

MY COLLEGE YEARS

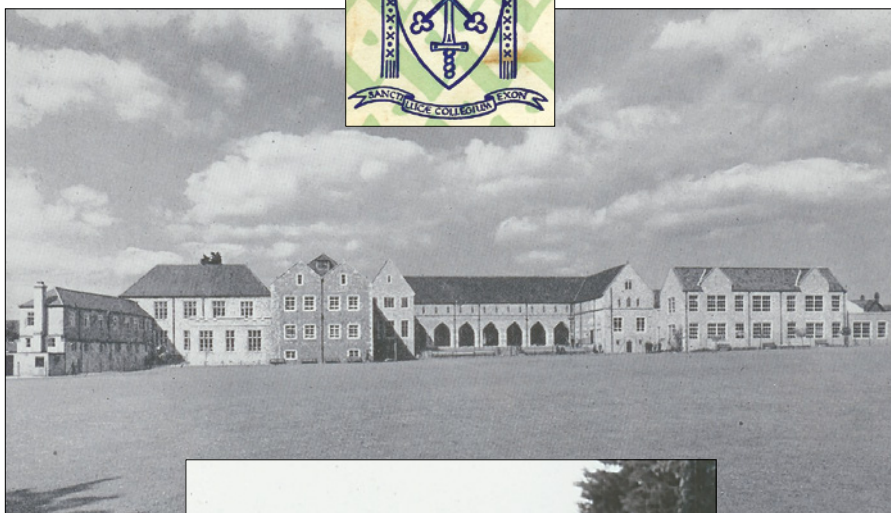
As the train rolled away from the station I had very little idea of what lay ahead of me and, beyond the name on a piece of paper, no idea of where I would be sleeping that night. Fortunately I was not entirely alone. Another lad joined the train at Southampton destined for the same College and the same hostel so we consoled each other and eventually arrived on the doorstep of 'Clystlands', our new home, together. It was an imposing regency styled building at the end of a sweeping drive in Heavitree Road about 400 yards from the main College campus. It was not overly large housing about 30 students, mostly in double rooms. This was the first surprise. I had been hoping for a room of my own and instead found myself sharing with a Welsh rugby player by the name of Dickie Uzzel. Fortunately he lived with the rugby team and only slept in our room. He would stagger in at about 11pm and be gone by 8am and between there was never any sign of him. We shared an upstairs room of about 20ft by 12ft which was sparsely furnished with an iron bedstead, a wardrobe and a bookcase each and a table and wash basin. Toilets and bathroom were down the corridor. It was basic but adequate and with a photograph or two of Jenny strategically sited in my corner of the room it quickly became home. The administration of the house was in the hands of a resident tutor assisted by two or three senior students called 'Proctors'. They were the ones to provide the second nasty shock of my arrival. Almost my first question was 'how often would I be able to get home' and they were to explain that there was no expectation that I should, and that weekend release was based upon a pass signed by the resident tutor, no more than three times per Term, with a good reason in each case. I was mortified and wondered what on earth I had let myself in for. The first letters to Jenny must have been a crushing blow. Fortunately nothing is ever as bad as it first seems and we were able to wangle seeing each other six or seven weekends out of the ten or eleven of the Term. But this was not the last shock of my first few hours at College. On the first gathering of the Geography group about eight of us with either History or English as second main subjects were taken aside and told that the Geography group was over-full. We were leant on to change and I had to be very insistent to hold on to a place. Once this hiatus was over, however, things quickly settled down into a routine.

From the outside the College was a grim, grey stone building, uninviting and

austere but entry through a central arch gave way to an attractive cloister and a range of buildings on three sides of a cricket pitch. It was one of the oldest teachers' training Colleges in the country dating from 1840 and there was a feel of permanence and tradition about the place. Even the steps and flagstones were hollowed in places by the passage of generations of students. The need to update the facilities, yet maintain the original shell led to some curious contrasts in design. Ultra modern common rooms with black and white tiled floors and fashionable, low G-Plan furniture and a busy smoke-filled coffee bar were conspicuously out of place amidst the old corridors, studies and seminar rooms. The constant modifications, however, did provide high standard teaching accommodation. Whilst I was there the heart was ripped out of 'Heighton', one of the older buildings, to provide a magnificent new library, and on the perimeter there were new buildings giving state-of-the-art facilities. There was also a magnificent theatre with a raked floor used a great deal for year group lectures.

The teaching regime centred upon lectures, tutorials and practical sessions. During the first year students followed their main subject, in my case Geography, for about five hours per week; Education which involved one lecture and a tutorial for three hours; and a number of basic curriculum courses notably Maths, English, R.E and P.E. for about one and a half hours each. The routines and emphasis of the curriculum courses varied. Maths and P.E. were orientated towards classroom practice and were highly practical. I have vivid memories of a group of grown men, including mature students in their mid-fifties straight out of the army, pretending to be butterflies and trees in the gym. I can equally remember having to make hexagonal spheres out of straws and pipe cleaners and of making solid mathematical shapes like cones out of card. R.E. and English were rather more academic and concerned more with personal education. They relied upon lectures, essays and grammatical exercises. The first task for R.E. was a 14 page religious autobiography – a salutary lesson in how to say an awful lot about very little. The exercises in grammar Jenny did for me and I sailed through! Although there were exams for each of these at the end of the year which you were required to pass, expectations were not high and nobody took them very seriously. Not so Education, however. There was altogether a more serious and businesslike approach centred upon high-powered, thoroughly structured and prepared lectures each week in the College theatre followed by a tutorial with a personal tutor. My allotted tutor was Sir Richard Ackland, a baronet and politician of some standing, a very intelligent man if a little eccentric. He presided over some of my most embarrassing moments at the College. He administered Intelligence, English and Reading tests and whilst he did not tell me directly, I was made aware of his surprise at the results. Since my failure at the 11+ I had always had hang-ups about such standardised tests and never regarded myself as being very intelligent and his attitude seemed to confirm my worst fears. Furthermore, structured discussion was something entirely new to me and I never liked being put on the spot to elaborate on some finer point of theory. I simply could not think quickly enough and tended to shrivel and dry up. In his attempt to involve everyone in the group he regularly gave me an adrenalin rush and I became grateful to the mature students

St. Luke's College, Exeter



Cystlands Hostel

The College Boy



The Trusty Stead



The Lecture Theatre



1962



1963



1964

who were only happy when they were hogging the proceedings. Geography was similarly organised with lectures and practical sessions but my experience here could not have been more different. With the confidence of a good 'A' Level behind me I excelled from the start. There were no embarrassing moments, I simply relished being ahead of the rest!

Life in a College hostel was never lonely. With over 30 young men about there was plenty of diversion and you had to be disciplined to shut yourself away and work. Friendship groups emerged surprisingly quickly. Most of them were subject based where there was the maximum of shared experience. I became particularly friendly with Graeme Thompson who had a room across the landing and we spent a large part of our free time together. Apart from Tuesdays, which was a full day of lectures from 9am to 6pm, we were free of College commitments for more than half of the time and we spent a great deal of time supping black coffee, playing darts and wandering the streets of Exeter. Money was in short supply. With a grant of £20-14/8d to last the Term I had to be careful. The greatest extravagances were smoking and going to the cinema. At that time I smoked 10 'Guards' cigarettes a day at a cost of 1/9d per packet and an outing to the pictures cost 2/3d. Fortunately all meals were provided free in the College refectory and were very adequate (a good breakfast, a two course lunch and three course evening meal and a cup of tea and piece of cake in the afternoon) and we did not have to spend money supplementing them. The problem was that we had to walk a quarter of a mile into College in all weathers to get them!

The routines soon came to include a nightly visit to the pub. At about 9.30pm a group of us would descend upon the Horse and Groom in Heavitree for a night cap. The cheapest drink was 'scrumpy' cider at 9d a pint and each evening I would allow myself the extravagance of half a pint. This was almost enough for I have seen people completely drunk on three pints. Needless to say quite a large number of our fellow students were not so restrained. The College had a large contingent of welsh rugby types who drank to excess. They tended to frequent a pub called The Honiton and the stories that emerged of the raves and drunken brawls were shocking. Everyone, however, experimented with alcohol. It was part of the macho youthful exuberance and fuelled many an escapade. For me the most memorable examples of alcohol abuse were two hostel parties held in the first term. The first was a welcome party organised soon after our arrival and for 5/- per head the booze lasted all evening. Few of us were used to drink and it did not take long for the fun and games to start. For some reason the welsh contingent headed by one of the Proctors seized upon a vulnerable, ginger haired chap who had obviously never drunk alcohol in his life before. They provided him with a pint cocktail of beer and spirits, told him it was beer and then goaded him into drinking it down in one go. Whilst the poor chap reeled the proctor volunteered to demonstrate how he could lift three men at once. He got the lad on the floor with his arms and legs akimbo and then invited two others to lay either side of him with their arms and legs over his, effectively trapping him. Making a big display of sipping a pint, as if gathering the final strength to perform the lift, the proctor bent down, undid the zip of his trousers and proceeded to pour the pint into

the opening. His reaction was violent and in his drunkenness he flailed at anyone near him until he finally collapsed. We were all too merry to realise the shabbiness of the trick. For myself, it was the second party, just before Christmas which resulted in my first taste of being thoroughly drunk and I can so well remember giggling in bed as I watched the window move around the room!

Although I entered into the spirit of things and joined the College choir, went canoeing with Graeme and even went dancing a couple of times, my preoccupation was Jenny. From the start we wrote to each other every day. The postal service could then be relied upon and next day delivery was assured. One of the highlights of my day was collecting Jenny's letter from the rack outside the refectory and then of finding a quiet bolt hole in which to read it. I also enjoyed my moments of writing to her – the last thing I did each day before retiring to bed. To supplement our letters we also set up telephone calls. This involved ringing at a pre-arranged time from the hostel pay phone to a telephone box in Eastleigh or visa versa. There was then no direct dialling facility over long distance so each call had to be routed through the operator. It cost 2/3d for a fixed three minute call. It was cumbersome, unreliable and curiously unsatisfying. I found that it was either difficult to sustain conversation for three minutes or you were just getting into it when the three minutes ended and the phone went dead. Fortunately, after three weeks we began to find ways of meeting nearly every weekend and the need for telephoning diminished. Besides my weekend passes Jenny and her Mum and Dad came down for four days over her half-term and, to bypass College regulations, we tumbled upon the idea of meeting at Salisbury on Saturdays. We discovered that the cheap day return fare from Exeter was only 15/6d and that if we both caught early trains we would be together for almost as long as we would on a weekend. From November onwards we therefore started our excursions to Salisbury. I have happy memories of our days there, lingering over coffee in the warmth of a coffee bar, wandering around the market, going to the pictures in the afternoon and of cuddling up before a roaring coal fire in the waiting room of the station. It's amazing that, even now, I can remember the films we saw – 'The Day the Earth caught fire', 'King Kong', 'Summer Holiday', and 'Blue Hawaii'. In the run up to Christmas we bought presents and window shopped for engagement rings. We were both as keen as ever to cement our relationship and on my second weekend home in November I nervously approached Jenny's Dad to ask permission.

The Term ended in a flurry of silliness as a group of us at Clystlands took part in the College Gang Show. I arrived home in time to do post-work and shared Christmases between Chalk Hill and Desborough Road. After Christmas Jenny and I went to Samuels in Southampton and bought engagement rings. Jenny chose a single solitaire diamond at £15. On her birthday, in keeping with tradition, I went down on one knee and popped the question. In the evening, by way of celebration, we had booked a dinner dance at the 'Fisher's Pond' – a local beauty spot. It turned out to be one of the most romantic evenings of our lives since we were the only customers there and had the band and dancefloor all to ourselves.

After a magnificent break the wrench of returning to College was even worse than before. For Jenny in particular a massive high was followed by a deep low as first

she returned to school to sit her mock exams, including English and French 'O' Levels proper, and secondly had to suffer an unprecedented attack by my parents. It became clear by mid-February that my mother's silent reaction to our engagement concealed a festering resentment that she was being robbed of her second son. Whether she had discovered that I was spending weekends at Eastleigh without going home, I don't know, but on Sunday 19th my Dad arrived on the doorstep of Desborough Road to make it clear what they thought about our relationship. Dad was a quiet man who would not search out trouble. He must have been bullied and cajoled into doing what he did, and I have little doubt that it was my mother speaking and not him. It was a devastating blow to both of us. For Jenny it was an act of savagery from which she never recovered. She was ill for two days and harboured a grudge for the rest of her life. For me it was the moment that my parents lost their son.

Back at College the Spring Term was dominated by my first teaching practice. I was allotted the Primary school at Ashburton, a large and ancient village on the southern edge of Dartmoor. There were two preliminary visits before the four week practice started in earnest on March 1st. I taught the top class of 10–11 year-olds and loved it from the very beginning. I have fond memories of my time there and can remember quite clearly the topics I taught. It was amazing how much I crammed into such a short time. I taught everything barring R.E. and Art, ran projects on 'Paper' and 'Woollen Textiles', organised a visit to the woollen mills at Buckfastleigh, taught the recorder and took football practices. For the duration I lived with the Headmaster and his wife. He was elderly and, somewhere along the line, had a military background. Consequently he had taught all the children in the school to spring to attention and to salute all visitors and members of staff. Crossing the playground was therefore hilarious as each child 'performed' and I found myself saluting in response. The only trial of my practice was substituting for the Head for three quarters of an hour each Monday afternoon. He had a habit of reading stories to a class and I was asked to read 'The Children of the New Forest'. To read aloud for so long and make it interesting is a skill which takes years to perfect. It was not my strong point. The poor kids must have been bored witless by my droning but, bless them, they were as generous and kind as the staff and soothed my way to a really good practice report.

In the last weeks of March I began to sense that Jenny's resolve was weakening. Her letters began to reveal some unhappiness at being tied down and, uncharacteristically, there were times when she shelved writing. As soon as I returned home for the Easter break I discovered why. For some weeks she had been rehearsing 'Iolanthe' with the Operatic Society. I attended the last night of the show at the Town Hall and from the front row witnessed the 'electricity' which was passing between her and the lad for whom the yellow socks had originally been intended, who was also in the show. Afterwards, as I waited in the corridor, it became clear that she had once more developed a crush on him and was in a state of some confusion. Needless to say my jealousy erupted, and had it not been for the calming hand of Jenny's mother, I would have stormed off there and then. There followed over three months of real discomfort and awkwardness between us. Jenny was confused, I was bruised, and we

were just not happy together. During the short summer term letters were less frequent and I went home only once. It was the worst, emptiest time of my life and I skulked around trying to bury myself in work. In June we both faced important exams. Jenny sat 'O' Levels and I wrestled with end-of-year exams. It was not until halfway through our holiday together that the air cleared and we managed to put our relationship back on track. Jenny's Mum and Dad had booked a fortnights' holiday for us all – one week in a cabin at Meon, not far from Lee-on-Solent, and a week at Goodrington in Devon, in the same Hotel as the previous year. The first few days at Meon were miserable but towards the end of the week we went by scooter to the King's Theatre in Southsea and queued for seats in the 'Gods' to see 'The Student Prince'. The show cast a spell over us. It was one of those rare moments when something just clicked. Warmth and tenderness replaced the awkwardness of the previous months, we regained our enthusiasm for each other and found once more the blissful happiness of first love.

On our return home we both went to work. Jenny started her first job as a Junior Clerk for Eastleigh Borough Council at the Town Hall and I, once more, did a spell at Edwin Jones before returning to Exeter at the end of September. My second year at College was significantly different. Firstly I moved out of a College hostel and into private 'digs'. This freed me from all the bureaucratic restraints and enabled me to go home every weekend unhindered. This immediately made life much more bearable. Secondly, I no longer had to wrestle with the Curriculum Subjects – Maths, English, R.E. and P.E. I learned that I had passed them all. In their place I started second main studies in History, so my time was now devoted wholly to the subjects that I really wanted to teach. Furthermore, by the start of the second year I was thoroughly adapted to the demands of College life, had a staunch friend and companion in Graeme Thompson, and felt very much at home in Exeter. Life was altogether more predictable and therefore less stressed. I was also feeling more confident about things. In the first few days of term we all received the results from the first year exams and I discovered that I had come third out of 150 in Education and was top in Geography.

My new home was much more to my liking. Five of us shared the front half of 26, Heavitree Road, a large terraced house near the College. We had our own lounge and three of us shared a large bedroom above. Mrs Tozer, the landlady, was a large lady with a passion for Bingo. She was a fine Devonian cook and provided three good, square meals a day. She also administered TLC when we were poorly. On several occasions, I recall, she stood over me with hot toddies so powerful that by morning, cold and flu germs had been dissolved in a night-time of sweating. I lived, however, for the weekends. During the week I sank myself into an ever growing quantity of work, pacing myself to ensure that Saturday and Sunday would be free.

Journeying back and forth from Exeter to Eastleigh on my scooter became a routine part of my life. The journey took anything between 3 and 3½ hours, depending upon the direction of the wind! I have to take my hat off to Piaget, the manufacturers of Vespa. After the first hour of warming up, the little 125cc engine purred. It never let me down. The first time I drove to Exeter was the previous February, just

before Teaching Practice and during the summer I kept it at Clystlands. During the second year, however, I had to find garaging facilities and throughout the week I kept it inside a motor repair workshop in Heavitree. Travelling by scooter might have been cheap but it was far from comfortable on long journeys. Keeping warm during the winter months was impossible. Although I wore layers of clothes, including helmet, goggles and a scarf over mouth and nose, after about an hour all body heat was lost and I spent upwards of two hours numb and frozen to the seat. There were times when arriving in Exeter about 9pm on Sunday I could hardly walk where I was so cold. How I envied the people passing in their super-heated cars in their shirt sleeves, especially when the cold was compounded by the rain. I became used to travelling in anything the weather threw at me. There were several occasions when I journeyed through snow showers, and one unforgettable journey towards the end of the notoriously snowy winter of 1963 when I drove through Dorset and Devon on compacted snow with my legs out either side of the bike for stabilisation. That journey took five hours!

There were occasions when, for one reason or another, I chose to hitch-hike home. The experiences are worth relating, not least because it illustrates the hazards of entrusting personal safety to complete strangers. Two journeys are particularly memorable. The first occurred whilst the snow still lay thickly sometime in January or February 1963. Most of the main roads were moderately clear, those that were not were rutted like tramlines by the passing traffic. I was picked up by a man in an estate car just outside of Exeter. Within minutes he had explained that he was a deep sea diver who blew up wrecks for a living. He was returning from Cornwall where he had been working for the last three nights – apparently underwater visibility is better at night. He told me that he had not slept for three days and that he had picked me up so that I would keep him awake. He also pointed to a large coffin like box in the back of the car which he said contained his equipment including high explosives. He drove like a maniac. I remember the base of the engine gouging into the ice as he steered the car at high speed along the rutted 'tramlines'. Mercifully he stopped at a roadside café for a break. Here, whilst he treated me to breakfast, he disappeared for more than half an hour. Later I was to learn that the establishment was owned and run by Mandy Rice-Davis – the prostitute at the centre of the infamous Profumo affair. No guessing what he was up to whilst I was supping my coffee!! He finally put me down at Andover and my knees were knocking so much that I could not face hitch-hiking any further, so I caught a train home!

The second occasion demonstrates the extremes of motoring at the time and the varying motives people have in picking up hitch-hikers. I quickly learned that the chances of a lift were greatly enhanced if your College scarf was highly visible. It advertised your background and, to some extent, confirmed your legitimacy as an honest and upright citizen. This particular day I was picked up by a couple in their smart Jaguar car. They had seen the scarf and were keen to reminisce about their own College days and demonstrate that they had made it! It is the only time in my life that I have ever travelled at over 100 mph. By the time they set me down I was feeling thoroughly travel sick. Fortunately, I had not 'thumbed' many cars when I was picked

up again. This time it was an old wreck of a car driven by a naval rating on his way from Plymouth to Portsmouth. He recognised a poor student and genuinely wanted to be of service. He explained that it was cheaper to buy a car from the scrap yard (pre M.O.T. of course) than pay the train fare. At journey's end, or before if it did not last that long, you just dumped it. So after the luxury of the Jaguar I found myself in an old Ford jalopy sitting legs astride a hole in the floor and holding on to the door, which was half off its hinges, for grim life! He was good company and I travelled thus from mid-Dorset to the Civic Centre in Southampton!

On the home front my regular weekend visits and Jenny's new found income meant that we began to develop a social life. We went out with friends to dinner dances and even went on a theatre trip to London to see 'The Sound of Music'. We also started to frequent the Pier in Southampton for Saturday night dances. At Easter we once again spent the weekend with Mrs Axworthy at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight and had a marvellous time. We were also both active in Operatics. Jenny performed as a dancer in 'The Rebel Maid' at the Town Hall in late April and I followed in a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Ruddigore' at College in early May. Jenny also came to Exeter more often, at first with her Mum and Dad, and later independently to go to the University Rag Ball, a College dance and the last performance of 'Ruddigore'. During the year we were more consciously looking forward to marriage and Jenny started collecting things in earnest for her bottom drawer. We were always on the lookout for a bargain or the means of getting more money. One attempt at trying to get rich quick was a chain letter, then doing the rounds where 6d Savings Stamps were sent to 10 addresses. The potential return was said to be £140. We received 9/-, a net profit of 4/-! We also collected coupons from Embassy cigarettes and traded them for bottom drawer items. We gathered a dinner service in this way plate by plate. As the year progressed, however, it became increasingly evident that Jenny was not enjoying her job or the day-release course at the local Technical College that went with it. Not long after Christmas she began to apply for other positions but could find nothing that matched the salary she was getting. At the same time her general health began to deteriorate and she suffered first a poisoned thumb and then problems with her feet which led to a long and expensive course of treatment with a Chiropodist. Fortunately her discontent at work registered with her boss who showed his appreciation of her efforts and provided her with additional responsibilities and this allayed problems for a few months.

At College the year passed as successfully as ever. I continued to spend time with Graeme who had moved into a room in Cloisters in the main College building. We talked a lot, drank gallons of black coffee and did most things together including trying to cut down or give up smoking. I remember vividly sharing our concerns and anxieties at the time of the Cuban crisis in October 1962 when nuclear war seemed a real possibility and of being soothed by Ella Fitzgerald whose record Graeme played over and over again.

The year was characterised by three extraordinary events. The first was the College production of 'Ruddigore'. Auditions and rehearsals started in November. My first attempt at a leading part failed, but for some reason the music student who had



October 1961



1962



Boxing Day 1962



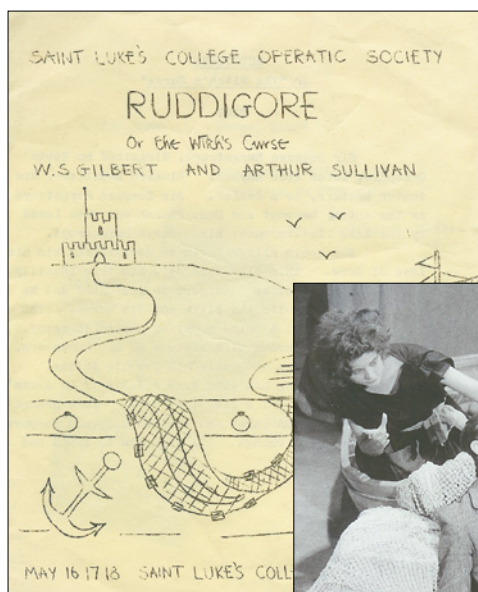
Mayor's Sherry Party 1963



1963



1963



‘Ruddigore’
successful

A predominantly youthful vitality and sense of purpose characterised last night's performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Ruddigore," which is being given a three-day run by St. Luke's College Operatic Society.

Outstanding in a well chosen and talented cast were Lionel Twiss as Sir Despard Murgatroyd and Linda Griffin as Mad Margaret, while Keith Upson, in the lead as Robin Oakapple, gave a many-sided competence to his role. Frederic Smith's producing was, in all senses, both colourful and assured. The men of the chorus sang with vigour, which is characteristic of the many spare-time activities in which St. Luke's students partake and they were adequately complemented by the bright tone—and good looks—of ladies recruited from the University, Rolfe College, and St. Loyes.

The orchestra, though perhaps not quite so youthful as those on the stage, kept up, despite some uncertain intonation, an enthusiastic pace. In this they had no option for Victor Whitburn in his customary and obviously happy position of directing light opera, allowed no one to wilt, and the music moved along at a consistently brisk pace.

One came away from St. Luke's Theatre very much aware of an all-round enthusiasm which infected the audience as much as the performers. — LIONEL DAKERS.



been given the lead tenor role withdrew and I was invited to take his place. It was not really a singing part that suited me. I have always been a ballad singer and this contained fast 'patter' songs which are so much part of the Gilbert and Sullivan idiom. Still, I did my best, enjoyed the experience and turned in a reasonably competent performance. If there was a problem it was that everything came together. The whole of the summer term was given over to teaching practice. This meant that the final year exams were held in March and the performances themselves coincided with the second week of teaching in my placement school. Not exactly an ideal time! I can remember the exhaustion, but I cannot remember being unduly stressed by it all. Oh the resilience of youth!

My second and final teaching practice was at Vincent Thompson Secondary School for Boys in Exeter. It was plain sailing and largely uneventful. The only real test was upon my ability to maintain discipline and I am happy to say that I won the battle without too much difficulty. I recall that the worst lessons were History. The teacher I was replacing was hopeless and his lessons were a riot. The children came with the expectation of doing nothing and of having a good time. To cap it all, the topic given me to teach was Malayan History which I knew nothing about, and the lower second year class for whom it was intended clearly saw no reason why they should know it either! On my second lesson with them I spent half of the time making them queue at the door and enter the classroom quietly. Over and over again they did it until they did it in silence. By the fifth or sixth lesson I was able to move away from the punitive and have a little guarded fun with them and things began to improve immeasurably. Being keen to impress, once again I took on extra work. The school had a flourishing Air Training Corp group and I was talked into lecturing meteorology for two hours every Tuesday evening. I also took on responsibility for a Geography exhibition for an Open Evening and arranged an after school trip to watch the local newspaper being compiled and printed. As with most Secondary Modern Schools, however, the School had its fair share of problem pupils. Whilst I was there one small lad was caught flushing school caps, and even a blazer down the toilets – a problem which only came to light when the local Sewage Department, recognising the badge, returned them to the School!

I returned in the summer to the most hilarious job I had ever had. Jenny had managed to persuade the Borough Engineers Department to employ me as a labourer on their road gangs. When I arrived at the Council Yard it became clear that the Superintendent did not like the idea of a posh College lad mixing with his band of uncouth navvies and he sought to protect me from manual labour. For the first few days, therefore, he employed me to sit in his office and answer the telephone, which rang only a few times each day. Needless to say it soon came to the notice of his superiors at the Town Hall and he was ordered to put me to work. Still reluctant to throw me to the lions, for about another week or ten days, I became a lorry driver's mate in a tipper lorry. This generally involved cruising around the Borough doing very little. Finally, however, I think the men began to get a little tetchy and I joined a road gang of four. There is no doubt that the popular conception of Council workman is true. They certainly did not overtax themselves. The working day started

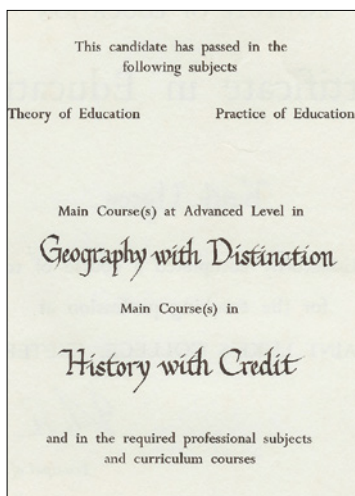
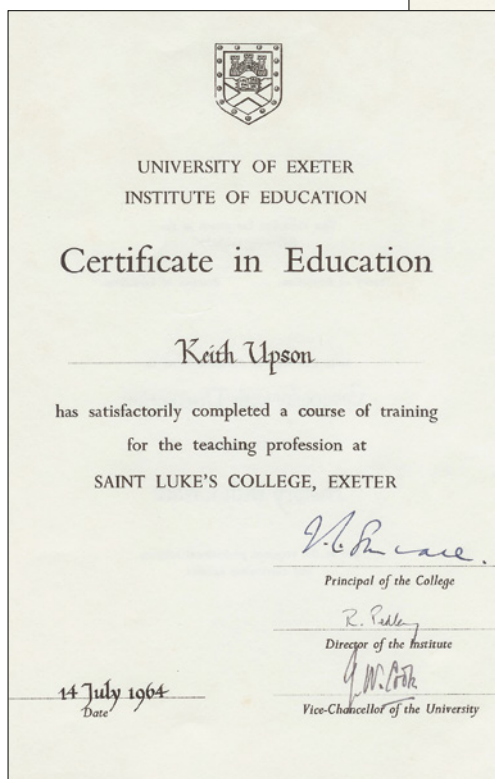
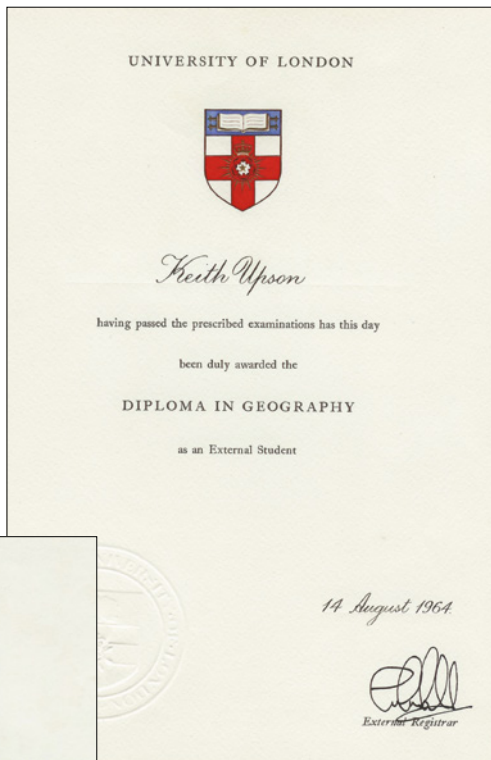
at 7.30am at which time we would all clamber aboard a lorry and go and have a look at the job allocated for the day to assess the materials that would be needed. Then it was back to the depot for a 30 minute breakfast break before loading up. Back on the site it was an unwritten rule that only one person worked at a time so there was always three looking on and eyeing up the women, which seemed a preoccupation. So the day progressed with generous coffee, lunch and tea breaks until about 4pm when all work stopped. Tidying up then began before we all sauntered back to the yard. There seemed to be little pressure and a great deal of frolicking around. I certainly cannot remember my soft hands being marred by any blisters!

The third and final year at College was a year of incredible pressure and hard work and more than a little tragedy. For me it was the year of the 'dissertation'. I had to research and write five of them on top of routine College essays. Such was the load that Jenny, bless her heart, offered to do one of the History dissertations for me and wrote a fine piece on 'The Lewis and Clark Expedition' having gathered information from libraries and the American Embassy. It was given an 'A' grading! Even so I often had to work to beyond midnight in order to finish them all on time. To help I invested in a portable typewriter, a cheap Japanese model bought for £16 from Curry's, and rapidly refined my keyboarding skills. This, at least, enabled me to achieve a professional finish without having to pay somebody to do it. I was also able to bring into use the 35mm camera that I had been given as a 21st birthday present to provide photographs of farms and landscapes to support the fieldwork upon which everything was based. There were three key areas of research, each the subject of a dissertation: 'The Medieval Manor', a study of Botley, near where I grew up; 'Hampshire Agriculture – Post-War Change', which hinged upon three farm studies at Botley, Crawley (near Winchester) and Exbury, on the edge of the New Forest; and finally 'A Solution to Exeter's Traffic Problems'. All of them scored 'A' grades but it was the last that had the most interesting consequences. The early 60's saw the start of concerns about urban traffic problems. Exeter City Council commissioned a number of studies and some really bizarre schemes were suggested to solve the problems. Graeme and I suggested and justified a more down to earth, common sense solution which involved building another bridge over the River Exe and creating an inner ring road. After I had left College my Tutors, two of which were City Councillors, asked me to send the dissertation back and that was the last I saw of it. Now it may be complete coincidence but when I returned to Exeter some twelve years later, the scheme we had suggested appeared to have been implemented almost to the letter. I like to think that I might have had some hand in it, but who knows?

The high spot of the year occurred a few weeks into the Autumn Term when I was awarded the College Arts Prize at a special ceremony in the College refectory. After that a succession of tragic events, both at home and abroad, began to build towards a crisis in the summer term. In November the world was stunned by the assassination of President Kennedy and we were all horrified at the video footage of the shooting. At home Jenny was still suffering badly with her feet and was weathering frequent visits to the hospital. After Christmas everything turned sour. In January Jenny and I had an accident on the scooter. Both of us were ambulated to Accident and

Emergency but fortunately neither of us suffered anything more than shock and a few bruises and abrasions. We were in Chandlers Ford when the car in front braked. I was not able to avoid it and we both sailed over the handlebars and landed on the pavement. The scooter suffered the most damage with a badly twisted steering column. The whole thing then erupted into a summons for careless driving, a court case, conviction and fine of £10. Being insured for only Third Party, Fire and Theft, I also had to meet the cost of repair to the scooter, not to mention the cost and inconvenience of being without it. All in all, therefore, it was a harrowing experience. More seriously, shortly after the accident Jenny started to suffer fainting attacks. Her Doctor discovered that her heartbeat was much faster than it should have been and began to suspect a nervous disorder. By the beginning of March she was referred to a psychiatrist and was in a turmoil over the possible cause. We even broke off our engagement in case it was me! On April 1st she finally started a new job in the Education Department of Hampshire County Council at the Castle, Winchester. Unfortunately, however, the fainting fits became more frequent and everything came to a head in early May when she was admitted to the Park Prewett Hospital in Basingstoke. Back in Exeter the pressures were extreme. I could not understand what was happening to Jenny, I thought I was losing her, and I was numb. At the same time I was furiously trying to complete my Geography dissertation, trying to settle my future by applying to L.E.A.'s for jobs and beginning to psych myself up for Final exams, including the University of London Diploma in Geography which I had entered as an external student. To cap it all I caught a thief red-handed rifling through Graeme's wardrobe when he was out of his room and was called as a witness at the trial at the magistrates court in Exeter. Fortunately he pleaded guilty to a long list of petty crime and I was not needed to give evidence. Four days before Jenny went into hospital I was whisked away to Shrewsbury on a weeks' Field Study trip, so whilst she was submitting to treatment, I was being drenched in Geography with hardly a minute to spare. I was down coal mines, into City archives, exploring Iron Bridge and Coalbrookdale and being wheeled over Long Mynd. When I returned I went straight to the hospital to see her. She had been given the 'Truth Drug' and had unloaded her problems – though what they were I still have no idea. After just over a fortnight she returned home and, with the aid of amphetamines, the much sought after Purple Hearts, she eventually returned to work and began the journey back to health. As before, I went into isolation to swot for exams. In early June I finally heard from the City of Southampton Education Department that I had been appointed to Shirley Warren Secondary School. That was an important moment, for I now knew with certainty that I would be returning home to live and Jenny and I would be together. I was therefore released from one major worry just as I sat my exams. The first batch, five 3 hour papers in two and a half days, were the University Diploma ones for which I had to travel to Plymouth. Then followed College finals, a further seven 3 hour papers. It all seemed to end very suddenly. One minute I was weighed by exams, the next, it was all over and I was on my way home. The relief was indescribable. As I prepared to leave emotions were bitter-sweet. Feelings of euphoria were tinged with nostalgia. I remember sitting on a seat near Cloisters looking out

The Pay Off!



over the cricket pitch at sunset on the evening before departure feeling quite sad. I had had three full and rewarding years and had emerged victorious. I passed the Diploma and graduated with a Certificate in Education showing a distinction in Geography and a credit in History.

By way of celebration Jenny came to Exeter for the final 'Going Down Ball'. It was a fabulous event. During the evening we had a photograph taken sitting at a coffee table upon which was a champagne bottle. The print was posted home and arrived before I did. Mum opened the envelope, misinterpreted the photo, and thought we had been secretly married ! A few days after I finally arrived home Jenny and I went on holiday together. We had booked two chalets in the grounds of a hotel in Shanklin. Given the traumas of the previous weeks, not surprisingly, it was not a notable experience – things were still a touch tentative. My abiding memories of the week are of James Bond books, slot machines and a bad attack of sinusitis. In the ensuing weeks things slowly returned to normal and we both began to lay plans for our wedding and our future home, a prospect that we both found exciting. It was time to look to the future. A new chapter was about to begin.