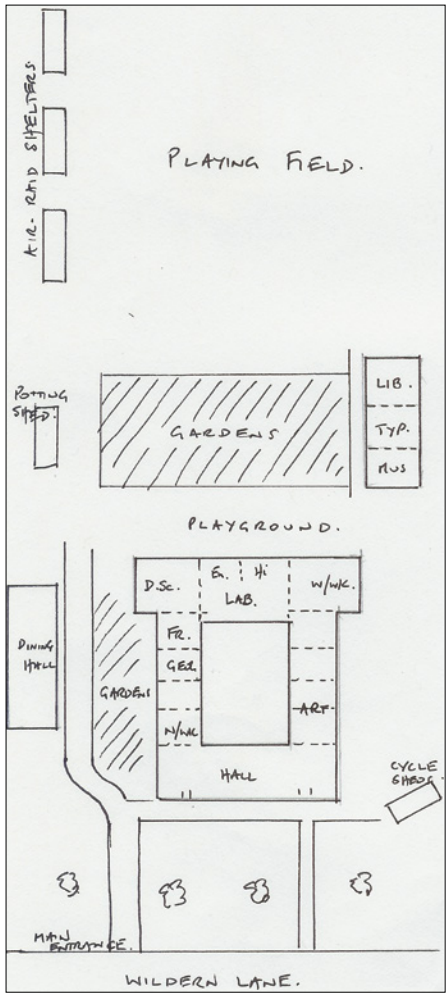
MY SECONDARY SCHOOL YEARS

I started at Hedge End County Secondary School, Wildern Lane, in September 1953. I was just eleven years old and as such I was one of the youngest children there. This was a disadvantage that followed me throughout my early school days for almost everyone in the classes I was attached to was up to eleven months older than I was and this made an appreciable difference. A year in the development of a six or seven year old is considerable, and, in days when competition in class was openly encouraged, the ability to succeed was permanently restricted. The lack of success experience that followed was one factor in my lack of motivation in the early years. How much difference this made to my ego and confidence over time is anyone's guess but I have certainly carried a chip on my shoulder throughout my life.

Hedge End Secondary School was modern in both senses of the word. It was a white brick building set in a country lane and I suspect it must have been built just before the war in anticipation of the 1944 Education Act which created the non-selective Secondary Modern school. The building was constructed around a quadrangle with the Hall, which doubled as a gymnasium, facing the road and classrooms on the other sides. With the exception of two classrooms built above a laboratory on the farther side the building was single story and each classroom opened onto a covered way surrounding the quadrangle, four on one side and three on the other. There was also a set of three rooms in a temporary pre-fabricated concrete hut set apart, and a similar building used as a dining hall as well as a classroom. In all there must have been about 17 or 18 rooms including specialist accommodation for Woodwork, Domestic Science, Needlework, Science, Typing, Music, Art and a Library. There was also a playground and a large area devoted to vegetable plots with a large potting shed. Beyond was the school playing field with grass covered air-raid shelters along one edge. Surrounding the school was farmland, mostly pasturage for cattle.

The School drew children from a very wide, mostly rural, area embracing the villages of West End, Hedge End, Botley and Curdridge and all the Hamlets in between. The distances were such that a large number of pupils had to be bussed in by contract coaches. The School was organised into year groups each with three or four classes streamed according to ability from the 'A' stream containing the bright-



est pupils down to the 'D' stream with the dimmest. I was disappointed at being placed in the 'B' stream particularly as cousin David was put in the top stream. The assessment of ability upon which the placement was based was the 11+ exam, which shows how badly I must have done. Fortunately by Easter of my first year, there were readjustments to the streaming and I was promoted to 1A. By today's standards class sizes were huge. There were between 40 and 45 pupils in most classes so there must have been around 550 or so pupils in all including a small 5th year group who were selected to stay on and try their luck with G.C.E. The School leaving age was then 15 and most left on their 15th birthday, so as the year progressed the number of people in the school declined. As you can imagine motivation for schoolwork collapsed during the 4th year as week by week pupils left and they must have been a handful to teach. The School was also subdivided into four 'Houses' for sport. These were named after varieties of Strawberries in recognition of the importance of the crop to the local economy. I was placed in 'Sovereign' but there was also 'Duke', 'Bedford' and 'Paxton'.

They say 'old habits die hard' and, as with Primary School, neither the curriculum nor the teaching staff succeeded in moving me out of my carefree idleness. As a result my classroom behaviour continued to leave a lot to be desired and I was twice sent to the Headmaster, Mr Simmonds (my piano teacher) to be caned, frequently suffered the 'beats' from Len Knowles, the Music teacher, and was compelled to write hundreds of lines by all and sundry. There was no real work ethic in the school, no real goals to aim at and little expectation beyond satisfying the whim of individual teachers. I cannot remember any homework other than the odd task. Certainly there was no regular routine of setting and marking homework. There was also no system of detentions for those failing to achieve in the classroom since the school could not interfere with the arrangements for bussing children home. Any extra time had to be made up in the dinner hour and

this was resisted because it deprived teachers of their lunch break. I recall that, from my perspective at least, the only thing that really mattered was position in class. This was calculated twice a year following exams when all the scores were added together and a rank order of pupils produced. I guess it was the fear of demotion that made it so important, or the humiliation of being near the bottom of the class. Following exams reports were issued to parents. These were the only contact between school and home. They showed exam marks and gave an indication of relative strengths and weaknesses in subjects but very little else. Teachers were offered a single line of about three inches to detail information regarding standard, attitude, progress and workmanship. Most settled for inane and meaningless comments like 'satisfactory' or 'good' which conveyed little to the parent beyond the fact that you had not upset the teacher.

Socialisation into the new school reordered my interests and priorities. The years between 11 and 16 are probably the most crucial in establishing life patterns. These are the receptive years when you are most open to influence, when you seek role models and worship heroes. In the search for self during the adolescent years there is a tendency to hang on to every grain of acceptance, encouragement and success and to be overly sensitive about being overlooked, rejected and failing to reach norms, both amongst your peers and those in authority. It is people that matter and the quality of relationships and respect for each others humanity, contribution and talents. For me it was the relationship with the teachers that determined my interest in subjects and my motivation to work. It was their recognition and value of me that lifted my enthusiasm out of the mire of the mundane towards success. Conversely it was their lack of recognition, their nonchalance, domineering and punitive approach that killed off any predisposition to a subject that I might have had and stifled talent before it could reveal itself. There were for me two examples of the destructiveness of negativity.

In the early weeks of attendance at the School any perceived ability at football and P.E. was knocked out of me. Not only did I fail to make the school football team but they only just tolerated me in the House team. There were few 'positive strokes' and within a few short months my interest and motivation towards football evaporated. The final nail in this coffin was routine games lessons. To preserve a decent football pitch for inter-school competition, play on the main pitch was restricted and the school gained the use of a field next door. This was not only very uneven but before each games lesson the cows had to be moved off the pitch. The ensuing games were precarious to say the least and as much time was spent dodging cow pats as kicking the ball. It was on one such occasion that, much to the hilarity of my classmates, I was so intent on watching the ball that I dribbled it right off the field well beyond the goal line before I was brought up sharp by the Ref's whistle. The ridicule finished me. So also did the precept that P.E. was about 'making men of you' to justify all kinds of ruthless activity. I remember shivering in mid-winter with next to nothing on and being made to box – a favourite way of getting boys to resolve their differences. Far from finding P.E. challenging and rewarding I found it belittling and humiliating. In athletics my small size and short legs meant that I was generally at the

back of the field. As a result, in the annual inter-house competition, I suffered the indignity of being pushed into the egg and spoon race and the sack race. I got the message. The experience turned me off participating in sport for the rest of my life.

Art was also an area where any potential I had was squashed by a teacher who seemed to take against me. Mr Owen was a tall, round-faced man who had little liking for young pupils and even less patience with them. He was a strict disciplinarian with very little humanity or sense of humour. His classroom behaviour was erratic. He blew hot and cold, used ridicule as a weapon and he left me confused and alienated. There was precious little encouragement from this man and I found his lessons a belittling experience. Fortunately for me, Art was either squeezed to the edge of the curriculum by the pressure of a large number of subjects on too little time, or suffered from a lack of specialist staff and facilities for Rural Science was substituted for Art in the second year and I was therefore relieved of his repressive influence.

Fortunately my memories of other teachers are more positive and whilst I can't say that I was excited to achieve great things, I have happy memories of my contact with them. Certainly there were two or three of them to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude in that I can trace key elements of my life back to their nurturing care. Chief amongst these was Len Knowles, the music teacher. Len was a smart, immaculately groomed bachelor in his mid-forties who worked hard to develop the musical life of the school. He was a very sound classroom teacher who had the ability to get people singing, even the shyest and the most reticent. His chief claim to fame, however, was his use of a thick ruler with a metal strip running through it to administer corporal punishment. Wayward pupils, including me on many occasions, were put over his knee and given a threshing, the number of 'beats' reflecting the severity of the misdemeanour. Hardly a lesson passed without somebody getting the 'beats'. The ultimate punishment, however, was a mythical black stick which was rumoured to be hidden in his piano, which nobody ever saw, but everybody feared.

I was first brought to Len's attention shortly after my arrival at the school when Mr Simmonds asked me to join the school choir who, under his direction, was rehearsing the choral version of Merry England. It was the senior choir and included a large proportion of the staff and there could have been no more than two or three first year pupils asked to take part, if that. Len, who played the piano, discovered I could sing and rapidly took me under his wing. A few weeks later, in the School Carol Concert, I sang 'Once in Royal David's City' as a solo from the stage of the school hall. I remember being too nervous to enjoy the performance, but the afterglow made it more than worthwhile and I bathed in the recognition and praise. This was the start of my solo career. In the Autumn of 1954 I was joined by Robert Schoen, a choirboy from Botley with a good treble voice. For the following two years Len tutored us to sing duets and we performed many times both at school and elsewhere. I recall singing at the Itchen Music Festival and entertaining O.A.P.'s in concerts at Hedge End, but there were several other occasions. Each time we performed our confidence grew, the panics receded, and we gave a little more of ourselves. Each time we improved. Len gave up most of his lunch breaks to teach and practice music. If it was not Bob and I, it was the school recorder group. Each week there was a practice for

Hampshire Education Committee

HEDGE END COUNTY SECONDARY SCHOOL ~~SCHOOL~~

Class 2A

Report on Keith Upson for Autumn Term, 195[illegible]

Age 12 years 5 months. Position in Class 13th (excluding Maths.)

Average of Class 12.10 Number in Class 40

Subject	Max. Marks	Marks Gained	Teacher's Remarks
English: Composition	75	52	Keen and interested.
Handwriting	25	16	Comprehension mark too
Comprehension	50	28	low. R.N.
Mathematics:			
4A3 Set Mechanical	50	28	Steady progress
Problems	100	46	has been made. R.N.
Geography	50	34	A very reliable boy.
History	50	41	Has worked well.
Elementary Science ~~or Hygiene~~	50	31	Shows interest.
Elementary Biology ~~or Botany~~	50	41	Good. Works well. R.N.
Rural Science and Gardening	50	17	A poor result compared with other boys of his form
~~Domestic Subjects or~~ Handicraft	100	63	Is not maintaining his standard.
Needlework			
Art and Handwork			
Commercial Subjects: Book-keeping			
Shorthand			
Typewriting			
Music			
French			Is not making the effort required from a boy promoted from a B form.
TOTAL	500.	323	

Number of openings 150 Times absent 1 Times late 0

Conduct Very Good R. Nicholls

Head Teacher's Remarks: Keep 'pegging away' Keith

Date 22nd December 1947 H. J. Simmons Head Teacher

wood and then the skills would be transferred to making something useful. So the

Hampshire Education Committee

HEDGE END COUNTY SECONDARY SCHOOL ~~SENIOR SCHOOL~~

Class 2A

Report on Keith Upson for Summer Term, 1955

Age 13 years 0 months. Position in Class 16TH (excluding maths)

Average of Class 13yrs 5 math Number in Class 41

Subject	Max. Marks	Marks Gained	Teacher's Remarks
English :			
Composition	75	32	Produces work of good
Handwriting	25	13	standard, Keen on
Comprehension	50	32	plays. He shows an all round interest R.N.
Mathematics :			
1/Set Mechanical	50	31	Quite good. I think he can
Problems	100	44	do better than this R.N.
Geography	50	42	A very good result. DEH.
History	50	22	Could work harder AHH
Elementary Science ~~or Hygiene~~	50	29	Interested. Works hard. DWH
Elementary Biology ~~or Botany~~	50	39	A good worker EP.
Rural Science and Gardening	50	35	Has worked quite well. WM
~~Domestic Subjects or~~ Handicraft	100	63	Quite good but falls a long way behind some of the class. EGH.
Needlework			
Art and Handwork			
Commercial Subjects : Book-keeping			
Shorthand			
Typewriting			
Music			
French			A cheerful personality : should like to see more work harder. GHHH.
TOTAL	500	307	(excluding maths)

Number of openings 112 Times absent 0 Times late 0

Conduct Usually good. R.H.Nicholls.

Head Teacher's Remarks : Generally satisfactory. J.C.Newman

Date 22nd July 1955. Head Teacher

beginners on one day and a rehearsal for the group itself on another. The objective was the weekly school assembly where the recorder group played the hymn, usually in two part harmony. Len taught me the recorder and I was a staunch member of the group throughout my stay at the school.

Len was a lonely bachelor and was in the habit of taking two or three boys out occasionally in the evening. The favoured few were usually connected in some way to musical performance at the school. Bob Schoen, cousin David and I were regulars to be so honoured. The pattern for the evening was always the same. He would take us to a live theatrical performance, feed us Black Magic chocolates during the show and then treat us to a slap-up fish and chip supper afterwards. Len drove a little Austin A30 and had a new car each year – that was exciting enough, but the experience of live theatre was a fascinating education. We travelled to Southampton, Salisbury, Bournemouth and Portsmouth to see a variety of shows of differing genres. One I recall, at the Playhouse in Salisbury was shocking! Unbeknown to Len the play contained nude scenes, static in those days, of course, but his confusion and embarrassment was palpable and we laughed our socks off. As time went by our excursions diversified and I remember going to Winchester one Saturday morning to visit the Cathedral and a music shop. I also remember going to Bournemouth for a day just after Christmas 1955. We went swimming, larked about on the beach and had lunch at Bobby's. Len was always the perfect gentleman, there was never anything untoward in his behaviour, indeed the thought would never have entered our heads, but in today's climate, I suspect he would be branded odd or perverted. As it was he was a super chap who uniquely repaid our dedication to making music with luxurious treats. He was one of the few who genuinely believed in me and I owe him a great deal.

Two other teachers impacted on my life, though to a lesser extent. The first was a Mr Yeatman. He was an odd looking, youngish teacher, with dark brown hair, a bright ginger beard, horn-rimmed glasses and a rather worn sports jacket with leather protectors on the elbows. He was my Form teacher in 1B and as such taught me Maths, English, Geography and History. His main specialism, however, was History and he was the first to awaken my interest in the subject. I remember I was sufficiently motivated by his teaching on medieval history to cycle to the Westgate Museum in Winchester to view, in fascination, the grim tools of human torture on display there. This was, perhaps, the earliest example of genuine intellectual excitement I can recall and as such it was influential in the choice patterns that followed later in my school career. The other teacher who stirred my brain cells and motivated me to achieve was Mr Hann, the woodwork teacher – another gentlemanly figure respected by all for his craftsmanship and ability to teach. Such was his charisma that I cannot remember him raising his voice. His system of demonstration and practice captured our attention and his praise and encouragement motivated us all to try and emulate his skills. If things went wrong there was no stern admonishment but rather an attempt to rescue the situation and set you on your way again. After some training in the basic skills of marking-up, sawing and planing, he structured his course around the major woodworking joints. A joint would first of all be constructed using soft

cross-halving joint became the basis of a tea pot stand, a mortise and tenon – a frame or panel and the dovetail joint provided the technology to construct an oak box with a carved lid. I was also taught the rudiments of lathe work and made a table lamp in the shape of a lighthouse complete with a rocky base fashioned from quick drying cement. Mr Hann generated an interest and confidence in using wood which remained with me throughout my life. With limited time and resources available he achieved excellent results.

Within a community of twenty plus teachers there are bound to be some interesting characters. There was Mr Milligan, the rural science teacher, an addicted pipe smoker who used the school gardens to grow his own tobacco. During the autumn the leaves were strung across the potting shed to dry before being sent away for processing. Mr Nichols, the biology teacher, was somewhat 'off the wall'. It was rumoured that his eccentricities were the result of a breakdown. He certainly resorted to odd punishments. I remember one involved getting miscreant pupils to hold a coin to the blackboard using their noses – very painful after a while! Although he was prone to 'explosions' he was a jolly and likable chap as long as you stayed on the right side of him. There was also Mr Spencer, the French teacher, altogether different from Michael Crawford's creation on television but nonetheless just a bit queer. His mannerisms were sprightly rather than eccentric and his speech well enunciated. French was only taught to the 'A' streams so I missed the first two terms and never really made up the ground. This was as much due to poor teaching as anything else. He was simply unable to lift the subject beyond the rote learning of vocabulary and grammar which, for me, was the kiss of death. There was also Mr Marsh, a somewhat rotund Geography teacher and the infamous Senior Mistress, Aggie Brooks who taught needlework. She was well into her fifties and wore so much make-up that it was difficult to distinguish between facial lines and cracks in the paintwork! Presiding over all, Mr Simmonds, the Headteacher was a capable and charismatic figure. To my young eyes he had it all. He was tall, handsome, talented and genial. He cared for people and, in exchange, earned their goodwill and loyalty. I both admired and revered him. He was a good headteacher, very much a hands-on person, who was involved in the life of the school and took an active part in many activities. Under his leadership the school pulled together and was a happy place. Not surprisingly his personal success earned him promotion and, during my second year, he left to take up a headship in Bristol of one of the first comprehensive schools in the country. He was replaced by Mr Newman who was custodian of the school Library and taught English.

One of the activities supported by Mr Simmonds, which drew staff and pupils together, was the school Field Club. This existed to organise cross-country walks, both day trips around Hampshire during half-term breaks, and more especially one-week walking holidays at Easter. The club was popular and had a considerable following. For some reason it touched a chord with me and when a last minute place became available for a holiday at Towyn, Central Wales at Easter 1954 during my first year, I jumped at the chance. The holiday was the first time I had ever been away from home on my own and it made a lasting impression. The combination of physical challenge, comradeship and the first mountain scenery I had ever seen was over-

whelming. We stayed at the Holiday Fellowship Hostel on the seafront of Towyn, a sleepy little place trapped in a time warp. Each day we could elect to take either an 'A' walk of 12 to 14 miles in length or a 'B' walk of about eight miles. I joined the A team everyday and climbed Cader Idris and Snowdon and traversed countryside of breathtaking beauty. The elements added to the challenge. Our attempt at reaching the peak of Snowdon was thwarted by gale force winds and torrential rain. I can remember literally leaning against the wind and of returning to the coach wet through. Our driver, a real character by the name of Ben Blow, hung a curtain across the middle of the coach to separate boys from girls so that we could take off our wet garments. Then, typically, any discomfort was forgotten in a riotous sing-song all the way back to the Hostel.

The holiday was the first of three. The following year, 1955, I went to Penzance in Cornwall and walked the Land's End and Lizard peninsulas and in 1956 I stayed at Lynmouth. The hostel there was right on the seashore and I can remember the beach being strewn with eroded house bricks – a legacy of the devastating floods of 1953. I can also recall getting lost when the mist came down on Exmoor and the brakes of the coach burning out on the long descent down into the village. Between the holidays there were day trips that were so memorable that, some years later, I organised walks along the same routes most notably Kingston to Swanage, Winchester to King's Somborne and the Yarmouth, Freshwater, Needles triangle on the Isle of Wight. The

love of walking, and in particular the love of the countryside nurtured at this time stayed with me throughout my life.

During these days my bike was my lifeline and my passport to freedom and adventure. During most weeks I must have cycled upwards of 40 to 50 miles. Over 25 of these could be accounted for by my journey to school. Hedge End was over two miles away. I did not qualify for free transport and, since bus fares were expensive, I cycled in all but the most inclement weather. Daily I would call for cousin David, wait whilst Auntie Fay hollered at him to get a move on, a consistent ritual, and then happily cycle through the village and down Botley Road to school. The route was then a country road with very little traffic, a far cry from motorway and Industrial Estate that now dominate the landscape.

Botley Road was also the route to my best friend, Bob Schoen, who lived at Botley, three and half miles distant. Bob was my singing partner and we spent a great deal of time together during 1955. He lived in a council house just off Brook Lane. His father was a German prisoner of war who met and married a local girl. Life was very difficult for them. Anti-German feeling still ran high and the family lived in poverty and were subject to ostracism and intimidation. Nevertheless they were a very loving family and I enjoyed my visits there. Botley was a fascinating place steeped in history and we happily rummaged around and paddled boats in the river. One of our favourite play spots was a stream which ran alongside the lane opposite to Bob's house. It was whilst we were messing around there that, much to our excitement, we unearthed the capital of a Norman pillar. It was a heavy, carved stone object which we took by bus to the Tudor House Museum in Southampton where the curator verified its authenticity. I remember that on our return home I dropped it on the stairs of the bus whilst getting off and it bounced heavily on the lower steps and the running board, much to the anger of the conductor. I'm not sure about the bus, but fortunately our precious artefact was undamaged.

For two successive years, 1955 and 1956, I cycled to Bath for a break with Grandad and Auntie Rose during the summer holidays. This was a five hour journey of 69 miles via Romsey, Salisbury, and Warminster. I cannot imagine anyone allowing a 13 or 14 year-old to attempt such a journey these days. With road traffic as it is the chances of surviving would be in question. Even then Mum and Dad were sufficiently anxious the first year to give me an hour's start and follow on behind in the car. They caught me up just beyond Warminster and could not believe the distance I had travelled. In retrospect it was not surprising. The average speed of cars over long distances seldom exceeded 30 to 35 miles per hour such was the narrow and twisty nature of main roads then, whilst it was perfectly possible to maintain a speed of 12 miles per hour on a bike. On both occasions I had uneventful journeys. Grandad was never particularly easy to please but I remember him being very proud of my achievement and telling all and sundry of the distance I had pedalled.

These were the first holidays I had taken on my own and, after the initial excitement of arrival, I found time beginning to weigh heavily. I wandered the streets of Bath, learned to swim at the swimming pool there and bought a permit and attempted to fish the River Avon. I also cycled via Peasedown to Auntie Ivy and Uncle

Len's farm at Shoscombe, but it was little fun on my own and I soon became bored. As a result I took to going to work with Grandad. He worked on a market garden a short distance outside the city and Harry, the owner, paid me 2/6d or 5/- a day to pick plums, pull carrots and generally help out doing a variety of jobs. I even learned to drive the tractor there. Arrangements were also made for me to go with Auntie Rose's son-in-law, who I knew as Uncle Norman. He was a commercial traveller plying ladies clothes to dress shops around Somerset. He drove a heightened Ford van and I kept him company. He was fun, had a wonderful sense of humour and worked hard to give me a good time. In between I indulged my interest in trains and spent a few pennies on platform tickets (then 1d each). The living room behind Grandad and Auntie Rose's shop in Claverton Street overlooked the river and the railway station and there was always something interesting to see there. Almost a daily event, for example, was the release of racing pigeons from the station yard. It was a busy main-line station and I loved watching the great steam beasts thunder in. I can remember the unimaginable thrill of being transported the length of the platform on the foot-plate of an engine, thanks to some empathetic driver. Station life was, for me, every bit as fascinating as playing on a beach. Auntie Rose also did her best to occupy me and on 'Faggot and Pasty' days I would accompany her to the abattoir to collect the meat she needed. The little grocery shop hardly provided a living. Customers for provisions were few and far between. Her trade was generated from her cooking. She had a gift for making pastry and savouries and produced miracles from a little old fashioned gas cooker in a kitchenette no more than six feet square. On Faggot and Pasty day – regular days each week, people would queue up the street and she would be sold out in minutes.

Another element of my developing independence which began during my Hedge End days was my paper round. I inherited this from Alan at Easter 1955 at the age of 12 earning the grand sum of 12/6d per week and continued until I was 19, by which time I was earning £2-16s. Believe it or not but I thoroughly enjoyed doing it and I certainly benefited from the exercise and the challenge, and indeed it was a challenge. There were around 100 customers scattered on Chalk Hill, West End Road, Moorhill Road and the top half of Telegraph Woods. My first task at 6.30am was to make up the papers in order of delivery inserting any magazines that were ordered. On Wednesday and Friday, the Woman's magazine and the Radio Times days respectively, my load was too heavy to carry and the newsagent had to provide me with a bike with a carrier. At this early hour I worked at Stubb's shop in Swaythling Road with Jim Edwards and we had good fun bantering with customers collecting cigarettes and papers on their way to work. I started delivery at about 6.50 and took about an hour to empty my sack. Along the way I met the milkman with his horse and milk float. I used to be fascinated at how the horse followed the milkman from house to house without prompting. As he emerged from each driveway the milk float would be waiting for him at the gate. The modern electric version might be more convenient but it cannot match the efficiency of old 'Dobbin'.

There were a number of lessons I learned from the paper round experience . The first was that it taught me responsibility at work and service to others both of which

paid great dividends in later life. I came to be proud of providing a reliable and faultless service come rain or shine and enjoyed the positive feedback I received from customers and the way I came to be valued by the newsagent. It fed my ego and drove me on. I also learned to beware of dogs. I delivered to a number of very large houses with long drives. In such cases I did not get off my bike but simply threw the newspapers into the cavernous porches and rode on. One of these houses had a dog who did not like the motion of peddles and would chase me snapping at my heels. One day the inevitable happened and I landed up at the doctor's surgery. From that point on whenever the dog was out free in the grounds I threw the papers (there were 6 of them) over the gate and watched as the dog chewed them to pieces. They eventually got the message. I also came to appreciate something of the generosity of working class people and the tight fisted ways of the affluent. At Christmas I profited greatly from gratuities but was surprised at the inverse law that seemed to apply: The larger the property the smaller the tip. I seemed to profit most from the people who could least afford it and would be regularly given anything between 2/6 and 5/- by many of them, whilst amongst the better off 2/- was the norm, and often nothing at all.

Christmas was also pay time for us choristers in the Church choir. During these years I took my responsibilities there just as seriously as I did the paper round and attended choir practice and 3 services each Sunday. The choir master, 'Pop' Harris, kept a register and paid a penny for each attendance. At Christmas this was totalled and any monies from weddings was added in. At the midnight service on Christmas Eve we each received an envelope containing our earnings for the year, usually a sum of around £1-15s. Riches indeed! I remember many amusing incidents in the choir. I might have looked angelic in cassock and surplus, but true to form I was anything but. I was never very moved by sermons which were so boring I found other things to do and I was often hauled out of the front choir stalls and made to sit with the men

at the back. Two very different incidents spring to mind which illustrate the breadth of experience here. The first occurred at a choir practice one snowy winter's night. After the boys were dismissed at 7.30pm the men rehearsed on. The lure of the fresh fallen snow proved too much for us. After throwing a few snowballs at each other we used the vestry door for target practice. The constant thump, thump, thump on the door brought 'Pop' Harris out to send us on our way. As soon as he opened the door, however, he was deluged with snowballs from all directions and had to retreat very quickly. So too did we! The other incident also occurred during a dark winter's evening when I arrived for choir practice to find the vestry door locked. I therefore entered the Church through the main door and found everything in darkness. I felt my way down the length of the nave en-route for the vestry when I met an object that should not have been there. Inquisitive to the last I felt around the obstacle to discover that it was a coffin! I certainly left the Church quicker than I entered it.

The years from 11 to 14 also saw the emergence of a number of passions – passing fancies and traits. Before my adolescent hormones began to jangle these were typically boyish pursuits – trainspotting and building model aeroplanes to name but two. The aeroplanes were made from kits comprising plans, balsa wood, tissue paper and dope and I built several of them. I remember being mortified when, on a test flight in the park at Hatch Grange, one of them crashed on its first launch and was damaged beyond repair. My interest in aircraft, however, went beyond modelling. Like most youngsters, for a while, I fancied myself as a pilot and I took a keen interest in the newly emerging jet fighters and the 'Comet' the first jet airliner. The interest was fuelled by 'Biggles' books and stories and cutaway diagrams in the 'Eagle' comic. I remember moving oddments of furniture to create a cockpit and playing at being a pilot. One item of equipment which helped and which I acquired from somewhere was a set of war-time earphones. These stimulated an interest in morse code. From the back bedroom window of Chalk Hill it was just possible to see David's bedroom window at 38 Midlands and we tried to flash messages to each other using torches – never very successfully. Further to this, however, for a period of nearly a year, I wrote daily diary entries in morse code. I guess that as adolescence advanced this appealed to the instincts for secrecy. I certainly felt that I could never keep anything private from my mother. Try as I might to conceal certain things she usually found me out.

At the age of about 13 I tried my first cigarettes. The cheapest available then were tipped Woodbines at 1/3d for 10. Then, as now, it was illegal to purchase and smoke cigarettes under the age of 16, yet there were shopkeepers who would even split a packet of 10 and sell them individually. Like most boys the smoking habit began in the bushes with polo mints to conceal the smell. It took a little while to pluck up the courage to smoke more publicly. In those days there was more respect for adults and they would not hesitate to stop you and tell you to put them out. I recall one occasion smoking as I walked home from choir practice in the dark. Street lights were few and far between and were of the type that only created a small puddle of light. As luck would have it that evening, as I walked into the light from one direction the village bobby walked into it from the other. I received a sharp telling off, was ordered

to stub out the cigarette and was threatened that my parents would be told. I can also remember having a sly smoke in the shed at home after returning from school and finding Mum out. In putting her bike away she smelt the fumes and proceeded to shame me into confession by building an elaborate story about a man having been in the shed and the fear of what he might have been up to. At about this time I also began to notice girls. I was never very courageous and tended to worship them from afar but I did acquire one regular girlfriend whom I used to walk home from school during the autumn and winter of 1955/56. Her name was Pam Walker, a first year, whose sister Eileen was in my class – 3A. I don't think we ventured much further than walking hand in hand. Even then I didn't have the nerve to knock on her door and ask her out, but waited instead on a corner within sight of her house in the hope she would appear. I really did seem to have self-esteem problems and felt that no decent looking girl would look twice at a little weed like me. So convinced was I that, in a sense I hid behind the knowledge, and when they did notice me I was so shy and unprepared that I panicked, lost courage and had not a clue what to do. It didn't last!

At Easter 1956 my life changed irrevocably. In January I sat the entrance exam for the Southampton Secondary Technical School for the second time and passed! This was a watershed in my life, a turning point from which an amazing success story began to unfold. From the moment I entered my new school a transformation took place.

The Technical School was Southampton's half-hearted answer to the Tripartite provisions of the 1944 Education Act. The intention was to provide a training ground for future engineers, builders and craftsmen in schools somewhere between elitist, academic grammar schools and popularist Modern schools. Rather than build a separate school, however, the Authority leant on the City's Technical College to open up a new Department to accept 13–16 year olds. With an intake of just 30 pupils per term drawn from a large area of southern Hampshire it actually produced an alternative to pitifully few pupils and can hardly have measured up to government expectations.

The School occupied premises in Albert Road, not far from the Gas Works. It was in a run-down part of town and was surrounded by 19th Century terraces which were increasingly being occupied by immigrant Asian families. The building itself was a substantial 3 storey, rectilinear building designed as a school with a playground on the roof and it was shared with older day-release students engaged in apprenticeships. As schools go it was very small – about 200 pupils with only seven dedicated members of staff. They were Mr Wright, the Headmaster, Mr Cummins – Maths, Mr Mercer – Science, Mr Surrey – History and English, Mr Flint – Geography and English, Mr Townsend – Technical Drawing and a P.E./General subjects teacher. The remainder were College lecturers who shared their time with older students. They included Mr Edwards – Woodwork and teachers for Metalwork, Brickwork and Painting and Decorating.

The basic course was two years in length with pupils from 13 years old to school leaving age at 15. Those who were deemed capable were offered another year to study for G.C.E. 'O' Levels. The curriculum was heavily craft orientated. In the first year two and a half days each week were devoted to Brickwork, Metalwork,

In School Uniform 1957

Woodwork, Painting and Decorating and Technical Drawing – a half a day each. In the second year, whilst Technical Drawing was maintained, there was specialisation in one craft, in my case woodwork. For youngsters seeking a career in the trades this was an excellent opportunity for orientation. With the exception of Painting and Decorating which was provided by the College of Art and was a waste of time, the subjects were highly practical. We were taught the brickwork bonds and practiced building walls in the workshop each week, we undertook a course in fabrication and cut, bent and soldered metal sheets into a range of useful things, and we pursued the finer points of Carpentry and Joinery. The remaining part of the curriculum was necessarily restricted to five subjects and recreational P.E. and Games. There was no Art, Music, R.E. or French. The regime was very structured and disciplined. Homework was compulsory and parents had to sign a sheet indicating how much time had been spent on it. Failure to behave or do homework resulted in Saturday morning school. Everything was rigorously marked and all staff kept detailed records of achievement. Each Term classwork and homework marks were totalled and percentaged for each subject and an average percentage was calculated across the subjects. This produced a term Grade. In the six Terms of the two year course I achieved six straight A's having scored an average of over 80% across the subjects. This was an unprecedented result.

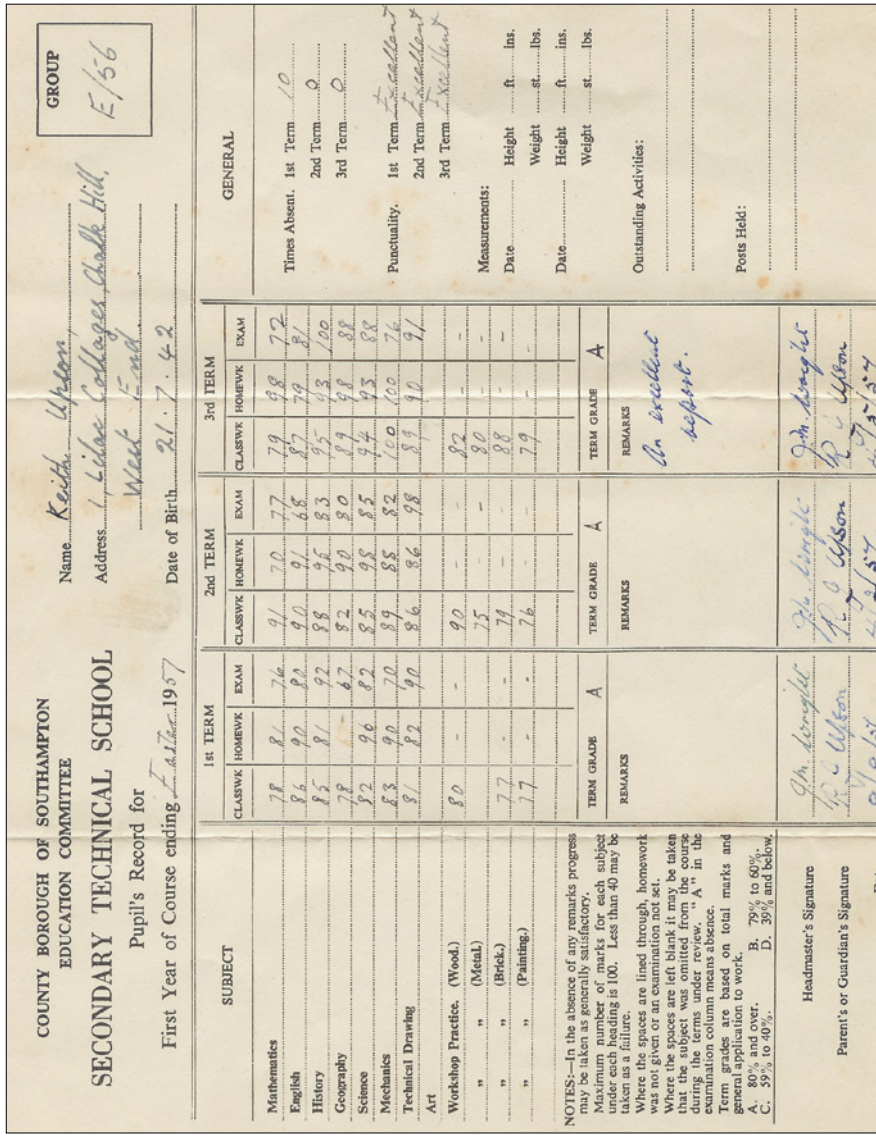
The complete turnround in my academic progress was due to a number of things. The first was certainly the serious, no nonsense approach of the School. There were clear aims and an expectation of success. No one could contemplate the ultimate sanction which was to return to Secondary Modern school. At a crucial age this finally jerked some sense into me. Prompted by my parents I could see well enough what the future held for me if I did not rise to the challenge and work. It was my one and only chance. Brother Alan had preceded me at the School and had done exceptionally well there taking 'O' Levels and moving on to Grammar School. The comparisons and expectations from teachers that I would follow in his footsteps also spurred me on. Most importantly, however, I learned quickly that hard work brought success and success fuelled hard work. I knuckled under and worked with a determination to achieve over 80% in everything. As time went by I invested hours in trying to produce the most immaculate work I could even going to the lengths of writing in script with mapping pen and indian ink. It paid off. I was awarded prizes each year for progress and I sailed on to pass four out of five 'O' Level G.C.E.'s in half of the time most people studied for them (one year instead of two).

As always my success was down to three or four superlative teachers and frankly

I owe them everything. I am particularly indebted to Mr Cummins, Mr Mercer, Mr Townsend and Mr Flint. It was their skill, patience and dogged determination to get me up to standard that brought me success. With the exception of Mr Flint, they were tough, finicky teachers who would not be denied. Michael Flint was somewhat different. He was altogether a milder, more generous person and we became good friends. In my last year at the School he gave me my first taste of dramatic performance with a large audience when he produced a play in which I took the lead. It was a one-act comedy set in a school and I played a schoolmaster. I also used to take my portable record player to school whilst he brought records and we would listen to classical music after school. It was my respect and admiration for him that first kindled my enthusiasm for Geography. Interestingly, by the time I reached my third and final year I was already beginning to err towards the academic. Consequently, in selecting 'O' Levels, I opted to take English Economic History instead of the more usual Technical Drawing. I was the only one to do so and had individual lessons with Mr Wright, the Headmaster, for a year. He was a dry old stick. A large man, big around the girth with swept back hair and large bags under the eyes but he made History interesting. He was a good Headteacher, good enough to appoint me Head Prefect for my final year!

Needless to say P.E. and Games were not a high priority at the School. There was a Hall/Gymnasium with changing rooms and showers where we spent our allotted two periods each week. The Games field, however, was miles away and involved a walk to the Floating Bridge across the River Itchen and then a bus journey to Weston Park. By the time we arrived and changed it was almost time to go back again. For a while we also went swimming. I remember one particularly embarrassing time

My first dramatic role on stage. 1959



COUNTY BOROUGH OF SOUTHAMPTON
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SECONDARY TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Pupil's Record for

First Year of Course ending July 1937

Name Keith Upson

Address 1, Cedar Cottages, Chalk Hill, Wick End

Date of Birth 21.7.42

GROUP E/56

SUBJECT	1st TERM CLASSWK	1st TERM HOMEWK	1st TERM EXAM	2nd TERM CLASSWK	2nd TERM HOMEWK	2nd TERM EXAM	3rd TERM CLASSWK	3rd TERM HOMEWK	3rd TERM EXAM
Mathematics	78	81	76	91	70	77	79	98	72
English	82	90	80	90	91	68	87	79	81
History	85	81	92	88	95	83	95	93	100
Geography	78	-	67	82	90	80	89	98	88
Science	92	96	82	85	98	85	94	95	88
Mechanics	83	90	70	89	85	82	100	100	76
Technical Drawing	81	82	90	86	96	98	89	90	91
Art									
Workshop Practice. (Wood.)	80	-	-	90	-	-	82	-	-
" " (Metal.)									
" " (Brick.)	77	-	-	75	-	-	80	-	-
" " (Painting.)	77	-	-	79	-	-	88	-	-
	77	-	-	76	-	-	79	-	-
TERM GRADE			A	TERM GRADE		A	TERM GRADE		A
REMARKS				REMARKS			REMARKS		
							An excellent report.		

NOTES:—In the absence of any remarks progress may be taken as generally satisfactory.
Maximum number of marks for each subject under each heading is 100. Less than 40 may be taken as a failure.
Where the spaces are lined through, homework was not given or an examination not set.
Where the spaces are left blank it may be taken that the subject was omitted from the course during the terms under review. "A" in the examination column means absence.
Term grades are based on total marks and general application to work.
A. 80% and over. B. 79% to 60%.
C. 59% to 40%. D. 39% and below.

Headmaster's Signature J.M. Dingle

Parent's or Guardian's Signature P. C. Upson

Date 9/9/36 4/3/37 4/3/37

GENERAL

Times Absent. 1st Term 10
2nd Term 0
3rd Term 0

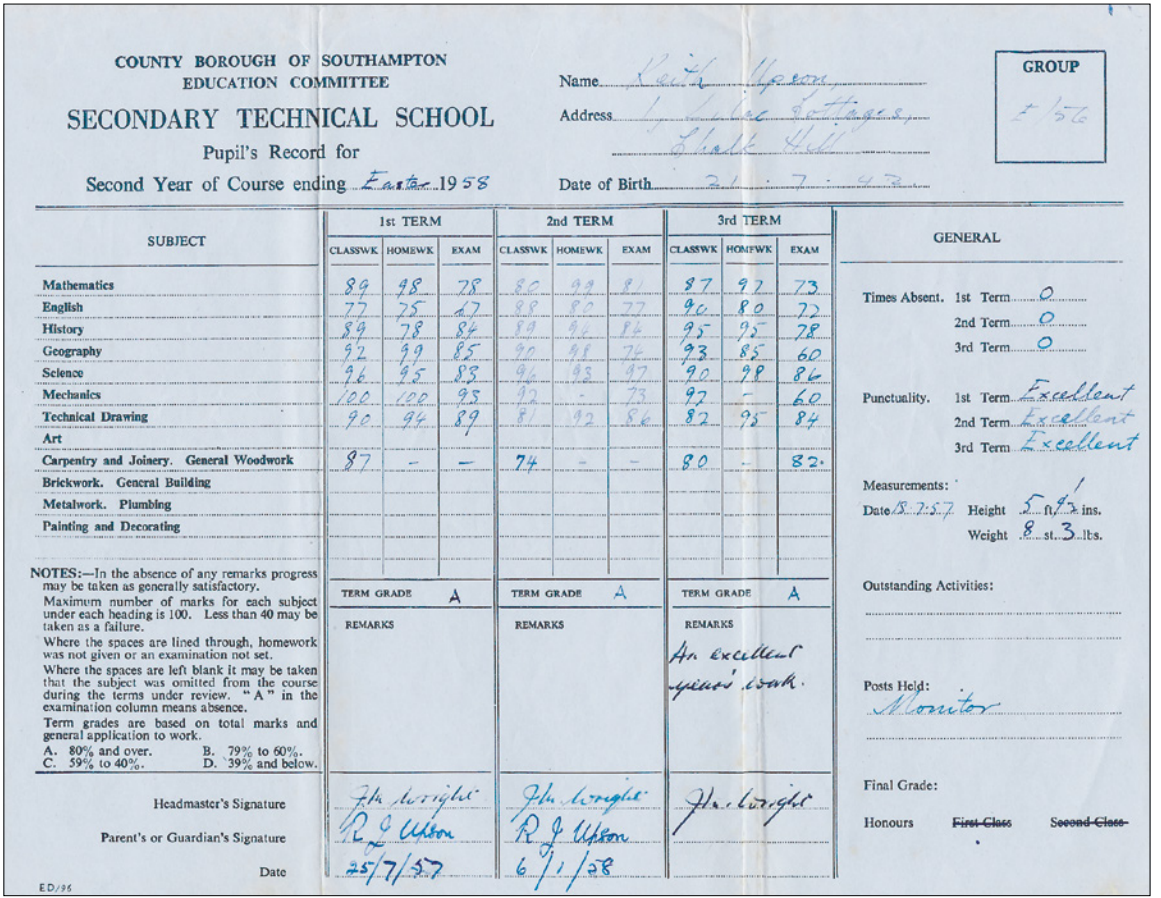
Punctuality. 1st Term Excellent
2nd Term Excellent
3rd Term Excellent

Measurements:
Date Height ft. ins.
Weight st. lbs.
Date Height ft. ins.
Weight st. lbs.

Outstanding Activities:

Posts Held:

when, at the start of a race, I dived in and lost my swimming trunks. I would not have



COUNTY BOROUGH OF SOUTHAMPTON
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SECONDARY TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Pupil's Record for

Second Year of Course ending Easter 1958

Name Keith Upson

Address 1 Lower Cottages, Shall Hill

Date of Birth 21.7.43

GROUP E/56

SUBJECT	1st TERM CLASSWK	1st TERM HOMEWK	1st TERM EXAM	2nd TERM CLASSWK	2nd TERM HOMEWK	2nd TERM EXAM	3rd TERM CLASSWK	3rd TERM HOMEWK	3rd TERM EXAM
Mathematics	89	98	78	80	99	81	87	92	73
English	77	75	67	88	80	77	90	80	72
History	89	78	84	89	92	84	95	95	78
Geography	92	99	85	90	95	76	93	85	60
Science	96	95	88	96	88	97	90	98	86
Mechanics	100	100	93	92	-	73	97	-	60
Technical Drawing	90	94	89	81	92	86	82	95	84
Art									
Carpentry and Joinery. General Woodwork	87	-	-	74	-	-	80	-	82
Brickwork. General Building									
Metalwork. Plumbing									
Painting and Decorating									
TERM GRADE	A			A			A		

NOTES:—In the absence of any remarks progress may be taken as generally satisfactory.
Maximum number of marks for each subject under each heading is 100. Less than 40 may be taken as a failure.
Where the spaces are lined through, homework was not given or an examination not set.
Where the spaces are left blank it may be taken that the subject was omitted from the course during the terms under review. "A" in the examination column means absence.
Term grades are based on total marks and general application to work.
A. 80% and over. B. 79% to 60%.
C. 59% to 40%. D. 39% and below.

REMARKS (1st TERM): —

REMARKS (2nd TERM): —

REMARKS (3rd TERM): An excellent years work.

Headmaster's Signature: John Wright / John Wright / John Wright

Parent's or Guardian's Signature: R J Upson / R J Upson

Date: 25/7/57 / 6/1/58

ED/95

GENERAL

Times Absent. 1st Term 0
2nd Term 0
3rd Term 0

Punctuality. 1st Term Excellent
2nd Term Excellent
3rd Term Excellent

Measurements:
Date 18.7.57 Height 5 ft 4½ ins.
Weight 8 st. 3 lbs.

Outstanding Activities:

Posts Held: Monitor

Final Grade:

Honours ~~First Class~~ ~~Second Class~~

minded had it not been for the female observers. Thank goodness it was the front crawl! Perhaps the worst experience was at the hands of a P.E. teacher who joined the School whilst I was there. He came from the Army school of discipline and paraded around the Gym with a Fencing Sword which he was apt to flick across the backsides of unsuspecting pupils. Fortunately I escaped him but I saw boys with red wheels across their bottoms. How he got away with it I do not know.

For three years I had little or no contact with the opposite sex. Whilst people of my age were socialising, I was working. Popular culture, then Elvis Presley and Rock and Roll, passed me by and, if anything, I thought 'Teddy Boys' looked ridiculous. Instead I became interested in Architecture and Meteorology. I had a fad for designing bungalows and remember giving a lecturette on the subject at school illustrated with detailed plans. I also set up my own weather station, took daily recordings, and entered them in a big ledger for what must have been a period of over 18 months. For a while I harboured ambitions to become a meteorologist until they pointed out at school that it was probably out of my league and I would need a degree. Out of school my contacts were more with adults than with people my own age. My voice broke so that at Church I was shifted into the mens' section of the choir to sing alto. I also joined the West End Little Theatre Club and helped backstage. I recall that the woodwork teacher helped me make a wind machine for use in a play and I also remember my shame at stumbling over words in play readings. Even then my reading was not very fluent. At the age of 16 I got a Saturday job at Edwin Jones, a large Department Store in Southampton. They set me to work in the 'Do it Yourself' Department where I sold tools, hardboard, timber, pelmets etc. I believe the starting wage was about 15/- a day. This was a valuable training and confidence building exercise in dealing with the public. I had a naturally mischievous way and I found a bright and humorous approach was the way to win sales. After three years I had acquired my own clientele and customers came into the shop just to chat with me. By this time, at 19, I earned just over £2 a day. I also worked two summer holidays in 1960 and 1961 and spent time in the electrical department selling radios etc. for a week and then ran the kitchenware department for a fortnight. I also did holiday relief cutting keys using a special machine with about half an hours induction. I believe the management of the store came to appreciate my efforts and abilities and I was selected for special duties working alongside a senior manager doing office work and working with the Managing Director on Christmas Eve serving cigarettes and tobacco. This was the hardest days' work I have ever done. In those days there were no electronic calculators or tills that automatically added up. Everything had to be calculated in the head. Tobacco was notoriously difficult to add because prices were almost always in half pennies. (i.e.) 2/10 halfpenny, 3/8d halfpenny etc. That day we served continuously under pressure from queues all day from 9am to 5.30pm. I have never been so mentally exhausted. Needless to say with the paper round and a 9am to 5.30pm job on Saturday I slept most of Sunday morning and Churchgoing took a tumble.

The only genuine mischief I can remember during these years occurred on Bonfire night when we used to go out 'on the village' with our pockets stuffed with

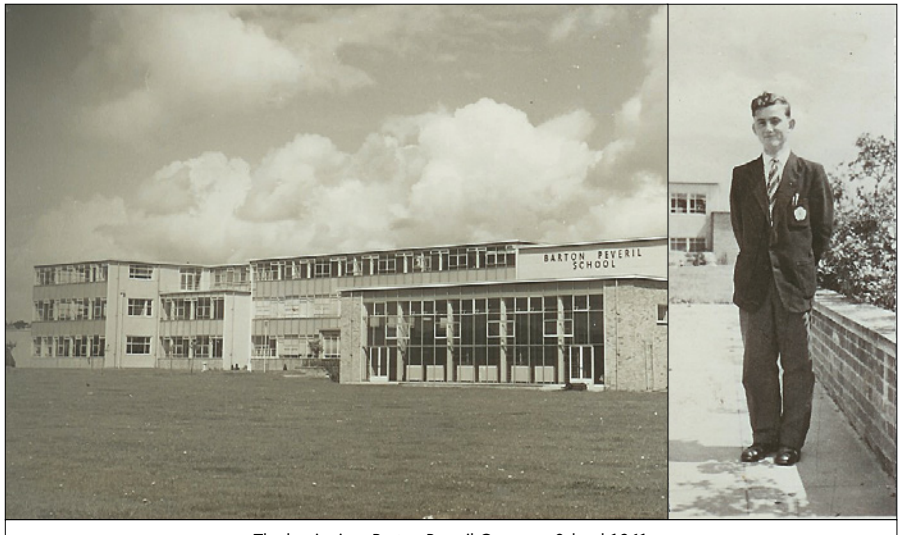
penny bangers. It was a miracle that there were no accidents. We used to throw them everywhere, even through the letterbox of poor Auntie Dolly, down the road on one occasion. It seems that just for one night we became rampaging delinquents. Beyond this smoking became a more accepted part of my life even though I still did not smoke openly at home.

My time at the Technical School ended in the summer of 1959. I recall it was a blazing hot June when I sat my 'O' Levels at the Central Hall in St. Mary's Street. By way of celebrating my results and my new found wealth now that I had two jobs , in August I bought a new Vespa scooter from Oakley's, a motor cycle dealer in London Road, Southampton. It cost £139 and since I only had £85 in my Post Office Savings Account, I had to borrow money to complete the purchase. I'm not too sure that my mother approved, but since she had not fully recovered from Alan's elopement to Scotland two years earlier, I think she was persuaded that if I had an empty bank account I would be unlikely to follow suit. Anyway, one afternoon, after about 20 minutes training in how to operate the controls of the scooter, I set off up the Avenue in an attempt to find the most traffic free way home. It was one of life's unforgettable moments. The exhilaration of just gliding along hearing only the rush of air was marvellous. Typically, however, I remember praying that the traffic lights at the top of Highfield Lane would be green because I was not too confident on how to stop and even less so about starting again in traffic. All was well, of course, and the scooter turned out to be one of the best purchases I ever made. It widened my horizons, increased my independence, provided 85,000 miles of trouble free motoring over the next six years and saved me a fortune. It had a 125cc engine and ran on a petrol/ oil mix delivered by special pumps in garages at around 5/- per gallon. It did 120 miles to the gallon which in 2002 terms is about five miles per 1p. Even more amazing was the fact that it had no ignition key and no lock. Anybody could have hopped on it, kick started the engine and driven away, yet I left it in City centres at all times of the day and night and parked it under the veranda at home in full view

of the road and nobody ever touched it. These days it would not last a week. What an indictment on society!

In September I started on the final leg of my secondary education in the Sixth Form of Barton Peveril Grammar School, Eastleigh. I did so in some trepidation wondering how the little Secondary Modern school boy would measure up to the brainy kids who had been at Grammar school since the age of 11. As it happens I need not have worried and after a few weeks and a few essays I found I could certainly hold my own. I soon relaxed into Sixth Form work and found it far easier than swatting for 'O' Levels. For one thing I now only had to contend with three subjects – Geography, History and Economics and spent half the week in the School library on 'Private Study'. Furthermore only one of the subjects yielded any appreciable work and that was History and the fact that they all played to my strengths and interest lessened the drudgery of it all.

It is a strange twist of fate that the worst teacher somehow stimulated the greatest interest and during my two years at the School I became increasingly passionate about Geography. Mr. Sansbury, the Geography teacher, was just about the laziest teacher I ever knew. He never left his hideaway behind his desk laden with books and his lessons comprised nothing more than constant dictation – three double lessons per week for two years! He even 'accidentally' burned our mock examination papers in a fire in his garage. As time progressed it became perfectly obvious that the only way we were to ever pass the examination was to pick up the textbooks and study hard on our own. He was a stern, pasty-faced man who was a tough disciplinarian and incessant nose-picker. He had a reputation as a 'dirty old man' and there were all kind of rumours about concealed mirrors so that he could look up girls' skirts. Perhaps it was true. He certainly spent time peering out of the window until it was discovered that, from his vantage point on the third floor, he had an uninterrupted



The beginning. Barton Peveril Grammar School 1961

view into the girls' P.E. Changing Rooms when the windows were open. Despite all this, however, he was knowledgeable and enthusiastic about his subject and his field excursions, when he used a coach as a roaming classroom, were inspirational.

Mr Surrey, the History teacher had moved from the Technical School ahead of me. He was a fine actor and took leading roles with amateur dramatic societies and even read for radio plays. I admired this aspect of his life and looked up to him. Thank goodness he came from the school of 'participative' learning. He forced your nose into the books by setting and rigorously marking an essay a week. This volume of study cured my inadequacies with written English and taught me how to structure essays and develop ideas and arguments on paper. I do not remember his lessons as being in any way out of the ordinary but his literary training was the basis of much success and I passed 'O' Level English Language with no problem in January 1960 to make good the deficit of the previous summer.

Mr Leburn (Economics) was also a relatively undemanding teacher. I never took this subject particularly seriously and passed it on the back of my studies in Economic History and Geography. Leb, as he was nicknamed, was a victim of Polio and had one leg in callipers. He was also thoroughly addicted to cigarettes and lived in a smog inside a tiny office. He was the School Librarian and was responsible for policing the students on Private Study. We had a lot of fun in the Library but were seldom caught out because you could hear the thump, thump of Leb's leg a mile off and by the time he arrived order and quietness were fully restored.

Games was technically compulsory for Sixth Formers but I certainly managed to evade it. We soon came to realise that the teacher was only interested in hockey. Those who preferred football were left to their own devices with no interference. Some of us therefore usually went to the changing rooms to be registered and then returned immediately to the library. We were never missed!

Whilst Barton Peveril Grammar School occupied new, modern premises, the values and attitudes it espoused were Dickensian. A School Uniform Code was rigorously enforced. For boys it included a cap. There was no relaxation for older pupils so that, at the age of nearly 19, I still had to wear one. This included the journey to and from school on the school bus and as a prefect I had to enforce the rule and ensure that every boy wore one so I could not neglect to wear my own. I can also recall visits from a Doctor, a County Medical Officer, to provide sex education lectures to the Sixth Form where the firm and unequivocal advice was that any contact with girls should not go 'below the neck'. The message was taken up by the staff and effectively policed at school dances to ensure the highest possible standards of decorum. Kissing, cuddling and over-familiarity of any kind were rigorously stamped on. I remember having my arm around Jenny and being told off for 'petting in public', whilst Jenny's friend, Wendy Passingham, was told by the Senior Mistress that she 'had seen enough of her knickers for one evening' after jiving on the dance floor!

In my spare time I continued to indulge my interest in singing and music. After a lapse of about five years I was strangely motivated to play the piano and practiced hymns and songs from the shows until I could play them properly. My chief diver-

sion, however, remained singing and I was pulled into a number of things to help overcome the perennial problem with amateur societies – the shortage of men. Thus it was that, after 'O' levels, George Hodkin invited me to join both the West End Choral Society and the Eastleigh Operatic Society. In November I took to the stage in 'The Quaker Girl' and was smitten. The following year, 1960, I was in the chorus for 'Goodnight Vienna' and was even more drawn to musical theatre. It was during this production that I remember being particularly attracted to a beautiful young dancer who I discovered also attended Barton Peveril School. Her name was Jennifer Lawford and I soon became touched by a magic of a different sort. Meanwhile I was persuaded by cousin David and others to make a contribution to the annual school variety show which was organised each Christmas as part of the end of term festivities. Consequently I sang 'Oh What a beautiful morning' and joined with a fellow Sixth Former, Frances Colley, to sing 'People will say we're in Love' – a duet from Oklahoma which was then very popular. This was my first outing as a solo tenor. The appearance led to both of us taking the title roles in Purcell's Opera 'Dido and Aeneas' which was staged at the school in March. Following this I was obliged to make a solo contribution to Will Sansbury's Young Farmers Club Variety Show in the summer – he was not the sort of man you could refuse!

By the time I started the second year sixth I had decided what I wanted to do with my life. Deterred from University by my own lack of confidence and barred from most of them by my lack of a modern foreign language at 'O' Level, I plumped for Teacher Training College, drew up a shortlist and applied. I was invited to interview at St. Luke's College, Exeter, and on a damp miserable day in November I met with Mr Revill, the Deputy Principal for about 15 minutes. Two or three weeks later I was offered an unconditional place at the College which I readily accepted. The prospect of a career in teaching strengthened my resolve to achieve 'A' Levels and throughout April and May I shut myself away in my bedroom to study and swot. The ruse paid dividends and when I was called to the telephone whilst at work in Edwin Jones in August, my mother opened the brown envelope and read me the results. I had passed them all! I later discovered that I had achieved the highest grade for Geography from amongst my group and I was awarded the School Geography prize to mark my achievement.