SHIRLEY WARREN SCHOOL

On Monday 7th September 1964 I reported for work at Shirley Warren School. It was a momentous day – the culmination of everything I had worked for thus far. I was filled with apprehension. In these days probationary teachers were appointed to the Local Authority and allotted a school. I knew very little about Shirley Warren. I had been sent a timetable during the holidays which gave me more Maths and English to teach than my main subjects and I had made one or two brief visits to the school to enable me to plan my early lessons. I had no idea whether I would fit in or whether I could settle there. The last time I had actually taught was now more than a year ago and I knew that unlike teaching practice, which provided an escape route after a few weeks, this was permanent. I sat outside the Headmaster's office knowing that it was sink or swim time and feeling more than a little anxious.

By today's standards, where newly qualified teachers are provided with induction programmes, mentors and light timetables, my reception was primitive. I was given a list of the pupils in my Form, their timetable, a school Dinner Register (the like of which I had never seen before) and a classroom and was left to get on with it. My classroom was a Nissen hut in the grounds of 'Woodfield', an annex a quarter of a mile up the road, about as far away as it was possible to get from the main school buildings. My class was 1/5 – the fifth of six classes graded by ability in the first year. It was clearly the policy of the school to provide newcomers with a class that didn't matter, in a room where any indiscipline would not disturb anybody, and let them battle it out. Not once in my first year of teaching did any senior member of staff visit me in my distant domain although I spent more than two thirds of my time there. It seemed that success was measured by the degree of silence and the number of complaints. These days there would be regular lesson observations, debriefings, weekly meetings and visits from L.E.A. Advisors all designed to provide a smooth and successful passage through the probationary period. In my day there was nothing. Unless, unbeknown to me there was some surreptitious spying, I cannot imagine how they managed to find the evidence to write my probationer's report at the end of my first year!

Shirley Warren School was built to serve one of the early council housing estates sited on the edge of the City of Southampton to accommodate displaced families

from the slums. As such it was a thoroughly working class area with more than its fair share of problem families. To achieve some balance the School also drew from parts of Mayfield which was just a little bit more well-to-do, but even so the School bordered on social priority classification and there were clear signs of deprivation and poverty amongst some of the children. Amongst the majority aspirations were not high and there was little passion for learning. The situation was exacerbated by the local tradition of sons following their fathers to work in the Docks where jobs were passed down through the family. Under such a regime employment was assured and there was very little point to schooling. To prevent this attitude from permeating the whole school children were streamed according to ability, attitude and motivation. In this way the brighter, more go-ahead were given a chance to succeed and annually about 30 opted to stay on at school until the age of 16 to sit the G.C.E. and/or the new C.S.E. exam. For those leaving school at 15 Southampton teachers devised a qualification of their own called the S.S.S.C. (The Southampton Secondary School Certificate) so that they should not leave school without anything. This was fairly basic but even so, for a good many, it was an uphill struggle. After working at near degree level at College I found the low standards of achievement a shock. I was sufficiently disgusted to apply for one or two other jobs after my first term but they were nipped in the bud by the Headmaster who drew me aside and advised me not to be so hasty, and they came to naught. I'm glad they did. I soon started to adjust to the situation and it became apparent that what the children lacked in academic talent they made up for in personality. Whilst it was necessary to hold a tight disciplinary rein on them, the kids lived for the moment, were fun to be with and appreciated what you did for them.

On the whole the teaching staff was a committed and professional team who were fully in control. In these days teachers were much more respected in society than they are today and challenges to their authority were unusual. The Head, Vic Claydon, was nearing retirement and was a paternalistic figurehead. His influence was not strong and outside the constraints of streaming, timetable and external exam syllabi, there was considerable freedom to teach whatever you felt appropriate in any way you fancied. Subject syllabuses existed but did not exert the rigid control over the curriculum that now exists under the National Curriculum. They were regarded as loose frameworks within which to work. The syllabus for History for example, was just four lines long giving the parameters of each years work as dates. Others, like English, were slightly more detailed but never saw the light of day. I can remember that the guiding piece of advice was 'Do what you can'! Given that there were no set books to read, no library and few class sets of anything worth having, you were forced back on your own ingenuity and creativity to discover what worked for you. Once achieved, the tendency, all too apparent for the majority of staff, was to trot out the same stuff year after year. Good teachers they might have been, but one look around the staffroom showed how the fire and enthusiasm had long since been extinguished for most of them and they were on a treadmill of routine. There were only a few with the sparkle of intellectual excitement. Only a handful who worked their creative magic to develop new curricula and new ways of doing things. Whilst

the staid old-timers spoke only of the problem pupils who stirred their days, the progressives enthusiastically tested things out in their classrooms and eagerly discussed the consequences in the belief that if the curriculum was right there would be no problem pupils. It was idealistic but it was the concept that captivated the educational pioneers of the time. Fortunately for me the Head of the Geography Department, Jack Oakley, was one of the progressives and I fell in with the set. The result was seven years of exciting change and development. I could not have had a better apprenticeship and the early culture shock of poor standards soon evaporated as I faced the real challenges of devising the most effective ways of raising them. It became a personal crusade that dominated the rest of my career.

Despite the differences in application and enthusiasm the staff was a happy crowd who were very supportive of each other. The atmosphere was not tainted by backbiting or subversion and, barring the usual age divisions, there were no divisive cliques. One of the most notable cohesive factors was Vic Claydon's passion for snooker. In the centre of the small staffroom stood a half-sized billiard table and about 75% of the men (the staff was split about 75% male to 25% female) regularly played in tournaments organised during the lunch breaks. One of my more enduring memories is of the women sat around the edge of the room eating their sandwiches finding, every now and then, a man's bottom stuck in their faces as they bent over their cues to line up a shot! Nevertheless it was a super way of breaking down barriers and of extending and strengthening relationships and there was much good humour and banter. The annual staff–v-boys football match was another occasion which generated much hilarity and no little suffering. In order to stimulate interest in the game the Head of P.E. always seized on newcomers to the staff and put it about that they were ex-professional footballers. So in the run up to my first match I was asked to go along with the idea that I was an ex Arsenal player. You can imagine how eyes were riveted on me during the first few minutes of the game until my lack of skill began to make obvious the deceit. Unfortunately the matches were always full-length games of three quarters of an hour each way, and for the unfit adults they were punishing in the extreme. I remember that, with the exception of the P.E. staff, the rest of us were crippled with stiffness for days afterwards and the kids must have paid the price in our irritability and lack of patience.

During the seven years I was at the school many young assistant teachers came and went. The tier of staff with responsibility points for running departments or for other things, about 60% of the total, remained fairly static. They were the backbone of the school. Their varying personalities and talents permeated through the establishment and made it what it was. Amongst the most influential was Eric Brinton, the Deputy Head, who ran the school on a day-to-day basis. He was fair, efficient, supportive and appreciative – the qualities that attract loyalty and respect. He actively encouraged new developments and made the structural/timetable changes necessary to facilitate change. To me he certainly outshone John Henton, the Headteacher who succeeded Vic Claydon in 1967 or 1968. He was a Welsh literary and poetic sort who was well-read and articulate; an orator of almost Churchilean eloquence. But there it ended. He was small in stature with a greying beard, in places

stained yellow with snuff. He had little charisma and few of the leadership qualities necessary to inspire the die-hards. Amongst the other stalwarts were Rees Evans, Head of English, a rational, softly spoken man who was brilliant at snooker; Arthur Faulkner, Head of Maths, a short solid figure whose teaching reflected his physique. In his spare time he taught interested children to play brass instruments. Ray Baldwin, Head of Science, was the stereotypical scientist, nice chap but eccentric and full of impractical, crazy ideas. He was also my Housemaster as Head of St. George's House and was quite a contrast to his close colleague, Harry Beasley, the Chemistry master who was quiet and reserved. He actually taught me for a short while at West End Primary School. He ran the school Photography Club and was one of my closest advocates with the Field Club. Other notable members of staff were John Stockwell, Head of Art, from whom I bought my first car, an old A35 van for £60; John Arnold, Head of Music, who I remember turned from conducting an ensemble during a concert and told the audience to Shut Up! There was also Oli Pounds, Needlework, definitely of the old school who published a textbook whilst I was there; Mrs Elsmore and Julie Withnall – Home Economics; Frank Green, Woodwork; Eddy Edmonson – Technical Drawing; a rather brash and blustery character called Barrett, Metalwork, who drove a Messerschmitt car and Malcolm Willcock, French and Music, the son of a one-time Mayor of Southampton and about the most conceited and obnoxious character you could wish to meet. To complete the picture, amongst the remainder was Don Benyon, a dead ringer for Captain Mainwaring in Dad's Army and dear old 'Tolly', Mr Tollerton, a very weak Head of History. Central to my little world, however, and outshining them all was Jack Oakley, Sheila Blake and Barbara Phillips. Jack was my Head of Department and, as time went on, we increasingly inspired each other to greater and greater things. It was a rare relationship. We saw things in the same way and shared a vision of how we could improve the standards of teaching and learning. Our achievements together became the springboard for promotion. Outside school Jack went through hard times. One day he returned home to find that his wife had just vanished. He went through torture for several weeks until he discovered that she had just upped and emigrated to the U.S.A. Jack leant heavily on his friends at this time, including me, and we have remained in contact ever since. Sheila Blake was the other Geography teacher in the Department. She spoke in whispers and you could hear a pin drop in her classroom. At Easter 1965 I accompanied her and about 30 children to the Voralberg in Austria for a week – my first excursion out of the country. Finally there was Barbara Phillips, Head of R.E., a humorist and extrovert with a flare for motivating children towards good deeds. She launched the P.S.E. programme within the school and recruited me for several high profile roles. She was a breath of fresh air, always upbeat and ready with a joke to lighten up the day. We also shared several happy and successful ventures and have never lost touch with each other across the years.

Although they were all about as nice a bunch of people as you could wish to meet, like most teachers, they could never agree upon anything. Staff meetings were classic. Vic Claydon, the Head, would launch the gatherings by explaining the

problem and how he proposed to solve it. There then ensued a heated debate as individual teachers demolished the Head's solution, suggested their own and slated everyone else's ideas. After about an hour the Head would bring the meeting to order, thank everyone for their contribution and close the meeting by explaining that he had patiently listened to everyone's views but would stick to his original solution. It was always the same. A particular group of teachers seemed to step out of themselves in meetings and assume a role, just like some choreographed part in a play, which they acted out every time. It was possible to recognise the demolition expert, the devil's advocate, the clown, the builder and the master of anecdote to name but a few. It was like a point scoring exercise, a game, which in some odd way satisfied an innate need for recognition. Outside the meeting room they were quite different.

For myself, during the early years I was as happy as a pig in muck! I wallowed in it and enjoyed myself immensely. I loved the power and responsibility, the creativity, the respect of the youngsters, the friendships and the philanthropism. There was never a single regret. There was simply nothing else I would rather have done. I enjoyed a very successful and productive first year. Even 1/5's English and Maths went well. I was astonished to receive a visit from the parents of one boy in my class to personally thank me for what I had done. They claimed that the lad had made more progress with me in one year than he had throughout the Junior School. What a fillip. My confidence soared. I was also pleased to learn that I was one of only a few teachers who could control a girl called Linda Goodman, who was in my Form. At eleven years old she was being left to bring up two or three younger children in her family in the absence of her mother. In effect she had been rocketed to adulthood far too early and had already acquired adult vices. She smoked, drank and knew the power of the vernacular to defend herself against unwanted intrusion. Poor kid! Fortunately she talked to me and came to like me and I learned how to manage her mood swings but few others did and she was constantly in trouble. Barring her friend, Maureen Garrett, a thin, pasty faced child from another problem family who I had to screw down, the class were remarkably tolerant of Linda and in some respects behaved better for her presence as if to balance out the disruptive influences.

The first few months in a school are always the time when the ability of a teacher to maintain order is tested. There are always those who, in a very public way, challenge authority and force confrontations and it is crucial that the teacher is seen to be the victor. Such encounters become the stuff of gossip and whispers amongst the pupils, they get larger and more dramatic with the telling and eventually pass into legend. The result is that other children are effectively warned off and disciplinary pressures disappear. As in my case, the incidents can be very minor. I can only remember one incident which occurred towards the end of a lesson with a difficult lower Fourth Year Geography group. I was collecting exercise books when a lad purposely held on to his book as I went to take it, goading me to react. He was a loutish individual, tall enough to look down on me and his eyes were full of challenge. My immediate response was to swipe him across the top of the head and tell him what I thought of him. It was, of course, a mistake for it was illegal even then to

hit children round the head. As it happens he was the son of a policeman and knew his rights and I had to brazen out his threats to fetch his father in to school by strongly urging him to do it so that I could acquaint him with some good home truths about his son. I sweated for several days but nothing happened and there was no further trouble with either the lad or the rest of his class. Such became my reputation as a disciplinarian that on two occasions parents actually came in to school to sort me out. One accused me of smacking her son so hard that I had left weals across his bottom and to prove it she had her boy take his trousers down to show the Headmaster. In fact I had hardly touched him and this notoriously twisted little boy was just out to make trouble. On another occasion a strapping great woman appeared at my classroom door shouting the odds. After I had calmed her down sufficiently to be coherent it transpired that her daughter was so scared of me that she came out in nervous blotches when in my classroom and Mum had come to put a stop to it! Whilst I had an absolute determination to maintain order I also tried to be scrupulously fair. There was nothing sadistic, malicious or vindictive in my attitude or the way in which I meted out punishments and I certainly took no pleasure in it. I laid down firm, unequivocal boundaries and was consistent in dealing with those who breached them. For example, I would never tell off a pupil more than twice in a lesson for any kind of misdemeanour. The third time meant trouble. I also never made threats that I could not carry out nor favoured one pupil over another to the extent that they were treated differently when they over stepped the boundaries. It is vital that children feel that justice is done. Any kind of injustice, like punishing a whole class for the misbehaviour of the few, becomes a breeding ground for resentment and dislike and a fast track to mayhem or perpetual repression. It is equally important to value and respect those that work and behave. There tends to be a self-fulfilling prophesy in classroom management. If you treat children badly, they will behave badly. Fortunately I enjoyed the company of children, I took an interest in them, cared for them, laughed and joked with them and held no grudges. In essence I courted their affection and respect and tried to make it worth their while to be diligent and behave. I have to say that little of this was conscious. It was instinctive. It was my way of creating the environment which would allow me to teach most effectively in the way that suited me. It was the actual process of teaching that excited me the most. There was simply no better feeling than having 30 people hanging on your every word and trying to please you with their efforts.

From the beginning my style of teaching reflected my preferred style of learning. I was blessed with a very sharp visual memory and an ability to transpose facts and ideas into sketches, diagrams and maps. In the classroom my determination to keep things real and relevant exercised my abilities to the full and I became an accomplished blackboard artist. I found I could explain things far more expertly by reference to visual prompts be they drawings, photographs, maps or even actual samples of things. Consequently I was much more at home teaching subjects like Geography and Economic and Social History because almost every facet of the subjects were open to illustration. I was not nearly so clever with words. I found subjects like political history a much more difficult proposition to teach. It demanded the ability to

paint word pictures and weave compelling stories to make historical figures come to life. This was something I had little talent for and avoided if I could. It is strange but I found that my ability to speak fluently varied from day to day. Some days I had an eloquent command of words and talking was sweet and satisfying. On other days it seemed a struggle to string words together and I found myself functioning in short bursts and relying upon questions to cover my awkwardness. Not surprisingly I was entirely at home with concrete, practical activities relying upon demonstration and emulation, less happy with the abstract and theoretical. I enjoyed teaching Maths but seized up attempting to teach English Grammar. However, I also had a determination to succeed, a single mindedness of purpose, and I would not be thwarted. I always thought in terms of what the children would do in my classroom rather than what I would do and I ensured that they fulfilled my plans. Furthermore I tried to set the standard for diligence and hard work. For example I was extremely keen to produce a stimulating and interesting learning environment and my classroom was always full of attractive and meaningful displays of material to match my teaching. No bare walls for me. If I couldn't find anything suitable either the children made it or I did. I took great care to ensure that everything was laid out in the best way possible to set an example for the children to emulate.

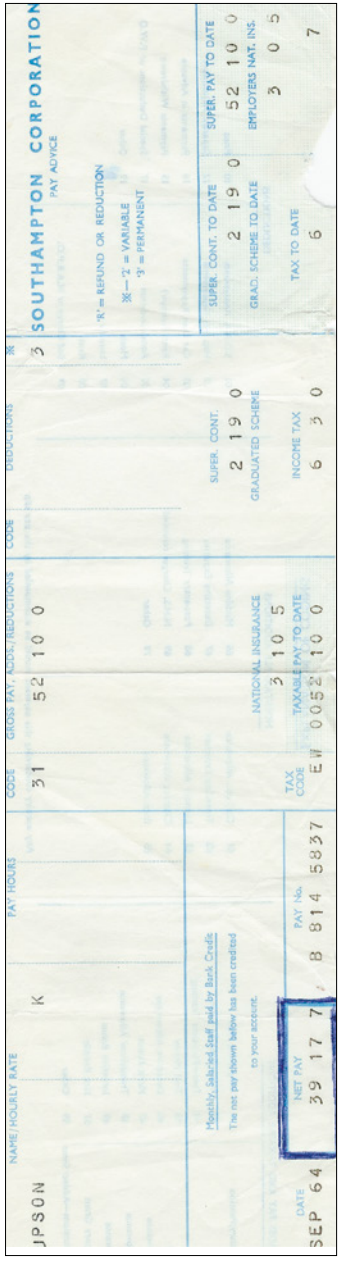
As the years progressed my lot improved. In the second year I was brought in from the cold and offered a 'Terrapin' hut on the main school campus, I was upgraded to Form Master of 2/4 and given rather more of my main subjects to teach. I remember the hut being very cold in winter and very hot in summer. At the time my quest for reality in teaching included strong encouragement for children to enliven their Geography note books by sticking samples of things into them (e.g. an array of small metal objects to demonstrate varieties of steel; samples of woollen and cotton fibres etc.). All was well until the subject got to dairy farming! I recall sitting behind my desk with a couple of piles of unmarked exercise books awaiting attention wondering what the horrible smell was. I discovered, of course, that some jerk had stuck samples of both butter and cheese into his book and in the heat of the room both had reached a nicely ripened, rancid state. The following year, 1966–67, Jack Oakley was seconded for a year to Birmingham University to study Programmed Learning and I was promoted to Acting Head of Department. On leaving College my only ambition was to have a department of my own so I was thrilled to be given the opportunity of learning the ropes. I was then relocated into the main school Geography room and, for the first time, had access to blackout, projectors and all the equipment, textbooks and visual aids you could wish for. Apart from a small amount of lower-school history my timetable was devoted totally to Geography and I was in my element. On October 10th to the 12th, 1966, we had an Inspection, a rare event in these days and every bit as nerve racking as present day Ofsted's. On the morning of 12th October an Inspector appeared at the back of a Second Year History lesson devoted to the political History of the Tudors. It was dreadful. At the end of the lesson the inspector expressed his disappointment and I had to explain that I had been up for most of the night and that, even at that moment, my wife was in hospital giving birth to our first child. His attitude changed immediately, the lesson was forgotten

and excused and for the rest of the morning, every few minutes, an inspector would put his/her head round my classroom door asking if there was any news. At lunchtime the call came and I rushed to the school office to speak to Jenny from her hospital bed. Stephen, my son, had been born. The school erupted with congratulations. In the afternoon the Heads of Departments were summoned before the Inspectors one by one to hear their verdict. I was highly commended for my work and was elevated from Cloud nine to at least Cloud twelve!

In September 1967 Jack returned thoroughly enthused by his course. His enthusiasm soon rubbed off on me and we began to work towards finding ways in which the ideas of Programmed Learning could be incorporated more fully into classroom practice. The process took two years to develop and refine but the end product was a system of team-teaching which was quite unique and just superb. We decided to rationalise effort by teaching three classes at once. This was made possible by a sliding partition between the two adjoining Geography rooms which created a space large enough to comfortably accommodate 90 children. The staff then took turns to teach the assembled throng, not any old lesson, but minutely planned, sophisticated and highly structured lessons delivered using all the latest technological aids. To ensure the total concentration of the pupils they were each issued with a duplicated response sheet which required them to respond in some way to each and every teaching point made as the lesson proceeded. At the end of the lesson there was a test using multi-choice questions and coloured flash cards whilst the completed sheets provided the means to produce homework which further reinforced the points made. It worked like a dream for staff as well as for children. We learnt so much from each other. We planned together, constructively criticised each others lessons and evaluated the outcomes. The result was higher levels of effort and refinement. My particular contribution was to utilise my artistic and typographical skills to enhance the quality of the pupils' response sheets using a colour 'Banda' duplicator and of transferring the artwork to overhead projector slides that could be used over and over again. It was all then relatively new ground. The system was so successful that it came to the attention of the local Teachers' Training College and Jack was offered a lectureship there in 1969. When he left I was offered the substantive post of Head of Geography, Scale A, and spent a further two years developing the curriculum and refining the processes still further. This involved putting the team teaching sessions on a three weekly rota and of developing intervening tutorials to mark homework and introduce and practice the chief geographical skills. The system provided a magnificent apprenticeship and I emerged from it a thorough professional with an absolute command of my subject and the most effective ways to teach it.

The role of Head of Department brought with it opportunities and responsibilities beyond the school, particularly in the organisation of exams. I therefore found myself working with Geography teachers from other local schools writing and marking the exam papers for the Southampton Secondary School Certificate and I was elected on to the organising 'Panel' for the Southern Regional Examinations Board, the administering authority for C.S.E. in Southern England. This was then regarded as a prestigious position, not only in terms of policy making for the exam itself, but particularly

In the Door and Up the Stairs



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Monthly Salaried Staff paid by Bank Credit.
The net pay shown below has been credited to your account.

TAX CODE	TAXABLE PAY TO DATE	PAY No.	NET PAY	DATE
EW	0052 10 0	B 814 5837	39 17 7	SEP 64

My first monthly Salary Slip.
September 1964

CITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Ref: 51/62

Education Office,
Civic Centre,
Southampton.

Dear Sir~~xxxx~~,

9th July, 1965.

Completion of Probationary Service

As you know, the first year of a teacher's service in a maintained school is regarded as a period of probation, under the regulations of the Department of Education and Science. I am now glad to confirm that your probationary period has been satisfactorily completed. No doubt you will be pleased to have this formal notification that you have established your practical proficiency as a teacher, which I am sure you will continue to seek to improve through further study and experience.

Yours faithfully,

J. J. B. DEMPSTER

Chief Education Officer.

CITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Education Office,
Civic Centre,
Southampton.

92/94

29th September, 1966.

Dear Mr. Upson,

I am pleased to be able to inform you that the appropriate Sub-Committee of the Education Committee has recommended, that from 1st September, 1966, you be appointed to Graded Post Scale I, at Shirley Warren Secondary School.

Yours sincerely,

J. J. B. Dempster

Chief Education Officer.

CITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
Education Department
D. P. J. BROWNING, M.A. *Chief Education Officer*
CIVIC CENTRE, SOUTHAMPTON SO9 4XE
Tel. 23855 Telex. Cenlib Soton 47331

MY REF SWJ/PC YOUR REF

29th May, 1969.

Dear Mr. Upson,

I have pleasure in confirming your appointment as Head of Department, Grade A for Geography, at Shirley Warren Secondary School from 1st September, 1969.

Yours sincerely,

D. P. J. Browning

Chief Education Officer

in terms of organising the marking and cross moderation of papers at meetings of all Geography teachers in the City.

At the other end of practice at the 'Warren' things could be very basic. 'Woodfield', the annexe up the road, was a tumbledown house of Victorian origins fit only for demolition. The place creaked and I remember a ruler falling from a child's desk and disappearing through a gap in the floorboards. The rooms were small and were used to accommodate the bottom sets of remedial children in 1/6, 2/6 and so on whose numbers seldom exceeded 12 in number. The place had few facilities and there was little scope for anything more than chalk and talk. I remember teaching 1/6 History there, a task which was more frustrating than daunting because the reading age of the kids was not much more than 7 or 8 years and their ability to retain knowledge was extremely limited no matter how hard you tried to drill it in. No amount of training prepares you for the disappointments of marking end of year exam papers. If you didn't laugh you would cry! I recall, for example, one small boy writing that the Romans invaded Britain in 1944! It often made you wonder what on earth you had been doing for all that time. In many ways I felt sorry for these children who were doing the same things over and over again, year after year. A large part of their life at School must have been excruciatingly tedious. Often pastoral matters overshadowed teaching at this level. I remember one boy stinking so much that I had to stand him a yard away whilst I marked his book. In the end I could stand the pong no longer and I marched him to the Home Economics area where there was a flat with a bathroom and insisted he had a bath! In these days the 'nit' nurse was a regular visitor to the School. She checked children's fingernails and scoured their hair for livestock. I remember learning, on more than one occasion, that children in my classes were infested, knowledge that set me scratching for the rest of the day!

An important part of my emerging practice was Field Study trips and during these years I organised quite a few. Following the example of Will Sansbury at Barton Peveril I used coaches as roaming classrooms. I sat in the front with a microphone, the children scribbled notes behind with the help of a supporting member of staff. All but one were highly successful. The one that wasn't was a catastrophe from start to finish. The trip in question took place in 1970 and was designed as an introductory tour of the Hampshire Basin with First Year pupils. The day started badly when I discovered I had three more children than the coach was designed to accommodate and I was left to wedge in the small ones three to a seat, something the coach driver was not happy about. The first stop was to study landscapes in the New Forest. Unfortunately one child was stung by a horsefly and her arm swelled up alarmingly. We therefore descended into Ringwood to seek medication from a Chemist. Whilst we were there the coach driver, attempting to manoeuvre in a narrow street, backed into and demolished a wall. Eventually we proceeded as planned up the Avon Valley to an Iron Age Hill Fort about five miles beyond Salisbury which had been designated as a lunch spot. During this journey I discovered that I had left my lunch in the car back at School, but worse than this, when we arrived and scrambled out of the coach for lunch, one child slipped and fell on to a sharp piece of flint opening a three inch gash in her arm. There was no alternative but hospital and whilst the coach and

The Field Club

INTRODUCING A NEW SCHOOL CLUB

THE FIELD CLUB

What are the aims of the Club?

The Field Club (or Rambling Club) will be wholly concerned with WALKING. We will arrange for YOUR enjoyment organised walks into the heart of the country. Covering 8 or 10 miles in a normal day excursion, you will discover the beauty of the countryside, not only in an enjoyable and challenging way, but also at the smallest possible cost.

Membership

There will be no membership as such, no subscription and no weekly meetings. Day excursions will be held twice a term and all you need to do is book your seat on the coach.

Our First Excursion

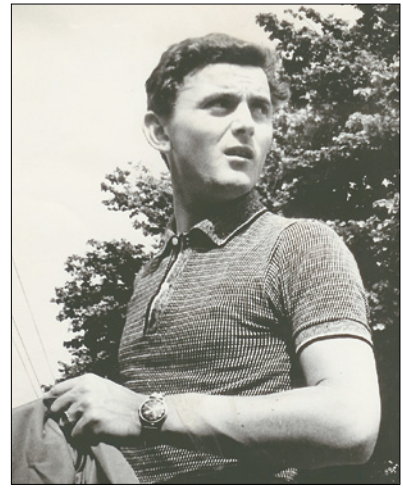
Will be held on January 5th, the day before we return to school for the Spring Term. The walk, from Winchester across country to Kings Sombourne is a really delightful one. Nine miles in length, the truck we will follow (in part a Roman Road) rises to Farley Mount - the highest point in Hampshire and traverses a beautiful Pine Forest.
Don't miss this opportunity
Secure your seat by a deposit of 2/- this Friday at break-time in Room 2.

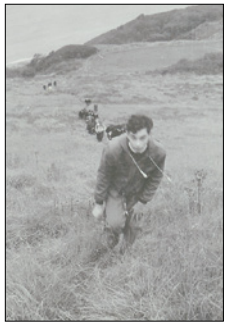
Future Attractions

(1) Isle of Wight - Lymington by ferry to Yarmouth. Thence to Freshwater, the Needles and Alum Bay.
(2) Kinmeridge - Swanage.
(3) The New Forest

AND many other exciting walks

For any further information consult Mr. K. Upson or Miss J. Withnall.





a member of staff took off for the Accident and Emergency Department of the Salisbury Royal Infirmary I remained with the group out in the middle of nowhere. It was a hot, cloudless day and on our high, open spot, there was not a tree or shrub to cast a shadow. The temperature soared into the 80's. Over two hours later there was still no sign of our wounded soldier or the coach. By this time not only were the group bored and restless but several began to complain of giddiness and feeling unwell. The heat had begun to take its toll. About this time I looked heavenward and prayed and the good Lord, bless him, returned the coach to us before things got any worse. Before any other calamity could overtake us we returned hotfoot to school. Never was I more pleased to get there!

Such was my interest in the countryside that one of the first things I did when I arrived at the school in 1964 was to start a Field Club. The first walk took place on January 4th and 5th,1965, the demand being so great that I had to run it twice on successive days. The nine mile route went from Winchester via Farley Mount to Kings Somborne and cost the children 2/9d per head to cover the £4-7s-6d hire charge for the coach. It was a resounding success. These 'town' children had little experience of the countryside and the challenge and camaraderie appealed to them. For the following four years I organised regular walks at half-terms as far afield as the Isle of Wight and Purbeck. It was so popular that places were often sold out in minutes. Two other teachers staunchly supported these ventures, Julia Withnall – a petite Home Economics teacher who started at the same time as me fresh from College, and Harry Beasely. Without them it could not have happened and I was so grateful for their unflinching support. So successful was the Field Club that in September 1966 I was promoted to a Scale 1 Graded Post with responsibility for Field Studies.

After the first two years I lost English, Maths and most of the History from my timetable but during the course of my stay at the School I was roped in to teach music and Personal and Social Education. It was not long after I started that my ability to sing became known. Indeed it was difficult to hide it since I had to ask for time off to perform in matinée performances with Southern Theatre Productions and, on at least one occasion, there were giant hoardings around the town advertising my name in a starring role. Also in the absence of anyone else who could cope with it I volunteered to play the piano for House Assemblies once a week, all be it fairly crudely. The two skills made me a likely candidate to make up a small shortfall in music provision and, for a year, I took a couple of second year classes for two periods each week. I can't say that I particularly enjoyed the experience because my lack of ability on the piano was too limiting, but I managed to sustain it reasonably successfully. In 1968 I was also persuaded to take a part in the P.S.E. programme which was being introduced by Barbara Phillips. P.S.E. was then quite new. One of my earliest contributions was to organise a social survey. This entailed compiling, circulating and analysing detailed questionnaires concerning the life and family background of the pupils. The final report was distributed to all the staff and gave a fascinating insight into our clientele. Another part of the programme involved organising a Christmas Party with entertainment for the local Old Age Pensioners. It became a regular fixture on the school calendar and each year I made a contribution to the entertainment

both as a performer and assistant producer. It is a fact of life that once you display a talent and a willingness to use it you are quickly taken captive by the expectation that you will always be there when the need arises. So it was that I was also asked to sing at Barbara's annual Carol Service. I loved it and was flattered to be asked. It certainly enhanced my reputation. Apart from these occasions live performance of any kind was notable by its absence. Although music and drama were taught, neither of the teachers saw fit to develop opportunities for youngsters to perform. In 1969, therefore, I took the bull by the horns and produced a variety show called 'Variety 69'. I remember talent scouting to gather a cast. I would haul children out of the corridor during breaks and at lunchtime, stand them by the piano I had in my room, and make them sing a scale or two. In this way I assembled soloists and a supporting chorus who were joined by instrumentalists and others with talent for three performances on successive evenings. The whole thing was very successful and greatly appreciated by the parents.

At about this time I reached the peak of popularity as a teacher. Young male teachers in mixed Secondary schools often become the focus of infatuation from adolescent girls and I was no exception. Most of these crushes are secret imaginings that never come to light but inevitably the blushing and mooning behaviour of some betrays their state of mind. Sadly, from my experience, it's not the really pretty girls who you'd feel really flattered to attract that become the ardent pursuers but those who seem to be just a little bit odd. I remember being stalked by two Second Year girls for some time. Somehow they discovered where I lived. One day, looking out from my front window onto Spring Road I became aware of two heads sticking up from behind a milk float. As the vehicle moved so too did the girls hiding behind it. They lingered in the vicinity of the house for some time hoping for a glimpse of their idol! The same girls, unbeknown to Jenny and I, apparently witnessed Kathryn's baptism by standing on tombstones to peer in the windows of the Church at Sholing. More seriously, however, there was one quiet and introverted girl who was totally besotted. Jenny can relate the story of being visited by this girl whilst she was in hospital recovering from a miscarriage. She had turned up in the hope of seeing me but unfortunately I could not be there. Consequently she sat with Jenny for half an hour mute, not knowing what to say. She continued to be a problem for months. Happily there were healthier incidents which, rather flatteringly, brought home to me the esteem in which I was held during my final years at the School. I guess by then I had no discipline problems and I could be myself without recourse to my 'Hitler-like' ways. Anyway the incident I remember most vividly occurred when I went into lunch on my birthday in 1970 and the entire hall full of about 200 children stood and sang 'Happy Birthday' and 'He's a jolly good fellow'. The whole thing had been carefully orchestrated by the Dinner Ladies. I was overwhelmed. Who wouldn't be?

Needless to say there were also girls that I took a passing fancy to. After all I was a red-blooded man and there is an enduring attraction for the male of the species towards young virginal girls in their prime. It's natural and instinctive. Most of these did not go beyond mild flirtation and an appreciation of their allure, not unlike being tempted by a work of art, but there was one in particular that developed into a

genuine friendship. Debra Prince was a Fourth Year girl in my Form, a vibrant, sporty and fun loving girl who, for a while, had a crush on me and would often come into my room with her friend at the end of the day for a chat and a laugh. She had a sister, Janice, who was in the First Year and had just arrived in the School. At that time the School introduced a vertical House system where each Tutor (Pastoral) group contained pupils from First Year to Fifth Year, about five or six of each. It was the practice that siblings were placed in the same Tutor group so Janice joined Debra in mine. Janice was a chip off the same block and shared her sister's exuberance and energy for life. During her first Term, however, she developed a slight limp. In a frighteningly short period of time she was diagnosed as having an aggressive brain tumour, was hospitalised and died. Not surprisingly the tragedy had a profound effect upon the family, Debra in particular, and for some while I offered her what support I could to help her to come to terms with her grief. This meant giving her a shoulder to cry on, lending a listening ear to her concerns and encouraging her to talk things out. For a while we became quite close. I certainly missed her when she left in July 1970 and she still never fails to send me a Christmas card.

Towards the close of the 60's there was a growing movement for change in Education. For the first time in decades school curricula became the focus of close scrutiny and the relevance of classical traditions to the modern world began to be seriously challenged. In response to growing concern from employers about the preparedness of school leavers for the world of work there developed a movement of epic proportions, firstly to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 16 and then to update subject syllabuses and develop new curriculum areas to address changing needs. Thus emerged new subjects like Social Studies, Personal, Social and Health Education and Careers. There was also a move to merge and integrate subjects by, for example, bringing Geography, History and R.E. together to create Humanities. At the forefront of such changes were organisations like the Nuffield Foundation and the Schools' Council all busy developing new curricula demanding new methods of delivery. There was a definite move away from didactic methods towards more experiential styles of learning designed to try to get pupils to take more responsibility for their own progress. So discussion groups, role-play, learning games and individualised projects etc. became fashionable ways of diversifying methods. The uptake of all of this was not huge. The educational establishment was notoriously conservative and change could take years to permeate through to the chalk face. There was, however, a discernible mood swing and a developing sense of expectation for the future. In many respects the growing optimism echoed the changes taking place in society. This was the age of the peace movement, flower power, increasing liberalisation and moves for equality. Many of these ideals also challenged the meritocratic traditions of education and prompted a revolution for comprehensive schools that all but saw off the ancient Grammar Schools. The same ideals wrought a revolution in the examination system and styles of assessment. The new C.S.E., for example, introduced the assessment of coursework and individual projects as an integral part of the exam and gave them the same weighting as the actual examination papers, a move that was greatly to the benefit of average and below average pupils. These were

exciting times!

At Shirley Warren School there was a surge of interest in finding curriculum solutions to the raising of the school leaving age, especially for those pupils not capable of entering for external examinations. In keeping with the general climate of the time answers were sought by considering the needs of employers. A Careers teacher was appointed to liaise with them and he began to prepare a suitable course for these disenchanted young people. This was an area that greatly interested me and a Government Scheme called 'Links with Industry' gave me the opportunity to become involved. The Scheme was designed to provide industrial experience for teachers by offering a one month's secondment into Industry. It was an attempt to address the problem of teachers going from school to College then back to school with no experience of 'life' outside education. I was accepted on to the scheme and was duly placed at Fawley Oil Refinery for a month. In consultation with the management of the Refinery it was decided that my task would be to study the school/industry interface by interviewing the 80 or so apprentices who were employed on the site. The object was to get each of them to comment upon the quality of preparation for work and career advice at school and to evaluate the Refinery's selection methods, induction programme and subsequent day-release courses and other support mechanisms. I was then to write a report making recommendations for change. It was an interesting experience and gave me valuable insights into the world of the multi-national organisation. The Refinery site was so large and the apprentices spread so far and wide that I was given the use of a mini car. I was also given an office and access to the 'executive' dining room. On a number of occasions I was also wined and dined by the senior management. By comparison with school the facilities were opulent and the various incentive schemes extremely generous. In teaching the facilities for staff were always crude and basic and the only perk was the occasional piece of chalk!

In my final year at Shirley Warren my world began to collapse around me. At 28 years old I was leading life to the full. Every ounce of my energy was absorbed by my job, my hobby and the demands of family life. There was simply no space for upsets and when it came it took me over the edge. At the end of August 1970 I organised a publicity stunt to advertise our production of Desert Song at the King's Theatre, Southsea and, along with a group of others, I walked from the Civic Centre, Southampton to the Theatre in Portsmouth dressed as an Arab. At the end of it I fainted and collapsed on to the pavement badly hitting my head. The episode knocked me off balance and during the Autumn Term things began to get on top of me. By Christmas it became quite clear that I was unwell. I could not eat without wanting to retch. After a couple of Doctor's visits it was confirmed that I was suffering from Anxiety Neurosis and I was prescribed Valium to calm my senses. I was tottering on the edge of a breakdown and was off school for a month or more. When I returned to work I was still subdued by drugs, the 'gloss' had gone and my self-esteem and confidence had taken a bit of a battering. Subsequently Jenny and I weighed up our options. Perhaps the time was right for a move. I had achieved all that I was likely to achieve at Shirley Warren and I needed a change and a new challenge. Stephen was then just coming up to school age and we really wanted to buy

a house of our own but could not afford property prices in Southampton. In April I fired off about ten applications for promoted posts in the parts of southern England where we knew we could afford to buy a house. Our aspiration was to return to the West Country and nine of the ten applications were directed to Somerset and Devon. The other one was to Whitstable in Kent and it was this one that responded the quickest. I attended for interview at the Sir William Nottidge School and was offered a Scale 'B' Head of Geography and History. When John Henton heard he immediately offered to match the salary and status in order to keep me at the 'Warren' but our minds were made up. We had already found a house to buy and set the wheels in motion and although it was a huge leap away from our families into the unknown we were excited by the prospect of a new beginning. A new chapter in our lives was about to unfold.