Set <u>A3</u> AV. AGE <u>13.0</u>	17	=8	<u>E H</u>	<u>It very good tennis work. Don't stop using your imagination in English. Well done. J.A.T.</u>
	Set <u>A2</u> AV. AGE <u>13.3</u>	18	=1	<u>4</u>	<u>A thoroughly good term's work. H.H.S. Good luck.</u>
	Set <u>A4</u> AV. AGE <u>13.5</u>	15	=3	<u>5</u>	<u>A really good Term's work. well done! J.H.W.</u>
	Set <u>A3 A4</u>	34	=10	12	<u>Very good J.P.</u>
MUSIC AND SINGING					GAMES, F.T. ETC.— His tennis improved enormously during 1954 term, and I hope he will do really well during Carnival; he needed only 15 sets a catch about anywhere.
ART					Performed <u>nicely & well</u> in the sports.
HANDICRAFT	<u>Good effort</u>				Swam with <u>Zig-Zag</u> enthusiasm in the 3 rd Boat.
DIVINITY	<u>v.g. H.W.A.B.</u>				Did quite well as a <u>advt. leader</u> .
SCIENCE	<u>Very satisfactory J.S.</u>				

General Report (for Day-boys)—
 House Report (for Boarders)—
 Headmaster's Report—
Highly satisfactory - We all wish him a happy & useful career.

Next Term begins Wednesday, September 21st, 1955, at 9.30 a.m.
 Boarders return before 7.30 p.m. on the day before (Sept. 20th)
 N.B.—No boy may return to School without a certificate of freedom from contact with infectious disorder during holidays

A. E. LYNAM

Holiday Prize Work :— Illustrated Holiday Diary

The Cast of *Iolanthe* in 1954: Alan in Chorus of Peers

Dragon School, Oxford

Iolanthe

or
The Peer and The Peri

by
W. S. GILBERT AND ARTHUR SULLIVAN
(By permission of Bridget D'Oyly Carte)

Cast

The Lord Chancellor - - - - MICHAEL EVERS
 Earl of Mountararat - - - - ROBIN BURLEIGH
 Earl of Toller - - - - ALAN BROWN
 Private Willis (of the Grenadier Guards) - OWEN BLEMENT
 Strephon (an Arcadian Shepherd) - ROGER MCGRIDGIE
 Queen of the Fairies - - - - NICHOLAS RAISON
 Iolanthe (a Fairy, Strephon's Mother) - ANTHONY DENISON-SMITH
 Celia } (Fairies) - - - - JOHN EVERS
 Leila } - - - - JONATHAN BROCK
 Phyllis (an Arcadian Shepherdess and Ward in Chancery) - STEPHEN OLIVER

Chorus of Peers: J. GARDNER, R. LEES, D. WALTERS, R. WALLACE, G. STURROCK, O. NAMOUS, A. MUNRO, A. MACFARLANE, D. WILSON, P. WRIGHT, D. MILNER-MOORE, T. HUNT, W. ARBER, A. SCORAH, P. MASEFIELD, J. SCOTT, P. CARTWRIGHT, J. FLETCHER, A. BAINES, E. MOTT, G. MARSH, P. STEADMAN.

Chorus of Fairies: A. BARKUS, M. MALLAM, ALISON THOMPSON, D. SYERS, K. WYLIE, JUDITH OWEN, R. OFFENHEIMER, R. DICK, KATY MACEETH, T. WHEARE, ELIZABETH PLUMMER, R. BRYSON, J. BROWN, J. TRENT, P. WALDE.

ACT I
An Arcadian Landscape (F.E.H.)

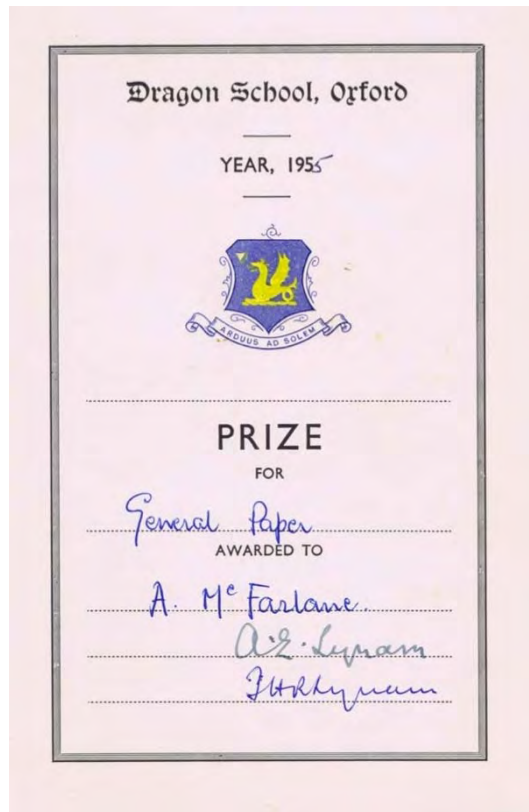
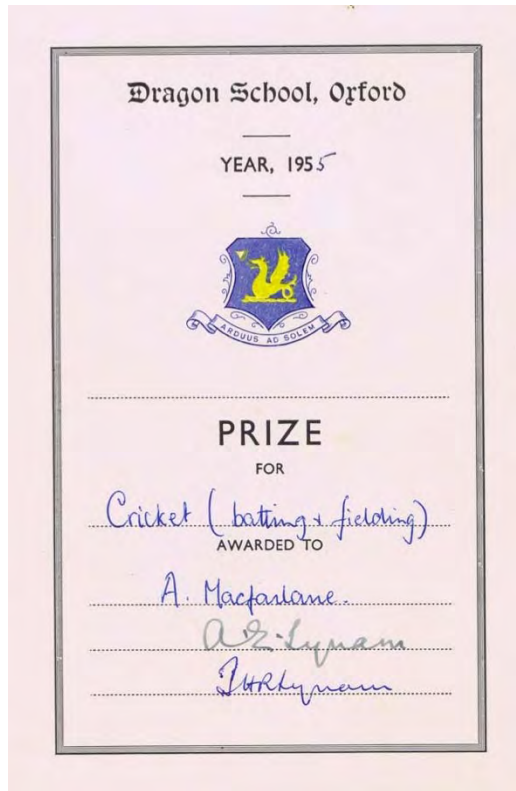
ACT II
Palace Yard, Westminster (F.E.H.)
Date: Between 1700 and 1882.

Orchestra

First Violin: MRS. GOTCH, MRS. HOOPER
 Second Violin: MRS. KINGSMURRY, MRS. JOHN, MISS M. JONES
 Viola: MRS. KIRBY
 'Cello: MRS. LOWE, MISS ELLIOTT
 Bass: MR. S. WINDSIEFFEL
 Oboe: MISS E. KITSON
 Clarinet: MR. H. HINKINS, MRS. SENIOR, MISS KINGEDSON
 Flute: MR. A. E. SMITH
 Piano: MISS PHIPPS

There will an interval of fifteen minutes between the Acts.

School prizes for cricket and general paper



SPORTS TEAMS: JAMIE

[See the front cover for Cricket 2nd XI 1954: Alan far left, Jamie second from right on bench]

Rugger first XV 1954 - Jamie far left on bench



Hockey first eleven 1954 - Jamie third from left on back row



SPORTS TEAMS: ALAN

First XV Rugger 1954- Alan far right



First XI Hockey 1955, Alan bottom left



First XI Football 1955 Football, Alan bottom left



First XI Cricket 1955, Alan far right



JAMIE AND SANDY DURING DRAGON YEARS

Jamie 1949



Jamie 1950



Jamie 1951





1953 Sandy, Jamie and cousins



Jamie in rowing boat 1954



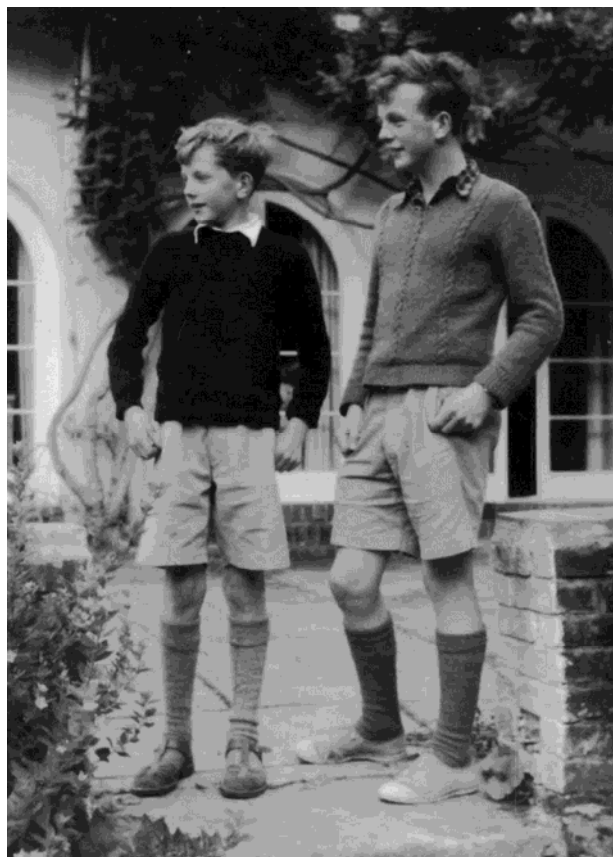
Jamie, Sandy with grandfather Bruce Lockhart 1955



Jamie and Sandy with sheepdog 1955



Sandy and Jamie, Heron's March, 1955



BEFORE AND DURING DRAGON YEARS: ALAN

Taken when we returned from India in 1947, aged six and a half.



With sister Fiona, aged about eight in 1949.



The 'Cup Final' in 1949, uncle Robert, Fiona, Grandpa and Alan



Aged ten, early 1951.



Aged twelve in 1954 sampling the joys of uncle's new motorcar.



Dressed in casual Dragon mode, summer of 1954, aged twelve.



THE DRAGON SCHOOL

Some of the pictures come from old postcards, and others from 'The Draconian'. All the pictures are reproduced by kind permission of the Headmaster of the Dragon School.

The Museum as it was when we were at the Dragon.



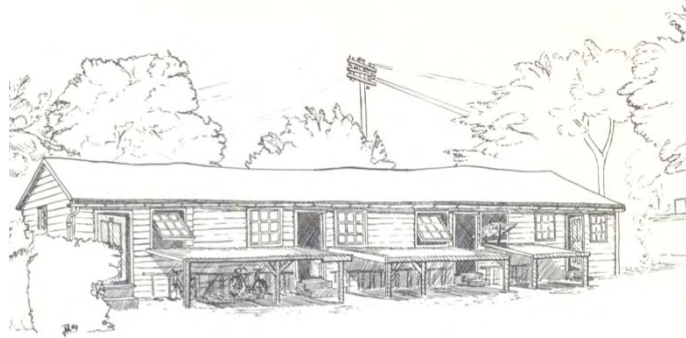
The carpentry shop under the old Museum, or 'Barsonry' .



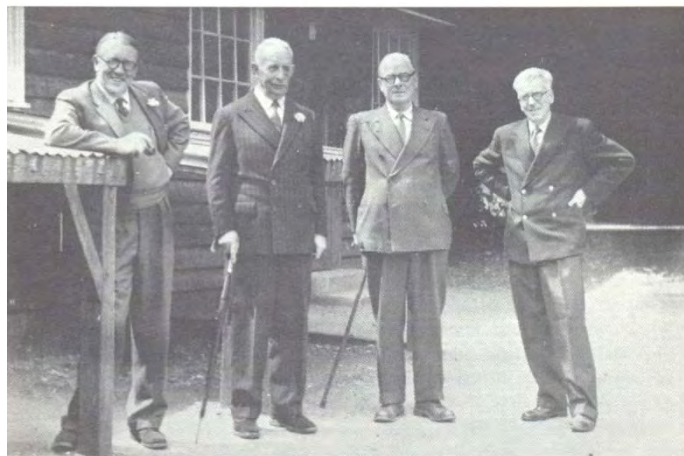
The Silence Room at the end of the New Hall



The huts were still up when we were at the Dragon.



and



Their Oldest Inhabitants

School sports 1951



Trial by Jury, Easter 1952, Joc as Judge



Patience by Gilbert and Sullivan, Winter 1952, Alan is in bottom row, four from left



Pirates of Penzance by Gilbert and Sullivan, Winter 1953, Jamie is under helmet in the middle



Coronation Day 1953



'COME TO THE FAIR'



BICYCLE PARADE



THE EMETT TRAIN



BIKE-FOOTBALL

Macbeth, 1954, Jamie as Lady Macduff, far right in third row from the front



The Middle Board and main bathing area.



The Spring Board and Top Board



Chess Team, Easter 1955



The mural painted by Tom Van Oss at the end of New Hall in the 1930's. It was reputedly covered in the 1960s. Its allegorical meaning is described in the text.
(Reproduced from Jacques, 'Dragon Century', 131)

