The English boys boarding preparatory school, 1914-1940

Thesis

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Volume 2
History was very much a minor subject which gained only minimal attention in the timetable. The inspectors at Belmont in 1935 even thought it "artificial" that the subject be separated from English. The focus was primarily on English history from 55BC and while on one occasion the inspectors did suggest "the possibility of including the outlines of world history is well worth consideration." this bias was rarely challenged. The total content of the Temple Grove history scheme of work was as follows:

Christmas term: Early Britons to the end of Richard II
Easter term: Henry IV to the end of Anne
Summer term: George I to the present day
(With the history of foreign countries as it arises)

A Dorset House Old Boy recalled that "History was confined to the British Isles and was based on a firm background of dates and royal genealogical tables." Seemingly it was all rather dull or too detailed, easily becoming simply a series of dates. At Aysgarth the inspectors said "It would be preferable to hear more questions beginning with 'why?' rather than with 'who?' or 'what?'

184 History syllabus for Temple Grove, dd.1934. School archives.
185 L.W.T., "Dorset House 1914 - 1921"; manuscript in Dorset House School archives.
detail and to overload the lesson with dates,"[^187] and were amazed that "In the lowest Class boys were being talked to about the Peace of Ryswyck and the War of the Spanish Succession who did not know that Charles I had his head cut off."[^188] They frequently encouraged schools to adopt a history course that used more lively texts, selected highlights from history rather than attempt to do all of it and focused, especially with younger boys, on the biographies of great men and women. As one old boy said: "I remember history as being extraordinarily dull - largely a matter of learning dates."[^189]

**Geography:**

Geography, together with history, filled the small space at the bottom of prep school report forms. It too was taught in a dry and mechanical manner but one not criticised by the inspectors. Their most frequent suggestion was for schools to do more map-work and practical field studies out of doors. In some ways the subject was linked to science and practical activities such as weather observation and soil examination were proposed. The Temple Grove scheme of work for geography rivals that drawn-up for history in its brevity:

- **Easter term:** The British Empire
- **Summer term:** The British Isles


[^188]: Inspectors confidential square bracket notes to above report.

[^189]: Revd. David Hughes (Rose Hill); interview 10/1992.
Christmas term: The World (omitting the British Empire) in conjunction with physical geography.  

Occasionally the subject represented an opportunity for teachers to pursue their own interests. Simon Raven recalled his prep school headmaster, Captain Trent, whose lessons in geography consisted "almost solely of the travel monologues and general memoirs of Captain Aloysius Trent."  

**Science:**

That science was not a major subject at prep schools before the second world war is an accepted fact but the idea that it only started with the introduction of Nuffield science in the 1960s is erroneous. The Joint Standing Committee, formed of representatives from the IAPS and HMC, had devised a science curriculum for the prep school after the First World War. It emphasised natural history and was revised regularly throughout the period. The teaching of science was not, however, widespread and the time devoted to it was meagre. Out of 307 schools questioned in 1917 only 104 regularly taught science. One contributor to the P.S.R. exclaimed:

"This neglect of Science in the Preparatory Schools is quite unjustifiable; and we appeal again to the Headmasters of the great Public Schools of this country to remove the obstacles they have placed in the path ..."  

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190 Temple Grove geography scheme of work. School archives.  
191 Simon Raven (at a school on the Bristol Channel, Somerset); The Old School; Hamish Hamilton, London, 1986; p35.  
He was referring to the fact that prep schools were reluctant to teach the subject because it did not pay. There were no real science questions in Common Entrance and the public schools showed no interest in examining ability in it.\textsuperscript{194} Although the possibility of a Common Entrance paper including Elementary Science in 1921 had led to "juggling feats with Time Tables"\textsuperscript{195} the questions never eventuated.

Amongst a large section of the English elite science was not a subject taken seriously or held in high regard. In her study of Ellesmere College Christine Heward notes that the "Headmaster thought scientific subjects suitable for the less able."\textsuperscript{196} At The Old Malthouse science was taught to those not capable of Greek.\textsuperscript{197} Evelyn Waugh mentioned his experience at Lancing during the First World War where "Scientists were regarded as a socially inferior race" and were treated with contempt.\textsuperscript{198}

In addition to philosophical hostility and the lack of an exam prep school science faced many other obstacles. To include the subject in an already crowded timetable would involve cut backs in other areas, none of which could easily or readily relinquish teaching time. It was said to complicate life for the less intelligent, be too difficult for young boys to study.

\textsuperscript{194} This was recognised in an article in the P.S.R. (3/1923; pp395-397) although in fact in 1914 the optional natural history paper in the Common Entrance Examination had been dropped because so few boys took it.

\textsuperscript{195} The Cotswomarian; Summer 1921; p3.

\textsuperscript{196} Christine Heward; Making a Man of Him (1988); p64.

\textsuperscript{197} Board of Education Inspection Report, The Old Malthouse, 3/1941. PRO Kew ED109/1030.

\textsuperscript{198} Evelyn Waugh; A Little Learning; p131.
and it was even thought unfair to take from the public schools a fresh subject to study." One head said a "Preparatory School can only go so far before it begins to do its pupils a bad turn." Suitable facilities were not usually available and construction of laboratories and procurement of scientific equipment difficult and expensive. Trained staff were not easy to find.

Some prep schools did advertise the teaching of science. Kingsmill advertised the "teaching of Science to all"; Dumpton of "A small laboratory, with gas and water laid on, and a special Nature Study room"; and Hurst Court stated that: "Boys are offered opportunities of gaining a practical knowledge of mechanical apparatus and of elementary science in several of its branches." Banstead Hall taught the seniors the practical applications of physics, St. Wilfrid's and Hurst Court had weekly visits from a science master, while at Nevill Holt the school doctor performed the task. The Dragon had regular science lessons on Thursday evenings and later each form had a lesson each week. Port Regis boasted of

199 See Michael Rogerson (Cottesmore), In and Out of School, (1989) p78.
200 Mr.J.E.Engleheart (Moffats), interview 6/1994.
201 Advertisement for Kingsmill, Cromer, Norfolk in Schools 1937; p414.
202 Dumpton House, Broadstairs, prospectus - late 1930s. School archives c/- Mr. M.T. Jones.
203 Advertisement for Hurst Court, Ore, Sussex in Schools 1937, p544.
205 Information from Mr. G. Grundy (St. Wilfrid's); interview 8/1992.
206 See inspection report; Op. Cit.
207 See Board of Education Inspection Report, Nevill Holt, 1929. PRO Kew ED109/3402.
"regular classes in Engineering, including dismantling and reassembling of actual chassis." The Quaker foundation of The Downs placed a high priority on natural history and "Downs boys were obliged to sign on for a natural history hobby ... every Wednesday groups of boys were led off into the countryside to look for autumn fruits, or snails, or fungi, or whatever ..."210

The growth of science in the period was a very gradual one but perceptible nonetheless. At some schools it was a tentative announcement - "We have also started two periods per week of Elementary Science and Nature Study, for all boys except those who learn Greek."211 - while others progressed more rapidly:

"Science ... is making vast strides .... He [the Senior Science Master] and his helpers have invaded our cellars, and filled them full of fearsome machines and grim chemicals ... the fitting up of the Laboratory is really an achievement! It contains two or three separate rooms for experiments, together with a well-equipped dark-room, and a big workshop."212

Sometimes this stemmed from a headmaster's personal interest, sometimes from an educational conviction. At St. Andrew's, Eastbourne, there was regular science on the timetable in the 1920s but Paul Spillane, the school's

208 Advertisement for Port Regis, Broadstairs; Schools 1937; p358.
209 This emphasis stemmed from the Quaker disapproval of music, drama and the arts in the 18th and 19th centuries.
210 The Downs study; no.51.
213 At St. Richard's, Little Malvern, it began with his love of birds. Information from Mr. Caspar Tremlett (retired headmaster and old boy of St. Richard's, Bredenbury - ex-Little Malvern).
historian, noted: "Science was not universally approved of, partly because it was not yet considered 'respectable'; and partly because it was so popular with the boys." In 1926 the Joint Standing Committee on the Curriculum of the Preparatory Schools had reported: "We hold it to be most desirable that a start should be made early in awakening this interest [in Science] and encouraging an intelligent attitude towards Science." Such recommendations were slow to be implemented.

Such science as was taught was nothing like as broad-ranging as that in schools today and was confined largely to Nature Study. This narrowness reflected educational opinion at the time. The Hadow report of 1931 had said:

"Under science we include: - (i) a study of the more salient features of plant and animal life, as far as possible in their natural setting - a study strictly elementary in scope yet conducted in a genuinely scientific spirit; (ii) some first-hand study of the apparent movements of the sun, moon and a few stars, taken in connection with the sequence of day and night and the seasons; (iii) a rudimentary study of some outstanding physical facts, such as the workings of the mariner's compass." A large number of prep schools fulfilled this recommendation. They went on to write: "No attempt should be made to build up an organised body of science at this stage." The inspectors too said "It is not suggested that Science should be

211 Paul Spillane; St. Andrew's School 1877-1977; (1977) p59.
217 Ibid; p186.
studied intensively"\textsuperscript{218} and sometimes suggested the subject be taught as part of Geography.\textsuperscript{219}

Science and nature study were often included in a school's extra-curricular programme. At Temple Grove the inspectors noted that "informally, the subject occupies a very important place in the boys' school life."\textsuperscript{220} Many other schools had scientific lectures on weekend evenings and encouraged an interest in natural history during a boy's free-time, perhaps offering prizes for the best collection. The library at Aymestry still contains a glass cabinet full of stuffed specimens and plant samples dating from the period. Though not on the timetable at Sandroyd 6\% of survey respondents mentioned bug-hunting and natural history as something that they enjoyed; at The Downs the figure rose to 15\%. H.R.F.Keating remembered:

"There was Botany Night, for instance. One evening every week - was it Tuesdays? - after tea the whole school would go back into the big classroom and there in a jam-jar up in front of the blackboard would be a plant, some weed growing somewhere near the school. The headmaster would then announce just where the weed was to be found and the whole school would rush off in a wild stampede to go and collect one specimen each of the plant."\textsuperscript{221}

At Aysgarth the inspectors thought this combination of lectures and field work "are an admirable substitute and are probably

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219 See their reports on The Downs, 1939, Westbury Manor, 1936 and Temple Grove, 1938.
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more effective than classroom lessons." Science may not have been part of the mainstream thrust of prep school study but neither was it completely ignored.

Conclusion:

The popular conception of a curriculum dominated by the Classics is at least partly true. Latin did enjoy a huge slice of the timetable but was gradually being reduced. Greek had already largely disappeared and by 1940 it was clear that English was to comprise the core of the prep school curriculum. The whole nature of study - the subjects and the way in which they were taught - was dominated by the Common Entrance Examination. A good pass rate in this was the primary academic objective of the inter-war prep school. Boys did learn science, albeit in only a limited way. There was some growth in the appreciation of the subject during the period. The teaching was often boring and didactic but boys achieved high standards nonetheless. Classes were very small and individual attention almost guaranteed. Expectations were high and boys were required to give of their best. Hard work stemmed from a variety of factors, ranging from the energetic and positive approach to work of small boys to the rewards on offer and the unpleasant consequences of insufficient endeavour.

It would be unfair to examine the prep school curriculum without reference to the large hidden curriculum provided by the boarding school environment. Unlike a day school the

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activities of the classroom formed only a part of the school experience. Education in the boarding prep school amounted to much more than what was taught; the impression made by life beyond the desk was often far more profound. It is important to stress the academic value of many out-of-school activities. Examples of this abound: regular educational lectures at weekends, time devoted to listening to gramophone records and nature study expeditions. The inspectors themselves noted the value of "informal plays and Sunday evening lectures" and pointed out that "Although, on the side of practical work, the School time-table seems at first sight to be rather thin, actually this work occupies a very important place". Such activities are investigated in the next chapter.


Analysis of prep school timetables shows that between five and six hours of the thirteen hour boarding school day were spent in academic lessons or prep. One would therefore assume that there existed considerable scope for activities beyond the classroom.

A particular feature emphasised by modern boarding prep schools in their marketing is the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer in the time after school when day children would be travelling or becoming bored at home. Prep schools in the inter-war period paid considerably less attention to this aspect of education although there were exceptions and perceptible developments in the period. Days were busy rather than well-used.

Life at prep school was extremely regimented. Apart from practicalities such as meals the routine at most schools had always concentrated on affairs of the classroom supplemented by games and chapel. Life at Horris Hill was said to be "Work, cricket, football and little else." Traditionally there had not been times set aside for hobbies or other non-sporting or non-academic activities. One retired schoolmaster said: "At Heatherdown you played games, you worked, and if you had a hobby you could follow it in your own time perhaps but no-one would help you with it and there were no rooms to do it in."

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1 Information from Mr. Jimmy Stow - interview 12/7/1991.
2 Information from Mr. Ted Vidal.
Evidence would suggest that this is true of most schools even after the First World War. Providing occupations for boys out of class-time was not an accepted part of prep school life, staff would not willingly involve themselves and money and facilities for such activities were very restricted. In 1934 inspectors from the Board of Education, writing in the *P.S.R.*, had commented: "Subjects which train hand, eye and ear are often inadequately treated: all boys should learn to draw and to sing without extra charge: handicrafts should be encouraged." In the majority of schools drawing and congregational hymn singing was standard practice but apart from the carpentry offered as an extra in around 70% of schools little was done beyond this. However, the beginnings of a change in attitude can be detected in the 1920s and became more manifest in the 1930s as a new generation of more enthusiastic schoolmasters combined with an increase in pressure for a broadening of the curriculum.

Quaker schools such as The Downs were in the vanguard of change. There the Headmaster had written:

"Classes promoting manual dexterity are essential to any well-balanced curriculum, and quite apart from the physical co-ordination they teach it often happens that a boy who is slow and backward at his other lessons but is clever with his hands is able to gain self-confidence by achieving success in a subject which is a recognised part of the curriculum."

But this avant-garde establishment was not unique. At the small Thanet school, Dumpton House, the late 1930s prospectus stated: "Creative work in the boys' leisure hours is encouraged, because it has been found that such work increases

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happiness and reduces the need for any form of stern discipline. Similarly at Hillstone "Every boy [was] expected to have some hobby or hobbies, and thus learn how to make-wise use of his leisure time." Many school magazines of the late 1930s contain references to new hobbies. This extract from the Pinewood School magazine is typical:

"While the [new] railway will afford a delightful occupation to many boys for many hours, that is not its sole object; its further aim is to encourage the acquisition of some knowledge of electricity, and to widen the opportunities for painting and drawing through the scenery required, and for hand work through the construction of stations, bridges and many other accessories."

All retired staff interviewed, most of whom had begun teaching in the early 1930s, noted that at first there was little extra-curricular activity but that they had pushed for it and that by 1940 significant developments had occurred. Contemporary evidence supports their view. This extract is taken from the Oakley Hall Magazine of 1935:

"It is in the new out-of-school activities that most change is apparent. In most schools thirty years ago the masters confined themselves to teaching regular lessons and games; consequently they were apt to become remote and slightly aloof beings. Boys out-of-school were left more or less to their own devices. All our out-of-school activities were either unknown or in their infancy."

Change was evident even in the elite traditional schools such as Sandroyd where survey respondents of late '30s vintage wrote how they remembered, "The encouragement given to us to pursue

5 Dumpton House, Broadstairs. Prospectus - late 1930's.
6 Hillstone School prospectus - late 1930s; p28.
7 The Blue and Grey, Spring 1936, p15.
our own interests," and the "Availability of hobbies and interests such as carpentry, debating, scouting, golf, current affairs. Freedom to pursue interests in spare time, such as private study of science, languages, railways."\(^{10}\)

A prep school master writing in 1938 thought that leisure activity training was most important as "The class of boy who attends a school charging £180 P/A will often have a large amount of leisure time during his adult years."\(^{11}\)

What, then, was the nature of these activities? To what extent did a 'hidden curriculum' exist beyond the classroom?

**Music:**

With the obvious exception of choir schools, the status of music was low key. Essentially it involved congregational singing - occasionally in specific lessons, more often hymns sung by the school in chapel. The world-wide fame of English boys' choirs was maintained by a network of choir schools but most prep schools also had choirs to accompany chapel services and these achieved high standards, albeit within the narrow boundaries of church music. At Farnborough all the staff were required to sing in the choir and "With scarcely any exception all boys were either choristers or 'probationers': to qualify as an exception you had to be tone deaf. The music was of a remarkably high standard."\(^{12}\)

7% of Sandroyd survey respondents

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9 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 77.
10 Ibid, no.37.
mentioned the choir as being something they had particularly enjoyed. Most schools had musical (usually singing) competitions on a Saturday night in which "everyone was expected to do something at least once every term."\textsuperscript{13}

While at The Downs instruments such as violin, flute and 'cello could be learnt, and there was a school orchestra, at most schools instrumental learning consisted of paying for piano lessons as an 'extra'. Even where it was possible to learn instruments such as the oboe this was considered "mildly eccentric"\textsuperscript{14} and the option was not often taken up.

From a modern perspective the musical education provided seems inadequate. Arthur Harrison wrote:

"There would be the hearty singing classes once a week, a few boys learning the piano and perhaps the occasional violinist, who was really a beastly nuisance; only the larger schools, with teaching facilities near at hand, could aspire to the less obvious instruments or anything that could begin to be called an orchestra. The cause of music was in the doldrums."\textsuperscript{15}

However, a music teacher writing in the \textit{P.S.R.}, in 1927 stated: "Most preparatory school headmasters now realise that music has at last come into its own, and is recognised as an essential part of a boy's education."\textsuperscript{16} School inspectors noted that most schools had singing lessons and never suggested an expanded music syllabus. They were sure that music had a place in education, for the one school which did not teach any music was told: "From the social point of view it is at least as

\textsuperscript{13} Mr. Charles Jewell (St. Wilfrid's, Hawkhurst).
\textsuperscript{14} Mark Lichens, West Downs (1992), p69.
\textsuperscript{15} Arthur Harrison, \textit{How Was That, Sir} (1975), p102.
necessary as moderate proficiency in athletics: in the larger aspect of a liberal education it is impossible to omit the importance of aesthetic values." At the larger schools it was usual for a music master to be employed or for one member of staff to take music as an area of particular responsibility. The breadth of music at The Downs came in for particular praise:

"It is evident that Music here is regarded as an essential part of education, and as a fine preparation for a cultural life. A boy leaving this school will have come into contact with some of the great things in Music and will be able to think of it and speak of it sympathetically and intelligently. Music indeed may be said to take its rightful place here in the scheme of cultural education."

**Drama:**

Most schools attempted a play of some kind at least once every year. Musicals by Gilbert and Sullivan were particular favourites. Headmasters appreciated their educational benefit and they were enjoyed by the boys. Another reason for producing them as a means of impressing the parents and to provide a social occasion. Even then it seems that some parents perceived plays to be an unnecessary distraction. One Sandroydian wrote home to his mother and father: "I am in Ruddigore for the time being, and I am very pleased, so do not say that you do not want me to be in it, you did not protest when I was in the Mikado ..."

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18 Board of Education Inspection Report, The Downs, Colwall, 6/1939, p12. PRO Kew ED109/1971. Perhaps there is here some veiled criticism of music in other prep schools when the rightful place of music here is noted.
19 Letter from Michael Reynolds (Sandroyd 1929 - 34). Sandroyd Archives.

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Art as a school subject was in its infancy in the period. The majority of schools offered 'drawing' but even this was often an extra. One Old Sandroydian wrote: "The budding artist had to handle the system and bide his time, as basically he had to at public school."\(^{20}\) Inspectors were aware of its value and at one school where just two boys took drawing as an extra they exclaimed: "It is regrettable that the value of Art as an important feature in Education is so little appreciated."\(^{21}\) Headmasters were less convinced: time spent on Art was less time spent on Classics, it cost money, the facilities did not exist and it was not considered a worthy subject anyway. When drawing was abolished at Aysgarth but continued as a winter alternative to dancing this was "so that those who are really keen on drawing and painting may still indulge in their artistic fancy [my italics]."\(^{22}\)

Of course there were exceptions. At The Downs a double art lesson was scheduled in the timetable and was considered one of the schools "outstanding features".\(^{23}\) The art master was Maurice Feild [sic] who had a profound effect on many boys. At Abinger Hill the inspectors commented that "One of the most pleasing aspects of the school work is the attention given to Drawing and Craftwork of various kinds."\(^{24}\) Drawing and "bold,

\(^{20}\) Sandroyd Survey respondent no.31.
\(^{24}\) Board of Education Inspection Report, Abinger Hill, 10/1930, p.5. PRO Kew ED109/5673. At Abinger Hill two hours of school time per week was devoted to the subject.
imaginative paintings were encouraged" at Marlborough House. Even at some more conventional schools art had a high profile. The senior Art master at Eton visited Scaitcliffe every Thursday and the teaching at St. Andrew's, Eastbourne, seems very enlightened:

"The method of teaching Art today aims first and foremost at encouraging a boy to express himself freely, not to insist on too great accuracy of drawing and construction but to seek to bring out the spirit of life and action ... above all, it will enable him to appreciate fully the beauty of life." 25

**Carpentry:**

One extra-curricular activity at prep school which was an unqualified success was woodwork. At Twyford it was described as "the most pleasant, and possibly the most profitable, of all our out-of-School activities." 27 By 1940 there were few schools which did not offer carpentry as an option and in many schools it had a weekly slot in the timetable. While on offer in some schools before the First World War this was an activity which developed in the period. The Brightlands Chronicle of 1927 noted:

"We have at last been able to make arrangements for proper instruction in Carpentry. This is a practical subject which has always appealed to us, but the difficulty of providing satisfactory teaching under modern conditions is far greater than might be imagined." 28

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Schools seemed determined to overcome these difficulties and while facilities were not lavish many school magazines make mention of the progress that had been made. In 1930 the carpentry class at Cottesmore had "proved a great success" and by 1938 at The Wells House everybody had "his weekly lesson as a member of his normal form." At Sandroyd there were lessons on two evenings a week and the boys were able to go to the workshop in their free time.

The boys reacted enthusiastically. At Twyford carpentry was "tremendously encouraged" and when one Sandroyd boy was sent home sick he "really wanted to get back" to do his carpentry. At St. Anselm's "We had joinery classes which were very popular and some very outstanding pieces of furniture were manufactured." Inspectors at The Downs commented that "The workmanship was good and the keenness was most marked .... progress quite exceptional." Usually an outsider would be employed to teach the boys. These men are remembered with affection. Peter Townsend's description provides a good summary:

"He knew no Latin, he played no cricket and perhaps he could not even write very well. But of his solid goodness Mr Longley gave us much. He was the school carpenter. An ex-sailor, he had departed from naval custom and grown a small moustache, waxed and pointed. His soft, slow accent marked him as a West countryman. As solid of stature as of heart, Mr Longley amply filled his blue overalls, yet the strength in his square hands and short, tattooed arms was as gentle as his speech. It was he who awoke my senses to the scent of oak

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29 The Cottesmorian, 7/1930, p.44.
30 The Wells House Magazine, January 1938, p1599.

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and pine and to the stench which rose from his little glue-pot when heated on the stove. I discovered from him the knack of working different grains with plane and chisel and saw, keeping faithfully to the straight line I had marked out with my carpenter's pencil. Under his practised eye I learned the respect that a workman owes to good tools and materials and the value of patience and precision in realising his designs.\footnote{35}

**Handwork:**

Carpentry was one form of handwork. The period saw a growth in handwork, which might include activities as diverse as basket-weaving or carving. In 1921 inspectors at Aldeburgh Lodge had said, "It is to be regretted that more opportunity is not given for handwork."\footnote{36} yet by the late 1930s this school had joined the growing number who offered some kind of manual training. The Headmaster of Pinewood wrote: "There is no doubt that the training of the hand and eye to accurate and beautiful practical work has a very real value for any boy, and for some boys a value that it is impossible to exaggerate."\footnote{37} Both Twyford and Horris Hill acquired new, younger headmasters in the 1930s who were keen on promoting handwork of some kind.\footnote{38}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[35] Peter Townsend (Wychwood), *Time and Chance* (1978); p48.
\item[37] The Blue and Grey (Pinewood School magazine), Christmas 1930, p4.
\item[38] R.G.Wickham (Twyford) and J.Stow (Horris Hill).
\end{footnotes}
Science and Nature Study:

By 1940 science was only just beginning to establish a foothold in the mainstream curriculum but for many years prep schools had offered some form of science as an extra-curricular activity. Its most common form was nature study. An Earnseat Old Boy said:

"My greatest joy was the time spent in the afternoons, mostly on walks when we were taught to keep one eye on the canopy above and the other on the ground beneath. We went for long nature walks and ... would fan out across the marshes to look for nests of the many coastal birds, make a note of what we had found and enter in a larger book back at school for the annual prize." 39

Forres had an entomology club and a "Field Society" while at The Downs "boys were obliged to sign on for a natural history hobby ... every Wednesday groups of boys were led off into the countryside to look for autumn fruits, or snails, or fungi, or whatever ..." 40 Sunday afternoons at Sherborne Prep were often spent rambling over the surrounding countryside in search of natural history specimens. 41 Some schools had school museums with stuffed birds and specimens from around the world. Bird nesting and butterfly collecting, although prohibited hobbies today, were popular in the period. At Temple Grove a map of the grounds was drawn by a boy at the start of the Summer Term and house points were awarded to the first boy to locate and pinpoint each nest which was then entered on the

40 The Downs Survey respondent no. 51. This emphasis on natural history was a legacy of the Quaker disapproval of music, drama and the arts in the 18th and 19th centuries.
map." Many schools had natural history competitions for the best plant or animal specimen collected or observed.

Occasionally boys were allowed to keep live animals as pets. This might be no more than a caterpillar or stag beetle concealed in a tuck-box or desk but several schools permitted 'proper' pets to be brought back to school." The Wells House Magazine noted "Ferrets, chickens, rabbits, and guinea pigs, and white and piebald mice seem to have been kept in some numbers." The boys appreciated the opportunity and pets provided an outlet for their love and feeling as well as giving them an insight into animal behaviour. These animals could prove rather a trial:

"Prescott's jackdaw came back with him, having done too much mischief at home, to be tolerated there any longer. Sooth to say he became a perfect nuisance, frequenting the house day and night, in spite of many forcible hints that his presence was unwelcome. He changed hands several times, his price dropping with each owner, and at last he was bought by Penn and sent to his home to our great satisfaction. We have not heard what his reception was!"

Other hobbies of a scientific bent included photography and weather recording. Cottesmore had a wireless hobby, temporarily abandoned during the First War when the equipment was taken by the G.P.O. Later the Cottesmorian reported that "The Library has been transformed into a first-class Electric Laboratory." The scientific foundation of St.Piran's,

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42 I am grateful to Mr. Simon Wright for this information.
43 During the war years some schools kept rabbits, chickens and ducks for dietary purposes.
44 The Wells House Magazine, April 1922, p794.
45 The Wells House Magazine, December 1922, p825.
46 The Cottesmorian, 7/1919, p15.
Maidenhead has been detailed elsewhere. The school had superb facilities for the pursuit of many scientific activities including engineering and metalwork. Port Regis in Broadstairs even advertised the fact that "Regular classes are given in Engineering, including dismantling and reassembling of actual chassis." The boys were "taught to drive, and may be given a driver's licence to drive in the grounds of the School."48

**Lectures:**

A feature of prep school life remembered by all Old Boys was the lectures given by visitors, usually on a Saturday night. Schools advertised that:

"Lectures on interesting subjects are arranged frequently and the boys are encouraged to take an interest in current affairs and problems. Those engaged in Social work are especially welcome visitors to the school, and an attempt is made to bring the boys, even at this early age, into touch with some of the problems which will face them later on in life, and in the solution of which they must someday take a hand."49

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49 *The Downs School, Colwall* prospectus, June 1934. The Downs was a 'progressive' school but this statement might have equally applied to most prep. schools in the period. Note the expectation that boys would one day be in charge of solving these problems and that these lectures formed part of a training for that.
The subject matter varied widely: below is the list of lectures given at St. Ronan's in 1926:

The reaction of the boys to these events was mixed. One Sandroydian wrote home: Lectures at St. Ronan's, 1926.

"We had a lecture about birds yesterday evening. I am not particularly keen on birds, but it was better than evening work."50 Another enthused: "We had a very good lecture on 'Moorish Spain' and it was terribly interesting, he was not at all dry and told us some very funny stories, and a lot about Bullfights."51 Arthur Marshall remembered:

"The lectures were invariably illustrated with lantern slides projected onto a screen by what was then called a 'magic lantern', an unco-operative instrument with a will of its own. A junior master, perched upon a dais, inserted the slides as signalled by the lecturer, either with one of those clicker things or by thumping on the floor with the pointer with which he was urging his audience to admire Botticelli's brushwork or the temples at Paestum. Schoolboys waited in breathless anticipation for one of the slides to stick or for Chartres Cathedral to come juddering on upside down."52

Some schools had their own film projector to screen films with worthy titles such as the 'Prince of Wales's tour in India', 'The Lumber Industry' and 'R.S.P.C.A. on looking after a...

50 Neville Wigram - letter home dd.16/3/1927. Personal papers of Lord Wigram.
51 Michael Reynolds. Letter in Sandroyd archives.
horse.' In 1937 375 children from the prep schools in Malvern went to see a special screening of the Coronation film at the local theatre.\textsuperscript{53} Events such as these were a valuable insight into the world beyond school and their impact represented a small but important part of the boys education.

**Excursions:**

Modern transport has made school excursions a regular part of any schools timetable. Before the War leaving school for day trips was not as easy. Coach transport was expensive and slow and rail not entirely convenient. Headmasters were reluctant to leave school during term-time because of the risk of contracting infection and for what they perceived as a waste of valuable teaching time. However, this did not mean that these exciting events never occurred. The Headmaster of The Wells House was most enlightened:

"We believe in the principle of the School journey. We believe in introducing early to young minds and to fresh minds the glorious heritage, historic, artistic and scenic, that is an Englishman's, and we believe in making full use of the neighbourhood to illustrate, enliven and give reality to the work of the term in School."\textsuperscript{54}

The objective of school journeys at Harecroft Hall was somewhat different:

"The boys at Harecroft are taken about a good deal, out of school, and in this way they learn easily and naturally how to comport themselves in the presence of strangers without any of the awkwardness or embarrassment which so often characterises the small boy in society."\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} St. Richard's Herald, Summer 1937, p8.

\textsuperscript{54} The Wells House Magazine, August 1935, p1506.

\textsuperscript{55} Harecroft Hall Prospectus, 1934, p4.
For whatever reason, these trips were universally enjoyed by the boys and represented a welcome break from the routine of school. School trips at The Downs included the Railway workshop at Crewe, Worcester Cathedral for a concert conducted by Elgar, Tintern Abbey, the Austin motor works and even viewing the total eclipse of the sun from Worcestershire beacon early one morning. At more traditional schools such as Twyford the only expeditions out were choir treats and the occasional trip to watch a game of cricket. There were a large number of schools where the only time the boys left school during term-time was to play a match against a rival establishment.

Reading:

Although English was only gradually establishing its rightful place in the academic curriculum, reading was encouraged at all prep schools. Only approved texts were permitted: nothing too racy and certainly no comics (although Boy's Own might lurk in a boy's locker) and boys were expected to have a 'reading book' at all times. All schools had a library, albeit often rather a small and Spartan one with some fairly unexciting tomes,64 and books could be brought from home or borrowed from other boys. It was usual for a set time to be established when these books were to be read. Often the half hour after lunch was one such time: the boys would gather together in the main classroom or go to their dormitories to lie on their beds, silence was enforced and they were expected

64 The following article appeared in the St. Richard's Herald in Christmas 1934 (p6): "INTERESTING BOOKS IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY: The following books we can highly recommend. Dreadnoughts of the Dogger; Bulldog Drummonds Three Rounds with Carl Peterson; When Ships Go Down; White Fang, by Jack London, a thrilling dog tale; Prester John, by John Buchan, is another book well worth reading. There are also all of the Waverley Novels which must, of course, be included."
to read. Other times in the day included before breakfast and in the evening in the dormitory after the boys had attended the bathroom and before lights out. At some schools this was a special time of day for the Headmaster or his wife would take it upon themselves to read to the boys:

"Each evening a marvellous period of relaxation was provided for the top 20, or so, boys in [the Headmaster's] study. As we found places to sit, either on chairs or the floor, [the Headmaster] lit his paraffin lamp with the green shade, ordered the light to be switched off and read for 15 to 20 minutes from a remarkable selection of books which he had used over the years and abridged in a manner much to enjoyment of his audience, for he read very well."57

At St. Wilfrid's the boys "all enjoyed it because we got read interesting to us books and it was rather peaceful."58 At Heatherdown each form master read to his own form "taking some thrilling story to stir our imagination. Percy Wilson was a great devotee of 'Sapper', or Rider Haggard and of Stanley Weyman. What sheer bliss it was to crowd into his study amidst the tobacco smoke from his meerschaum pipe and be wafted away down the Danube or far up into the Scottish hills. In the summer term we took our rugs outdoors and listened there."59

Scouting:

Lord Baden-Powell founded the Boy Scout movement prior to the First World War and after 1918 its popularity continued to expand. Prep schools were in the forefront of the movement - Sandroyd School in Cobham had had its first troop in 1910 - and

57 Mr. John Peel (St. Ninian's, Moffat, 1923 - 27) - letter dd.3/1992.
58 Mr. Charles Jewell (St. Wilfrid's, 1928 - 33).
by 1940 many schools had enthusiastically formed their own cubs and scouts. With nearly 130 schools as members\(^\text{60}\), the prep schools represented a strong source of support for the whole movement. Although there were frequent complaints of a shortage of Scoutmasters (perhaps too few Masters were prepared to give up their time in this way), schools took scouting seriously. In his history of West Downs Mark Hichens writes: "It is not too much to say that in the twenties and thirties it permeated the life of the school."\(^\text{61}\) Many school magazines contain long scouting reports, imploring boys not to "lay aside your Scout Spirit with the end of term ... [but to] keep the good work up and show others that there is all the good we claim for it in Scouting."\(^\text{62}\)

The reasons for their enthusiasm are not difficult to determine. The ethos of the Movement differed little from that of most prep schools. Hillstone adopted it because "Scouting helps to develop initiative, usefulness, citizenship and leadership and the numerous badges available encourage the pursuit of a wide range of interests."\(^\text{63}\) It was said to encourage co-operation, to influence opinion for the good, to eliminate a feeling of Masters versus Boys and to provide opportunities for leadership.\(^\text{64}\) One headmaster wrote that it was of value "not only on account of the much interesting knowledge the boys acquired, but also on account of the

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\(^{60}\) Survey in F.S.R. (March 1936), p221.

\(^{61}\) Hichens (1992), p68.

\(^{62}\) The Sandrovdian, No.68, 4/1921, p27.

\(^{63}\) Hillstone School [Malvern] Prospectus, late 1930s, p23.

excellent principles which lay beneath all that was done." Others noted that it "has been found to have a very beneficial effect on tone and discipline" and that it provided 'disciplined happiness'. Beyond these rather lofty benefits lay more simple ones. One headmaster wrote: "there are many occasions on which boys get too much cricket or football, and scouting offers an extremely valuable and at the same time interesting and amusing alternative." It provided scope for the less athletic, kept boys occupied at weekends and, importantly, was quite definitely enjoyed by the boys. 28% of Sandroyd survey respondents mentioned it as something they highly enjoyed and one Old Boy commented "I was thrilled when I was old enough to become a Scout." Although scouting did involve much lining up, parading and attention to uniform it also included highly attractive activities such as camping, cooking on an open fire, tracking and other outdoor tasks. One Old Sandroydian remembered "Extraordinary pitched battles in the woods, sometimes involving 30 - 40 boys." while at another school: "Hills are defended against attackers creeping up under the cover of trees and bracken, treasures are carried from one place to another through enemy territory, there are clue hunts and arrow chases." "Everyone enjoys the scouts",

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66 Nevill Holt prospectus, 1923, p5.
68 From *The Brock* [Brockhurst School magazine], Xmas 1928, p20.
69 In fact it gained most mentions after games and for a large number was their most enduring memory.
71 Sandroyd Survey, respondent no.124.
72 Hoyland (1943), p36.
claimed one contemporary novel." It was certainly different from the daily round of work and games.

Drill:

Similar to scouting, albeit less popular, were military cadet corps. Although membership was officially for boys of 13 and over, prep school corps were given official status. Some headmasters, some old soldiers themselves, were very keen on cadet corps. The height of their popularity came in the aftermath of the First World War. There was a real feeling that Britain must never again be caught unprepared as she had been in 1914. One head wrote: "Everyone realises the psychological importance of drill in regard to the forming of a boy's character and it is to this end that the various forms of drill have been shaped: self-control, amenity to quick obedience of commands, and responsibility are thus encouraged." Inspectors noted that the "good effect upon the boys is obvious to anyone who observes their alert and manly bearing." Given that drill was undertaken by 12 and 13 year-old boys it seems that headmasters occasionally forgot the youth of their charges. One wrote "The discipline of the school and of the parade ground taught punctuality and obedience, and the first duty of the soldier is obedience." However this did all fit with the prep school ethos and contemporary comments give an insight into what they thought boys were being prepared for:

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73 T.P. Toynbee, School in Private (1941), p198.
74 Beaudesert Park Magazine, No.2 Vol.3 1935, p47.
76 Aldeburgh Lodge Magazine, Vol.6 No.8. Summer 1921, p520.

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"Life was a battle, and drill taught boys and men to discipline themselves and others. Unless they learned to obey, and to discipline themselves, they could never hope to discipline others." 77 After one drill inspection Lambrook boys were told of "the importance of making self subsidiary to the team, and the great advantage of having a perfectly sound body to live in ... [there were] several cases during the war where bodily fitness alone enabled men to duly rise to the heights when sudden crises demanded." 78

In practise this drill was broadly similar to that of a parade ground. At The Wells House each team paraded as a squad every morning under its own officer. Cottesmore had a 'Smartest on Parade' Cup. At Oakley Hall there was "Platoon and squad drill, with and without rifles ..." 79 and every Thursday and Friday three-quarters of an hour were spent practising such things as musketry positions, skirmishing and the handling of arms. Strict discipline was expected and maintained. A Temple Grove old boy remembered "if we drilled badly ... one was sent 'round the quad' by the boy N.C.O's. This was quite brutal, as they flayed one's back with their webbing and brass belts, causing horrible weals. One was not allowed to tell matron." 80 The climax of the year was the annual inspection when a senior army officer would come down to 'review the troops':

"Annual inspection taken by Lt.Col.H.E.Kitching MBE, commanding officer of the 5th Bn DLI. Following the inspection, an attack on a miniature scale was staged on the playground

77 Alderburgh Lodge Magazine. Vol.6 No.11, Summer 1922, p603.
78 Lambrook Chronicle 1924, p43.
79 Oakley Hall Magazine Vol.3, No.8, Summer 1921, p167. Oakley Hall was not unique in having a complete set of dummy wooden rifles for use by the boys.
80 John Stokes in O.T.G.Newsletter, 1988 (no pagination).
where a bridge was erected, 'cover' set out and a imaginary river was flowing across the grass. A stockade at the foot of the drive contained the defending force who sent out scouts to ascertain the whereabouts of the attacking party. On discovering that the attack was to be launched from the opposite corner of the field, they returned to the stockade. The advance guard under the command of Sgt. R.B. Matthews were then seen marching onto the ground. They were met by rifle and machine gun fire and extended at once, though not without loss. They then advanced by short rushes and were followed by the main body of the attacking troops commanded by C.S.M. Murray. The advance proceeded as far as the river bank when instructions were sent back to the rearguard to make a flank attack and divert the attention of the defenders while the bridge was being crossed. This was successfully done, despite the heroic efforts of Cadet Slack who, though seriously wounded, ran out of the stockade and blew up the bridge, which however, did not collapse before the last of the attackers had crossed. The 'charge' was then sounded by Bugler Hempson and the fort was captured - the casualties falling during the advance in a very realistic manner. 

Quite what the boys made of all this is not often recorded, although one writer stated "drill...was heartily detested by the boys." Such emphasis on a rather peculiar pastime for young boys seems almost farcical from a modern perspective. Even during the period the decline in the popularity of such drill was evident and noted by contemporary writers. By 1940 only a few schools continued; its place often taken over by scouting.

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82 Pritchard (1938), p245.
A large number of prep schools offered shooting as an option. Usually this was with a .22 on a small range. The schools organised a national competition for the best school team and the best individual shot. Score cards were collected and the Lord Roberts Cup competed for. At a few schools shooting had a very high priority. Mostyn House was a frequent winner as was Aysgarth which had a purpose built indoor range. At Harecroft Hall coarse shooting was available and one Old Boy remembers that at the age of ten he was allowed out with a shotgun with which he shot a partridge which was brought back and served up for tea! At Beachborough Park taking part in shooting expeditions was seen as part of the preparation the school was offering. The prospectus advertised:

"By going out occasionally with the guns during the shooting season, they learn the art of game shooting, how to beat, place stands, walk up and drive game and, above all, the etiquette and rules for safety to be observed, so that when the time arrives for them to receive invitations to shoot, they may accept them, without fear of making foolish or even dangerous mistakes."

At a few schools the English passion for horses and riding was encouraged. This was an expensive option and one that could only be offered by country schools with plenty of space (although some schools did make use of specialist riding schools nearby). Where available it was an activity much

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enjoyed by the boys. They were taught elementary dressage and showjumping as well as learning how to trot or gallop whilst on hacks through the countryside. At Harecroft Hall, a school which advertised it was "frankly designed for the sons of country gentlemen, and of other gentlefolk who believe in English country life, and in riding and manly outdoor pursuits"\(^{\text{4}}\), every boy was taught how to ride and look after a horse and compulsory riding was said to be "very nearly as important as Latin."\(^{\text{5}}\)

**Hobbies:**

Beyond these more regular extra-curricular activities lay a wide range of peculiar or less important hobbies. The existence of these largely depended on the interests of staff in a particular school at a given time. Malsis had a debating society - "to encourage the art of speaking in public, so necessary when our members become M.P.'s, chairmen of companies, mayors of towns, and so on."\(^{\text{6}}\) Sandroyd had a billiards competition. At one stage cooking was very popular at The Downs\(^{\text{7}}\). The same school prided itself on its model railway. This was not the Hornby or Gamages miniature affair set-up of some schools but a large scale, outdoor, people-carrying affair. Not only was this hugely enjoyed by the boys but was said to be "a great attraction to prospective parents. Fathers had to be dragged away to less attractive scenes such

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\(^{\text{4}}\) Harecroft Hall prospectus, 1934, p2.


\(^{\text{6}}\) The Malsis Chronicle, Vol.2 No.11, 12/1924, p5.

\(^{\text{7}}\) Mr.Donald Boyd (The Downs 1933-38), interview 10/1991.
as kitchens, dormitories and classrooms. Huyton Hill went one stage further and must have been unique in having its own airstrip!

Various schools offered dancing in the winter terms with a visiting instructress coming in one evening a week. Boys usually had to practise the steps with each other, a part of their social training, but just occasionally there was a 'dancing match' 'against' a girls school.

The vaguely Heath Robinson-like nature of many prep schools, with headmasters trying to save money by 'making do' with some fairly basic 'home-made' facilities, often led to involvement by the boys. At Temple Grove, Brockhurst and Great Walstead the boys dug the swimming pool and Fernden boys frequently spent Sunday afternoons landscaping or building new cricket pitches. At Upton School, Ripple Vale:

"No groundsman was kept so the playing fields of about three acres was mowed by the bigger boys in the break and after prep in the summer. We regarded it as a privilege to be in charge of the 24" 4 stroke Dennis. The grass was picked up the following break by a working party controlled by a 'monitor' in a large handcart."

Activities such as these were typical of many schools, particularly the less-expensive or less-elite variety.

A final extra-curricular activity which requires mention is the hobbies provided by the boys themselves. These often took the

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89 Mr. I. Butler, interview 4/1993.
form of 'crazes' for a particular toy or activity. The Wells House Magazine noted:

"School crazes during the two winter terms have included knitting, roller skating, making model guns and revolvers in wood, house building in the meadow, and the construction of aerodromes and garages and model houses." 92

Meccano, marbles, cigarette cards - the list was endless, hugely varied and constantly changing. Occasionally these interests were encouraged and the authorities might set aside a room for a model railway but more often such enthusiasm belonged to the boys domain and these were activities which did not involve staff or adults.

**Conclusion:**

By 1940 prep schools were offering a range of extra-curricular activities which certainly enhanced the limited breadth of the academic curriculum. However in most schools there was no real commitment to the full range of this hidden curriculum and it cannot be said that there was a huge variety of activities in out-of-class time at the typical inter-war boarding prep school. There were many reasons for this, ranging from a simple lack of enthusiasm to inadequate facilities, cost, difficulty of organisation or creating space in the daily timetable. The period did see some change in this situation as new headmasters arrived and parental expectations began to change. Before the First War almost nothing was done beyond the standard work and games; this was not true of the prep school of the late 1930s.

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92 The Wells House Magazine, April 1937, p1571.
A commitment to religion was a key component of the prep school ethos. The reason for this was a traditional one: it was something expected of this type of school and represented one aspect of the education they offered. The Dumpton House prospectus said:

"Boys are taught to realise that their religion should be the basis of their every action and the guiding principle in life. A strong simple faith is the surest foundation for complete fearlessness of thought, word and deed; those possessing it are happy boys with individuality and character."^2

All prep schools expressed broadly similar sentiments and all claimed to provide a religious education and to inculcate Christian values. A contemporary commentator wrote: "The majority of preparatory schools have a definite religious outlook on life .... it should not be difficult, at preparatory school age, to provide simple and wholesome religious teaching for all."^3 Not all managed to achieve this, and their degree of success differed considerably.

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1  I.A.P.S. motto.

2  Dumpton House prospectus, late 1930s.

3  Alan Rannie (then Headmaster of West Hayes), "The Preparatory School" in J.Dover Wilson (Ed.), *The Schools of England*, 1928, p76.

(300)
Religious Education:

Time was allocated to religion in the timetable of all schools. Most began their day, and some ended it, with a short chapel service. If they were not fortunate enough to have their own chapel then this might take place in the dining room or hall. Grace was said before meals, a lesson or two a week would be devoted to the study of the Scriptures and prayers said before bed in the evening. On Sunday the sabbath was often strictly enforced. A contemporary author wrote:

"At a Preparatory School there must be definite teaching ... because without some sort of institutional religion the continual effort of the individual to get into close personal touch with God would be too great a strain, and his conceptions might be too vague.""

Some schools had staff in holy orders responsible for religious instruction. At most, however, the duty was shared between staff. At Wychwood Peter Townsend remembered: "Mr Calkin spent hours reading to us in his rich, expressive voice. He opened our eyes to the beauty of the English Bible." Most oral sources reported teaching that was less inspired. At Rose Hill "Scripture was abysmally taught" and inspectors at Seafield Park in 1932 noted "Only in a few cases did the teaching show signs of any profound conviction as to the place which religious teaching should occupy." At St. Cyprian's the teaching took the form whereby "Many passages from the Book of

Common Prayer and the Bible were to be learnt each week by heart, and not least one was required to recite the Collect for the week. Such lessons can hardly have helped a boy 'to get into close personal touch with God'. As one retired headmaster said "Religion was taught but whether it was learnt was another matter."

It was, however, taken seriously and the schools projected an image of religious sincerity. No failure to learn or misbehaviour in chapel would be tolerated. One Old Boy remembered "being beaten for laughing in chapel" while another remembered how "We knelt forward, making a temple of our hands ... before getting into bed, and whispered the Lord's Prayer - twice to make sure of being down long enough." This was wise for one High Court judge recalled: "My unhappiest memory ... was one evening I was given three up in my pyjamas for not saying my prayers for long enough."

9 Mr. Geoffrey Tolson (Durlston Court/St. Peter's, Weston-super-Mare), interview 8/1992.
10 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 70.
Sundays:

At many prep schools Sunday was a day devoted, at least in part, to God. At Summer Fields "Sunday was in truth a day of penance"14 while at West Downs "Most Sundays ... tended to be tedious and long drawn out."15 The day usually began with letter writing: the hour in which boys were expected to write their formal letter home. This was followed by catechism - a time to learn some Scriptures or parts of the service off by heart. There followed a long chapel service which sometimes involved a walk to the nearest church dressed in uncomfortable suits or, worse still, Eton collars. Once there the school would be expected to sit still and silently and to offer up their pennies for the collection when the time came. Some schools had their own pews but, as a parish church, the public attended as well and it was to them that the vicar delivered his sermon. In Broadstairs there was a special service for prep schools while elsewhere schools which had their own chapels had the opportunity of creating more suitable services. At Hillstone the chairman of the advisory council wrote:

"A Preparatory School which does not possess its own Chapel is incomplete, not only for the practical reasons that young boys require special services and special sermons which they cannot hope to get if they are mixed with more mature congregations, but also because the presence of a building within a school, which is set aside for worship and for worship alone,

14 Aldridge (1989), p90.
and which is their very own, has a deep influence on growing boys, which, though at the
time unrealised, is very lasting. 16

For most 8-13 year olds this hour or more was hardly thrilling although a surprisingly small number of Old Boys actually complained of it being boring. 51% of Sandroyd respondents agreed with the statement that "chapel was a significant part of corporate life" but more significantly 9% mentioned Chapel as being something which they had particularly enjoyed. They had enjoyed singing hymns, participating in the choir or even pumping the bellows for the organ. At Parkside the Headmaster usually preached and an Old Boy commented "how nice it was to listen to someone you knew and trusted." 17 For one unhappy boy at West Downs "Only the chapel seemed colourful and warm to someone as homesick as myself." 18 No doubt these views benefit from hindsight. One Old Sandroydian wrote: "I don’t see it did us anything but good. Compulsory Church provides the best of services. It is those only attended by a few scattered among empty pews which are so depressing and make singing such an embarrassment. It made us familiar with all the old hymns and poured into our ears the incomparable language of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer." 19 An important point to appreciate is that for all these old boys the chapel and the services therein had been exclusive to their school. While some of the old guard were "not in favour of  

16 Sir Cyril Norwood in Hillstone School prospectus, late 1930s, p5.  
19 Ivor Crosthwaite, unpublished memoirs.
boys reading the Service for I do not believe in small boys
going up to instruct their elders,"²⁰ most schools did try
to make their services relevant to boys. The Lambrook
Headmaster wrote:

"We don't want to be out-of-date, but our simple services do, we think, still appeal to our
young congregation. Services short, with many hymns, a few verses of psalms, lessons
carefully selected - read on week days by boys, on Sundays by masters - a few special prayers
for those at home, our own boys and our Old Boys, ending on Sunday evening with an
address or an occasional 'Eton Fable'. I don't think we are exactly 'bored' with all this."²¹

The Dragon had its own hymn book and followed the example of
many schools in that prayers, hymns and readings were all done
by the boys. It was hoped that this "may engender an attitude
towards worship different from that which has too frequently
been held among school boys."²² The experience of an Old Boy
obliged to attend a public service explains their disillusion:
"Nothing was gained spiritually from our compulsory church
attendance: the vicar was ancient, out of touch, with a
piping voice. Sermons would last half and hour or more."²³

The routine for Sunday afternoons became more liberal as the
period progressed. At some schools strict adherence to the
Sabbath meant no running or playing about: the boys spent the
afternoon sitting down quietly or being taken on accompanied

²¹ Lambrook Chronicle 1924, pp4-5.
²² The Draconian (4/1919), p5139.
walks. Boys who misbehaved were sent to bed or beaten. Summer Fields was one such school:

"On fine Sundays in the Summer boys were allowed to sit in the field, the operative word being sit. Any breaking into a run was sternly checked by a bellow through the study megaphone; the production of a cricket ball would have involved 'six of the best.'"

At other schools swimming and ball games were disallowed although by the 1930s the authorities at Horris Hill had yielded to rounders. At Dorset House "you were allowed out on Sundays provided you knew your collect." All boys were expected back to attend the evening service which followed tea. At Temple Grove the boys had to go on the notorious afternoon walk. Staff were advised: "Behaviour on walks in very important. No boys should (1) eat sweets (2) lag behind (3) push people off the pavement. They should be inspected before starting and heads counted. Masters should make sure, on occasions, that boys are wearing their own caps. It is important that they should pick up their feet and walk upright (without hands in pockets)..." An Old Sandroydian recalled "thoroughly tedious long Sunday walks, with the Deacons bashing the ankles and shins of the laggards with staves." It was not exactly a day of high excitement and Sunday afternoons were not necessarily a time to be looked forward to.

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26 Information from Jimmy Stow.
28 "Private Programme" in Temple Grove School archives.
29 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 28.
The vast majority of boys boarding prep schools were Church of England in their faith although only a few insisted that all boys should follow the Book of Common Prayer. Not surprisingly, Roman Catholic schools placed greater emphasis on religion but in 1937 there were only 29 (4.5%) such schools in England. Many Catholic schools were founded by men with a religious mission. Oral evidence suggests that boys who attended these schools imbibed religion more seriously but then this may also reflect their background and upbringing. At The Downs, a Quaker school, there were Quaker meetings every morning (in which often nothing was said) but the school was religiously 'free' and difference of opinion was tolerated. There is no record of any Muslims in prep schools but Jews attended a number of schools for there was no prep school specifically for them. The anti-semitism typical of the class and the times occasionally made the experience of Jewish boys an unpleasant one. Lord Rothschild noted "I became painfully aware of being a Jew when a boy called Michael kicked my shins shortly after I arrived at Stanmore Park and called me a dirty little Jew." In J.T.C.Pember's novel, Not Me, Sir, a Jewish boy tries to keep his religion secret but when he is eventually found out the Headmaster makes a mockery of him, the school hisses and he is forced to leave. One Anglican noted that his headmaster clearly "didn't like Jews."

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30 Information taken from Schools 1937. A higher proportion of Catholic schools were classified as "private" schools because they kept boys beyond 14. Catholic public schools tended to accept younger boys than was usual among such schools.


Religion and religious instruction is an area where institutional perception and schoolboy reality differ markedly. While the schools may have thought they were inculcating religion successfully and producing devout young Christians the experience of those who attended these institutions was rather different.

For some the whole process of worship was a novelty:

"The first night at St. Cyprian's, I observed that the older boys knelt before getting into bed. I assumed that they were using their chamber pots; I had never seen anyone pray, because there had been no religion in my family since my grandparents became agnostics in 1870, the year after Thomas Huxley invented the word. When matron was told that I had not prayed, she took me off to her bedroom and tried to explain the mysteries of revealed religion. But my incredulity was too much for her, and she gave it up as a bad job. The following morning was a Sunday. I had never been in a church before, and did not know the drill. When the chaplain finished his sermon I applauded."³³

In this case the religious indoctrination had the desired effect:

"I soon became deeply religious. During Easter week I went about with a heavy heart, and wept on Good Friday. I prayed for good marks in exams."³⁴

For most the experience was less profound. One man wrote: "Our bodies obeyed the ritual of religion, leaving our minds free to explore our various heavens."³⁵ For A.N. Wilson religion was a solemn occasion, he gained "attitudes acquired

³⁴ Ibid.
³⁵ James Kenward (Upton), Prep School (1958), p165.
by Sunday after Sunday of having to put on a smart suit to go to church, day after day at school of being told that one did not talk in chapel. Religion, which I did not even begin to understand, was something connected in my mind with being on someone else's idea of good behaviour."\textsuperscript{36} One retired headmaster admitted "I don't think most boys absorbed it although some of them did."\textsuperscript{37} Even some contemporary writers questioned whether the prep school boy had any religion and concluded that while they did it was one of "enterprise, exploration, self-development and self-conquest, along the lines of delight, adventure, gain of power, heroism and the love of all that is courageous, skilful and strong, seen mainly in himself."\textsuperscript{38} For most it was simply another aspect of school life, something with which one must comply. Much of it was boring and repetitive yet for some there were some genuine highlights and for a small majority some long-lasting impression was made.

Prep schools paid attention to religion and worship but claims that it was "the whole life of the school"\textsuperscript{39} and that boys lived lives of "practical Christianity"\textsuperscript{40} were exaggerated - however much the authorities in these schools might like to have thought otherwise.

\textsuperscript{37} Mr. Richard Vickers (Heatherdown/Scaitcliffe), interview 4/1992.
\textsuperscript{38} R.A. Raven, \textit{The Religion of the Preparatory-School Boy} (1934), p30.
\textsuperscript{39} W.Frazer Hoyland (The Downs), \textit{Aedificandum Est} (1943), p49.
\textsuperscript{40} Harecroft Hall prospectus, late 1930s.
"A high standard of discipline is maintained. Its purpose is explained to the boys on joining and it has been found that boys readily answer to it and understand its purpose. Sense of duty, honour, responsibility, decency, truthfulness, politeness - all these qualities are encouraged to develop."

This extract from a school prospectus typifies the considerable emphasis placed in the inter-war prep school on rules, organisation and discipline. To apply their ethos successfully schools had to ensure that their values were enforced; this was done rigorously and without exception. Rules and discipline were comprehensive and strict, control was tight. As one person wrote: "So many things were not allowed, so few were."

No apology was made for this. General ideas about discipline in this period were stern. A firm application of established rules was expected by staff, parents and boys. A clearly-defined set of traditional values lay at the heart of prep school organisation. One headmaster wrote: "The discipline of the school is strict because a boy must first learn to obey, if he is ever to command."

Orderliness and recognition of

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1 Dumpton House prospectus, late 1930's.
3 Explored earlier in the ethos section of this thesis.
authority were of great importance and, as one Old Boy wrote, "The sense of order and discipline ... seemed almost to be innate."  

RULES:

The underlying atmosphere in prep schools at this time was one of manners and formality. At Temple Grove "Everything had to be taken seriously.... His intention was that boys should behave 'like intelligent grown-ups'." Abberley Hall was little different: "Insistence on sensible behaviour, good manners, tidiness and respect for books and other property was unceasing and effective." The Harecroft Hall prospectus made the situation quite clear:

"The social sense is very carefully fostered, and there is at the School a tradition of manners, good breeding, and quiet behaviour, which has its immediate effect upon any new boy who is inclined to be unduly turbulent or destructive, and which extracts from him a very high standard of courtesy and gentlemanly bearing, to say nothing of personal cleanliness, neatness, and tidiness, as regards himself, his hands, his hair, clothes, books, work, desk, lockers, and everything connected with him. The thousand-and-one little things which make all the difference between the gentleman and the man who is merely educated are inculcated from the start. To give a few concrete examples from everyday life, no Harecroft boy of more than a term's standing would allow a woman to open a door for herself, or pick up for herself something which she had dropped; or, at a meal, help himself to food without first looking round to see whether his neighbour were supplied; or to allow his own voice to be heard above the general conversation of the company; or ridicule the opinion of another, merely because it differed from his own.

or make use of a bath without leaving it spotlessly clean for the next comer; or do any
other anti social act, either at school or during the holidays."

Few schools were as explicit as this but at all these values were accepted and enforced. Good manners meant good breeding and were part of the gentlemanly training which these schools were expected to provide. At Temple Grove "Even on less formal occasions the atmosphere was one of formality. It was the custom in the summer term to have tea outside under the oak tree near the swimming bath. At these teas everyone was expected to sit up properly, no lounging, in a sloppy way or lying down permitted, the food was offered and passed round and everything was done in an orderly and gentlemanly way.";

This was the foundation from which school rules were derived. The minutiae of the rules themselves, and what constituted a breach of these rules, was another matter altogether. The rules themselves were rarely written down yet were expected to be learnt. They covered all aspects of school life. Consider this example from the Temple Grove advice to staff:

"Boys should stand up when a master comes into class or goes up and speaks to them. Caps should be removed in the house and when meeting members of the Staff outside the grounds. Boys must acquire the commonplaces of politeness - 'Sir', 'please' and 'thank you'. They must take off their caps to masters of other schools .... Boys should stand up and stop whatever they are doing, when visitors come in - and take their hands out of their pockets. They should also remove their caps on meeting visitors in the grounds." 10

8 Harecroft Hall prospectus, 1934. p4.
10 "Private Programme" in Temple Grove School archives.
When questioned about the nature of school rules, Old Boys had many memories of their all-encompassing scope. One recalled: "Leaving the lights on, in an empty form room, was a heinous crime for which one was slippered." The most common 'offence' seems to have been talking after lights out (mentioned by 30% of Sandroyd survey respondents) but others included lying ("a cardinal sin"), swearing, ragging, theft, bullying, fighting, cheating, lateness, running indoors, idleness and rudeness. Boys at Greenways were alerted to this notice:

11 Major Francis Irvine (Sandroyd 1926-31) in response to a questionnaire sent by boys at the school, 2/1991. School archives.

12 Sandroyd survey respondent no.111.
PUNISHMENT DRILLS of FIFTEEN minutes duration will in future be awarded for any of the following offences:

1. Arriving at meals or in class with dirty hands or with unbrushed hair.
2. Failing to put boots or shoes in their lockers during the Break.
3. Leaving tape running or lavatory doors open.
4. Having untidy lockers.
5. Placing blotting-paper in ink-wells.
6. Chronic pen or pencil-sucking.
7. Failing to hang clothes up in the Changing Room.
8. Being late for Games.
9. Running about between Classrooms.
10. Forgetting school books.

STRIPES will be awarded for the following offences:

1. Slackness at work.
2. Wearing another boy's cap.
3. Talking or getting out of bed in Dormitory after Lights Out.
4. Buying, selling or "swap-ring", except in the presence of a member of the Staff.
5. Ragging in the Dining-room or the Senior Classroom.
6. Interfering with the fires or lights.
7. Undue familiarity with the maids.
8. Cheating.

Dormitory and Drill Quarter Stars will in future be given fortnightly, instead of weekly.

Three Drills in one week entail a BLACK MARK, and THREE BLACK MARKS entail a CANING.

November, 1929.
Some of the more interesting and amusing 'crimes' in the Summer Fields punishment book include: "deliberately walking into a snowdrift in his ordinary clothes, describing a cricket ball as bloody, trying to take two buns, misbehaviour with a razor blade, bringing comics into chapel, wearing another boy's shorts, rebellion against prefects and banging a boy's head on the floor."\(^{13}\)

A distinction tended to be drawn between breaches of a disciplinary code and what were regarded as criminal offences such as stealing. Punishments reflected this. Crimes included in the latter category continue to be punished in schools today but what has changed is the decline in the number of minor rules and regulations and a reduced emphasis upon manners and what might be generally termed 'good behaviour'.

**REWARDS AND SANCTIONS:**

To assist with the maintenance of discipline, and to foster competition and team spirit, prep schools devised often complicated forms of school organisation. These varied between schools but were all based on the idea of dividing the boys into groups, rewarding good behaviour while punishing bad, and then making the groups competitive. Most common was the system of 'stars' and 'stripes'. At Hillstone this was called 'Recs and Vetos' and was explained in the school magazine:

"Every master has a couple of perforated books, one of pink, the other of blue slips. Every good piece of work gets its rec [or star], whether it is an exercise solved in spare

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time, or general usefulness to the School by a plucky innings against odds or some other
good piece of work. Every breach of conduct gets a boy a Veto. All Recs and Vetos are
tabulated under each group and the charts are put up in a prominent place (where they
catch the eye of visitors!) and the group which has the biggest balance of Recs to its credit
gets an extra half and holds a cup for a term, the cup being taken home by the group
leader during the holidays. Thus a boy realises that by working hard and keeping himself
under control he is benefiting not only himself but the whole group, while the slacker and
unruly person instead of finding himself an object of envy and admiration in the eyes of
his weaker fellows, finds himself up against that most potent of all forces - public
opinion."^14

At Ravenswood the system was similar and an Old Boy recalled:

"Bad work or behaviour was recorded on a green form which was retained until the next
Wednesday or Saturday morning. Before morning school the recipients of such awards
would have an audience peeping out to watch each pupil enter and leave the study. Three
disobedience stripes resulted in a caning, ditto 10 stripes. Stars were received by the Head
with some suitable remark about an improvement or 'Well done, why don't you try and
get some more stars?'^15

These schemes did seem to work. Old Boys remembered them as
being competitive and effective. The boys enjoyed the rewards
on offer and many worked hard to attain them. The kudos of
having a number of stars and the congratulations received from
staff and parents, as well as the possibility of extra
holidays or treats, provided quite an incentive. An Old
Downian said "charts really mattered."^16 Similarly, the
unpleasant consequences of acquiring stripes were all too
obvious. A Hillstone Old Boy remembered accumulating six

^14 Carmen Strieis, mid-1930's, p6.
^15 Mr. Peter Unwin (1929-35), letter 1/1993.
^16 Mr. Donald Wright, interview 8/1993.
vetos: "I was duly tanned for my sins on the following Monday." Linking individual punishment and reward to a group system brought the powerful force of peer pressure to bear on those who underperformed and thus hindered their house's chance of winning a cup or treat. At Ravenswood "Those who got lots of stripes were beaten up by the other boys in the form - a most effective way of making one think of one's form mates." One Old Boy remembered being unhappy as a new boy because he was considered a drag on his set and had to be moved to another set.

At some schools these 'sets' were of great importance. As well as behaviour the sets competed in sports and extra-curricular activities. An Old Downian said "It was the pack that meant the most." At Scaitcliffe "Loyalty to one's section was fostered from start to finish of a boy's career." An emphasis on group values was at the core of the prep school ethos. Some schools based their sets around cub 'sixes, scout patrols or drill sections but whatever the division there was always a senior boy or prefect in charge as group leader. Sometimes staff were also assigned to each group. A few schools even had formal meetings of group leaders and the headmaster. The role played by senior boys is examined in the Prefects' section below.

17 Recorded in Carmen Stricel (Hillstone magazine) Summer 1922, p11.
18 Mr. Peter Unwin (Ravenswood 1929-35), letter 1/1993.
20 Mr. Donald Boyd (1933-38), interview 10/1991.
Other organisational features in inter-war prep schools included forms and age groups. Scholarship forms and First teams often enjoyed special status as, of course, did the most senior class. Invariably there were privileges, both official and unofficial, attached to a rise in status due to time spent at the school. This might be something as straightforward as a special classroom or as complicated at the privileges system at The Downs where "the 'Priv List' set out the limits to which boys had to adhere particularly during week-ends. Small boys, for example, were taken for a walk on Sunday afternoons, whereas their senior associates enjoyed free-time; the middle school strata had to come into the library an hour before tea, the seniors nearly an hour later. As boys progressed up the school the limits on their free time activity decreased and the bounds were "jealously guarded." 22

A simple disciplinary procedure operating in many schools was a punishment book, often known as the 'Black Book'. In this staff would write the name of an offender and his crime for the headmaster to deal with later. Some entries from the Summer Fields black book were given above. At Arnold House:

"Once a week we all assembled in the big classroom, and the Headmaster read out the Black Book. With covers of that colour, the book was filled in each week by Masters, recording any misbehaviour or careless class-work performed during the week. After each crime was read out, the criminal received sentence, which might range from a reprimand to 'see me in my study after tea!'" 23

To the uninitiated, one of the more extraordinary aspects of the prep school is that some form of 'Prefect' system was being used with children of this age. The assignation of power and responsibility to senior boys is a particular feature of the English school system and was initiated by public schools in the Victorian era. With the tendency of the prep school to adopt customs and practices from its senior educational partner it is not surprising that most junior schools in the period used boys in their final year to assist with the running of the school. Given that doubts are frequently expressed about the wisdom of this policy with older boys, its application with much younger thirteen and fourteen year olds requires examination. It certainly forms yet another component of the prep school experience.

Prep school authorities were aware of the potential criticism that a Prefect system might invite. Justification for its existence is frequently made in contemporary sources and oral history has provided additional insights. The rationale was based around two points - one ideological, the other practical.
1. Assisting with the formation of character in a boy:

One headmaster wrote: "Giving responsibility is part of the training of a boy or girl and is the business of the school. Leadership can begin at an early age and must be encouraged." It trained them for this task at public school and beyond. It gave boys a sense of responsibility; the training in judgment and self-control was said to be "valuable" and it allowed them to exercise discipline and management skills.

One headmaster went as far as to claim that "This is one of the benefits our type of education provides as opposed to State education..." and another that "We are profoundly convinced that ... every boy in turn ought to have his opportunity of learning to exercise authority wisely and conscientiously - we believe it to be the most valuable part of the training we give our boys."

2. Assisting with the running of the school:

Prefects were often used for controlling or marshalling younger boys and assisting with matters of elementary discipline. Sometimes their ideas were valued: "A boy's way of dealing with minor offences is often more intelligible to other boys and so more effective than a master's." They were said to

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26 *The Chronicle* (Feltonfleet), No.23 (April 1938), p3.
27 *The Blue and Grey* (Pinewood), Winter 1922, p2.
be "shrewd judges of each others motives"\textsuperscript{29} and could be "of real help in keeping the school up to scratch."\textsuperscript{30} As one Sandroyd respondent wrote, "They ... helped to keep things going more or less quietly and efficiently."\textsuperscript{31}

The basis upon which prefects were selected was fairly consistent throughout all schools which operated such a system (and only a very few schools did without, although the titles, powers and responsibilities granted them varied widely). The essential criterion was age and in some schools it was simply the oldest boys who became prefects. Others added factors such as obedience, presence of personality and natural influence, loyalty and a readiness to accept the position. Occasionally a desire to satisfy parental expectation or social status also played a part. At Hillstone leaders were chosen:

\begin{quote}
...chiefly on the grounds of truthfulness, unselfishness, and strength of character generally, a boy who has been long enough in the School to have affection for it and a determination to allow nothing to happen or continue in it which reflects on its honour and well-being.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

The tasks that these boys were expected to fulfil were largely minor or menial. Their duties were described as "not very onerous but they do demand a certain amount of tact and firmness as well as loyalty and common sense."\textsuperscript{33} When they were 'on duty' they might be in charge of directing boys to the

\textsuperscript{29} Alan Rannie in J.Dover Wilson, \textit{The Schools of England} (1923), pp77-8.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Sandroyd Survey respondent no.20.
\textsuperscript{32} Carmen Strizis (Hillstone, Malvern) - mid 1930s (no dates).
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{The Chronicle} (Feltonfleet), No.23 (April 1938), p6.
loo after breakfast, controlling queues for sweets or meals, checking the tidiness of clothes on dormitory chairs or inspecting hands before lunch. A boy at St. Ronan's wrote:

"A Prefect on duty spends all his spare time in the School Room or Reading Room; at other times he will take the service in Chapel; he will be on duty in the cubicles or in the room, or on changing duty, while in addition to this he is, so to speak, always on parade." 34

Sometimes certain boys performed specified duties: dormitory captaincy or form tidiness. The list of School officers at The Wells House in 1933 illustrates this point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Officers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefects [5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Brambles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Shed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Bicycle House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Clerks [4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Dormitories [12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eleven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shooting Eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spelling Eleven</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Wells House Magazine, 1928.

34 St. Ronan's Magazine, April 1935, p.1. When he refers to "taking the service" one presumes he had to help rather than literally take the service. No source can be found to clarify this issue.

35 Brambles was a house.
The Wells House at this time was a large school but even Brightlands, a school of about fifty boys, had at least seven prefects.

Around the school they would be expected to stop running indoors or break up stray fights. The expectation was that they would set a proper example to the younger boys and help ensure that school discipline was maintained. Although these boys were young they were expected to project an adult example and behave in a suitably mature and sensible fashion. At one school they were even said to have "the moral tone of the school very much in their own hands". Headmasters used their prefects to provide a boys perspective and supply information about life amongst the boys. Responding to a parental complaint about bullying one headmaster wrote: "I will ... talk to one or two of the head boys about it who don’t mind at all telling me how things stand." Writing in an end-of-term report another head notes "the Senior Boys told me at the end of the term that Dare had practically ceased to give trouble by disobedience." Prefects' meetings would be held about once every week where "Fortified by ginger beer or lemon squash we discussed school business and the technique of wielding authority and setting an example." One retired headmaster described his prefects as his "eyes and ears" and although...

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36 At Hillstone this was to be one of "keenness and efficiency" [Ref.: Hillstone School prospectus, late 1930s, p30.]
37 Extract from The Downs, Colwall prospectus, June 1934.
38 Letter from J.M.Carson, headmaster of Belvedere, Hove to Mr.Burn, dd.18/6/1921. Personal papers of M.C.Burn.
40 Wells House Magazine, April 1938, p1615.
41 Mr.Donald Sewell (Old Buckingham Hall), interview 12/1992.
no doubt the term ‘spies’ would have been frowned on they seemed a have served a remarkably similar purpose. One bitter Old Sandroydian wrote that they were "Basically informers; fond of reporting boys for minor swearing such as ‘damn’ or ‘beast’."42

The status of prefects within the school was an enviable one. They had reached the top of the school and enjoyed the privileges thus accorded. An Old Sandroydian wrote:

"One's last year was very different from one's first. One had reached the right end of the Pecking Order. One had made good and firm friends .... One enjoyed respect, envy and responsibility. With no particular effort life had suddenly blossomed and was fun. One was treated as a civilised, grown-up Human Being - an experience not repeated until another five years at one's public school - and some maintain never again thereafter."43

For a small number of Old Boys this was one of their most pleasant memories of prep school. As well as experiencing control over younger boys, Prefects gained privileges such as later bedtimes, additional sweets, the right to go on walks unsupervised and other seemingly minor benefits which actually meant a great deal to a thirteen year old. At Malsis in the 1920s younger boys were even expected to fag for their prefects."44 Prefects at The Downs, Colwall went on a summer holiday with the Headmaster.

Most boys were conscious of their responsibility and took their role seriously. A Sandroyd head boy wrote: "It is very

42 Sandroyd Survey respondent no.16.
43 Ivor Crosthwaite, unpublished memoirs.
amusing being head boy but I have a lot to do."45 while another noted "My six [cubs] is mouldering away rather. On Monday we won, but Tuesday and Wednesday we lost. The result is they all line up and get kicked on their sit-upon, no doubt I am the one who deserves it most."46 For some it was quite a burden. Royston Lambert recorded the prayers of two prep school boys in the 1960s who no doubt shared the feelings of their predecessors:

"Dear Lord, please help me to be able to control my house, and help them to realise how difficult my job really is, apart from all the privileges. Amen."

"Please God give me strength to cope with my house. Make the boys realise what they owe to one another and help them not to be so selfish but let them do their best in aiding the house to come higher."47

The role of prefects in providing a boy's perspective has already been identified and it is clear that in many schools the headmaster and staff relied on them to a remarkable extent. When West Downs acquired a new headmaster from a public school he asked two boys to stay on an extra year to help him learn the ropes."48 The Headmaster of Sherborne Preparatory School wrote that his prefects were "very important personages .... whom I could completely trust, and whose influence with the rest was probably quite as great as that of some assistant masters and far more naturally asserted."49 After illness at St. Richard's had affected staffing the headmaster's wife wrote

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45 Letter from Michael Reynolds (Sandroyd 1929 - 34). Sandroyd archives.
46 Neville Wigram - letter dd.16/3/1927. Personal papers of Lord Wigram.
in the magazine: "Specially I would like to thank the Captains for the splendid discipline they kept in the dormitories and the loyal example they set to the rest of the school." Prefects undertook tasks which the headmaster might otherwise be obliged to employ adults to perform.

For prefects to have this status and power they had to have means of asserting their authority. This could take many forms. At some schools they could make boys stand up or be in silence for meals, set lines or impose minor chores. They could always report boys to higher authority: more than one Old Boy remembered "being caned for being reported by prefects for saying 'blast' and 'damn'." Peter Luke recalled at cold bath time: "There is always a monitor there to flick us with a wet towel if we don't go in properly. P.A. Stamford is an absolute expert with a wet towel. He can practically take your skin off." Most controversial of all was the practise of allowing these boys to inflict corporal punishment. Arthur Marshall wrote:

"At Stirling Court a rebellion against the prefects was unthinkable, for they possessed despotic powers. It will hardly be believed but when I went there, aged nine, in 1920, they had the authority to beat. There were six of them, they were each aged thirteen, they called themselves the Star Chamber."

Such an experience was not untypical. Usually, it seems, the Prefects held some form of court before which the boy was 'tried'. At Sandroyd a boy might be summoned to this kangaroo

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51 Sandroyd survey respondent no.16.
court because he had 'not tried hard enough' or was 'very idle playing games'. One head boy said "We were very proud of our school. He might have let the school down." A Downs boy who tipped water onto a passer-by recalled "For this act I found myself summoned before a meeting of older boys, the Pack-leaders, who duly found me guilty and sentenced me to some eight strokes. These were immediately administered with a stout stick ..." 

Although staff often kept a wary eye on the practice it was open to abuse. In Pember's novel Not Me Sir the main character is regularly whacked with a belt after lights out by his dorm captain for all kinds of minor misdemeanours. At Sandroyd the hard heel of a shoe was used. This "hurt quite abominably, leaving horrific bruises. Their severity was quite out of proportion to the crime. One was never quite free from the fear of it." At The Downs one respondent remembered "A friend of mine was beaten so hard that a bone was broken in the base of his spine." It was very easy for this form of punishment to become bullying and at The Downs beating by prefects was stopped after a boy hanged himself from a tree in the woods behind the school. Such discipline was questioned at the time and the P.S.R. records the attempt of one headmaster to defend it - stating that it was perfectly acceptable provided the "prefects acted as a whole body and not as individuals ... their actions should be entirely impersonal,

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55 The Downs survey, respondent no.56.
56 Crosthwaite; Op.Cit.
57 The Downs survey, respondent no.20.
and that the culprit had a free and generally recognised choice as to whether he should be dealt with by them or the headmaster." However, clear problems of abuse remained and evidence suggests that the practice was in decline throughout the period and beating by prefects, at least on an official basis, was rare by 1940.

One problem resulting from the system which all commentators agree on is that it did make the transition to being bottom of the heap at public school "quite tricky." Peregrine Worstthorne recalled:

"Towards the end of my time at Abinger Hill, I had grown into a great swell, editing the school magazine, winning the top prizes for literary composition, becoming an all-powerful prefect, and generally developing the tastes and style appropriate to prestige and privilege.

But on arriving at Stowe, as a new boy, one found oneself back at the bottom of the ladder again with a vengeance ... surrounded by loutish morons who quickly resented my pretensions .... the disturbance was certainly intense and protracted, to an extent that was absolutely excessive by any humane standards. I remember the first one or two terms with absolute horror."60

Retired staff were aware of this difficulty but accepted it as part of the training they were giving, stating that "that's life" and you "had to get used to going back to the bottom."61

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58 P.S.B. 3/1926, p207.
59 Information from Mrs. E. Keyte (Beaudesert Park), interview 11/1991.
60 Peregrine Worsthorne in George Macdonald Fraser, The World of the Public School (1977), pp86-7.
61 Mr. Geoffrey Tolson (Retired headmaster St. Peter's, Weston-super-Mare), interview 8/1992.
The validity of a Prefect system at prep school remains debatable. Where commented upon by Board of Education inspectors they report in favourable terms, writing that it taught "the need for foresight and sound planning"\textsuperscript{63}, and helped develop "a sense of responsibility"\textsuperscript{64} and stating that "there is no evidence that they abuse their privileges."\textsuperscript{65} Old Boys' opinions vary - some feeling that this was too much responsibility for children while for others this:

\begin{quote}
"was one of the most valuable parts of the wide education the school offered, and countless Downians have testified to this after being called to greater responsibility in later life, claiming that the principles of leadership gained in their last year at The Downs had remained with them and had served them well."\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

The variety of experience and the problem of separating lessons learnt at prep school from those at public school do not help clarify the issue. By the end of the period the powers assigned to prefects, particularly the authority to inflict corporal punishment, had declined - perhaps to a level more appropriate to their age and experience. Where their powers were limited, and carefully monitored, there is little evidence of abuse and in these circumstances the benefits gained in terms of training in leadership and responsibility seem to tip the scale toward a positive conclusion. Perhaps the last word should go to the Headmaster of St. Ronan's, who agreed with a parent who suggested that he forgot his prefects were only prep school boys and that he treated them like public

\textsuperscript{63} Board of Education Inspection Report, Hayton Hill, 6/1939, p3. PRO Kew ED109/2961.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
school men: "I think this is true, and if I expect much, then I have had much given." 67

PUNISHMENTS:

In 1922 Alec Waugh wrote: "the essence of preparatory school life, the habits of courtesy and sportsmanship are acquired through fear until they become a second nature .... I think we do wisely to train our small boys as we train fox-terriers. We thrash our dog if he plays havoc in our neighbours' chicken run, and we rag the small boy who disputes the umpire's decision. The dog does not chase chickens again, nor does the small boy argue in the middle of the pitch." 68 To maintain such a multiplicity of rules and high standard of behaviour the discipline in prep schools was necessarily strict and severe. In addition punishments were not always linked to the crime but were sometimes chosen as part of the general toughening process operating in these schools.

A range of different punishments were in operation, not all of them unfamiliar to a modern school-child. After a telling-off of varying degrees of ferocity, poor behaviour might result in the loss or withdrawal of privileges or free-time. The removal of sweets or deselection from a team were keenly felt. The imposition of lines was a frequent punishment as was detention for poor or inadequate work. Depending on the master, a 'jaw' was often one of the worst punishments and boys could be moved to tears by the force of the reprimand. In E.F. Benson's David

Blaize "it had often been a debated question as to which was really the worse, a caning or a proper jaw from the Head, for the hardiest were reduced to unwilling tears by the Head’s tongue, when he really chose to apply it, so convincing and dismal a picture could he paint of a boy’s satanic iniquity." Only some headmasters were sufficiently enlightened to write: "Very often it is more effective and healthy to get a boy to laugh at his sins than to weep over them, and experience has shown that many a boy can be chaffed out of a wrong attitude or antisocial habit more effectively than preached out of it." Of all the punishments physical ones were the most common. At Beaudesert Park the headmaster "would pull the cheeks of boys who didn’t work" while misdemeanours at Abberley Hall could lead to "a good hard spanking from a member of the staff with the back of hairbrush." At St. Wilfrid’s "there was plenty of slapping on the face, rapping on the knuckles with rulers and bottom-beating with rulers and slippers, boxing your ears and in the case of the Head he used to partly lose his temper and pick you up with his enormous fists, holding you by the lapels of your tiny jacket and pull you toward him, bouncing you off him while saying ‘My boy, my boy, you must not be so slack and idle.’" At Walton Lodge, "If two boys were found fighting the Headmaster would put them together with gloves on in the boxing ring to settle their differences." Arthur

73 Information from Mr.Charles Jewell.
74 Mr.C.F.E.Boldero, letter 2/1993.
Marshall cites a very unusual school where the boys were punished by electricity: they were "made to join hands, and a strong electric shock was passed through it." Punishment drill was more common: "Three order marks per week meant punishment drill ... a most unpleasant chore entailing the carrying of bricks back and forth along the terrace for at least an hour on a Wednesday afternoon." At Lambrook there was 'the path' which one had to walk up and down while others had free-time. Cold showers and extra runs might also be on the menu.

Corporal Punishment:

It is for excesses of corporal punishment that discipline at the inter-war prep school has become most infamous. Roald Dahl wrote: "I was frightened of that cane. There is no small boy in the world who wouldn't be. It wasn't simply an instrument for beating you. It was a weapon for wounding. It lacerated the skin. It caused severe black and scarlet bruising that took three weeks to disappear, and all the time during those weeks, you could feel your heart beating along the wounds."

There were very few prep schools where corporal punishment was never used. It was not illegal and was also used frequently in state schools of the period. Parents beat children, especial-

75 Quoted in Marshall (1982), pp120-121.
77 Information from Mrs. Isla Browless.
78 Roald Dahl (St. Peter's, Weston-super-Mare), Boy (1984). This edition Puffin (1986), p120.
ly boys, much more commonly than they do now. A lawyer advised: "A schoolmaster may, for purposes of correction, inflict moderate and reasonable corporal punishment, but it is always subject to the condition that it must be moderate and reasonable." While one headmaster wrote, "The stick is only one of many weapons. It should be used occasionally and decisively, and in some cases only when higher appeals have failed," this was not always the case. It was often the first line of punishment. One retired head said, "If you catch a dormitory all ragging you've obviously got to bend them all over, do something straight away." In reply to contemporary criticism of the practise a headmaster wrote: "It has been clearly proved that the cane, properly administered, can do no permanent harm. The boy who is encouraged to shirk all physical pain must inevitably degenerate into a coward." Another master "declared himself a believer in corporal punishment on the grounds that it possessed two outstanding merits: it was safe and it was final." An Old Boy writing in the 1920s declared, "no one could surely believe that slight corporal punishment can be more detrimental to health than having to sit in a whole half-holiday afternoon and cramp your hand with writing hundreds of stupid lines." Most headmasters did reserve the cane for more serious offences or a cumulation of minor ones. Direct disobedience and cases of

79 A Handbook of Law for Private School Masters (1922), p49.
80 Rannie in J.Dover Wilson (Ed.) (1928), p76.
81 Mr.G.Grundy (Felousfleet/Perrott Hill), interview 8/1992.
82 Kenneth Durlston, The Preparatory School System (1926), p82. Note the link between discipline and the preparatory schools' toughening ethos.
bullying, insubordination, property destruction and idleness were all judged to be offences worthy of a caning. One headmaster claimed "These things can be beaten out, like dust from a carpet." 85

The frequency with which boys were beaten varied from school to school. Terence Prittie described the headmaster of Cheam as: "A devout believer in the efficacy of cane and slipper. He did not beat boys particularly hard, but he beat them perpetually. He beat them for quite minor misdemeanours and he beat them for nothing at all." 86 At Grace Dieu "Caning was frequent .... A reasonably well-behaved boy could expect to be caned four or five times a term." 87 At Twyford a flogging was a constant fear, often for poor work in form: "You could see the Old Man's face getting blacker and blacker. He would rattle the keys in his pocket. After five howlers a boy would be hauled off to the study and made to bend over a leather armchair and he would give you four." 88 A Brockhurst old boy noted wryly: the Headmaster "did not spare the rod". 89 At other schools Old Boys reports indicate a less frequent application. 58% of Sandroyd survey respondents indicated that corporal punishment was only used occasionally whereas 32% thought it was used often or very often. Almost all prep school Old Boys considered corporal punishment to be a powerful deterrent - 86% in the case of Sandroyd. The fact that it was

85 A.G. Grenfell, Custodibus Custos (1921), p49.

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used so frequently in some schools must have reduced its value in this respect but it was really feared by most boys and old boys can remember their beatings vividly to this day. There is no evidence to suggest that it was used less as the period progressed although some schools began to place restrictions on its use. For example at Sandroyd in 1920 the Master on Duty was allowed to cane but by 1940 only the Headmaster could do this and a master was asked to leave for hitting a boy. While corporal punishment was used much more frequently at home than it is today, in one prep school novel the main character was beaten by his father with a stick or belt. Several oral sources remembered being beaten by their father with a stick or belt on a walk. Several oral sources remembered being beaten with a walking stick whilst in the dormitory and being whipped with a bamboo cane by the Master on Duty. The latter was rather more serious. The birch was not used on prep school boys. Another factor worth bearing in mind when considering this issue is that corporal punishment was used much more frequently at home than it is today. In one prep school novel the main character was beaten at the table and later feared being whacked with a walking stick whilst a slipper or hairbrush for offences in the dormitory and being whipped with a bamboo cane in the study. The former happened fairly often, hurt only moderately and could be applied by almost any member of staff. The latter was rather more serious. The birch was not used on prep school boys. Another factor worth bearing in mind when considering this issue is that corporal punishment was used much more frequently at home than it is today.
The Execution:

"THOUGHTS OUTSIDE THE STUDY"

What on earth is it for this time I haven't done anything wrong or very bad have I? Oh I remember calling one of the matrons names and cheeking the Leaders perhaps it is for something nice like being a Second or again it might be for something terrible I wish I could run away or die my heart is beating terribly fast the distance in that picture is good I wonder if it is oils here he comes those are his footsteps how horrible oh! oh! oh! no its only Mr Day Mrs Field is watching me from one of the music rooms she thinks I'm in for something horrid I must paint the trees in my picture next perhaps it is for ragging about oh! horrible ghastly I might be expelled for something...my face is hot I must be going red I seem to be falling - bang there is his door shutting I must look the other way and pretend not to see him - tramp! tramp! here he comes oh! how horrible my heart's thumping like a hammer how horrible...Bang, the door's shut. 'Why didn't you knock? Besides I don't want you, I want Yates 2.'

Thoughts such as these must have passed through every prep school boy's mind as he stood outside the headmaster's study after having been sent for or told to wait there. The very location of that room was a place to feared: not only did the Headmaster lurk within, it was also the place of execution.

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91 M.Yates (aged 13) in The Badger. Quoted in Hoyland, p73.

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A Brockhurst Old Boy wrote, "This passage which we came to know so well was a dark and fearsome alleyway in which we queued up when we needed to interview or be interviewed by the Supreme Authority ... [the headmaster] showing an unexpected touch of humour had caused to be hung up in the shadows beside his study door the encouraging remark 'Don't worry, it may never happen.'" Beatings always seemed to take place at particular times and always after something, typically 'on Sunday after chapel.' Many remembered this period of waiting as the most agonizing part of the punishment. Eustan More recalled the "cultivated horror of 'waiting until after prayers'" and "the macabre juxtaposition of compulsory religion alongside a deliberately delayed vengeance." At West Downs:

"Just before lights out K.T. came on his final round of the dormitories, and these could then be anxious moments for some boys. If in the course of the day one had lost a 'nuisance point' or, worse still, an 'all-rounder', an explanation was required, and this might result in a summons to the bathroom after which three or four whacks would be heard as K.T. wielded his slipper." Having been ordered into the study, "The order of the ceremony was as follows: 1) the lighting of the pipe 2) the sermon - known as 'the jaw' 3) excuses 4) sentence 5) execution." Boys were usually beaten on the buttocks because "Punishment on the hand would have savoured too much of the 'Board School.'" The boy would be told to bend over and hold the back of a chair. Sometimes he would have to lower his trousers.

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94 Hichens (1992), p56.
95 James Kenward, Prep School (1958), p56.
sometimes he wore only pyjamas and sometimes boys were beaten on the naked bottom. One recalled "There was a special padded stool ... and I had to kneel on this on all fours with my shirt out of my trousers. The Head tapped my behind for hours, it seemed, between each whack.... The suspense was just as bad as the thing itself." 97 At Sandroyd a slippering "didn't amount to much but a caning by Hornby on the other hand was a totally different thing: the 'lecture' preceding it was impressive and alarming and the caning hurt like hell and continued to hurt for possibly two more days. It impressed the body and the mind and although I was caned several times I was never caned for the same type of offence twice!" 98 At St. Wilfrid's an Old Boy remembered the Headmaster's "lips would tremble and shake and his hands would tremble as he talked and he said 'Now I'll have to flog you, my boy,' Then he went and scrambled with the fingers of both hands behind the lower row of bookshelves in his study and pulled out one of these awful canes, three or four feet long, very thin - about two pencil thicknesses - and bloody well beat you with a bare bottom and drew blood and frightful bruises." 99 H.R.H. Prince Alvaro of Orleans-Bourbon recalled "unimaginable brutality including being beaten across the ribs and spine with a walking stick." 100 Another Old Sandroydian simply said it was "bloody painful, much dreaded, very effective." 101 At Peregrine Worsthorne's progressive school, "It was not called beating. It was called golf

97 Quoted in Dr. Arnold Armstrong, The Mortarboard Spartans, Frederick Muller, London (1963), p37.
98 Sandroyd survey respondent no.35.
99 Information from Mr. Charles Jewell.
100 Sandroyd survey respondent no.57.
101 Sandroyd survey respondent no.55.
practice. And it was conducted in a jolly spirit. 'Take down your trousers, dear boy.' he would say, 'I have it in mind to practise a stroke or two, using your bottom as the ball, if you don't mind.'

Boys submitted to this harsh punishment without complaint or rebellion. Ludovic Kennedy avoided a beating by lying on the floor and crying 'No' and the Headmaster released him but, "When the school assembled for lunch that day the Bug [Headmaster] said 'Before I say Grace, I should tell you about a boy I had to deal with this morning. Instead of taking his medicine like a man he grovelled about on the floor making a disgraceful exhibition of himself. It was not something I wish to see again." It was unlikely that he did for Kennedy was thoroughly teased by the other boys. Another boy went to see matron "to get some embrocation for his continuing smart, she scolded him and reproved him for such lack of manliness. He had received what he deserved, she had no doubt, and the continuing soreness was unquestionably part of the punishment."

In extreme cases in some schools the ultimate physical punishment was a public flogging in front of the assembled school. The boy was thoroughly degraded and the other boys shocked and horrified. One Old Sandroydian wrote "I vividly recall a ghastly public flogging in front of the whole school." The guilty parties were made to change into football shorts and

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102 Worsthorne in Fraser (1977), pp83-84.
104 Armstrong (1963), p36.
laid over a desk. "Four boys had confessed in public to bullying a boy called Angus." At St. Ronan's the school gathered in the hall and the Headmaster called the boy out and beat him in an adjacent room so the whole school could hear the strokes. These terrible occasions were very rare and, brutal though they were, they nearly always had the desired effect.

In many ways worse still were the mass floggings which seem to have occurred under some regimes. There was a "Public Sixer" at Ashdown House in the 1930s in which "the whole school was to be beaten for some grave offence." Guilty or not guilty, fairly or unfairly, every boy was severely punished. At Northdown Hill one evening "Pa Snow remonstrated with the School for picking on one of the younger boys, and demanded to know who the culprit was who had actually pinched him. No one spoke, so Pa Snow gave the School until morning prayers the next day, so that the horrid little boy could go to him and own up, otherwise the entire School would be caned as a 'lesson to you all'. No one came forward at morning prayers so all the boys had to line up." At Cheam Terence Prittie recalled:

"There was a great deal of talking after 'lights out'. Quite rightly, the Head wanted to stop this ... [he] crept about the place in tennis shoes, like a cat burglar. When he pounced in a dormitory, he expected the talkers to 'own up' at once; if they did not, all the boys in the dormitory were beaten.

105 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 76.
106 Information from Mr G. Grundy.
This was insane. Small boys, still asleep, were lugged from their beds and told to bend over.  

This was not only grossly unfair but it also reduced the effectiveness of corporal punishment as a deterrent. One contemporary headmaster was unrepentant: "I entirely disagree with those who say it is unjust, and therefore wrong, to make all suffer for the sins of one or two. Whether it is just or unjust is not the point, one of the great facts of life ... is that we all must suffer ... for the imperfections of others." and went on to cite examples such as having to pay for the Police even though you may never require their services.

**Expulsion:**

The ultimate punishment was expulsion from the school. This was, however, an extremely rare thing - happening no more than about once in a normal size school in the period. Only one boy was expelled from Sandroyd in this time - for kleptomania. Not only did expulsion reflect badly on the school but few schools could afford the loss of fees such a drastic move caused.

Retired headmasters tried to draw a distinction between being asked to leave and expulsion. They claimed the former would happen if a boy was simply impossible to discipline whereas the latter was as a result of gross misconduct.

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110 Pellatt (1936), p238.
The boys' reaction:

While prep school discipline was severe and boys were fearful of being punished few resented the regime to which they were subjected. One said "We never questioned the demands made on us, as we knew of no alternative." Christopher Hollis wrote "We took for granted the existence of rules and punishment. We disliked being punished but, when punishment came, accepted it without resentment." Another Old Boy simply said "You did what you were told in those days."

For the boys beatings were seen as part of everyday life: a punishment to be avoided but to be taken bravely. One Old Boy noted, "A beating was the equivalent of a duelling scar and the stripes could be proudly displayed at cold bath time the next morning." This fascination with beating and its consequences might easily be construed as some sort of sexual perversion but, if it was, the boys were not aware of it at the time. One recalled:

"There was a good deal of talk amongst us about whacking and being whacked. One boasted about it, teased about it, joked about it. If one had been whacked the day before one had a bath in the evening, someone would be sure to ask to see one's marks as one got into one of the seven baths in the communal bathroom. I don't think it was more than honest curiosity, and Matron, who was always present when we bathed, continued placidly cutting toe-nails or shampooing hair at the other end of the room."

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111 L.W.T. "Dorset House 1914 - 1921", a manuscript in Dorset House school archives.
112 Christopher Hollis (Summer Fields), The Seven Ages (1974), p22.
113 Mr. Duff Mitchell (Dorset House), interview 10/1993.
A Sandroyd boy seemed rather proud when he wrote home:

"Dear Mummy,

On Monday night I was slippered by Mr Langdon (Bunch) for talking. We were making up rhymes like this - little boy, big cane, loud squeals, much pain, meaning the boy is caned, and he squeals, and he is hurt. In the morning, when I looked at my stripes, I asked the captain Borwick (Gorgon) to give me some more, to make them prettier."\(^{116}\)

At Stanmore Park boys kept a stick and each time they were beaten they cut a notch out of it.\(^{117}\) An enterprising youngster at Upland House ran an insurance business: "The premium was two sweets a week which insured against punishment. Ten for a beating, two for this and three for that."\(^{118}\)

Many sources, both old boys and retired staff, emphasised the extent to which one was 'expected to behave' at school in the period. Boys were unquestioning of authority and were generally polite and decently behaved. There may be an element of nostalgia in this but evidence would suggest agreement with the statement in one school history that: "In those days respect for one's elders and for authority was taken for granted, just as respect for property, particularly other people's, was never doubted. Digress from the standards of behaviour and loyalty demanded by society, one's parents or School and you paid the penalty."\(^{119}\) A contemporary source claimed: "Boys of this age have a very strong sense of fairness, and quite apart from the educational benefits of mild correction when

\(^{116}\) Letter from B.Richards. Property of Mrs M.Richards.


\(^{119}\) Robbs (1983), p304.
necessary there are times when a boy knows he deserves a punishment and, though he tries not to be found out, once his crime is known his sense of justice would be outraged if nothing further happened."\textsuperscript{120} A headmaster wrote: "I should like to protest against the idea that punishments, and particularly corporal punishments, are unnatural or undignified for the small boy. To entertain this notion is to read into the boy feelings which belong entirely to adult life."\textsuperscript{121}

In adult life most prep school old boys continue to accept the level of discipline and the punishments they received. One wrote: "I think the happiness subsisted in a well-ordered routine, where acceptable behaviour had well-recognised limits and these limits were enforced."\textsuperscript{122} Another stated: "I look back on my time there with pleasure because there were no grey areas between good and bad behaviour. If you misbehaved and were caught, you were punished knowing full well what would happen."\textsuperscript{123} There may be lessons in this for modern educationalists.

What criticism exists, is usually of excessive or mistaken corporal punishment. While very few old boys objected to corporal punishment per se, some found its severity hard to accept. One Old Boy recalled being shocked and astonished for being beaten for not doing his prep: "The punishment, four strokes across the tightened seat of his shorts, was surpris-

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Hoyland (1943), p46.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Rannie in Dover Wilson (1928), p76.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Mr. Philip Hebbert, letter 12/1992.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Mr. Peter Unwin, letter 1/1993.
\end{footnotes}
ingly painful; the weals on his buttocks took several hours to stop hurting. The experience left such an impression that he feared and secretly resented his schoolmasters for the rest of his stay at the prep school." A headmaster's son found it "sad in that grown-ups I had come to love and trust were now doing all this to me." Others were still smarting from being beaten unfairly.

The parents' reaction:

Parental feeling strongly supported the policy of the school. This is what had happened to them and they appreciated why it should happen to their sons. When one boy complained to his mother about a beating he received, she replied, "Punishment was like medicine, nasty to take at times but beneficial." They hardly ever opposed strict discipline. Wilfrid Thesiger provided one rare exception:

"After we had been at school for about three years Arnold Hodson, who had been Consul in Southern Abyssinia, was staying with us at the beginning of the holidays. One evening he said jokingly, "I don't suppose you get beaten at school nowadays, not like we were in my time." Neither Brian nor I had told our mother about these beatings but now, incensed, I pulled up my shorts and showed him some half-healed scars. Years later I learnt that Hodson went down to Sussex and told the Headmaster that if he beat either of us again he would have him taken to court."

126 Ibid.
Parental values dictated the ethos which strict discipline and firm punishment reflected.

CONCLUSION:

The preponderance of rules and the strict discipline which enforced them formed yet another part of the prep school ethos. It was accepted by boys and parents and differed little between schools or between the beginning and end of the period. Boys were punished more often and more severely for misdemeanours that might not be considered so great today. Corporal punishment was commonplace and frequent in some schools. Beatings, particularly those with a cane, were harsh and painful and were occasionally performed publicly or en masse. It is fair to assert that this punishment in particular was probably overused and that more attempts should have been made to identify the causes of problems and to devise more appropriate punishments. However, the conception that small boys were regularly beaten and bruised applies only to a minority of naughty boys in schools with harsh headmasters and does not reflect the reality of the experience of the majority. Although rules, organisation and discipline were rigorous and thorough they were not cruel. Boys accepted it all as part of the prep school training and remained supportive of this ethos in their adult life.

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"Mr. Dutton himself was a tall and ineffective young man, entirely undistinguished for either physical or mental powers, who had taken a somewhat mediocre degree at Cambridge, and had played lacrosse. By virtue of the mediocrity of his attainments, his scholastic career had not risen to the heights of a public school, and he had been obliged to be content with a mastership at this preparatory establishment."

This description, taken, in fact, from a novel published in 1916, typifies the popular conception of the prep school master. It is not a complimentary depiction: the 'typical' prep school master is supposed to have been a bullying and incompetent oddity, fond of cricket and small boys. The staff of the inter-war prep school are frequently criticised and lampooned. How fair is this image? What were these men like? What sort of lives did they lead?

RECRUITMENT

Professional training and qualification for teaching staff was only just beginning in this period. There was no requirement that staff in any school, state or independent, should have acquired some form of 'teaching qualification'. Therefore the range of potential applicants for prep school posts was a broad

one and the process of acquiring new staff not as standardized as today.

In common with other schools the prep school used traditional means of appointment via personal networks, systems of patronage and references rather than any form of competitive examinations and qualifications. Evelyn Waugh wrote, "The private schools lay open to anyone who spoke without an accent and had been through the conventional routine of public school and university." There was rarely any serious shortage of applicants for prep school posts, particularly in the depression years. There were problems during the world wars, when young men were obliged to fight for their country, and the high death rate in the Great War resulted in a dearth of good applicants until the mid-twenties. A public school headmaster at the H.M.C. conference in 1928 noted that a major problem faced by the prep school had been the "great difficulty in getting men to teach." Retired headmasters reported fewer problems after this time although, as Arthur Harrison noted, "a good [my italics] staff was hard to find."

Staff looking for a post usually applied via Gabbitas and Thring or Truman and Knightley. Schools would employ the services of these agencies who would then forward the testimonials of suitable men from the collection on their books. They might also carry out the initial interviewing. One retired

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2 E. Waugh, A Little Learning, p215.
3 W. W. Vaughan (Rugby) quoted in T. E. S, 29/12/1928, p563.
head remembered they were "simple, easy and prevented you having to advertise." Their selection was not rigorous: unsuitable staff slipped through the net - one man wrote 'London and Birmingham' after his name but it transpired after he had been employed that these were places where he had lived rather than been to university. Staff were appointed from a short-list after a brief interview by the headmaster. Personal links were also important: Arthur Harrison gained a job at Marlborough House because the headmaster knew his brother while another man gained a job at Heatherdown because his cousin, a well-known sportsman, shared the same surname. The selection and interview process was haphazard, even at the best schools. Most headmasters established good criteria for employment but sometimes failed to apply them. In years of shortage this was understandable but they could also be insufficiently rigorous in times of abundance. The consequence of this was that unsuitable and inadequate masters were able to gain employment. It is important, however, that this description not be applied to all masters for the majority were competent professionals.

Although Gabbitas might provide a short-list, headmasters were obliged to use their personal judgment and intuition when making appointments. The qualities which they sought were varied. Headmasters expected any prospective employee to have

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5 Mr.J.E.Engleheart (Moffats), interview 6/1994.
6 Information from Donald Sewell (South Lodge/Old Buckenham Hall).
7 Information from Mr.J.R.Thompson (Marlborough House).
8 Information from Mr.Ted Vidal.
been prep-and-public school educated. They wanted people who had a "real love and sympathy for boys" and who would be able to impart knowledge successfully. Gabbitas and Thring advised:

"First and foremost the good Schoolmaster must be a good disciplinarian, able to maintain order by the strength of his own personality rather than by recourse to frequent punishment; further, a man with some interests outside the classroom, i.e. a good athlete or one willing to identify himself with some other branch of out-of-school life, has a better chance of success than a mere scholar."  

With no standard professional training, paper qualifications carried little weight. One contemporary writer wrote "It is qualification of personality that counts, for assistant masters are continually before the eyes of the boys."  

Another wrote, "Never mind their academic degrees and diplomas, which means nothing compared with their personality and effectiveness."  

The Board of Educations inspectors shared similar feelings: "the effectiveness of a staff must be judged by their handling of the classes and by the work in the classrooms and not by their academic qualifications."  

All headmasters sought men with a knowledge of their subject but a high standard of scholastic attainment was not considered important "since the standard of scholarship required by a man to enable him to teach forms in a school where no boys are over fourteen years of age is naturally not very high."  

In these

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10 Letter to Lord Beaverbrook c1922 in Gabbitas archives. 
14 Durlston (1926), p36. 

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pre-P.G.C.E. days the trade had "to be learned, like any other, by practice."\(^{15}\) Academic criteria were limited.

However, although degrees were not always necessary, Oxbridge graduates were a favoured breed. At Rose Hill the staff were "All Oxford or Cambridge graduates - the whole lot of them."\(^{16}\) and at Aldeburgh Lodge when the Headmaster had a lot of applications he simply threw out all those who had not been to Oxbridge before he started short-listing.\(^{17}\)

Many headmasters liked to have sportsmen on their staff and occasionally a university 'blue' counted for more than anything else. The St. Andrew's, Eastbourne, historian noted:

"Throughout his headmastership E.L.B.'s basic criterion for appointing staff was simple. He wanted Oxbridge 'blues'. These qualifications would, he felt, go a long way towards ensuring that they were good sportsmen and intelligent Christian gentlemen."\(^{18}\)

Fundamental to employment in a prep school was knowledge of 'the form'. All staff would be expected to have sympathy with the ethos of the institution and to behave accordingly:

"It was essential to the purpose of a preparatory school of any standing that the assistant masters should be in the accepted sense 'gentlemen', that is to say that they should speak without a markedly provincial accent, wear the right kind of clothes, so far as they could afford them, and in their manners, games and habits appear to conform to public school standards."\(^{19}\)

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15 Grenfell (1921), p14.
17 Information from Mrs. Sylvia Belle.
18 Paul Spillane, St. Andrew's School 1877 - 1977 (1977), p49.
19 J.H. Simpson, Schoolmasters Harvest (1940), p34.
Ideally the headmaster sought paragons. A.G. Grenfell, the Head of Mostyn House, suggested these as the ideal qualities of a prep school master:

- Tough skin.
- Tough stomach.
- Soft and understanding heart for boys.
- Nerves of steel.
- Iron constitution.
- Eagle eye.
- Hands that will turn to almost anything.
- Determination to interest boys in their work and wean them from childhood.
- Inspire respect.
- Imagination.
- Foolproof temper.
- Touch of humour.
- No conceit.
- Faith and patience. 20

THE RECRUITS

Those who became prep school masters fell into three basic categories:

1/ Those who did not know what to do or had had to give up their previous job.

2/ Those filling in time before deciding on their future.

Those who had a sense of vocation or were attracted to the job and lifestyle on offer.

A large number of men drifted into prep school teaching because they did not know what else to do. Usually they were graduates but reluctant or unable to follow the traditional career paths. One retired master remembered that his father had not wanted him to become a land agent so he wondered what to do. He had taught in prep schools during his university long vacations and his brother, who taught at Haileybury, suggested he try making this a permanent career. This was not necessarily disadvantageous to prep schools. It meant that qualified and able men might be lured into the profession, if only on a temporary basis. Sometimes men who had done a year or so at prep school and enjoyed it left reluctantly to pursue a more prestigious career. The Headmaster of Pinewood wrote in the magazine: "We have to deplore the departure of our good friend and comrade, Mr. W.H. Burnell. He told the Head last term that his people felt that he was not availing himself of the advantages, in the form of an expensive education in Engineering, which they had provided for him and that he thought he ought to conform to their wishes."

For the second group of people it was often the case that their life had simply lost its direction and prep school provided some sort of security. Evelyn Waugh was one such master. He wrote to a friend:

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22 The Blue and Grey, Summer 1923, p47.
"You have probably heard that I found it impossible to afford living in London any longer and have come here as a master .... It is a sorry waste of time and energy. I do not think that I am good at teaching ...."23

He was not and did not stay in the profession for long. Twyford employed a Mr. Gordon "who was formerly in the Civil Service, in the Malay States, but has been prevented by ill-health from returning to the East."24 One retired headmaster praised ex-servicemen who "taught with method and precision and stuck to the point with over-elaboration."25 The Aysgarth history describes the career of their future Headmaster:

"He was expected, after reading law at Oxford, to go into his uncle's firm of solicitors in Newcastle, but when he announced that he wanted to get married, such was the disapproval that he abandoned law and went into Harrods to learn shopkeeping. His health suffered from the indoor life, and the doctors advised him to take up a country pursuit, so his thoughts turned to Aysgarth [his old prep school], and Joy [the Headmaster] very kindly found a position for him."26

Despite the popular conception most prep schoolmasters fell into the third category. In 1922 Gabbitas advised that "the Profession now offers a steady, if moderate, income and congenial work to a man of Scholarly tastes who is fond of boys and who regards the training of the future generation as an important duty."27 There were a number of men who were drawn by a sense of vocation, a desire to educate and guide the

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24 The Twyfordian, 7/1921, p17.
26 Erica Thompson, Out of the Oak (1977), p36.
27 Letter to Lord Beaverbrook c.1922 in Gabbitas archives.
young. One retired headmaster remarked that he had decided to become a schoolmaster aged 11 and then set about gaining the right training for it." Sons of headmasters were expected to take over their father's schools. Some were simply drawn by the lifestyle on offer: secure and institutionalised, long holidays, the camaraderie of other staff, the often beautiful location, the opportunity to play games and become involved in an outdoor life. Many were keen to avoid office or factory work. "It was a relaxed sort of existence", commented one. Others had a genuine love of children:

"I liked the boys and the ways in which their lives and mine interacted throughout the waking hours. I liked the noises they made getting up and going to bed, yelling on the fields, chuckling in the classrooms or singing in chapel ... I liked the way each boy accepted the other for what he was ... I liked trying to teach them ... I liked the fact that I was expected to be a great deal more than a teacher. I taught them in class, involved myself with them in their spare time, played games with them in the afternoons, swam with them, carpentered with them and with their help built an exciting set of stepping stones across the lake. I worshipped with them and ate with them .... Above all I liked their enthusiasm, not of course for everything, but a keenness both spontaneous and infectious for the thing of the moment; for boys there is no past, no future." 30

The notion that prep school masters were drifters and wastrels is unfair to men such as these. The allegation may apply to a minority but not all came to the profession in this way. Even of those that did many turned out to be first-class schoolmasters.

The popular conception is not of recent origin. A writer in the *Saturday Review* in 1932 claimed there were three types of prep school teacher. Type one was an inexperienced young man, just down from Varsity "intent on filling in time till he finds a suitable job." Type two was "one of life's misfits, who has drifted into teaching, the one profession in which he may partly cloak his utter incapacity." Type three was "a disillusioned old man, hanging on in sheer desperation to the only work that stands between him and penury." It would unreasonable to wholly dismiss this perception. Indeed, there is evidence that it is at least partly true.

A Sandroyd Old Boy wrote that "The older ones [staff] were very good teachers. The younger ones were just down from Oxford/Cambridge and had not managed to find a job. This was obvious to us even at 12!" There is a huge weight of evidence, anecdotal and otherwise, to confirm this feeling. The situation had changed since Tom Brown encountered masters who "were not gentlemen, and very poorly educated, and were only driving their poor trade of usher to get such living as they could out of it." but even in 1926 a headmaster wrote: "At present there are far too many men engaged in the work who are unfitted for it." Such men may be identified in inspection reports. In one the inspectors wrote:

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32 Sandroyd survey respondent no.128.
34 Durlston (1926), p59.
"Joyce is 37 and seems to have drifted into teaching. He got a War degree and was some years in Persia (oil fields). He knows something of Latin accidence though his Latinity is poor stuff and he allows wretched pigeon Latin to pass unchallenged. The careless way he keeps his books is inexcusable." 35

At Stanmore Park old boys remembered a man hired because he had come out of the army and the headmaster thought he would be able to keep discipline but only lasted one term as he turned up at one lesson dressed in white tie and tails. He "was a schoolboy's delight as he had no idea how to keep order at all." 36 At St. Anselm's, "There was Mr. Nurse, a young clergyman ... not long out of university. He loved church bells and would listen at the open windows of the dining hall whilst doing prep as the bell ringers at the local church practised their art. He did not stay with us for very long." 37

Together with these men who had just started as masters were those who had somehow contrived to stay employed. At Cheam, "There was a master who was a dwarf, well under five feet tall and determined to make up for his lack of inches by adopting a hectoring and sardonic manner .... The dwarf was taken away to a mental home and was not seen again." 38 Lord Rothschild remembered a master who "got drunk one evening and tried to remove the appendix of a boy called Cremer with a penknife." 39

Small boys were merciless when they perceived weakness. At Shirley House there was a Mr. Town:

"He was elderly and had spent his life teaching in a missionary school in India. Little Indian boys must have been better behaved than little English boys and the poor man had a wretched time at Shirley House. Undisciplined small boys are brutes and his classes were a shambles. Stinkbombs were let off, everybody played the fool and nobody learnt any Latin or Greek. It could not go on, and at the end of my last term Mr. Town got the sack. Destitute and ailing (he had had a stroke) he finished his days in meagre accommodation at Bushey. My mother occasionally sent me to see him, and I would take Mrs. Town a hamper of food."  

In other schools old men lasted longer. Arthur Marshall remembered a Mr. Adcock: "The only thing one could say about him was that he was very old and very mad. As a teacher he was utterly useless, and I imagine that his services had only been retained for sentimental reasons. He had been a schoolmaster for an incalculable number of years."  

"Captain Hodgson [who] taught Geography and his temporary absence was covered by a local resident, Miss Fanshawe, whose claims to geographical knowledge appeared to be based on two week-end trips with her sister to Boulogne, her reminiscences of hectic Continental life being pretty tame when compared with the gallant and recently demobilised Captain's tales of Gallipoli and Flanders."

A survey of poor prep school masters would not be complete without a further examination of staff such as Captain Hodgson: demobilised war veterans whose nature has previously been

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described. In the early 1920s, with a shortage of staff, unsuitable men such as these were able to gain employment. The Pinewood magazine previewed the arrival of a Mr. Norman:

"a young man, a war-time comrade of the Headmaster, and a very fine cricketer - he played for Hertfordshire and belongs to the M.C.C., but he was desperately wounded, which had somewhat impaired his activity but, fortunately, not his competence as a coach."^43

It is hard not to have sympathy for such men, their lives ruined by the terrible atrocities of the trenches. As it happened "Mr. Norman ... had not been here a week before he expressed the fear that he would not be able to 'stand the strain'; and, by the end of his fifth week here, was obliged definitely to ask for his release at the end of term."^44 The injuries of other veterans continued to plague them. John Mortimer wrote about a master who "had shrapnel stuck in his head, which caused him to go periodically out of his mind and strafe us with text-books and blackboard rubbers, attacks for which he was profoundly apologetic when he came to himself and the armistice was signed."^45 At another school there was a master who had been:

"badly gassed in the 1914-18 war, for which we had nothing but sympathy. It undoubtedly, however, affected his whole outlook and may well have accounted for the ungovernable outbursts of temper to which he was prone.

There was nothing more terrifying for us to experience than one of 'the old man's blowings-up'. Generally they were entirely unpredictable and almost always took place when he was either carving in the dining room or vulgarly munching a chop ... Something would set him off, a harmless remark from a boy sitting near, or an innocent youthful gesture; he

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^43 The Blue and Grey. Summer 1921, p36.
^44 The Blue and Grey. Winter 1921, p1.
would flush and address himself to the offender, his voice getting louder and louder till he was shouting and trembling with rage. The whole room, mesmerized by this performance, would sit hushed—boys, masters, mistresses, matrons, maids. For a full minute or two it would go on, a tirade of invective and opprobrium; then, exhausted, he would continue carving or munching his chop.46

Clearly there were a sizeable number of incompetent masters such as those described here. However there is nothing to suggest that they formed anything but a small minority of the large number of men who taught in these schools. As has been mentioned elsewhere, peoples memories tend to be anecdotal and masters who were peculiar make for much better anecdotes than those who were ordinary, regular and professional.

Some prep school masters were merely harmlessly eccentric. At Sandroyd there was one who "always seemed strangely old-fashioned to us in his dress and appearance; and he always smoked a pipe which he filled with tobacco rolled up in paper."47 West Downs had a master who was extremely wealthy:

"With his considerable wealth he was able to indulge his taste for high-powered cars, the latest cameras and the best Parker pens which were the envy of the School .... He presented the School with a new electric organ, took parties of boys to Switzerland at his own expense and passed on his discarded cars to his colleagues on the staff at knock-down prices."48

A few had an alcohol problem:

"Benjy' Hullet was a great fisherman and I recall that he was in the habit of wearing knickerbockers and belted jacket of a rough spotted tweed which exuded a strong unfamiliar

47 A.E.Cameron in response to a questionnaire sent by boys at the school in February 1991. School archives.
48 Mark Hichens, West Downs (1992), p82.
smell. This I later discovered had its origin further North and was not connected with the material. The effects of the liquid concerned were doubtless responsible for the excessively robust singing of the Magnificat while playing the organ at evening service.**49**

Mention should also be made of that ubiquitous prep school figure, the Sergeant-Major. Most prep schools featured such a man or one in a very similar mould. Nicholas Monsarrat described the R.S.M. at The Leas, Hoylake, as "a most formidable figure in a shiny blue serge uniform, with a row of medals dating from the Afghan Wars, and a pointed and waxed moustache."**50** Their task was multi-faceted, turning their hand to many aspects of school life, mostly physical, and often a formidable disciplinary figure. Typical was the man at Beaudesert Park:

"In 1930 Sergeant-Major Miller joined the staff after a distinguished career in the army. He stayed for twenty years and in that time imposed his stamp upon the boys to a remarkable degree. He was a great judge of character and the boys knew it. His responsibilities lay in the field of physical education - drill, boxing, P.T., athletics."**51**

Alongside such oddities worked a large number of industrious professionals not likely to be the subject of anecdote. The Headmaster of Lambrook wrote of one who, "Without any fuss or outward show ... has carried on day after day. There are many now in the Army and Navy, not to mention public school boys, who will look back with sincere gratitude to him for what he

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has done for them."52 A Mr. and Mrs. George Burnett at Seascale Prep "were just like kind parents to each boy and so always got the best out of them."53 There were some who were exceptional: Sandroyd Old Boys remembered first-class Maths teaching and a music master, Denis Fielder, who "woke interests in me that have lasted for life."54 At Cheam a master called Edward Ree "was a beacon of light and hope, with an easy charm and unaffected friendliness."55 At The Downs boys benefited from the art instruction of Maurice Feild and the extraordinary teaching of W.H. Auden:

"His arrival was like a glorious firework display, we could hardly believe he had come to teach! Completely unconventional, striding about in a large black Flemish hat, waving an umbrella, he entranced us with his eccentricity, tireless energy and sense of fun."56

The Staff as a Whole:

John Le Mesurier wrote:

"That I failed dismally to make my mark as a scholar was surely in some part due to the eccentric teaching I encountered. Remember this was the aftermath of the most devastating war in modern history, when good schoolmasters were in short supply. Many of those who were put in charge of us were either rehabilitated pensioners who retained but a slight grasp on their faculties, let alone on those of their pupils, or life's misfits searching for an escape from their own terrible frustrations."57

52 Lambrook Chronicle, 1930, p3.
53 The Seagull (Seascale Preparatory School magazine), 6/1948, p19.
54 Sandroyd survey respondent no.91.
This is a description which fits well with the popular conception but, as he himself points out, he is writing about an exceptional time. Such a statement applied universally would not be true later in the period.

Certainly there were criticisms by the Board of Education of some schools in the years 1918 - 40 but only one prep school had its recognition as 'efficient' withdrawn. Some others attracted broad criticism: of Temple Grove in 1930 they wrote:

"In teaching capacity it cannot be regarded as very competent. In some cases there is obvious lack of interest and vigour, in others lack of control, and generally it may be said that aims and methods have received little thought."

Occasionally a particular member of staff was singled out - at Nevill Holt a Form Master was described as "not well suited for the work of young boys." Analysis of inspection reports reveals that such criticism was only levelled at staff in about 20% of schools. Even in schools where the descriptions of staff are uncomplimentary good teaching could exist. Terence Prittie wrote of Cheam in the mid-1920's:

"Curiously, with this profusion of Grand Guignol talent, we were on the whole well taught at Cheam. The Head was keen and efficient and presumably employed such raggle-taggle because he could not pay decent wages. We got a good grounding in the classics; the dwarf taught mathematics with real flair; and Edward Ree was a benevolent disciplinarian who ensured that we learnt our French and Geography."

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58 This was Aldwick. The inspectors said "The staff is weak on paper ... its teaching power is below the level which the staff of a Preparatory School on the Efficient List might be expected to reach." and the joint-Headmaster "stripped us as a very poor teacher." Notes to Board of Education Inspection Report, Aldwick, 10/1934. PRO Kew ED109/6014.


61 Prittie (1977), p38.
The quality of staff and teaching varied as much as the schools themselves. Within the system there were those incompetent or ill-suited to their jobs but equally there was a large number of dedicated and hard-working professionals. The teaching may not always have been dynamic or inspired, and some staff were very inexperienced, but on the whole the teachers were sound and satisfactory. The inspectors at The Downs considered the staff "a hard-working team, they think about their job, and they are keenly interested in all the boys' manifold activities."62 By 1938 the staff at Temple Grove had been sorted out and they wrote "The school staff may be described as zealous, competent, suitable and friendly."63 At Ravenswood it was clear that, "All the members of staff are devoting themselves unsparingly to the interests of their pupils both in the classroom and outside,"64 while at Harecroft Hall they commented, "The staff as a whole is unusually well qualified and numerically is more than sufficient for the present number of boys."65 Cecil Day Lewis said of the Summer Fields masters "I had never imagined that schoolmasters were capable of such an intelligent interest in the young, or spent so much time discussing their pupils' work and characters."66 At West Downs the staff were said to be "gifted and sometimes inspired"67, while Sandroyd Old Boys were almost unanimous in their praise

63 Board of Education Inspection Report, Temple Grove, 5/1938, p4. School archives. This was after a change of headmaster and the removal of the school to a new site.
of the staff, writing, for example, "the school did a lot for me largely due to having such a good staff, as people as well as being very good teachers" and praising "the excellence of the teaching."
Staff Discipline:

Prep schools had a strict disciplinary system which is detailed elsewhere in this study. While a small number of masters were unable to maintain control, most exercised firm, occasionally fearsome, discipline over their charges. Occasionally this was necessary to gain control and respect. One Summer Fields master recalled:

"They had enjoyed themselves at the expense of temporary war-time masters and they proposed to go on enjoying themselves at mine. Two of them, perhaps, were keen to learn, the others resisted strenuously. The strife was fierce for some weeks, but the weapons at the disposal of a master determined to enforce discipline are too powerful; he may get himself heartily disliked for a time (I did) but that is a small price to pay for peace in the form-room."70

Others used the threat of punishment as a spur to hard-work in their forms. At St. Ninian's John Peel remembered "one of the best teachers I have ever come across"71 using a variety of punishments including one called 'Gryps':

"Gryps entailed the seizure by the master's hand of the jacket lapels of the victim who was drawn rapidly forwards until the motive force suddenly reversed its action leaving the victim gasping as his chest made a smart impact with the knuckles of the masters hand. The possibility of these indignities kept us alert ..."72

Such excesses were rivalled at other establishments. At Stanmore Park a Mr. R.F. Reynolds "was a superb shot with a piece of chalk when a boy in his form annoyed him. Nose, cheek, forehead were his preferred targets, in that order; he never

70 Geoffrey Bolton, "Recollections of Summer Fields." Unpublished manuscript in Summer Fields archives.
72 Ibid.
hit a boy in the eye. His classroom was on the second floor and he dangled a boy called Openshaw outside the window, by his hair."73 At Cheam "there was 'Bully' Beaumont, a fierce old gentleman who bandied no words with children who wouldn't or couldn't learn, but hit them bone-shaking blows in the chest."74 At St. Wilfrid's a master called Humphrey Selway75 "was a bit of a bloody Tartar and any form of idleness or disobedience you'd get slapped hard across the cheek."76

Again, such anecdotes should not be taken to imply that masters were bullies, for these cases were exceptional. Assistant masters did, however, have some formidable disciplinary powers readily available and were quick to use them should the need arise. Prep school boys of the period usually worked hard in their lessons, wary of the unpleasant consequences of not doing so, and most staff were treated with respect.

Staff who come and go:

The belief is widely held that prep school masters were shifty individuals who rarely stayed long in one place and that consequently education was disrupted and schools made unstable environments. There is some truth in this opinion, indeed the Board of Education's inspectors made the comment that "The

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73 Rothschild (1977), p12.
74 Prittie (1977), p37.
75 Later Headmaster of Pilgrim's, Winchester.
76 Information from Mr. Charles Jewell (St. Wilfrid's, Kent, 1928-33).
staff is generally too transitory." Arthur Marshall wrote of staff who "came and went, and some of them in the middle of term." By analysis of inspection reports and school magazines it is possible to build up a picture of staff movement. One example is Sandroyd, a 'premier league' school. Over the period 1918 - 1940 Sandroyd had 52 different members of staff, staying on average 6.8 years. The table below profiles the years of service given by staff in five separate years:

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At Brightlands in Gloucestershire the pattern was similar, with staff staying an average of about five years. Both these schools were well-established with good reputations and both paid their staff properly, handsomely in the case of Sandroyd. The inspectors wrote "The salaries paid to Masters vary from £200 to £600 with board and lodging .... These salaries may certainly be regarded as generous .... The general conditions of service are good and the relations which subsist between the Head Master and his staff appear to be harmonious." In other words precisely the conditions in which one would expect staff to stay. This graph shows the number of new staff at Sandroyd in each of the years 1918-40. The differing numbers are explained below and changes in staffing at other schools were often for similar reasons.

![Graph showing number of new staff joining Sandroyd](image)

**Notes to Graph:**
- 1915 - five members of staff join the Forces.
- 1918 - 21 - disruption caused by staff returning from the war and the inadequacies of some new staff. One joint-Headmaster retires.
- 1929 - 30 - new joint-Headmaster arrives.
- 1932 - 33 - older joint-Headmaster retires.
- 1940 - younger masters join the Forces.

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It was accepted that masters would move around. At Rose Hill the Headmaster "encouraged good ones to go" as only then would they acquire a sufficient breadth of experience to make good headmasters themselves one day.

The charge that staff were 'too transitory' seems to have been true only of some schools. The schools experiencing a staffing problem of this nature were those not in the 'Premier League', particularly schools which were new, financially unstable, run by unpleasant headmasters or which paid poor salaries. The staff most likely to move were young men or those ill-suited to the profession. In all schools there was greater movement of staff immediately after the first war, as inadequate staff were moved on, and at the beginning of the second world war as men joined-up.

_The relationship between Masters and Boys:_

"We knew them all very well, and yet we knew nothing about them; they were grown-up - remote, possessed of the last word on everything, ten feet tall, incomprehensible. We knew nothing of their feelings, except their feelings towards us, which were likely to be severe. We could only go by appearances, by rumours of past excesses and by the amount of noise they made when they were angry."^1

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^1 Monsarrat (1966), p82.
Undoubtedly the relationship between masters and boys in the inter-war period was more distant than that which exists in prep schools today. This was, however, one aspect of prep school life which changed during the period and such relationships had come a long way since the near warfare which existed in Tom Brown's days.

Amongst the older staff and those who had served prior to the First World War there was a feeling that the lives of boys and staff should only come together in the classroom and when they were duty bound to do so. At Summer Fields "there was an unwritten rule that no master was ever about in the field or in the boys' rooms unless he were on duty or playing in an official game."82 A headmaster of the old school wrote that adults had nothing in common with boys and that therefore "there is only one practicable relationship between boy and master, and that is arm's length and a bit more."83 Pastoral responsibility had been the concern of the Matron and possibly the Headmaster or his wife, and boys had never spoken privately with assistant masters.

After the war a new generation of younger masters set about to changing this situation. John Evans arrived at Summer Fields in 1919 and remembered later:

"I didn't like the pin-drop silence that was kept in my New Room prep.

I didn't like the barrier and lack of companionship between masters and boys ..."
I did my best, and so did other junior masters after the war, to lower that barrier."\(^{54}\)

P.J. Campbell came fresh from Oxford and found "There was no variety in their lives, nothing exciting ever happened"\(^{55}\) and set about playing games with the boys, reading out loud and becoming more involved in their lives. Another master wrote "To us younger ones it seemed only natural to be about with the boys, playing chess or ping-pong with them, bowling to them or just talking to them. The older masters looked askance at this innovation."\(^{56}\)

There was resistance to the change of atmosphere. The then Headmaster of Summer Fields thought that to allow boys "to rag with their Masters" was "detestably bad form."\(^{57}\) He thought it would adversely affect discipline, make the boys "offhand and uppish."\(^{58}\) Finally, he referred to "the sad experiences we have had in the past in the case of Masters whom we have entirely trusted are conclusive as to the dreadful danger of over-familiarity."\(^{59}\) This was a legitimate concern and is considered below.

However in most schools a change did take place - for wholesome reasons. A headmaster wrote:


\(^{56}\) Bolton in Aldridge (1989), p92.

\(^{57}\) G.B. Alington, "Reflections of an Old Pedagogue upon Preparatory Schools" - manuscript in Summer Fields archives.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

(372)
"It is necessary not only that there should be very strong mutual affection between the Master and his boys, but that they should also be on terms of real intimacy so that the boys are in no way afraid to be absolutely frank and open with him on every sort of subject."90

There was usually at least one master who the boys felt understood their point of view and was approachable and caring. He would be the one who "treated us as people, not things to be taught only."91, who "was an unselfish friend"92 and who "talked and would talk with you instead of just spouting at you."93 One writer went so far as to claim that "It was from them [the prep schools] that the friendly relations between masters and boys had spread to the public schools."94

By 1940 the relationship between boys and masters was closer and more caring and sympathetic. It was in this respect that young and single men who had the time and inclination to involve themselves in the boys' lives were a considerable asset to the prep school. However, as one headmaster had already insinuated, there was a dark side to some of these bachelor staff.

Paedophiles and Pederasts:

Lurking behind some of the suggestions in the popular conception is the belief that many prep school masters plied

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90 Stanley S. Harris, The Master and His Boys (1924), p18.
93 Mr. Charles Jewell (St. Wilfrid's).
their trade because of their 'fondness' for small boys. This is a dark and murky area into which light is rarely cast and definitive information impossible to come by.

It would be ridiculous to assert that no masters had some sort of paedophiliac perversion. The problem is that in these post-Freudian days much innocence has been lost and there is a tendency to assign critical labels to harmless comments, events and procedures. Certainly in the intimate world of the prep school, and with young, unsuspecting boys, the pederast would have been well-served and some must have been attracted to the job. But the fact that most were bachelors leads late-twentieth century readers to make conclusions that may be wide of the mark. It has become difficult to differentiate between the idea that a man might simply like boys rather than love them. In Decline and Fall, Evelyn Waugh describes a 'Grimes' who has gone from school to school due to "scandals so dark they remained secrets at the scenes of his crimes." and goes on to state "Such episodes were not rare in his chosen career." He does not, however, substantiate this and old boys of Arnold House, the school at which the man on whom the character is based, taught, deny the charge. Waugh himself notes that 'Grimes' had forgotten the confession later. Pederasty has been insinuated but not often proven.

In extensive and often open oral interviewing this issue has very rarely surfaced. One retired headmaster said "There was

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95 Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall (1928). This edition Penguin (1937), p229.

96 Ibid, p228.
never any thought of any of these [bachelor] men being homosexual. Sex was an absolutely closed book."⁹⁷ At some schools Old Boys felt a particular member of staff might have been homosexual but none admitted to knowing of suspicious physical contact between them and boys. One was described as "homo, though not active."⁹⁸ When one interviewee was asked how he was able to discern this tendency he replied "from what was said and how he hung about over some boys."⁹⁹ A retired head conceded that there was a danger of pederasty in prep schools and remembered a partner who was sacked for 'interference'. He noted that this man was a bachelor in charge of an isolated dormitory wing with a bedroom nearby and stated that most headmasters realised how important it was that staff were not placed in such positions.¹⁰⁰ Some autobiographies do contain references: Terence Prittie mentions "a dear old gentleman who meant no harm at all but pawed small boys about and sometimes kissed them."¹⁰¹ Peter Luke wrote of "a new master called Mr. Curtis who takes us for maths. He tries to be nice to me and puts his arm round my shoulder when he is correcting my work. This is very embarrassing"¹⁰² The most specific incident of abuse comes from Clive Dunn’s autobiography:

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⁹⁸ Sandroyd survey respondent no.70.
⁹⁹ Information from a Marlborough House old boy.
¹⁰⁰ Referring to a school in Sussex. Source wishes to remain anonymous.
¹⁰¹ Primie (1977), p38.
"One night I was lying peacefully abed, minding my own innocent seven-year-old business, when a master entered and sat on my bed. He then proceeded to fumble about under the bedclothes until he found my very small scrotum. "Have you been playing with this?" he asked gently.

"No, sir," I replied truthfully.

"You have, haven't you?" he asked again.

"No, I haven't," I said, beginning to feel a little puzzled, not to say indignant.

"Oh yes, you have," he insisted.

It was beginning to sound a little like the sort of pantomime that's a bit short of material: "Has Buttons been playing with his balls again?" Eventually I agreed that I had, partly out of a craving for popularity and partly because I thought there was an outside chance he would let me have my balls back. "Right," he said, with a note of quiet triumph, "Follow me!"

I clambered out of bed in a rather worried way and trotted obediently after him into a small, brightly lit room where he proceeded to sit me on his knee and start the fumbling again. "How would you like to be punished?" he said. "On the hand or on the bottom?"

Decisions, decisions. "Um - on the hand." I said, not wanting to sound lavatorial, and by now beginning to feel rather sleepy. The unpredictable gent then took my pyjama bottoms down, put me over his knee and patted first one buttock, then the other. He then solemnly shook hands, kissed my forehead and sent me back to bed."103

Similarly, Peter Townsend remembered:

"Mr H. was a pederast; not that it worried us, for we had not the faintest idea what a pederast was. Nor did it strike us as unusual that Mr. H. should always turn up, a willing helper, at our bi-weekly bath-time, when Matron scrubbed us from head to foot.

One evening, I was washed by Mr H.; he massaged the more inviting curves of my small body with his soapy hands, sliding it up deftly between my thighs until, in a slippery lather of soap-suds, he was fondling my private parts. It never occurred to me what Mr. H.

Similarly, Peter Townsend remembered:

"Mr H. was a pederast; not that it worried us, for we had not the faintest idea what a pederast was. Nor did it strike us as unusual that Mr. H. should always turn up, a willing helper, at our bi-weekly bath-time, when Matron scrubbed us from head to foot.

One evening, I was washed by Mr H.; he massaged the more inviting curves of my small body with his soapy hands, sliding it up deftly between my thighs until, in a slippery lather of soap-suds, he was fondling my private parts. It never occurred to me what Mr. H.

103 Clive Dunn, Permission to Speak (1986), pp5-6.

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Examples such as these are exceptional, possibly because people are too embarrassed to mention them but more probably because they only rarely took place. Only around 5% of autobiographies and those interviewed mentioned this issue and fewer still cited specific events. Peter Townsend's example is important for on those unpleasant but infrequent times when abuse did occur there is no suggestion that it was hurtful or damaging and there is every indication that when abuse was detected the member of staff concerned was speedily dismissed. One retired headmaster mentioned an occasion when his Head Boy had informed on a deviant master who had asked boys to lower their trousers whilst in the darkroom. He was immediately summoned to the study, this eventually led to an admission, he was sacked immediately and the I.A.P.S. and the police informed. Prior to List 99, The I.A.P.S. kept a record of such unsavoury masters.

Incidents of sadism are more frequently mentioned (see discipline section) and sometimes these have sexual undertones. At Durnford:

"There was a Master who was obviously a sadist: he used to 'murder' boys while taking a class. He would get a boy (usually a good looking one!) to get out in front near the blackboard and pinch him or torture him in other ways, trying to make him answer a question which the boy found difficult."\(^{105}\)


\(^{105}\) Information from the Revd.M.F.Gibbs (Duroford 1922-25).
while at Grenham House there was a man:

"tainted by more than a touch of sadism which he practised in his capacity as scoutmaster, games supremo and form teacher. I dreaded the moment when I was summoned to the small platform at the front of the class to answer - aloud, please - his trick questions. He had a pair of tweezers with which he used to pinch the legs of those who made mistakes."\(^{106}\)

Abuse by female staff is less frequently mentioned, probably because there were fewer of them and they were often placed in positions where they were able to abuse undetected. For example, enthusiastic matrons in charge of washing boys may also have been guilty of interference. Matrons were the sole source of any heterosexual intercourse. A few oral sources made mention of attempts to 'get close' to a matron with occasional success and matrons were very occasionally dismissed for improper conduct. John Le Mesurier recorded one such incident:

"In the evening, Matron invited me to her room for tea and biscuits .... After the refreshments I became aware that she was making mild overtures. She began offhandedly to disarrange my clothes and eventually I found myself in her bed where she consoled me and I was able to explore for the first time the softness and warmth of the female body."\(^{107}\)

For young girls working in a restricted and often isolated environment the close proximity of boys who, by the time they were 14 and about to leave for public school, could be post-pubescent, mature and well-developed, could be too much to resist.


\(^{107}\) Ibid, p9.
It does seem that sexual abuse of boys by the adults entrusted with their care was a very rare event. Prep schools were not institutions where every boy could expect abuse of this kind although a few were likely to encounter it. The authorities did not condone such behaviour and were quick to deal with it when detected. Contrary to the popular conception only an extremely small number of the staff in prep schools of this period could be considered 'child abusers.'
Marriage:

One reason why prep school assistant masters have lived under a cloud of such suspicion is that the vast majority of them in this period were unmarried men. The automatic assumption is then made that they preferred the company of men and were therefore homosexual. This is not only unfair but incorrect. There is no evidence to suggest a higher incidence of homosexuality among teachers in prep schools than in any other profession and while it may have been true for a very small number there were more significant reasons why masters stayed single.

Primary among these was the fact that traditionally it had been an all-bachelor occupation. As all-male institutions a masculine atmosphere was deeply pervading. This was not necessarily welcomed, for as one contemporary master wrote "this monastic system gets on my nerves at times."108, but it was the norm. The longer masters lived in such an environment the more inhibited and idiosyncratic they became, the very idea of living with a woman becoming an impossibility.

Compounding the situation was the very nature of the job: masters worked long hours with evenings taken up with supervisory duties. Weekend time was rarely free. The schools were often in isolated locations and many masters, particularly the younger ones, were unable to afford their own transport. For those who did marry they saw little of their


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wives during term-time. As one remarked "It was not much of a job for a married man."\textsuperscript{109}

Accommodation, comprising part of the remuneration package, was invariably for a single man. With bedrooms often located near boys' dormitories it was difficult to have a private social life. As Gabbitas advised: "It is almost impossible for an Assistant Master in a Preparatory School to marry, as nine-tenths of the appointments are resident."\textsuperscript{110} It was different for public school masters who did not always have to take games or involve themselves in such close supervision. If you did marry then you would usually have to live outside the school yet continue to be paid as if you were living in. As one headmaster's wife said: "You were paid such a pittance that a man couldn't possibly afford to get married."\textsuperscript{111}

If you did marry then most headmasters were unsympathetic. Not only could most not afford to pay any more but you were now less useful to him. A contemporary headmaster wrote "Marriage makes him not more but less valuable to the school."\textsuperscript{112} A man's interests would become divided and he would be less willing and able to devote time and energy toward school. Nonetheless some did marry. There are various examples of 'prep school romances', usually between masters and matrons. The Lambrook history records that one man "proposed in the bus

\textsuperscript{109} Mr. Donald Sewell, interview 12/1992.

\textsuperscript{110} Letter to Lord Beaverbrook c.1922 in Gabbitas archives.

\textsuperscript{111} Mrs. Isla Brownless (Lambrook), interview 5/1992.

\textsuperscript{112} Grenfell (1921), p22.
going to Windsor. At Rose Hill half the staff were married but they were expected to live out. Married men at Sandroyd were more fortunate; they enjoyed higher pay and some cottages were available, and by 1928 the married men outnumbered the unmarried.

Combinations of these factors caused men who wished to marry or who had already done so to leave the prep school world, thereby increasing the transience of staff. For those who remained the situation changed slowly. By 1940 most assistant masters were still bachelors and it was only after the war, as pay and conditions improved and schools began to build or acquire suitable accommodation, that marriage became common.

The Life of a Master:

"The stern-looking woman brought me a contract to sign over a six-penny stamp. I pledged myself not to teach at another school within 50 miles in the event of my leaving Hurstwood and not to run up bills anywhere in Bulstrode."

The popular conception is that for most men a job as a prep school master was a sinecure. The attractions of long-holidays, free accommodation and time spent playing games seem great indeed to those commuting to a regular office job. The

113 Browless, Lambrook history (no pagination).
114 Information from Revd. David Hughes.
115 See The Sandroydian No. 91 (1/1929).
116 Campbell (1984), p34.
drawbacks are less obvious and what the popular conception fails to appreciate is how hard many of these men had to work in order to earn their very modest salary.

A 1920s commentator wrote that "The assistant masters in preparatory schools are a devoted body of men." and the inspectors referred to "the special difficulties of Preparatory School work". The nature of their job, encompassing teaching, games and endless supervision, has already been touched upon. By the inter-war period being a professional prep school master meant much more than merely teaching in the classroom. One retired master recalled:

"I certainly earned my £40; besides teaching all day and every day, taking games, being on duty, one was expected to mow the cricket field, mark out the pitches (having of course mown them), not to speak of preaching in chapel on one or two Sundays in the term and scrubbing the floor of the Hall before a parents day etc."

Another, who rose to a senior position, wrote that he "had to work very hard, ten hours a day, from 9 o’clock in the morning until 7 at night. I had one free afternoon in the week, but worked all day on Saturday." He recalled that "On one occasion I overheard an assistant master, after some criticism, saying 'Well, I can’t be in two places at once, can I?’ and his [the Headmasters] reply, 'You’ll never be any good as a school master unless you can be in half a dozen."
The hours of work at St. Cyprian’s in 1934 are shown below. What this graph does not include are the times spent on supervision, marking, lesson preparation and duty. These could add up to an extra 35 hours a week.

Looking back one man recalled:

"There were compensations for me in a new-found life, but the overriding purpose was work, and then more work. It went on without remission day after day, and not entirely for the sake of passing exams. The spirit of the school demanded it as the essential prerequisite for training, both in respect of character and mind. I had little conception before this how hard schoolmasters worked or how much they expected from their boys."

Gilbert Ashton, the Headmaster of Abberley Hall, wrote:

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"The pre-war schoolmaster was certainly not highly remunerated, and still very much conformed to Ian Hay's description of the profession as 'the most responsible, the least advertised, the worst paid and the most richly rewarded in the world.' However, for a dedicated man, the indirect rewards and satisfactions compensated for the low salary."123 It was more than just a job: it was a lifestyle.

What this lifestyle was like depended on the individual master and school. Evelyn Waugh hated it and left quickly. Arthur Marshall wrote:

"And where, indeed, were the masters? Paid a pittance, they had dined on their own (and on what?) at 7.30 in their dingy common room that smelt of sweaty boxing-gloves and had then, presumably, retired to the bed-sitters that they inhabited and which were dotted round the small town. And then what? There was no cinema and no wireless and, too poor for pubs, they presumably corrected our exercises and then read a library book or just stared hopelessly at the wall, glumly wondering whether it had been worth emerging safely, as most of them had, from the first world war."124

The reality as experienced by the men themselves was somewhat different. One wrote "I loved the life. There was plenty of variety, long holidays and little to worry about."125 Another that "we were a cheerful crowd, we took our professional duties very seriously. We all worked hard and played hard."126 One man began his career at a school in Swanage. There were seven schools within two miles and he remembered, "There were lots of young staff all there at one

time; there was a very happy background to it." Not all headmasters approved of their staff having a social life outside school. One wrote, "We don’t live here in term-time to enjoy ourselves," and went on to state that he thought "it very much better for us not to be seen in any local Hotel, Pub or Alehouse."

With most schools having a staff of under ten men, sometimes as few as three, it was important to find companionship with colleagues and, provided one was reasonably tolerant and easy-going, it was not hard to make friends. Waugh’s view was a negative one and he wrote "We were a rum lot united like defeated soldiers in the recognition of our common base fate." This reflected his own perspective at the time for in most schools it seems that there was a real feeling of camaraderie. Staff felt they shared a common purpose; they certainly shared a common lifestyle. Sometimes masters shared a cottage, they met in the common room, on the games field and in the evenings over dinner. As one person commented "A community as closed as were many prep schools between the wars developed a lively feeling of unity with a sparkle in the atmosphere." There was even a group of freemasons, the Roger Ascham Lodge, "intended to provide an additional bond of union between those who are engaged in teaching in preparatory

127 Mr. Geoffrey Tolson (Durlston Court), interview 8/1992.
128 Grenfell (1921), p38.
129 Ibid, p40.
130 Waugh, A Little Learning, p225.
While the I.A.P.S. was for headmasters the Society of Assistants Teaching in Preparatory Schools (S.A.T.I.P.S.) existed for assistant masters.

By 1990's standards the atmosphere within the Common Room was reserved. Staff were expected to behave 'like gentlemen' and, as a rule, they did. Different categories of staff were separated: teaching staff, matrons, domestics, outside staff. At some schools life was old-fashioned even by the standards of the 1920s and 30s. At Heatherdown every Sunday evening the staff dined formally, with dinner jackets. A maid brought staff their morning tea. Masters taught in gowns and wore mortar boards on Sundays.

The relationship between staff and their employer, the headmaster, varied between establishments. Some schools had weekly staff meetings; at others the day was discussed over dinner. Not all Headmasters treated their staff as part of a team: at Lambrook "staff were employees of the Headmaster" and at Beaudesert Park the Head simply "told staff what to do, there was no discussion." At South Lodge, Lowestoft, the situation was likened to that of Zeus and Mount Olympus.

133 Information from Mr.Ted Vidal.
L.A.G. Strong said the Headmaster of Summer Fields had a "Mount Sinai manner".  

**Pay:**

In 1934 the I.A.P.S. wrote:

"Salaries seem too low to tempt good men into our service: it is suggested tentatively that the salaries of beginners might be reduced if they were substantially increased for men of experience. In discussing this question our members proved to be strongly opposed to any form of scale: they preferred to raise salaries at their discretion for merit."  

The salary paid to assistant masters at this time was certainly not generous - averaging £211 P/A for a resident master and £282 P/A for a non-resident. Mistresses earned a paltry £129 P/A. There were variations within this. The highest salary was £600 and the lowest £80. Longer serving and more senior staff earned around double the most junior. This graph shows pay levels at two schools in the 1930s:

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138 General comments from Board of Education inspectors and the I.A.P.S. Reported as "Kindly Criticism" in P.E.11/1934, p36.

139 Based on 96 salaries at 21 inspected schools in the period 1931 - 39. Source: Board of Education Inspection Reports. PRO Kew ED109.

140 Based on 15 salaries at 11 inspected schools 1931-39. Source: Ibid.

141 Based on 24 salaries at 17 inspected schools 1931-39. Source: Ibid.

142 At Sandroyd.

143 At Bigshotte. This may have been for a school-leaver.

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The more prestigious and expensive the school the more the staff who taught in it were paid. In very low grade schools you might not be paid at all. [The School] "was as grotty an establishment as it is possible to imagine; it eventually went bankrupt after I had been there 8 terms, owing me 2 terms' salary which I never got."¹⁴⁴ Females were paid less because it was thought, because of their gender, they deserved less. They also taught the youngest boys, were only rarely graduates and tended to stay only a short time - these factors weighed against any possibility of high pay.

¹⁴⁴ Mr. Dick Thompson, letter 9/1993.
Given that most assistant masters were university graduates this was not a high level of remuneration, even with free board and lodging during term-time taken into account. It is difficult to give comparative figures but in those days the average fee would have paid 80% of the average salary whereas in 1993 it was more like 40%. In 1931 the P.S.R. claimed "The outlook is still serious for a man without capital". Other sources agree. A retired master said, "You needed to have your own means to advance." and Gabbitsas advised "There is no prospect for a Preparatory School Assistant Master as such .... a certain amount of capital is necessary." There was no career structure, status was gained by seniority rather than position, and power was concentrated in the hands of the headmaster. To experience authority a man would have to become a headmaster himself and the only way to do this was to buy or start a school - something which required a substantial capital investment. This could only be achieved by private means or, perhaps, if "You had been extremely clever financially with your finances for some years and had saved enough money out of your meagre salaries." and were able to complement this with a bank loan. Sometimes masters pooled their resources and bought a school as a partnership.

For those who were not ambitious, reasonably frugal and content with a comparative lack of status the financial

147 Letter to Lord Beaverbrook c.1922. Gabbitsas archives.
148 Mr. G. Grundy (St. Ronan's/Feltonsfield/Perrrott Hill), interview 8/1992.
remuneration offered by work in a prep school was satisfactory but inherited wealth certainly helped and it was not a career for those money-motivated.

**Professional Development:**

In the absence of routine teacher-training most masters were expected to learn 'on the job'. This has its advantages in that teachers gain much experience in practice rather than theory but can only really be effective when linked to some form of training or induction programme. The inspectors were quick to encourage this, recognising the experience of the headmaster and advising him to visit and guide his junior staff. Unfortunately this did not often happen and, they lamented, "Young masters do not receive enough advice or assistance from headmasters, who spend too much time on teaching and too little on helping their young men." 149 The memories of retired staff uphold this opinion: one remembered beginning with "remarkably little guidance - if any!" 150 and others recall being given the textbook and pointed in the direction of the class they were to take. A contributor to the St. Ronan's magazine wrote "When my day for duty came, I wondered what would happen ... Prefect Johnnie [said] 'Do you know, Sir, that no one will go and change if you don’t ring the bell?'" 151 At Temple Grove there was a basic induction manual, advising the Master on Duty: "The secret is (1) with

150 Mr. Dick Thompson, interview 10/1993.
the better boys, your own personality (2) with the worse ones, not your presence, but the uncertainty of your coming."\textsuperscript{152} Such helpful hints were rarely written down and only in some schools would more experienced staff help those who had recently arrived. The Dragon was one of the few schools where the headmaster observed his staff teach. It was said he "had a pretty good grip on what went on in the classroom .... Any new master, after a week or two, might find him seated in the back row, and be subsequently given his views in teaching methods in which criticism could be well laced with encouragement."\textsuperscript{153}

Some contemporary commentators were critical of the situation. One wrote:

"To suppose that a newly fledged graduate, whatever his scholarly attainments, can successfully handle a form of young boys is no less a fallacy than to suppose a graduate, fresh from a London hospital, can perform the work entrusted to an experienced specialist."\textsuperscript{154}

New masters were expected to learn by experience and experimentation, at the expense of those they taught. Headmasters did not do enough to help them acquire the fundamentals and the consequence was that many young masters were only partly effective for their first few years and, more seriously, good habits were not always acquired. It should, however, be mentioned that the range of skills expected of a prep school master in the inter-war period was nothing like as

\textsuperscript{152} Temple Grove "Private Programme" c.1934. Typed manuscript in school archives.

\textsuperscript{153} C.H.Jacques, A Dragon Century (1977), p128.

\textsuperscript{154} W.Ross Irving in letter to T.E.S., 4/7/1931, p267.
extensive or complicated as a primary school teacher in the 1990s. Not only were the classes small, well-disciplined and well-motivated but the demands upon teachers were less: their task was primarily to train boys to pass examinations for which textbook-based work would suffice. Not all prep school masters were boring and didactic but dynamism and innovation were not prerequisites.

The I.A.P.S. and some headmasters were aware of the lack of training amongst prep school staff and in the 1930s initiated a series of refresher courses to educate teachers in good practice and the latest techniques and developments. The inspectors were full of praise for these and they were well-attended. Other sources of training information were educational reviews and regular Board of Education inspections, the latter proving particularly useful.
It was highly unusual for any prep school to have more than one or two women among the teaching staff. This was considered normal: "You didn't have men in girls' schools and you didn't have women in boys' schools." Where a woman was employed it was usually as a teacher of the most junior form. There were two main reasons for this:

1/ She provided a mother/nanny-like figure to help ease the transition to boarding school: "Obviously important given the sudden switch from mummy and nanny to the institutional academic approach." An Old Boy remembered it was "rather nice to have a mistress rather than a master in your first term." At Harecroft Hall, "All the boys regarded her as Mum's representative and substitute."

2/ Women, particularly those who had been Froebel-trained, were regarded as particularly suited to the teaching of young boys. One headmaster wrote, "For the smaller boys in a Preparatory School the Lady Teacher ... is a sheer necessity." This was partly for the reasons given above but also because women were thought to be more able to relate to 'immature minds', had greater patience and

157 Lord Wigram (Sandroyd), interview 8/1993.
159 Grenfell (1921), p33.
Froebel training was specifically designed to assist those teaching this age group. Sometimes it was simply that men did not like teaching this ‘un-house-trained’ age-group.

It was not considered appropriate for women to teach older boys. During the First World War women had crept into prep schools in the absence of men but few remained afterwards when men were available to replace them. The Headmaster of Aysgarth gave the excuse that "The premises are ill-adapted for a large feminine contingent." The reality was that a large number of female staff might have interfered with the inculcation of manliness: they would have been seen as unsuitable role models, might have had difficulty with discipline and coaching boys’ games and it would not have been considered a woman’s proper place. Boys had come to school to learn how to be men away from the care and attention of mother. One contributor to the P.S.R. wrote: "Forty years experience convinces me that most women teachers - especially those with a tendency to neurosis - make no attempt to understand boys: they - the latter - are simply machines. Should women teach boys? Most emphatically, No." A flood of letters in the next issue disputed this but one said: "What most of us maintain is that women cannot educate boys, and that boys ought not to be put under the general control of a woman." Where female teachers did exist they were poorly paid and poorly regarded.

162 Mr.Craig, P.S.R., 11/1929, p70.
At many schools they were not even permitted to enter the staff Common Room.\textsuperscript{163}

\textbf{The Matron:}

The prep school matron figures highly in the prep school myth. All those who attended these institutions in the period have their own tale to tell of matrons kind, horrible or indifferent. One of the most famous depictions of a matron is in Roald Dahl’s autobiography, \textit{Boy}:

"On the dormitory floor the Matron ruled supreme. This was her territory. Hers was the only voice of authority up here, and even the eleven and twelve-year-old boys were terrified of this female ogre, for she ruled with a rod of steel.

The Matron was a large fair-haired woman with a bosom. Her age was probably no more than twenty-eight but it made no difference whether she was twenty-eight or sixty-eight because to us a grown-up was a grown-up and all grown-ups were dangerous creatures at this school.

Once you had climbed to the top of the stairs and set foot on the dormitory floor, you were in the Matron’s power, and the source of that power was the unseen but frightening figure of the Headmaster lurking down in the depths of his study below. At any time she liked, the Matron could send you down in your pyjamas and dressing-gown to report to this merciless giant, and whenever this happened you got caned on the spot. The Matron knew this and she relished the whole business ....

Looking back on it now, there seems little doubt that the Matron disliked small boys very much indeed. She never smiled at us or said anything nice, and when for example the lint stuck to the cut on your kneecap, you were not allowed to take it off yourself bit by bit so that it didn’t hurt. She would always whip it off with a flourish, muttering, 'Don’t be such a ridiculous little baby!' ....

\textsuperscript{163} At The Dragon they were even obliged to take meals separately.

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After 'lights out' the Matron would prowl the corridor like a panther trying to catch the sound of a whisper behind a dormitory door, and we soon learnt that the powers of her hearing were so phenomenal that it was safer to keep quiet."164

The prep school matron or sister was usually a middle-aged woman, perhaps a nurse, sometimes a widow, more often a spinster. Being responsible for the health and general welfare of fifty or more small boys she was invariably brisk and efficient. When the matron left Hillstone the magazine recalled:

"Miss Inger ruled Rockburn with no uncertain voice for 17 years, her clarion call 'Will you be quiet there' being the invariable precursor of a compliant hush. Her mission was to make men of boys. Minor playground casualties found that, although their grazes received attention, their self-pity was given short shrift ..."165

An old boy recalled, "She possessed a tongue of brass, a will of iron, and a heart of gold."166 While "Matron’s starchy presence largely dominated the lives of the younger boarders once they went upstairs"167 and she could be "rather a frightening figure for some"168 behind the brisk, efficient and sometimes fierce mask there usually lurked a woman dedicated to the boys in her care. At Upton she was a "woman who had a natural affection for small boys"169 and at Grace Dieu:

"She was the embodiment of practical, kindly, commonsense. Always dressed in nurses uniform, she was tall, athletic-looking, always had a healthy tan, and always seemed to have her sleeves rolled up. She could unerringly diagnose real illness, and could dispose of malingerers without diminishing them. She had the perfect blend of sympathy without sentimentality. She seemed genuinely to like us all."  

For many boys the Matron became a mother-substitute. A Walton Lodge Old Boy remembered:

"The school matron was good to me as the youngest boy and each week I went to her room for an hour, had a cup of tea and a piece of bread and butter and wrote a letter home under her guidance. When it was my mother's birthday she would buy a card and get me to write on it."

The prep school ethos of manliness meant that she was rarely as sympathetic as a natural mother but she was always concerned for the boys' welfare. The obituary for a deceased Sunningdale matron concluded: "Miss Hunter valued the affection of the boys very much; she loved to have them round her, and to hear about their games or whatever they wanted to talk about. She heard of their troubles, too; many a boy has sought comfort from 'Trern'."

Their work was often exhausting and mundane. One person described it as an "efficient domestic operation that cooked and sewed and swept and scoured, washing behind our ears, dispensing Sanatogen and cod liver oil and mopping up any

170  Mr. Philip Hebbert (Grace Dieu Manor 1937-40), letter 1/1993.
172  Sunningdale School Notes, 4/1929, p6.
emotional fall-out." An Old Boy of The Leas, Hoylake, recalled:

"She must have done a tremendous amount of work, and done it very well; issuing the sheets and pillow cases, supervising the food, organising the laundry of eighty boys of predominantly filthy habits, unpacking at the beginning of term, packing at the end of it, and listening patiently to that enormous majority of the parents who were convinced that their sons were delicate, and likely to fade away unless they received constant care and special treatment." At Cottesmore, "Nurse never took a day off in her whole time." A retired matron recalled, "Only those who have done this kind of work can know the incredible burden of it. One is on call morning and night." She went on to describe the responsibility for the care and welfare of fifty or more young boys as "awesome". The reward was not a monetary one. The principal motivation for these women seemed to be the environment itself: "Living with so many young boys is very exciting work but infinitely rewarding. You guard over their health and welfare and they give you their love and trust."
Domestic Staff:

Below all other staff came the domestics, usually females whose job was often unnoticed or unappreciated by the staff and boys. Their experience is rarely related in school histories and memoirs. One exception is the Lambrook history, which describes well the life they led:

"By today's standards, the domestic staff worked long hours and were lowly paid. However, service was not then a dirty word and these maids were kindly looked after and were better housed and fed, they said, than they had ever been. Newspaper advertisements, placed where unemployment for men was high, produced girls glad of residential jobs in order to send money home.

They did masses of housework: they made the boys' beds, complete with counterpanes: they waited at table and then washed up: after lunch they changed into tidy black dresses with little white aprons and a gaggle of them with baskets of mending would sit under a tree with Mrs Bennett, the matron-housekeeper. Sometimes she read to them. After tea they sped round the dormitories again, folding up the counterpanes. Too often a girl in domestic service was lonely: at Lambrook a dozen girls together made for merriment below stairs."179

Most boys would have had servants at home and the fact that they "never did a hands turn"180 at school would not have seemed unusual. At Beaudesert Park, a school of about 60 boys, there were 10 domestics and 4 gardeners.181 The number of such servants in these schools did drop as the period wore on. The cost of domestic labour increased and as the

179 Brownless, chapter GFCl.
181 Ibid.
depression affected school income this was an area in which economies could be made. By 1940 recruiting domestics had become problematic; some heads thought they were the most difficult staff to recruit and retain\textsuperscript{182} - the Headmaster's wife at Old Buckenham Hall had to go "maid-hunting" around the local villages.\textsuperscript{183}

Lowest of all was the boot-boy, a young lad not much older than the oldest boys employed to clean shoes and football boots. One Old Boy recalled: "We accepted the fact that there was a simpleton with a moustache incipient on a loose upper lip, who was required to do odd jobs and clean shoes"\textsuperscript{184}, and another remembered that one pastime while waiting for the loo was to tease the boot boy, "who was a tough character, luckily, as he had a lot of ragging to put up with in the boot-hole."\textsuperscript{185}

**Gender Roles:**

The inter-war boys' boarding prep school was an overwhelmingly masculine world. Not only were the pupils and the majority of the staff male but the institution and its ethos emphasised manliness at every turn. One way in which this was expressed was in the differing roles of males and females within the school.

\textsuperscript{182} One headmaster's son remembered his father asking his mother "Why are you so nice to that beastly cook when she is so beastly to me?" His mother replied, "She can give notice and you can't." Lt.Col.B.Holloway.

\textsuperscript{183} Information from Mr.Donald Sewell.


Power and responsibility were concentrated in the hands of men. The dominant figure in the school, the Headmaster, was male as were all the senior teaching staff. Men were paid more. Men acted as tutors and games coaches. Men imposed discipline. Men had their own Common Room. Women, by comparison, performed much less important jobs. As teachers they taught only the youngest boys and were on the staff periphery. The Matron, possibly the most powerful woman in the school, emphasised male values and concealed her femininity. Other women were consigned to menial or servile roles. In their study of manliness in the public school Michael Roper and John Tosh concluded, "While women played a central role as workers and 'stand-in' mothers, their activities were continually dismissed as peripheral. While mummy, matron and the maids serviced the boys' physical and emotional needs, the achievement of manhood depended on a disparagement of the feminine without and within."166 One man recalled of his headmaster father "I think my father regarded women as somewhat inferior beings .... They were regarded as a necessary part of the household but I don't think my Papa ever went into the kitchen to talk to the cook, or talked to the daily women - it wasn't done."187 A headmaster's wife recalled "Women were definitely second-rate. Girls had to keep out of the way and not annoy the men."188

This was a legacy of the Victorian age. Men and women were supposed to live in separate spheres. The private and domestic world was that of the women while men dominated public life. Mens clubs and schools had developed and flourished and even at home father often inhabited the separate world of his study. The fundamental nature of the prep school reflected this: it was, of course, single-sex and the boarding school environment removed a boy from the feminine influences of home. The woman’s role at prep school was always to be secondary if not hidden. It was a masculine world in which boys were learning to be men.
CONCLUSION

There are some elements of truth in the popular conception of prep school staff in this period. Some were unsuitable, some were perverted, some were ferocious, some were transitory. However, evidence suggests that such men (and women) were a minority. Staff may have been attracted to working in a prep school for a variety of reasons, often from a genuine sense of vocation, and once they arrived the majority proved to be satisfactory, and occasionally excellent, teachers. Most were men as this suited the ethos and atmosphere of the schools. Women were consigned to secondary roles. Most masters were bachelors as marriage was problematic given the salaries and conditions of the job. Their salaries were mediocre and another source of income was necessary to achieve the ultimate ambition of headmastership. The life they led was generally enjoyable although they were expected to work long hours and in becoming an assistant master they were not only taking on a job but also a lifestyle. In this aspect of prep school life the popular conception has again failed to match the reality; by investigating beyond the amusing anecdote one discovers a world that was rather different.
"His influence was all-pervading in the School. He was a man of wonderful vitality and had the power of communicating his own keenness to those who worked with him and under him. Everyone, staff and boys, were kept on their toes .... a man of very strong dominant personality, a man of considerable originality and eccentricity but someone obviously devoted to his boys, who inspired awe and in most cases a willing response; a man who demanded the best and generally got it. He had, I am sure, a lasting influence on boys' lives."¹

Towering above the staff, boys and buildings of the school which he owned was the prep school headmaster. In this small world he was a man of extraordinary power and influence, guaranteed to have a profound effect on all who came into close contact with him. The nature and role of the headmaster are fundamental to the prep school experience and his character was closely linked to that of his school. A contemporary source stated, "Most schools tend to become a very faithful reflector of the headmaster's character and outlook on life."² Another wrote "A boy is (or should be) sent to a preparatory school not because it is St.L's, but because Mr.X. is Headmaster."³ This author said that the headmaster must set an excellent example for, "It is his personality that counts first and

foremost, and on his merits the school succeeds or fails."
A retired member of staff agreed: "Any prep school depends on
the headmaster. It doesn’t matter how good the rest of the
staff is, if the headmaster is no good the rest of the school
will suffer." It is fair to agree with Alec Waugh’s claim
that "The success of a preparatory school depends largely on
the energy and personality of one man".

One Old Boy wrote "I hope you will give much thought to the way
in which the whole nature of a school could change with a
change in Headmaster." Because the headmaster so dominated
school life his character was of immense importance. Several
sources mentioned the change when a new man took over. A
Temple Grove Old Boy wrote: "Even to us children it was clear
that a new era was about to begin." Often they were phased
in, with the old head staying for a while to show him the
ropes and soothe parental concern. One man, who became a
headmaster in 1937, remembers how he felt the need for
immediate change: "It struck me that the whole regime was
wrong. Children are human beings and should be treated as
such. I couldn’t rule only by fear." 

5 Mr. J. R. Thompson, interview 10/1993.
7 Sandroyd survey respondent no.7.
8 Peter Waterfield (Temple Grove 1933-37) in O.T.G. Newsletter, 1988 (no pagination).

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The headmaster of popular conception is considered an ogre and a tyrant. He is made out to be a man more interested in beating boys than educating them, a distant figure who was feared and avoided wherever possible. There was, however, much more to this central character than this simple portrait.

His Background:

There was nothing surprising about the background of most prep school headmasters. Invariably they were products of the educational system of which their schools formed a part. The majority had attended Oxford or Cambridge where they had read Classics, some had served in the army during the war, most were good games players—a number being university 'blues'. The headmaster of Twyford was reasonably typical:

"He had a very distinguished scholastic and sporting career. At Twyford, he was head of the school and captain of the cricket and football elevens. At Winchester he was captain of 'Lords' (cricket), captain of football and captains of 'Houses' [Winchester football]. At Cambridge, he was a scholar of Corpus, a cricket blue, captain of golf and, but for an accident, should have received a football blue. He played cricket for the Gentlemen at Lord's, for Surrey and regularly for Hampshire, being described as the best close fielder of his day and a very useful bowler."

They tended to be men with games, as opposed to academic, prowess for this was one occupation open to good games players and was less attractive for intellectual high-fliers. The Headmaster of Stanmore Park was a famous cricketer. Lord Rothschild recalled: "We were told that while he was dozing at

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cover point one day, a black object hurtled towards him and he caught it. His catch turned out to be a swallow."

At the beginning of the period they were all Victorian men with Victorian values. Their childhood and upbringing greatly influenced the way in which they conducted their schools. Together with the environment in which they operated this caused most headmasters to shy away from innovation and maintain a conservative outlook with an emphasis on tradition. Towards the end of the period a younger generation who had grown up with war and its aftermath brought a more modern perspective to bear but, this notwithstanding, old-fashioned mores continued to predominate.

One change from Edwardian times was the decline in the number of headmasters in holy orders. Although clerical headmasters counted for as much as 1 in 12 in 1930, and many headmasters went on to become clergymen in their retirement, the figure in 1900 had been 1 in every 6.

Headmasters had come to teaching for the reasons examined in the chapter on staff. Very few became headmasters without any previous teaching experience. Even those taking over a school from their fathers usually served an apprenticeship at another establishment before taking the helm at a school of their own. A sizeable proportion took up a headmastership after having been a master, sometimes a housemaster, at a public school.

This was one career path open to suitable public school men. The Headmaster of South Lodge, Lowestoft, had been a Maths teacher in a public school and had come to prep schools determined to improve the quality of mathematics teaching. Port Regis and West Downs acquired new headmasters after the recommendation of public school headmasters. Huyton Hill and Wood Hall were founded after their headmasters were encouraged by parents to do so. Stouts Hill began from the determination of a Cambridge graduate to run his own school. Rose Hill was bought by a father for a son who did not seem destined for any particular career. Most schools had been bought by their headmasters.

Their Nature:

"He was a tall, grizzle-bearded man, lean and wiry, with cold grey eyes. To the boys he appeared of gigantic height, and was tragedy and fate personified. Terror encompassed him: he scintillated with it, as radium scintillates and is unconsumed. But he scintillated with splendour: he was probably omniscient, and of his omnipotence there was no doubt whatever."  

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13 Information from Mr. Donald Sewell.
14 Information from Board of Education inspection report (Port Regis) and Mark Hichens, West Downs (1992).
15 Information from Ian Butler (Huyton Hill) and John Catlow (Wood Hall).
16 Information from Mr. Rowland Ryder.
17 Information from Revd. David Hughes.

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While the background of these men was broadly similar their natures varied enormously. Where one was cruel another was caring, where one was an extrovert another was an introvert. Generalisation about their nature is almost impossible.

Some are remembered for their tempers. At Ghyll Royd the head "was a short-tempered man," while Robert Hartman described his headmaster as "A man of ungovernable temper, a sadist, and a person thoroughly unsuited to be in charge of small boys." Often, however, there were mitigating features. The Headmaster of St. Anselm's "could blow up at any moment" yet was "a kind man at heart." At The Abbey, Beckenham, he was "given to occasional detonations of Olympian wrath, [but] was plainly dedicated, kind and idealistic."

Others are remembered for their brutality. Wilfrid Thesiger said the Headmaster of St. Aubyn's was "a sadist." An Old Boy said of the head of Ghyll Royd: "I have always thought that he ruled by fear, fear of the cane. Many times, for a small offence, he would call a boy out of class, make him hold out his hand and give him one or two whacks on it, in front of all the others." Apparently the head of Twyford "would beat you as soon as look at you."

21 Martin Fagg, "Those were the days" in T.E.S. 15/11/1991, p30.
23 A memory recorded in Ghvll Royd School 1889 - 1989, p2.
Usually, however, they were remembered in awe. The Headmaster of Scaitcliffe "commanded respect because he was a formidable personality. He was tall, six-foot, very upright and had very penetrating brown eyes and he just had a commanding presence." John Mortimer wrote, "The headmaster of my prep school looked very much like God."

The difficulty of defining the nature of a 'typical' prep school headmaster stems both from the huge differences between the headmasters themselves and the equally considerable differences in opinion between those who knew them. This is illustrated in the Sandroyd study where the opinions of over fifty Old Boys who knew a particular headmaster - Hornby - over a ten-year period provide a most inconclusive insight. While one wrote he was "An austere, bad tempered and frightening man." another considered him "A courteous father figure, a strong character respected by all." One respondent thought he was "an utter scoundrel of the worst type", yet another wrote he was "someone to respect, trust and like - a man who oozed old world charm." The character of the man himself could change. Most men were headmasters for a 20 - 25 year period and over this time some mellowed, some became corrupted.

27 Sandroyd survey respondent no.108.
28 Ibid, no.137.
29 Ibid, no.148.
30 Ibid, no.141.
by power, while others simply became atrophoid and lost inspiration.

The difficulty of generalisation is further illustrated by a consideration of the two very different headmasters described below.

**Rev. Edward Hugh Alington - Summer Fields**

The Rev. Edward Hugh Alington of Summer Fields, nicknamed the 'Bear', was an archetypal headmaster of the Victorian school. An excellent description of him was provided by his son:

"He was the most conventional of men. He lived by the values and standards of the mid-Victorian middle classes. He was also the simplest of men. His religion was that of a child. He had an acute sense of sin, and was convinced, I think, that he was bound for the everlasting flames ... His values, too, were straightforward and unsophisticated. He believed unreservedly in the Ten Commandments, the British Empire, the Conservative Party, the importance of the classics and all forms of outdoor sport, and in anything traditionally venerated, such as Beethoven, Shakespeare and the Parthenon. He abominated Cambridge, Roman Catholics, Socialists, the Germans and all aspects of modernity. He was frightened of the telephone, poverty, overdrafts, contemporary literature, social functions and foreigners. For him Wogs began well before Calais. He was painfully inarticulate and shy .... He had a terror of any demonstration of emotion and, like so many who bottle up their feelings, he was intensely emotional. Just occasionally, as in 1916 when he received the

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telegram from the War Office with the news that his eldest son had been killed, emotion burst
its barriers with results that were agonizing for him and everyone else. "31

An Old Boy wrote of him:

"I was afraid of him .... It was partly his inflexibility, physical, mental and spiritual, partly
his apparent remoteness, partly his silence. He seemed inexorable, you never knew what he
was thinking, and he did not (could not) come to meet you. And there was his temper."32

Geoffrey Hoyland - The Downs, Colwall

At the other extreme was the extremely innovative and forward-thinking Geoffrey Hoyland of The
Downs, Colwall. He was described as "a genius"33 by one Old Boy while another said he was a very
"enlightened headmaster: a great believer in children finding their own interests. Children were given
time to themselves and expected to organise themselves. He was not one for formality within the
school."34 At his memorial service a public school headmaster said: "Certainly Geoffrey Hoyland brought happiness wherever
he went, for he cared for other people's welfare more than

34 Mr. Donald Boyd, interview 10/1991.
anything in life." Not only did he care deeply about the boys in his school he also made himself open to their needs. His house became their house and he actively encouraged individual interest and expression. He was open to new and different ideas and was full of creativeness and imagination. The inspectors said "He is a man of high ideals and is devoted to the boys."  

The nature of the headmaster had a direct effect on life within the school. He could alter the curriculum. One redesigned the timetable to reduce the importance of Latin" while Scaitcliffe only had nature study because the headmaster was interested in flora and fauna. In the late 1930s the new Headmaster of Marlborough House set about trying to make the boys happy and himself approachable because he had been bullied as a boy. At Beaudesert Park the headmaster was "mad on cricket" and boys were obliged to spend their free-time coaching and learning the game. At Port Regis the inspectors noted that the Headmaster held "very advanced views on health and education; in short he is a crank. He makes the boys drink water, spray noses, do breathing exercises and he pays great attention to food values etc."  

39 Information from Mr.J.R.Thompson, interview 10/1993.  
41 [] notes to Board of Education Inspection Report, Port Regis, 10/1929, p2. PRO Kew ED109/2286.
Given such enormous differences in the character of the men filling the prep school's top post it is only possible to provide the most tentative of descriptions as to their general nature. They do seem to have been fairly remote and at least moderately frightening or formidable. They were often old-fashioned in their ideology and behaved accordingly and finally, behind their reserved exterior, most cared deeply about their school and the boys within. This is examined more thoroughly below.

The Job:

The job of a prep school headmaster was not an easy one. For a start, he was in charge of almost everything in the school—from disciplining boys and hiring staff to repairing broken windows and balancing accounts. A man had to be extremely dedicated and hard-working in order to succeed. One member of staff remembered: "He was almost always there; hardly ever, in all the time I was with him, did he spend a night away from the school during term-time. His boys were his trust as well as his life." Another man recalled of his Headmaster father: he "would have regarded it as a shameful dereliction of duty to have taken time off during term-time." Another said, "He was the spirit of his school - he was completely lost in it." An Old Boy of St. Ninian's wrote "The headmaster ... and his wife were a remarkable couple who lived totally with and for

the school and whose influence was profound and enduring." A contemporary source notes: "Such men live lives of complete self-sacrifice." An assistant master said:

"Looking back over many years at West Downs one's mind goes automatically to the apparently inexhaustible and tireless energy of Kenneth Tindall. All day would be spent in taking an active part in all kinds of school activities, teaching two forms as well as dealing with his own administrative work; and often far into the night he would be discussing with would-be somnolent members of the staff ways and means of improving teaching or discipline, or new ideas for leisure activities."47

There were a few exceptions to this very active and involved approach. At Parkside, "More often than not, it seemed to us, he was out playing golf with some Admiral or General whose son or grandson he was trying to net."48 John Mortimer "can't remember Noah taking a great part in our education."49 The Headmaster of Aysgarth managed to combine a busy school life with being a magistrate on the Bedale Bench and partaking in various shooting parties.50

There was plenty to keep them busy within their schools. At Bramcote: "Pidcock paid the staff, taught, got us up in the morning to our compulsory cold baths, taught us cricket in the nets and during the fielding practice at break and took us to

47 Quoted in Hichens (1992), p49.
50 Erica Thompson, Out of the Oak (1977), p33.

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church . . . . On Sundays Pidcock kept up the correspondence with parents."\textsuperscript{51} The headmaster of Pinewood received 1154 letters in one term\textsuperscript{52} and with no secretary or bursar had to attend to them all, bills included, personally. Letters were invariably written by hand. The telephone was an even more persistent interruption. One headmaster moaned: "Parents and friends of the School are earnestly requested not to use the telephone except when it cannot be helped; frequent ringing of the telephone bell makes it almost impossible to get on with the day's work."\textsuperscript{53} Another bewailed "If Parents realised how often I am called away from work and play in order to speak on the telephone, I feel sure they would refrain from using it so much. It is always easier to answer a letter."\textsuperscript{54} The whole aspect of recruiting and retaining parents and their sons could be time-consuming, difficult and stressful. For many finance was a constant worry, especially in the difficult Depression years. At Brockhurst the headmaster "was often worried and depressed particularly in foreseeing financial doom."\textsuperscript{55}

At all but the premier league schools the headmaster also had to maintain the buildings and grounds. At Great Walstead the Headmaster "was known to enter the Latin lesson with a loaded rifle and halfway through the lesson to disappear suddenly through the window. Bang! Another mole intent on ruining the

\textsuperscript{51} Pip Land, Dramcote School: The First 100 Years (1993), p30.
\textsuperscript{52} See The Blue and Grey, Spring 1931, p2.
\textsuperscript{53} The Blue and Grey Christmas 1937, p4.
\textsuperscript{54} The Maisis Chronicle Vol.2, No.16 (7/1926), p198.
\textsuperscript{55} Quoted in J.T.Fleming, A Century off the Examiner (1984), p46.
lawn had come to grief. Certainly he taught with a screwdriver in one hand and a Latin grammar in the other. He was doing-it-all before the phrase had been thought of. Plumbing, electrical wiring, painting, bricklaying, carpentry, he would have a go at them all."56

Above all else were the boys themselves. The headmaster was their leader and guide, their chief disciplinarian, an important teacher and games coach, unofficial chaplain, boarding housemaster and much more besides. Of the Headmaster of Abberley Hall it was said: "Where the boys were concerned no detail was too small to consider, no effort too great to make. His interest in their activities was all-pervading and they will have been the first to look back and appreciate the justice, understanding and kindly humour of their headmaster."57 One retired head thought his role had been "to provide an environment suitable for growth on the right lines. One couldn't do much about the roots of the plant nor the soil in which it was planted in the first place, but one had to see that the plant was well nourished, watered and properly activated afterwards."58 While to the boys he may sometimes have seemed harsh and distant, the headmaster cared deeply about his boys and their successes and failures came to dominate his life. They had a remarkable knowledge and watch over their charges. Even at Sandroyd, a school of over 100 boys, individual attention was guaranteed. In one letter to


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a boy's parents the Headmaster wrote, "I am afraid I have had my eye off him just recently and he needs constant stirring. In general bearing he is sensible and he has lost the touch of uncomfortable conceit which used to attract my attention to him." At Harecroft Hall the headmaster drew up individual tests for each boy. The headmaster of The Wells House had every boy to tea or dinner every term. Their interest did not end when boys left. Like many others the headmaster of West Downs wrote to boys at their public school and school magazines regularly carried news of Old Boys and appeals to stay in touch. St.Peter's, Weston-super-Mare, closed in 1970 but the pre-war ex-headmaster keeps the Old Boys' organisation running. He said: "We feel it is our life's work."

All headmasters at this time were expected to teach and they usually took on a full timetable. Often they were the most experienced and senior teachers in the school and influenced the teaching styles of others. Responsibility for the top forms was usually theirs. Most were praised by Board of Education inspectors for their high qualifications, quality of teaching and devotion to their jobs. At Temple Grove they wrote: "The Head Master, an Oxford man, is eminently suitable for the post he holds. It is not merely that he unreservedly devotes himself to the multifarious problems of Head Mastering; he is also educational adviser to his staff.

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61 See Wells House Magazine, 12/1924, p1469.
and he is personal counsellor and friend to every boy in the School.\(^{116}\) At Doon House their comment was: "He is unusually well-qualified for his present work by his administrative capacity, knowledge of affairs and sympathetic understanding of boys and men."\(^{114}\) Only occasionally were the inspectors critical of the headmaster and his teaching: "He, the Headmaster, has given little or no thought to real educational problems, even to such simple matters as the proper planning of a Time Table. He was effusive - far too effusive - both in his welcome of us and in his gratitude for our suggestions, and we cannot believe in his genuineness."\(^{115}\)

**Relationship with boys:**

The relationship the headmaster had with the boys in his school varied as much as the nature which determined it. Wilfrid Thesiger decided, on re-visiting his prep school several years later, that the key difference was that he sensed "affection, confidence and trust" between headmaster and boys.\(^{66}\) Other Old Boys would say that this relationship existed at their schools in the inter-war period.

All headmasters had presence and projected power. At the back of boys minds was the knowledge that he reported to their parents and that he possessed the cane. They came into contact

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\(^{114}\) Board of Education Inspection Report, Doon House, 3/1930, p3. PRO Kew ED109/2493. He had been a Lt.Col. in the Indian Army with 18 years in the Police Department on the North-West Frontier.


\(^{66}\) Thesiger (1987), p68.
with him every day and he ordered and instructed them on a regular basis. At the very least the boys regarded their headmaster with respect. One Old Boy commented "We were not frightened of him but were very much aware of his power .... [and were] jolly wary of him." Many headmasters, particularly older and stricter ones, were held in awe. At St. Ninian's:

"The 'Bump' was immensely tall with a good crop of white hair. Add to this a benign expression - except when angry - and the permanent clerical dress and it would not be surprising that most of the younger boys were of the opinion that, if he was not actually God, he must work in very close association with Him. As one advanced in years one added to this a touch of Old Testament fear. One could not fail to appreciate the power of his arm and the ease with which a cane could be reached. At a normal passing in a passage he would, from a great height, place a hand on the small head and advise the owner to 'go steadily on.'"

Fear was a factor in many boys relationships with their headmaster. At The Old Ride the boys "respected him for his great teaching ability but feared him. He had rather a short fuse and for the physical meting out of punishment he would grab a boy's cheek and shake it brutally." This was a fear born out of physical threat. The headmaster of Ashdown House had "a violent temper which he made not the slightest attempt to control. He used physically to attack those unfortunate pupils who failed to meet his expectations. I remember him seizing one boy by the hair and beating his head against the blackboard while bellowing: 'I CAST MY PEARLS BEFORE SWINE!'",

each word being emphasised with a crash on the board." At Abberley Hall the Headmaster:

"went round every form every day and one never knew when the door would open and reveal the Headmaster and woe betide the boy who looked as if his thoughts were far removed from the classroom. Sometimes an unfortunate would find himself suddenly dragged to his feet by his coat collar and rudely shaken; subjected, in fact, to a simulated wrath which was terrifying to a small boy and meant to be. If the small boy happened to have his legs crossed, they were kicked apart, on the assumption that with legs crossed he could not really be concentrating." With the ever-present danger of physical chastisement such as this it is hardly surprising that one retired head noted, "The more shy and timid [boys] were clearly frightened." Some headmasters combined this with the maintenance of considerable distance between themselves and the boys. The headmaster of St. Richard's "thought it was a great nuisance to be disturbed by a small boy." At Scaitcliffe "It took a very courageous boy to knock on the study door. My father felt that there were masters to deal with the boys' daily needs." At Stanmore Park one unlucky boy was sent to the Headmaster with a good piece of work but the Headmaster assumed he had been sent to be beaten. The boy was too terrified to disabuse him of this fact and was told to take a place at the table alongside some naughty boys whereupon he too was caned.

73 Mr. Caspar Tremlett, interview 10/1991.

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Not all headmasters intended to be so far divorced from the boys but it was partly a result of their position. When Bob Wickham became the young and more caring headmaster of Twyford in the late 1930's, replacing a rather brutal regime, he found it hard to break down the divide between himself and his boys. He said: "I had boys through to talk every so often but it was not easy to get them to talk freely with me as an adult and their Headmaster." Boys were often naturally wary of the headmaster.

There were exceptions to this rule. At The Old Malthouse the headmaster joined in free-time games of prisoner's base and was considered "a tremendous performer." The Headmaster of Lambrook was said to be "Charming, genial, smiling, he soon established the most cordial relations between himself and this new boy .... Mr Browne made you choose him as a friend .... To this kind-hearted friend you went for advice, felt honoured by his praise." At Sandroyd Mr Wilson was remembered by a number of Old Boys as kind, approachable and caring, while at Lake House the inspectors wrote of the Headmaster's "friendly counsel". The Headmaster of Parkside was said to bear "no resemblance at all to the fearsome gentleman of popular schoolboy fiction."

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78 Old Boy writing of F. D. Browne in Lambrook Chronicle, 1931, p7.
Relationship with staff:

The headmasters powerful position in relation to the boys was broadly similar in relation to staff. He hired and fired, determined salaries and duties and could do all of this almost at will. Headmasters in this period were often autocratic and seldom held staff meetings. At Temple Grove many of the staff "were most reluctant to enter the Study to see him... The power of his personality was tremendous ... he always had to be right."81 At Heatherdown you "almost needed an appointment" to see him.82 Again, it did depend on the nature of the headmaster for there were some schools where the headmaster frequently liaised with, and asked the advice of, his staff. This was, however, more the exception than the rule.

The headmaster's relations with his staff were of great importance. One retired head said they were "priority No.1 for a headmaster."83 To have a good teaching team he not only has to choose well but "have their confidence and their support and he must encourage their efforts."84 His role in this respect was little different from that of a headteacher today. There was some criticism from inspectors that headmasters did not give enough support and guidance to staff.

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82 Information from Mr. Ted Vidal.
84 Ibid.
The headmaster’s wife, or housekeeper if he was a bachelor, was also an important figure in the inter-war prep school. Not only was she one of the most dominant females and a mother figure but she also had a major role to play. One head wrote: "The Headmaster’s wife is an integral part of the whole social and religious life of the school."85

One retired headmaster said "A lot depends on your wife."86 for:

"She took over completely all matters relating to boys’ health, domestic staff and the organisation of big occasions. She took new boys under her wing and wrote soothing letters ... to parents. In addition she was always ready to undertake other miscellaneous duties, acting as sacristan in chapel, issuing books and stationery and even, when the need arose, wielding a broom and washing the dishes."87

A contemporary writer claimed "She certainly works harder than any other wife; she sees to the creature comforts of all the boys entrusted to them, nurses them when they are ill, and mothers them all the time, and has to share all the worries and anxieties that schoolmasters are always heir to."88 A long article in the P.S.R. described all the duties which she had to perform. It said: "Probably the most difficult duty of all is the management of school servants," advising, "it is false economy to engage common or inferior servants. They need

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85 W. Frazer Hoyland (The Downs), Aedificandum Est (1943), p51.
87 Hichens (1992), p49.
88 Paul King, Preparatory School Ideals (1924), p254.
constant supervision, and can give a bad tone to the house."\(^{89}\) The wife was expected to take charge of school meals and the menu: "Strict supervision is necessary to prevent waste, and to ensure the healthiest and most attractive diet on the available allowance."\(^{90}\) She had to assist the matron in the nursing of boys who were unwell and it was "essential to know all about the physical condition of the boys: what illnesses they have had, and any tendencies to weakness."\(^{91}\) The headmaster's wife had social duties which included meeting prospective parents and reassuring worried mothers: "It was she who had the vision, the charm, the sympathy, the kindness and the imagination that gave parents the necessary satisfaction that their children had been entrusted to someone with an abundant degree of humanity and warmth."\(^{92}\) Perhaps most importantly:

"She must take special charge of all newcomers, particularly those of a nervous type, and those likely to be homesick during their first terms. No one else can do this. Most boys come to their Preparatory School without any previous knowledge of school life and conditions. Often they have never slept away from home before. The motherly touch is needed here, and she will be well advised to take personal charge for the first few days, so far as possible, of these boys, until they have shaken down to their new surroundings ... Even then for three or four terms they will need some extra attention, after which they should be able to carry on without worry. They must not of course be kissed and fussed over, but there are many


\(^{90}\) Ibid.

\(^{91}\) Ibid.

occasions when a little encouragement and sympathy can be handed out unobtrusively to their
great benefit."93

She was often put in charge of travel arrangements, school publicity, play costumes and end-of-term bills. She gave her husband support and someone with whom to share motivation and problems. So important was she that the Gabbitas and Thring archives hold numerous records for schools 'for transfer' because of the death or ill-health of the headmaster's wife.

Occasionally the headmaster's wife ended up as head herself. Lime House in Cumbria became a Dame school in the 1920s when the wife carried on after the death of her husband."94 Without much approval from headmasters, Mrs. Malden ran Windlesham House. There was a feeling amongst men that women such as these "must be a bit of a battle-axe"95 and indeed, with the circumstances they faced, they very often were. A well-known Headmaster's wife from this school was the infamous Mrs. Wilkes of St. Cyprian's. Although her husband was headmaster she dominated him and the school. Henry Longhurst described her as "the most formidable, distinguished and unforgettable woman I am likely to meet in my lifetime .... undoubtedly the outstanding woman in my life."96 George Orwell slated her and David Ogilvy wrote:

94 Information from Mr. W.S. Donald (Old Boy), letter 11/1992.
"The horror [of St. Cyprian's] was Mrs. Wilkes, the Headmaster's wife. This satanic woman carried the art of castration to extra-ordinary perfection. Like a chess master playing simultaneous games against several opponents, Mrs Wilkes played games of emotional cat-and-mouse against every boy in the school. Each of us was alternately in favour and out of favour, like the courtiers at Versailles."97

Old Boys remember regular headmaster's wives rather differently and few have a bad word to say against them. At The Downs Dorothea Hoyland was described as a "universal mother"98 who provided "a rather gentler side to the school ... [and] was good at comforting unhappy small boys and created a very warm and supportive atmosphere."99 and who was an "extraordinarily good influence of a wholesome kind."100 At Marlborough House "She stood for the values of home amid the ardours of school,"101 while an Ashdown House Old Boy recalled: "She was very understanding and kind to the younger boys to whom she read stories before the lights were turned out. I can see her now, dispensing boiled sweets from a large glass jar, and she used to give each of us a small book marker for our Bibles on our birthdays."102 Old Boys of Beaudesert Park recalled that "Trooping up to Mrs Richardson's room for a lollipop on Sunday evening gave one a feeling of being part of a family."103

98 The Downs survey respondent no.56.
99 Ibid, no.84.
100 Mr. Donald Wright, interview 8/1993.
St. Anselm’s she was remembered for her "gentleness and understanding when any of us suffered homesickness or some other major calamity."\textsuperscript{104} Inspectors wrote that she "does much to produce the atmosphere of the home."\textsuperscript{105} and that "The whole of this side of school life is clearly well and sympathetically managed."\textsuperscript{106} The motherly care and attention bestowed on boys by headmaster’s wives was a much-needed antidote to the often harsh and uncaring nature of prep school life.

\textbf{Conclusion:}

The popular conception is an exaggeration of the facts. While headmasters shared a similar background and were mostly traditional and conservative in their thinking their personal natures varied widely. Most were respected and, to an extent, feared by both boys and staff. This stemmed from their very powerful position and, in the case of the boys, the punishment they could mete out. Only a minority were really brutal and a small few sadistic. Their character was very important for it had a major influence on the nature of the school and a change in headmaster could make an enormous difference to life in the school. The role of the headmaster’s wife was important too: not only as support to their husband and the performance of domestic duties but also as the central female in an overwhelmingly masculine world. For both the job

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{104} Martyn Beckett (Ed.), \textit{All Our Yesterdays} (1988), p15.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Board of Education Inspection Report, Cothill House, 2/1930, p2. PRO Kew ED109/42.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Ibid, Belmont, Hassocks, 7/1935, p3. PRO Kew ED109/6011.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
required, and was usually given, devoted service and wholehearted attention. Headmasters cared about their schools and the boys who attended them.
Starting at Prep School

For many men one of the most traumatic and frightening times of their lives was the transition from home to boarding school for the first time. Even for those happy about the move it represented a dramatic change of environment and lifestyle. After over fifty years many prep school Old Boys have vivid memories of their first experiences.

In "Such, Such Were the Joys", George Orwell's diatribe about his experience at St. Cyprian's, he wrote:

"Your home might be far from perfect, but at least it was a place ruled by love rather than by fear, where you did not have to be perpetually on your guard against the people surrounding you. At eight years old you were suddenly taken out of this warm nest and flung into a world of force and fraud and secrecy, like a gold-fish into a tank full of pike."

Not only were small boys going to a different and usually larger school (or school for the first time), they were also leaving home; leaving the love and care of parents and entering an entirely different world in which they were expected to survive on their own.

Boys reacted differently to the news that soon they would be going away to school. For most it came as no surprise for this was considered usual in their social class and an older brother or friends might have made the transition already. Usually

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there was no alternative in the form of a suitable local school. Nonetheless to some the news came as a shock. Kenneth More recalled that: "Mother and Nanny Gething burst into tears at the news, and Kate [his sister] and I howled to see them cry." One Old Boy said "I hated the very idea of going away to school. I had a lovely home and was very happy there." Another remembers he "was terrified by the prospect of being sent off to live with strangers."

The majority of boys had no accurate conception of what it would be like and such information as was available painted a rosy picture. Kenneth More’s Nanny "explained to us that going to a boarding school was really like entering an outpost of fairyland. Gnomes would join our games. There would be fun of all kinds. Life would be an endless playtime, infinitely better than anything we had so far experienced, with chocolate cake and honey buns for tea." Another wrote: "I was an avid reader of the Magnet and the Gem. The only worthwhile life a boy could lead seemed to me to be at a boarding school." Fortunately not all boys suffered from such misconceptions yet most recall a feeling of nervous excitement, often resulting from an exploratory visit and the build-up given by parents and friends.

3 Henry Glaisyer (The Downs, Colwall), interview 8/1993.
The preparations began some time before the boy was actually due to start. Occasionally there would be visits to the school and a trip to the school outfitters in London to be measured for uniform. *The Times* advised: "The wise mother will send in very good time for the list of clothes, bed linen, and other necessaries issued by the school for which she has entered her boy." This list was invariably exhaustive. *The Times* went on to note: "Unless she is one of the few fortunate people to whom money hardly matters, she will probably be very much surprised and even dismayed when she sees the number of things that are regarded as indispensable."

Eventually the day itself came. A visit to the barber was often scheduled for the morning and then the boy changed into his new uniform. Roald Dahl recalled:

*"Every piece of clothing I wore was brand new and had my name on it. I wore black shoes, grey woollen stockings with blue turnovers, grey flannel shorts, a grey shirt, a red tie, a grey flannel blazer with the blue school crest on the breast pocket and a grey school cap with the same crest just above the peak. Into the taxi taking us to the docks went my brand new trunk and my brand new tuck-box, and both had R. DAHL painted on them in black."*  

In addition to trunk and tuck-box, sometimes sent on ahead, the boy would carry a case with 'night requirements.' An Old Sandroydian recalled:

*"These consisted of a pair of pyjamas (thick, striped flannel), a camel-hair dressing gown, a thick leather handkerchief box, an equally thick leather Eton collar box, a stud box, a rubber sponge bag with toothbrush, toothpaste, loofah, sponge, and face flannel, bedroom..."

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8 Ibid.  

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slippers, a spare pair of pants and vest, a flannel shirt, a pullover and a silver-framed portrait of my mother and father. Forty years later I weighed all this and found that it came to just under half a hundredweight. I shall never forget to my dying day the awful struggle through the pinewood of Oxshott carrying this frightful impediment.¹⁰

For a boy's first term it was usual for his parents to accompany him down to school. Often they would arrive before the others for a tea party with the Headmaster. A parent recalled "The crunch begins at the tea party. There are the parents trying to keep up bright chatter. And the little boys are trying to pretend to enjoy the eats provided. Everybody is keeping a stiff upper lip, and how!"¹¹ A boy remembered:

"Over tea with the Headmaster (there was quite a nice cake but I could munch nothing) the well-known clichés poured forth: 'I've brought the young man ... soon find his feet ... we'll keep an eye on him ... nothing to be afraid of', only one of the clichés being correct."¹²

Roald Dahl provides an excellent description of arrival at school in his autobiography:

"As we got out of the taxi, I saw the whole driveway abustle with small boys and their parents and their trunks and their tuck-boxes, and a man I took to be the Headmaster was swimming around among them shaking everybody by the hand.

I have already told you that all Headmasters are giants, and this one was no exception. He advanced upon my mother and shook her by the hand, then he shook me by the hand and as he did so he gave me the kind of flashing grin a shark might give to a small fish just before he gobbles it up ....

¹¹ Ibid, p16.
'Right,' he said to me. 'Off you go and report to the Matron.' And to my mother he said briskly, 'Goodbye, Mrs Dahl. I shouldn't linger if I were you. We'll look after him.'

My mother got the message. She kissed me on the cheek and said goodbye and climbed right back into the taxi.

The Headmaster moved away to another group and I was left standing there beside my brand new trunk and my brand new tuck-box. I began to cry."

Another boy recalled, "I went reluctantly, confessing at Victoria station, 'Daddy, I don't feel very well.' This did not prevent me being put on the school train, blubbing slightly." One remembered, "On arrival at the front door I was intrigued by the antics of a fellow new boy who had somehow obtained his school cap prior to arrival and who was in the throes of a howling tantrum at the thought of being left alone. This scene culminated in a screaming session with the appropriate jumping up and down in fury on this brand new piece of headgear." It was not just for the boys that this initial parting was a difficult and upsetting experience. A mother wrote:

"The final day was a blur of horror for me. We took Mallory down to Oxford. We drove to the school. We had tea with the headmaster. The Headmaster looked at me with compassion .... Matron was brisk. There were dozens of sandwiches. Dozens of mothers with hot red eyes; dozens of little boys, very little boys. Mallory's blond head shone in the sunlight. I went up to his dormitory. His case had been unpacked and his little possessions disposed on a chair. Our photographs, and a particularly unattractive one of Nanny that he had specially framed, stood on the chest of drawers. Everyone was very kind, very understanding."

Matron was comforting. There was more tea, more sandwiches. The Headmaster was drowned in a sea of mothers. The fathers all looked resolutely at the cricket pitch. Mallory went out of the French windows and on to the lawn. It was time to go. I took his warm dry hand in mine. I looked down into his face..."16

The time of separation had come. The parental car departed through the school gates, the day drew to a close. One Old Boy wrote: "The reality hit me like the shock of a plunge into icy water ... I knew not one of the hundred boys, only one of the masters. I shared a dormitory with five unknown new boys. No one showed the slightest interest. I was suddenly utterly, completely ALONE." 17 For others the shock came from being among so many boys they didn't know. One remembered "the way boys clustered round me in the playroom after my parents had gone. They formed a semi-circle around me, three-deep it seems to me in retrospect, plying me with questions ... there was something daunting about the sheer number of boys' faces, and the interminable barrage of questions. No-one was in the least hostile, but I did not gain any impression of friendliness. I felt very much alone."18 For those coming from abroad, in England for the first time, the shock could be even greater. One "had only just learnt to speak English as I had been brought up by servants in India and spoke 'bazaar Urdu'."19 Wilfrid Thesiger had hardly met any other English boys before when, "Suddenly at St.Aubyn's we found ourselves

17 Ivor Crosthwaite (Sandroyd), unpublished memoirs.
19 Sandy Smith in O.T.G. Newsletter, 1990 (no pagination).
in a crowd of seventy boys, nearly all older. There was no privacy anywhere, we were always among others, whether in classrooms, dining room or gymnasium, on the playing fields or in the dormitory at night." Sandroyd survey respondents reported similar emotions, writing it was "Rather like going from heaven to hell in any imagination" and it was "utterly traumatic. No prison could rival the hopeless terror and bewilderment of the first few weeks." There were exceptions: one wrote: "I had no problems and was not homesick at all ... Sandroyd was new, pleasant and exciting." 

After tea the new boys would make their way up to their dormitory for their first night. At many schools Matron and the Headmasters wife would do their best to be cheery and friendly and to comfort any who were homesick. At West Downs the matron "was adept at putting boys at ease and keeping them busy so that they forgot their troubles." At Beaudesert Park the Headmaster's wife had them to tea and took them for picnics by the school lake. The first night was not, however, an easy one. One Old Boy recalled, "The dormitory in which I spent my first night was a long, cold, cheerless room with eighteen beds. It seemed to be a place of strict discipline. No one spoke. No one even smiled in my direction. I did not

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21 Sandroyd survey respondent no.8.
22 Ibid, no.115.
23 Ibid, no.20.
25 Information from Mrs.E.Keyte.
actually cry myself to sleep, but I was not far off it."26 Not wanting to create a bad first-impression some boys contained their homesickness until after lights out: "I knew better than to be seen blubbing. One had to wait, and there were others who waited too, until the night was well-advanced and the more stout-hearted fellows were fast asleep."27 Often it was not on the first night that homesickness manifested itself but a little later when boys realised that the time to go home was a long way off. One wrote "For days I couldn't get used to the idea that it wasn't temporary. Nanny would come and fetch me. Or Father would call round for me in the car."28 An Old Downian wrote that "I was so homesick I couldn't eat."29 Staff did their best to comfort homesick boys but they were expected to 'get over it' quickly and crying was definitely not the done thing. At Sandroyd after the first week they were treated unsympathetically: "Mrs. Ozanne would say we were being stupid little boys and should grow up and be brave."30 Becoming a man involved suppressing such emotions; to cry was to show weakness. One Old Boy wrote "I sometimes cried to myself but made sure never to show this in public!"31 Retired staff were quick to emphasise how once parents had left and the break had been made boys settled down and it was not long before they were happily playing together. It was usual for

29 The Downs survey respondent no.2.
30 Mr. Peter Ansdell, interview 8/1993.
31 Mr. C. Boldero (Walton Lodge), letter 4/1993.
the Headmaster or his wife to write or telephone new parents in the course of the first few days to tell them that, in most cases, their son had settled down. One reported that some parents could hardly believe this, "especially mothers who seemed quite put out by the thought that they could rush off and be happy without them so soon." A minority of boys found the transition an easy one. An Old Sandroydian wrote, "I don't remember feeling homesick; everyone was friendly, the buildings seemed palatial and I was bursting with pride to find that one of the dormitories was named after my father." A Durnford Old Boy said, "I remember settling down to this extraordinary new life fairly quickly." For new boys the first few days of term were confusing and, consequently, slightly frightening. Alec Waugh wrote:

"The embarrassed misery of a boy's first week at school has been the subject of many essays. Mr. Vachell compared it to the first plunge into ice-cold water, a sudden shock, and afterwards, the glory of a swim. But it is the inaction, the loneliness of the first week that is so difficult. It is more like standing on the edge of a swimming bath on a cold day waiting for the signal that will start the race." There was so much that was new and which had to be learned. One boy noted of a newcomer "he is the only new boy who has not muddled up." One boy wrote "it is impossible ever to find out what time anything happens at St. Ronan's .... what one

36 Letter home of M. Burn (Sandroyd). Personal papers.
does is to wait for the bell, and then walk out of the room and follow the crowd."37 As the first day dawned boys were slowly coming to terms with what had happened. One wrote, "Before I was properly awake I could feel there was something wrong: the light was coming in from a different direction. Then I realized what I didn’t at first dare accept was true: I wasn’t at home. I was in a strange place – school."38 Then there was the uniform to cope with: collar studs, tie pins, braces to hold up both trousers and underpants. Those whose parents had failed to supply the proper uniform were immediately noticed, for anything out of the ordinary was soon identified and made fun of. In some schools older boys were sympathetic towards the younger ones but in others there had developed an antipathy toward new boys: they were treated unkindly or, at best, simply ignored. As one wrote: "The problem was being an outsider entering a close community. And boys do like to demonstrate to strangers that they know the ropes."39 The needs of new boys were not always appreciated and answered and the boys themselves were too frightened or embarrassed to make their questions or problems clear. One wrote, "Like the other new boys, I was frightened of being ragged or made to look silly."40 Nicholas Monsarrat was too embarrassed to ask where the lavatories were and went for three days before an ‘accident’ was discovered – something about which he was then savagely teased. This uncaring treatment was

39 Mr. Philip Hebbert, letter 1/1993.
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sponsored by the ethos and sanctioned by the staff: learning
to adapt quickly and by oneself being seen as part of the
process of acquiring manliness. Typical was the "Ivy Sunday"
at Harecroft Hall: "This was the first Sunday of term when any
boy not carrying a piece of ivy was fair game to be pinched by
those in on the secret. New boys, of course, were not told,
and others forgot - so there were always black-and-blue thighs
on the first Sunday of term." 41 The Downs had "new boys flips"
where "everybody flipped you more or less for a day." 42
Traditions such as these formed part of the initiation process
operating in many schools in the period.

Some schools did make an effort to help new boys 'learn the
ropes' by assigning an older boy as their 'father' or
'substance'. At Heddon Court "for anything that the Shadow did
wrong the Substance was punished." 43 While this was a powerful
incentive to help a new boy it could also result in the
'Substance' exacting retribution later.

For some boys the harshness of the environment was upsetting.
While most adapted quickly and uncomplainingly to the physical
routine some found it more difficult. A Summer Fields Old Boy
recalled how it took him a whole term to adjust to "The
agonizing cold bath in the morning, the sin of rolling chamber
pots, the other boys crying at night because they missed their
homes, the absolutely unattainable greatness of being a

42 The Downs survey respondent no.58.
prefect or in the Fifth Form or XI."

"For others smaller things mattered: not seeing the family pet, not having mother read or the absence of brothers and sisters. One Old Sandroydian deeply resented being bathed by a Matron when he was quite capable of cleaning himself.

By the end of the first week the new boy would be beginning to find his feet. Sunday would bring the first letter home. Christopher Mayhew put a brave face on it, writing:

"Dear everybody, I love school. I have made three friends at school, Sandy Brown, Richard Medley, and another boy whose name I do not know. I am in Class 3. Love from Kiffy." He admitted later that he was, in fact, bitterly homesick. One Old Boy was so miserable that he wrote home and "begged my parents to fetch me back by the 4th." 14

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first train on Monday, and I offered to refund them my tip.  
I 'knew' that they would come. They did not, but it reduced 
my mother to tears."46 Some schools censored these letters to 
avoid such upset. At another school the Headmaster's wife 
wrote:

"Dear Mrs. Richards,

Bernard has settled down very happily to school life. He seems quite cheerful and 
pleased with everything and has taken quite a good place in the school ... He came to my room 
last night for games and was very gay. He is a most attractive small person, and ought to get 
on very well.

Yours sincerely,

Madeleine Hornby."47

Life became progressively more understandable and acceptable. 
Richard Todd wrote "After a few weeks I settled in very happily 
at Norwood School and thereafter loved almost every aspect of 
school life."48 An Aymestry Old Boy wrote, "After he [the 
new boy] has got over the newness of being away from home [his 
first impression] is that all those in authority are extraordi-
narily kind and sympathetic people who are doing their best to 
encourage and help him on."49 Occasionally boys continued to 
be miserable until after their first term. The Headmaster of 
Brockhurst reacted angrily when a boy was removed after three 
weeks "on the grounds that he was not making friends and was

47 Letter from Mrs.M.Hornby (Sandroyd) to Mrs.Richards dd.1/11/1923. Personal papers of Mrs.M.Richards.
48 Richard Todd, Caught in the Act (1986), p47.

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unhappy,\textsuperscript{50} and said "He hardly needed to enlarge on the absurdity of expecting friendship to spring up overnight."\textsuperscript{51}

Given how traumatic the transition was it is surprising that schools and parents did not make a greater effort to ease the change. There was some advice as to what academic standards should be expected but only very rarely were parents given practical advice such as teaching their son how to tie shoe-laces and ties, tell the time or write his name and address. Some new boys had not even seen their new school before, let alone spent a reasonable amount of time there.

There were exceptions. The Downs asked new boys to come a few days before term began and the system of guardians, whatever its drawbacks, did help many boys. In 1929 Temple Grove established a separate house for new boys: "Here the wind can be tempered for poor, shorn lambs until they be come acclimatised to the cold, bleak fact that there are other lambs in the flock quite as important as themselves."\textsuperscript{52} The boys for whom it was easiest were those who had gone to a kindergarten (which would be known today as a pre-prep) beforehand. A sizeable number of Sandroyd boys had done this, for just down the road was Sandgate, a pre-prep established by the ex-junior mistress from Sandroyd. When one new Sandroydian was not at all homesick the Matron wrote "I expect being at

\textsuperscript{50} The Brock, Summer 1933, p12.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Temple Grove Magazine No.42 (3/1929). Note how the writer accepts the fact that life was hard and that boys should have to learn to adapt to it.
Miss Hunneybun's [Sandgate] has made the difference." Sandgate, like many pre-preps, was a small school with under 40 boys and, run by a woman and with only small boys, was more homely for those who attended - sometimes as boarders for a year or so before they went on to prep school. Lord Wigram, who went on to Sandroyd from Sandgate, identified several advantages in having attended a pre-prep rather than having had a nanny: he did not become homesick, frequent visits to Sandroyd helped him know what it was like and what to expect, the teaching was similar and he learnt skills such as how to play football which gave him an advantage in his first term."

**THE HOME/SCHOOL INTERFACE**

"I had a very happy home life. We were united, had many friends and laughter abounded. I was spoilt. Life was too easy and I was protected. Luckily I was sent to boarding school when I was nearly nine and had therefore to stand on my own. Naturally, I was terribly homesick. The last few days of the holidays and the first few days of term were purgatory. I sobbed my heart out every night."²²

The experience of the first term was often partially repeated on successive returns to school. For many old boys their most painful memories of prep school concern the transition between school and home. Even those who enjoyed boarding school once

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they were there often found the time of separation from parents and home life a difficult one.

Arnold Toynbee wrote, "The date of the beginning of term was, for me, like execution-day for a prisoner who has been condemned to death. As time rushed towards the dreadful moment, my agony rose to a climax." Some began to dread the return to school as the holidays drew to a close. An Old Downian remembered "The countdown until the return to school started two weeks before the end of the holidays and I became increasingly depressed and unhappy. This lasted a further week into the term." It was not that schools were necessarily horrible places but rather that returning to school meant a return to work and regulation as well as an end to the comfortable enjoyment and love of home, parents and holidays. It also represented change, something which adults find equally unsettling. For those who came from happy and exciting homes even the best school was no substitute. One respondent noted that he found school really interesting but he "didn't like going back to school simply because I was going away from home." Another felt "sure it was ... a very good school but I hated being away from a very happy home." Of course there were exceptions to all this. A sizeable minority of boys looked forward to returning to the friends and activity of school. One old boy remembered: "With father away I had just

57 The Downs survey respondent no.66.
58 Mr. Donald Wright (The Downs, Colwall), interview 8/1993.
59 Sandroyd survey respondent no.122.
mother to go to in the holidays, but no friends of my own age and I remember the excitement towards the end, of the approaching return to school."

Most found the time of return at least moderately upsetting. For some it was extremely traumatic. While an Old Sandroydian recalled "The cold feeling of entrapment as the car turns in through the front gates at the beginning of each term," an Old Downian wrote, "Each time I left my uncle’s house in Somerset to travel to school I cried." Traditionally boys returned to school on the school train:

"The gathering on the platform of Victoria Station was an essential preliminary to each term. The train left for Forest Row at about four p.m. and we always travelled in a drawing room car .... The Headmaster was always there to greet us on the station platform and to address reassuring words to those parents who needed them. There were those whose offspring were already in tears, sometimes with Mum blubbing as well."

Often the staff and headmaster were on hand to greet the returning boys and their parents. An Old Boy of St. Wilfrid’s said: "I remember how pleasant and jovial the staff were to us with the parents present and what a contrast that was to how they behaved to the pupils without others around." Terence Prittie recalled how, on arrival, "All four of us were ushered into the Headmaster’s part of the gaunt and unprepossessing Victorian building. He and his wife, certainly,
seemed ultra-friendly .... The moment that they [his parents] left, the Head's manner became strictly matter-of-fact. 1165 There was always much bustle and greeting of staff and other boys. There was excited exchange of news, tales of holidays escapades and demonstrations of new toys. After overnight cases had been unpacked sensible parents quickly bade farewell and departed. The boys were gathered together by the staff. Term had begun.

Homesickness:

For many boys the first few days of term, as they readjusted to the reality of school life, were most distressing. They often suffered from that most difficult of emotions: homesickness. For most this was no more than "a lump in my throat for the first few days," 66 and one Old Boy wrote, "Of course we all were [homesick] at the beginning of every term but it very soon wore off - small boys are strange adaptable little creatures." 67 Another wrote: "After a year or so one developed a protective shell, largely composed of conformity. What else could one do, apart from the futile gesture of running away to somewhere even more hostile, like Bicester or Banbury? Among the smaller boys, every term began with sobbing in the dorm, teddy-bears lynched and stuffed into chamber pots." 68 One Old Boy thought, "The only thing to do with one's affec-

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tionate feelings was to store them deep in some tuck-box of the heart."69 A few found adaption to school so difficult they regularly suffered from homesickness. David Ogilvy "was wretchedly homesick and was only happy when the postman brought a letter from my family; to this day, the arrival of mail excites me beyond reason. At night I went to sleep sucking on a tiny hole in a can of Nestle’s condensed milk; it tastes like mother’s milk. When that ran out, I sent for free samples of toothpaste and sucked it out of tube."70

The majority soon came to terms with the transition and said it became easier as the years passed. Comments made by Sandroyd survey respondents included: "accepted as one of the facts of life"71; "I was always miserable on leaving home but soon recovered"72; "unpleasant but it was just another expected step in life"73; "everyone had to leave home some time"74; "continuing familiarity and indoctrination lessened the impact as the years went by;"75 and "The general nature of my upbringing made me inclined to accept and make what I thought to be the best of my circumstances in which I found myself."76

Retired staff claimed that after the first few days most

69 Lewis in Roper and Tosh (Eds.) (1991), p177.
71 Sandroyd survey respondent no.36.
72 Ibid, no.75.
73 Ibid, no.64.
74 Ibid, no.81.
75 Ibid, no.80.
76 Ibid, no.110.
homesickness had gone [or had been concealed] and boys happily went about their everyday school life. There was plenty to keep them busy and little time to think about home.

A large number of boys suffered from no homesickness. One Old Boy wrote, "Sandroyd represented freedom from stifling family life." while another recorded, "As home life was in a strict, old fashioned Methodist family it made quite a pleasant relief - I enjoyed it!" Louis MacNeice remembered that, "Very soon, I preferred school to home, felt I had everything in hand. Popularity was achievable by recipe; at school one was a person, at home one was just a child." One man wrote:

"Few families are without their problems and vagaries, and once the initial brief period of homesickness is past a young boy at boarding school is cocooned, safe from such difficulties, whether emotional or practical. The organised routine of school life, the constant company of other boys, and the watchful caring of experienced staff fill all the hours of every day, and the average boy has little time to mope or worry about anything outside the confines of classroom and playground."

For boys with troubled homes, or boys who had no homes or parents, school became a welcome refuge.

77 Ibid, no. 10.
78 The Downs survey respondent no. 81.
79 Louis MacNeice (Sherborne Prep.), The Strings Are False (1965), p67.
The End of Term:

In contrast to the beginning of term both staff and boys found the end an exciting, if busy, occasion. An Old Sandroydian recalled "The joy of seeing trunks appearing within a few days of the end of term." After a long term just the prospect of freedom from regulation was sufficient to induce joy. One Old Boy wrote "the joy of going home for the holidays and seeing old familiar things with fresh eyes was an experience the majority of children couldn't even comprehend, let alone experience." Exams and reports over, there were usually some end-of-term festivities and concerts before the final day dawned. A boy wrote:

"It is the morning of the day of going home, at the end of the term. Suddenly, the gong rings, all the boys rush downstairs and go into breakfast, but the reader must remember that the last breakfast is very exciting, and that no one eats much breakfast, because they are all excited.

They go down to the boot-room and get their boots on with excitement. They all bustle round and forget what they are doing."

For boys who were leaving it could be upsetting. The school had been part of their life for up to six years - nearly half their lifetime - and while there was reckoned to be much to look forward to at public school it entailed change and uncertainty.

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81 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 80.
82 Mr. Simon Wright (King's Mead) in letter 1/1995.
84 See section which follows.
Not all boys were able to go home in the holidays. If parents lived abroad there was rarely time to travel by ship to a far-flung colony and be back in time for the next term. Boys such as these were farmed out to uncles and aunts or grandparents. Some had to go to holiday homes and some remained at schools where 'full charge' was offered. While sometimes these holiday homes really were homely they often had similar rules and regulations to school. Harecroft Hall offered holiday accommodation in a letter to parents. Not only does this letter provide details of what holiday care was like but also gives an interesting guide as to what parents regarded as standard norms and values - many of which were replicated in school life. The headmaster wrote:

"Boys in the holidays are under the personal supervision of the Headmaster, and are kept busy, happy and fit. Bedtimes are reasonably early and punctual, and the boys are made to rest for half-an-hour on their beds every day after lunch. A short period of P.T. and breathing exercises is supervised before dressing every morning. There is that amount of discipline needful for good behaviour, good manners and obedience, and spankings are administered in holiday-time when necessary or deserved."\textsuperscript{85}

There was a marked difference between life at home and life at school. Gavin Maxwell wrote: "Life at school and life at home were so utterly unrelated that it seems now as if they must have run parallel in time and been lived by two different people."\textsuperscript{86} This made the transition to school difficult for many boys. One Old Boy wrote "I don't think my parents realised the traumatic contrast between home and school for a


\textsuperscript{86} Maxwell (1965), p79.
boy of seven and a half. Some boys continued to be troubled by homesickness throughout their prep school days. While this upset occasionally stemmed from the harshness of school existence it was also a consequence of change and separation from a happy home life. It seems that for some 50% or more of boys it was a trying change but one which they adjusted to after a few days back at school and one which became less difficult as they grew older and more experienced.

87 Sandroyd survey respondent no.115.
As its name suggests, preparation for public school was the most important role of the prep school. Prep schools had proliferated after public schools excluded younger boys and the consequent need for education and preparation for boys under 14 years of age. By the inter-war period almost all public school boys had attended a prep school beforehand and it was all but impossible to gain a public school place without the academic and social grounding provided by the prep school.

In 1922 Alec Waugh noted:

"The preparatory school fulfils a most important function, and it fulfils it extremely efficiently. It is what it sets out to be, a school that will take a small boy almost from the nursery and train him, in the course of four or five years, to take his place in a large public school."

Not only had prep school become a necessary precursor but for the better public schools the education of a good prep school was important. The Times noted "It is now widely believed to be best for a boy's future career at his public school that he should go to as good a preparatory school as his parents means will allow." Prep school prospectuses advised early entry to ensure that examinations could be passed and parental wishes fulfilled. The schools hoped that boys would not only pass into their first choice school but pass well and for most this became their primary objective. Of course the preparation was not merely academic: an experience of life at boarding school

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and exposure to the prep school ethos was essential. An Old Boy noted, "It gave me what it was precisely designed to give us: a preparation, not merely, or even mainly, academic, for dealing with the intense, ritual-dominated world of Eton, which would have been altogether too alarming and bewildering without such special training." 90

The formal prerequisite for public school admission was the Common Entrance Examination, the nature and difficulty of which is examined in an earlier chapter. The prep school was obliged to prepare its pupils to successfully surmount this hurdle. The mark required to pass Common Entrance varied between public schools and was largely dependent on supply and demand: i.e. it was higher for over-subscribed schools and lower when there was a surplus of places. This varied considerably in the period. Immediately after the First World War there was considerable pressure for places and the prep schools had instigated the foundation of Stowe in 1923. Contemporary letters reveal that even in the late 20's well-known public schools were turning away potential pupils. Harrow advised an Old Boy, "I think I could squeeze your son into a Small House in September, but I could not at all guarantee him on into a big House: some forty or fifty entries have been refused this last term ..." 91 An eminent lawyer's desperation to secure a place for his son at Winchester is evident from the succession of letters he wrote. Although his son was a potential scholar he was still advised, "I know that there are about 30 very

strong candidates for 7 places,""92 and later that "It is a difficult year and I fear I shall have to disappoint many.""93 When, after considerable pressure and many letters, he finally received notice of his son's nomination he wrote "Thank God!""94 The situation had changed by the 1930s: economic depression had reduced the number of parents able to pay for public school education. Retired prep school headmasters recalled public school headmasters touring prep schools, touting for boys. Arthur Harrison cited one who visited prep schools in an open-topped Rolls-Royce, stepping in to say "I always heard your school was one of the best in the country etc.""95

The relationship between public schools and prep schools was generally a fairly close one. Senior school heads would often visit for Chapel services or on Parents' days; there was a constant flow of correspondence. Often a prep school would feed a particular public school, sometimes that which the headmaster once attended or taught in. Catholic prep schools were close to the five major Catholic public schools, and Quaker schools such as The Downs fed almost exclusively to Bootham or Leighton Park. Eagle House was known as a feed for Wellington, Hawtrey's and Wixenford for Eton and Hillside for Charterhouse. While a pass in Common Entrance the official requirement for public school entry, the prep school headmas-

92 Letter from Headmaster of Winchester 5/6/1926. Personal papers of M.C.Burn.
93 Ibid, 7/6/1926.
94 Ibid.
ter’s confidential report carried equal, if not more, weight. These were generally up-beat but honest appraisals that could sway a borderline decision.

For prep school headmasters one of the most difficult aspects of public school entry was persuading parents that their idea of a suitable school was not always what was best for the child. Retired headmasters observed that while most parents were realistic about their sons’ achievements there were a minority who could not appreciate their weaknesses. Reported one: "If they were awkward parents they would take their boy away and send him to a crammer but in other cases they accepted it and agreed to a school with a lower entry standard."96

While at their prep school boys looked forward to the time when they would move on to public school. In Tom Brown’s Schooldays "Tom ... was constantly working the Squire to send him at once to a public school."97 This book was widely read by prep schoolboys "for whom it served as a guide or manual."98 They were frequently reminded that gaining entry to public school was their goal and as the time became closer they would usually visit their intended destination. Alec Waugh observed:

"The preparatory school boy is always looking ahead to a future stage of life. And so it is that, when his last day at [prep] school comes, he is not the victim of the surprised sentimentality of the public school boy. He has begun to feel that he has outgrown his surroundings. He has chafed at the restraint of childhood .... He has spent the long summer evenings reading

97 Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown’s Schooldays (1857). This edition Collins (1953), p67.
the history of his new school. He has studied photographs of its buildings; he has pored over old numbers of the school magazines, and has formed a romantic conception of the giants of whose prowess he has read. The future opens before him with limitless opportunities, and he can face it with an eager confidence after his five long years of discipline."99

Old Boys also remembered how they had looked forward to moving on. One boy wrote home "I'm very excited about it and I am learning a lot of Winchester notions from my friend Francis Wigram."100

Before they left, boys were warned of some of the dangers of public school. Their sex instruction often alluded to "unwholesome friendships"101 as well as cribbing and loutish behaviour. When they arrived at public school there was often a letter from their prep school headmaster awaiting them. Despite their high expectations, for some the transition was to be one of the most difficult times of their lives.

Oral and written sources vary widely on this subject. One claimed the move "was easy, you were well prepared."102 while another wrote of "the horrors that were to follow."103 Most found the move to be a shock. Sometimes this was simply a question of scale: there were many more boys and they were larger; the campus itself could seem huge. The prep school world, despite its strict discipline and austere atmosphere,

99 Waugh (1922), p829.
100 Michael Reynolds (Sandroyd). Letter home in Sandroyd archives.
could still be comfortable in comparison. The authorities at St. Ronan's later conceded, "Perhaps the environment created was too protected: some found the transition to the hurly-burly of a public school almost traumatic."104 When asked about their preparation for public school Sandroyd survey respondents variously wrote, "Well academically, not so well socially. The transition was not easy."105; "Not very well because public school was so tough;"106 and "I'm not sure it prepared one for the rigours of Marlborough."107 A St. Peter's Old Boy said "It wasn't until I got to Bromsgrove that I realised life was tough .... at prep school you felt at home, public school was far harder. A campaign in Burma after five years at Bromsgrove was money for jam."108 T. C. Worsley wrote "The family atmosphere of Brightlands was exchanged for a hostile, friendless, solitary anonymity - back into an alien and uncivilised tribe."109 Some, full of prep school innocence, were shocked by public school reality. A few found the new freedoms difficult to manage. The consensus view was that while prep school provided an excellent academic grounding for public school life, socially the preparation was inadequate.

Given that the prep school was supposed to prepare boys for public school this would appear to be a serious failing.

105 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 37.
106 Ibid, no. 80.
107 Ibid, no. 92.
However it should be remembered that for those few boys who entered public school with no prep school experience life could be almost unbearable. As for scale, it was impossible for the prep school to emulate the size of the public school. If life at public schools between the wars was unreasonably tough and barbaric then prep schools cannot be blamed for failing to copy it - life at prep school was meant to toughen boys but there were limits. Similarly it is not unreasonable for prep schools to attempt to prolong the period of childhood innocence. It must be borne in mind that prep schools had eight year olds who had never lived away from home before entering at the bottom and this transition was difficult enough without the prep school making life even tougher and more brutal. This insurmountable problem continues in all school systems today: it will always exist while children grow older and move from one school to another.
CHARACTER OF THE PERFECT PARENT.
(Some way after Wordsworth.)

Who is the Perfect Parent? Who is he
That every Prep. School Head would wish to see?
It is the man, who the boy once brought,
Uninterfering leaves him to be taught,
Nor recks of homestick letters all distraught;
Whose own fair letters are the Head's delight,
Which deem that nothing's wrong and all is right;
Who, with usual instinct to discern,
Can realise that perhaps the boy can't learn;
Abides by this resolve and does not care
If Clarence has for Algebra no flair;
And further goes, once having gone this far,
Owns that he gets his half-wits from his Pa
And thence his geese are flown;
In face of this doth exercise restraint,
Admits the fault rather than make complaint
Of soul reports full of foreboding fears
Of Common Entrance failed in future years,
And other things which might make him irate
He just imputes to stupidness innate;
Is pliable should work of fees arise,
And smiling yields thrice-yearly sacrifice—
More cheerful in his payments, 'en more glad
When touched for more, for extra Clarence had:
As violin lessons, vaccination fees,
Riding and Shooting, Copies of School glee,
Fruit after meals, two pairs of football bags,
Swimming and Woodwork, the yearly fee for Mags;
Who, if his son's a Day Boy ne'er withholds
Him from his games for fear of catching colds;
Who does not fume, nor rave, nor even cuss
When extra work doth make him miss his 'bus;
Who judges food as food alone and knows
That boys' complaints are generally a pose;
Who, if he has occasion to command
An interview, does not demand
To see the Head in midst of meals or school,
But 'phones beforehand as a golden rule;
Nor overstays his time, but to the tick
States his desires and gets it over quick,
And therefore present, this is he:
To catch the Head outside the entrance gate;
Who, when he meets him at a bingle or hop,
Can keep him talking without talking shop,
And thuswise, too, hath trained his lady wife
To speak of things removed from Prep. School life,
From Clarence and those spots on Clarry's face;
But who, if ever called upon to face
Some awful tidings such as 'Flu or Mumps,
Does not deprecate the fact in doloreful dumps,
But sympathises o'er a ruined term
Disordered and upset all through a germ;
And through the epidemic keeps the law
Of quarantine, and feels himself quite sure
That everything is going for the best,
Nor worries human with inane request
If his son should part without much fame
To see the Head in midst of meals or school:
And leave a dead, unprofitable name,
But 'phones beforehand as a golden rule;
Admits the school has really done its best
And in the many walks of life is one
Who, if his son's a Day Boy ne'er withholds
Him from his games for fear of catching colds;
Who does not fume, nor rave, nor even cuss
When extra work doth make him miss his 'bus;
Who judges food as food alone and knows
That boys' complaints are generally a pose;
Who, if he has occasion to command
An interview, does not demand
To see the Head in midst of meals or school,
But 'phones beforehand as a golden rule;
Nor overstays his time, but to the tick
States his desires and gets it over quick,
And therefore present, this is he:
To catch the Head outside the entrance gate;
Who, when he meets him at a bingle or hop,
boarding schools that prepared for entry to public school but because it was the type of school which people from their class attended; state schooling was out of the question. As one inspection report stated: "The boys are of good address". 110

Although it has not been possible to find exact statistics, in approximately 75% of families at least one of the parents had been to boarding schools themselves. Of the remaining 25% almost all would have attended an independent day school or a grammar school. 111 One retired headmaster claimed only a third of his parents had been to prep school themselves 112 but accumulated evidence from other sources indicates that this would not have been true in terms of a national average where it seems at least two-thirds of the fathers had attended prep school. The fact that parents had experienced what their sons were to undergo was an important factor in determining the nature of the school and its ethos. Most of them had valued their boarding experience, however hard it may have been, and were prepared to put their children through the same system. It also helped fashion the social mores of the school. 'First-generation' parents tried not to be conspicuous and to accept and blend in with the values the school presented. Nonetheless one headmaster's son remembered they could be "extra-ordinarily awkward - coming overdressed and that sort of thing. They just didn't know how to behave." 113

111 Although it should be noted that there were few other secondary schools around in their childhood.
112 Mr. Geoffrey Tolson (St. Peter's, Weston-super-Mare), interview 8/1992.
Only a small proportion of schools, those in the premier league, made the social class of their parents a criterion of entry. For some schools only those in the upper class were able to gain entry and those less wealthy or untitled felt alien or unwelcome and often decided that 'School X was not for them.' Headmasters liked to have the sons of influential or wealthy parents in their schools for the prestige this afforded them but only rarely did they actively discriminate against 'respectable' parents not in the uppermost echelons. St. Cyprian's was, according to George Orwell and David Ogilvy, one such exception: "Boys who were lucky enough to have rich or aristocratic fathers were always in favour, which meant that Mrs. Wilkes showered them with privilege and affection."114 This blatant snobbery was one of their principal criticisms of the school. However, recent research has shown even this rare example to be exaggeration.115 The class that was discriminated against was the lower class and 'new money' was similarly frowned upon. Of course few of the former category could afford such schools and it was usually a financial, rather than social, barrier which prevented their children attending. However, one headmaster's daughter remembered her father "frowned on people in trade" and once refused to take the son of a hotel manager because he was "too far down the social order".116 Some entries for schools for transfer in the Gabbitas and Thring archives note that the school has not only no day pupils but 'no Indians' or 'no


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Jews.' The Headmaster of Stanmore Park refused to take an Indian Maharajah because of "the colour reason." The discrimination against Jews has been mentioned. Ultimately, however, it must be remembered that exclusion of parents (and, thus, boys) on the basis of their nature, class or background was a rare thing which only the most exclusive schools could afford to do. For most of this period there were many more places in prep schools than there were takers and at least one oral source said, "Those who could pay could come." A retired headmaster said his only criterion had been, "If you're keen to come I'm keen to get you in." While some schools might have liked to have criteria for selecting parents few were able to apply them.

Choice of school:

Parents choosing a boarding school in the 1990's generally limit their choice to the schools that are within an hours drive. In the inter-war period long-distance boarding was much more common. The graphs below show the distance of the parental home from the school in the period compared with the same distances today.

118 See p307.
120 Revd.R.G.Wickham (Twyford), interview 1991.
121 The level of fees is covered in Chapter Two.
122 Both Aysgarth and Lambrook were all-boarding schools at the dates chosen. They have since begun to accept day pupils.
As their sons were to be boarders, parental involvement in the school was minimal (see below), and lengthy travel was usually by train, the distance of the school from home made little difference to their decision. In the 1920s over 15% of boys at Sandroyd, a school in Surrey, were from homes in Scotland and, as the graphs above show, boys at other schools travelled often long distances to school. One significant
change in the last fifty years has been the decline in long-distance boarding.

The key factor determining choice of school in this period was not proximity but personal connection. This connection may be divided into three types:

1. Having a direct link with the school: the headmaster or a member of staff might be a relative or close friend; the father or older brothers or cousins may have previously attended the school.

2. A connection with a company or neighbourhood. Some schools recruited heavily from particular towns or groups of parents. Schools might, for example, have a large number of Navy boys or boys from India. The Downs was dominated by Quaker families from the Midlands.

3. Personal recommendation, "The main way in which the news was propagated." A good reputation and commendation by parents were powerful reasons for choosing a particular school. One headmaster asked "all good friends of Brockhurst to advertise us," while another was grateful to "the numerous parents who have been kind enough to assist us towards erasing an unenviable name which undoubtedly the school had obtained." Many Old Boys remembered that their parents had chosen their prep school because of friends of theirs who had suggested it, often because they had a son there and were pleased with it.

124 The Brock, Summer 1927, p5.

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Words of advice from doctors, educational consultants and public schools also fall into this category.

There were a variety of other factors which influenced parental choice. The outcome of any visit undertaken was important. Having decided to visit a school parents may have been taken by its atmosphere, its facilities or the personality of the headmaster. However not all parents even bothered to visit the school they had chosen for their son and even those that did make visits rarely visited more than a couple of schools. Sometimes the type of education on offer influenced choice: Rose Hill attracted some parents because German was on the syllabus,\textsuperscript{126} while St. Piran's was the choice of parents who desired a scientific education for their sons. Schools such as The Downs and Abinger Hill offered educational alternatives which a number found attractive. Catholic parents favoured Catholic schools. Parents of weak or sensitive children sometimes selected smaller or more family-based schools. The level of fees influenced some parents for there was appreciable variation (see Chapter Two). South Lodge in Lowestoft, for example, attracted some parents because its fees were lower than its two nearest competitors.\textsuperscript{127} There were one or two parents who tried to set schools off against each other in attempts to secure lower fees but the schools themselves fiercely resisted such pressures. In 1925 the I.A.P.S. Conference had passed a motion "condemning the practise of inserting advertisements in the public Press offering reduced

\textsuperscript{126} Information from Revd. David Hughes.

\textsuperscript{127} Eversley in Southwold and Aldeburgh Lodge at Aldeburgh. Information from Mr. Donald Sewell.

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fees in schools, as being contrary to the spirit of the association and against the best interests of education, and subsequently schools rarely engaged in the practice. The public schools to which boys went on were important, not only because recommendations came from public schools but also because parents wanting to send their sons to a particular public school often chose schools who had success in gaining places at that school. Prep schools attached to public schools carried obvious appeal. The scholarship record of schools might also be considered. Location was less important than many believed. Some boys were sent to the seaside for health reasons but, despite advertisements for healthy sea air and "mixed loam and gravel" soil, only a small number of parents made such location a factor in their choice of school. One headmaster thought it strange that "parents never seemed to care much about vital matters such as location and health." Another unimportant influence was advertising. In her study of private schools in Bognor Regis Judith Lee discovered that prep schools in Bognor "made use of a wide variety of sources of advertising." If this is correct then it is very unusual for advertising was rarely undertaken by most schools. One headmaster's daughter remembered "advertising was absolutely out." Few schools placed advertisements anywhere except in

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129 Horris Hill, for example, was known as a prep school for Winchester. Other preparatory school - public school connections are mentioned in the section on preparation for public school earlier in this chapter.

130 Greenways, Bognor Regis, prospectus - 1930's.


schools' directories and reputable and established schools never placed advertisements in the press. Publicity, even good publicity, was also avoided. The key, observed one retired headmaster, was "Don't market, be recommended." 134

One consequence of personal connection being the dominant reason for choice of school is that rivalry between schools in the recruiting of parents was less than it is today. The fact that parents came from a distance and rarely compared schools helps explain why large numbers of schools existed in close proximity in places such as the Isle of Thanet, Seaford and Malvern. While there was a "certain amount of going around and testing the water" 135 and "there were always some parents who would go down to a town and then tour around looking for the best school" 136 rivalry between schools tended to be based around performance on the games field rather than in parental recruitment.

Parents seemed surprisingly unclear about what they were looking for in a prep school other than it being a reasonably happy place which would give their son a decent education. One schools' directory advised: "Among the points to which parents should give attention when seeking a boarding school for a child are health, tone, standard of teaching, and social standing." 137 An interesting order of priorities. A headmas-

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134 Mr. J. E. Engleheart (Moffats), interview 6/1994.
137 Schools, 1924, p115.
ter advised parents to look at the boys in the school: "Are they properly controlled - disciplined and well-behaved without being cowed? Do they stand properly when spoken to, and answer respectfully but fearlessly?"\(^{138}\) Here again we see the importance of manners and social graces in prep school education. An informative insight comes from a letter from one clergyman to another in which he recommends a school:

> I consider Bramcote an excellent school - with a sound manly tone, and distinctly out of true Religion and loyal Churchmanship. The masters I mention are regular communicants weekly and men of delightfully clean and manly influence.

> The one thing about the school is that it is not in any way luxurious. The food is very good, my boys say, but cold baths and regular public school hardness is the spirit of the school. There is an excellent Nurse and Matron. Scholarship is attended to and their record at Winchester is good - and every care is taken to make them good athletes too."\(^{139}\)

The aspects of schools mentioned here, and the order in which they are mentioned, also help explain the schools ethos (see Chapter Five). However in spite of advice such as this parents rarely came to the school with any form of mental checklist or specific criteria. As one retired headmaster observed, "They just tried to get a general impression."\(^{140}\)

Parental expectations of the school were similarly vague. If pressed parents would have offered notions such as a desire that the boy should be well-grounded academically ("to teach the meaning of work")\(^{141}\), taught how to behave properly,


\(^{140}\) Mr.Geoffrey Tolson, interview 8/1992.

equipped with games prowess and social graces and generally properly prepared for public school. Parents were satisfied with the general ethos of the schools and were happy that their sons should imbibe this and be taught accordingly. As one school historian wrote: "[parents wished] to ensure that their sons became useful, honest and courteous members of society and acquired the right habits for life. They wanted them to enter a new world with the correct intellectual, artistic and sporting attitudes." Another thought, "They expected the school to produce the required academic result. They expected the school to produce a boy who was well-disciplined, obedient, his hair was properly cut, his clothes were properly looked after, he knew how to behave himself in adult company." Parents were predominantly concerned with character rather than merely academic education and this, of course, was what the prep school sought to provide. A failure to respond to parental concern and values would ultimately result in the closure of the school.

144 The reasons why parents chose to send their children away to school were examined earlier (see p30).
Once parents had chosen the school and their son had started, their contribution to school life came only in the form of paying fees at termly intervals. While one headmaster thought that in an ideal world, "The co-operation of parents would be invited and encouraged" in reality most parents were kept at arm's length. Although the schools expected parents to support their ethos and reinforce disciplinary decisions they did not agree with parents having any influence in the day-to-day running or policies of the school. As one source said: "There was trust by parents in the school: they had made their choice and entrusted the upbringing of their children to it so did not expect to interfere." 'Interference' was precisely how parental involvement was viewed and there is little evidence that most parents wanted to become involved in the life of their sons' schools.

Once boys were at school even parental access was restricted. Before the second world war boys were not permitted to return home until the end-of-term: there were no exeats or long half-terms. The Downs was not unique when its policy stated: "Leave for boys to sleep away from the School is never given except for urgent and exceptional reasons." One source said, "It was not expected of parents to visit schools".

147 The Downs, Colwall prospectus, 6/1934 (no pagination).
and those times when they were permitted were strictly defined. At Huyton Hill "a positive arrangement had to be made to see their sons during term-time."\(^{149}\) Parents were usually allowed to watch matches (although with the exception of cricket they seldom did for most of them lived some distance away) but other than that visiting hours were on Sunday afternoons or at half-terms. At half-term boys remained at school and their parents stayed in hotels nearby. At The Wells House parents were able to see their sons on Saturday from 12.00 until 6.30 and on Sunday from 11.00 until 6.15.\(^{150}\) These rules were rigidly enforced. At Feltonfleet the headmaster "was strict with parents over what they were and weren't allowed to do and if they didn't fit in exactly with his ideas he could be extremely rude to them and he had the most fierce quarrels"\(^{151}\) while at Temple Grove, "The regulations and arrangements for Parent's were clear [and simple]...[and] they were kept to rigidly."\(^{152}\) On one occasion a widowed mother came all the way from the North of England to take her son out for the day but was late back due to the traffic. The Headmaster informed her "I'm afraid you won't be able to take him out again this term."\(^{153}\) A typical incident is recorded in the correspondence of a Sandroyd boy. He was returned late after an afternoon out and wrote home: "It is a pity that I was late for Chapel, as besides stopping you coming down on Sunday, Mr. Hornby sent me

\(^{149}\) Mr. I. Butler, interview 4/1993.

\(^{150}\) These hours for Spring 1938.

\(^{151}\) Mr. G. Grundy, interview 8/1992.

\(^{152}\) Gilbert Wheat in O.T.G. Newsletter 1990 (no pagination).

\(^{153}\) Meston Batchelor (Headmaster) quoted by Wheat, Ibid.
to bed early and, worst of all, stopped me acting in the play." His parents received a letter:

"Dear Burn,

Before I forget to say it I am afraid Michael will have no more Sunday leaves this term or next. He knew perfectly well that he was due back at 5.15 and was given leave on that understanding. He ought not to have gone at all - as it was a scouting Sunday. I am thoroughly annoyed with such casualness and am on the point of cutting off Sunday leaves altogether."

When his parents wrote a letter blaming themselves, the Headmaster retorted: "Parents are always much worse than their children - but if a boy has leave it is on certain conditions - and for the fulfilment of these, he is responsible: otherwise the penalty. How else is one to teach them that casualness doesn't pay?" Headmasters were as strict with parents as they were with boys. A later headmaster told the boys to "make sure their parents did not tread on the lawn edges." One Old Boy thought "parents were a little afraid of the headmasters."

The principal reason behind restricting parental visits was that they were seen as a distraction and disruption to school work and school life. The Headmaster of Cottesmore wrote: "I view with grave concern the increasing habit some of the boys are getting into of going out continually on Sundays .... The question arises: Are boys who are often out during term,

154 William Hornby to Burn, 1/12/1924. Personal papers of M.C.Burn.
155 Hornby to Burn, 3/12/1924. Personal papers of M.C.Burn.
156 Sandroyd survey respondent no.99.
157 Ibid, no.102.
being properly prepared for public school life?"\textsuperscript{158} The Headmaster of Feltonfleet wrote, "It really is not advisable for a boy to be taken out too frequently,"\textsuperscript{159} as not only did boys need a day of rest after a week of hard work and games but leaves caused excitement and energy expenditure and led to poor results when work started again. "Not long ago a Master here said to me that in his opinion boys who had been away from the School during the week-end did not really get down to work again until the following Tuesday."\textsuperscript{160} The feeling at Brockhurst was similar: "The duplicated Parents' Day of this term had a really bad effect on the work. A week of anticipation, with minds anywhere except on the work in hand, then the excitement of it all, and a week more to think about it. It's mighty hard on those who are doing their best to get the boy to concentrate."\textsuperscript{161} As one source said: "If you wanted the school to do anything for the kid then they had to be left to do it and you don't want mother coming crying over them all the time."\textsuperscript{162} Seeing parents and escaping from the confines of school on such rare occasions, and then enjoying the treats they provided, was undoubtedly unsettling for boys. The Brockhurst magazine recalls the "Tear-bedewed faces in Chapel on Sunday evening"\textsuperscript{163} after Parents Day. The problem was really that they were so rare they became too much of a

\textsuperscript{158} The Cottesmorian 12/1927, p.172.
\textsuperscript{159} The Chronicle No.24 (8/1938), p.3.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{161} The Brock, Christmas 1930, p.5.
\textsuperscript{163} The Brock, Summer 1937.
highlight. At a modern prep school, where parents visit much more often and boys frequently go home for weekends, this is much less of a problem. Added to the upset and loss of time that parental visits involved was the feeling that increased visits boosted the chance of infection and also that they were an unfair burden on parents who lived far away or abroad. For boys whose parents could not attend, these times must have been particularly upsetting.

Most schools had a day, usually in the Summer term, on which all parents were invited and the school was open to inspection. Parents Day at Brockhurst was described as "the most important day in our school year"\textsuperscript{164} On this day the athletic sports were held or the Fathers versus Sons cricket match. At West Downs, "Parents would arrive, awaited by their sons with eagerness but at the same time with a little apprehension - apprehension that their female relations would not be dressed in too bizarre a fashion and would not do anything which might attract ribaldry."\textsuperscript{165} John Le Mesurier thought it was "a ghastly affair, the fathers trying not to play too well so that their various offspring could shine and return to the pavilion midst muted cries of 'Well done, you fellows!' One sometimes heard, 'Bad luck, Daddy! Sorry I hit you on the instep.'"\textsuperscript{166} No doubt he, like most other boys, found it rather more enjoyable at the time. Some schools hired a marquee; occasionally there were speeches and prizes. At a

\textsuperscript{164} The Brock, Summer 1924, p7.

\textsuperscript{165} Hichens (1992), p73.

\textsuperscript{166} Le Mesurier (1984), p10.
number of schools parents were invited to the school play. At Huyton Hill this was so good that a hall in the centre of Liverpool had to be rented so that all could see it.  

Many headmasters viewed parents as a nuisance, albeit a necessary evil. One said, "The boys were no trouble at all, it was the parents!" This was not because of any demands to change school policy but from their perfectly understandable concerns about their boys' welfare. The headmaster chapter has detailed how time-consuming parents could be. There were, for example, the parents who had unrealistic expectations of their boys. One headmaster wrote that one of his greatest difficulties was explaining to parents that the reason their son was not succeeding was that he was stupid, not because he was lazy. A retired matron recalled over-ambitious parents who promised a boy a bicycle if he came top in Latin. As he was of limited intelligence this was impossible and despite his good effort reports he was thrashed by his father every holidays for failing to succeed. The problem of persuading parents that a particular public school was not suitable for their sons has been mentioned previously. Headmasters seemed to have the most difficulty with mothers. The record cards for Sandroyd boys invariably blamed mothers when boys were removed early - consider this selection:

"Most unsatisfactory - appalling mother."

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167 Information from Mr. I. Butler.
168 Mr. Henry Glaisyer (Hill Place), interview 8/1993.
170 See Flora Scott, And One Ran Away (1991), pp76-77.
"Removed to Wixenford. Quarrelled with his mother."

"Mother difficult - went to another prep school"

"Father amicable but shifty; mother a cad. Gone to Ludgrove."

"Mother drank - father deaf and hopeless. Boy vanished."

"Impossible mother. Biggest liar going and the worst mischief maker in the British Isles."

The Brightlands school register notes about a boy who left after only one term: "Too much mother!"

The Effect on Parents:

How going away to prep school affected boys and their reactions to it has been covered elsewhere. What remains to be mentioned is how parents were affected. After all, the prep school experience did not involve boys alone.

The popular conception maintains that parents were happy for their children to go to boarding school and were pleased when holidays ended. Some people continue to maintain that boarding schools are simply dumping grounds for unwanted children. Kenneth Clark wrote that prep schools existed "solely in order that parents could get their children out of the house."

This is grossly unfair. The vast majority of parents were spending what, even then, was a large quantity of money on their sons' education and sending them away to school not because they wanted to be rid of them but because they thought it was the best, and a right and proper, thing to do.

171 Headmaster’s comments on record cards. Sandroyd archives.


Kenneth More's mother "burst into tears at the news" and there can be no doubt that many other mothers and fathers found separation from their sons difficult. A contemporary author wrote:

"It is only necessary to watch the school special trains depart from one of the large termini at the beginning of term ... to realise that, when the train has gone, taking the boys away with it, a very real gap is made in the lives of the boys' fathers and mothers.

To the observant onlooker many a tear furtively wiped away by the mother, and many a setting of the jaw to suppress emotion by the father, may be seen."  

A matron wrote: "One soon learnt to console the homesick boy or his broken-hearted mother, but weeping fathers always defeated me." Anthony Quayle felt, "Both she [my mother] and I paid a stiff price for my early years at Abberley. Neither of us regretted it, then or after. But we paid all right, and much as it cost me, I am sure it cost her more." For many parents, particularly mothers, the emotional cost of sending their son away to school was high.

Once at school telephone communication with home was unheard of but letters were regularly exchanged and boys were obliged to write home to their parents every week. Official letter writing was usually on Sunday morning. Roald Dahl explained:

"Letter writing was a serious business at St. Peter's. It was as much a lesson in spelling and punctuation as anything else because the Headmaster would patrol the classrooms all through the sessions, peering over our shoulders to read what we were writing and to point

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175 Paul King, Preparatory School Ideals (1924), p16.


out our mistakes. But that, I am sure, was not the main reason for his interest. He was there to make sure that we said nothing horrid about his school.

There was no way, therefore, that we could ever complain to our parents about anything during term-time. If we thought the food was lousy or if we hated a certain master or if we had been thrashed for something we did not do, we never dared to say so in our letters. In fact, we often went the other way. In order to please that dangerous Headmaster who was leaning over our shoulders and reading what we had written, we would say splendid things about the school and go on about how lovely the masters were.\textsuperscript{178}

This issue of censorship was a vexed one. A boy at Walton Lodge received a dressing down from the headmaster after writing, "I am tired of school already"\textsuperscript{179}, and an Old Sandroydian claimed there was a "public beating if a boy criticised the school in his letter home."\textsuperscript{180} Schools claimed that the reason letters were examined by staff was that they were a formal communication and a good standard was to be insisted upon. The St. Peter's, Seaford, magazine explained: "The master on duty is expected to glance at letters, a tactful cursory glance only, to see if they are decently tidy and of sufficient length."\textsuperscript{181} At The Downs a boy had to "hold it upside down some distance from the master"\textsuperscript{182} for similar reasons. Not all schools did inspect letters but, as the Pinewood magazine noted, "This is not altogether without its disadvantages for boys do not always realise the full impact of what they say ..... Perfectly truthful boys, especially those

\textsuperscript{178} Dahl (1984), pp82-83.
\textsuperscript{179} Mr. C. Boldero, letter 2/1993.
\textsuperscript{180} Sandroyd survey respondent no. 7.
\textsuperscript{181} St. Peter's, Seaford, Magazine No. 47 (Easter 1930), p1.
\textsuperscript{182} W. Frazer Hoyland, Aedificandum Est (1983), p52.
who are somewhat imaginative, sometimes give their parents and friends news which is at complete variance with fact. At most schools boys were allowed to buy stamps to post letters during the week and in these they usually had the opportunity to write what they liked without having to submit their missive to higher authority.

While some boys could not always communicate freely with their parents while at school, it is unlikely that their letters would have been entirely open, descriptive and honest in any case. It seems that life at school was rarely discussed with parents, even in the holidays. 62% of Sandroyd survey respondents indicated that school life was never or hardly ever discussed with their parents. Their comments included: "One said anything that needed to be said freely but, in my family, one didn't constantly gossip about the separate world of school."184, "I felt school life was a separate world and ... did not want it to intermingle with or even contaminate home life."185 and "I think one was expected to conform and go along with the system without any question or discussion."186 One wrote "Goodness, no!"187 and another "If tears can be called discussion, then we discussed."188 Parents were kept officially informed via their sons' letters and reports but

183 The Blue and Grey, Winter 1921, p5.
184 Sandroyd survey respondent no.20.
185 Ibid, no.83.
186 Ibid, no.80.
188 Ibid, no.101.
beyond this few knew, or cared to know, more. In Tim Pember's novel *Not Me, Sir* the main character finds his parents uninterested in school life and his mother avoids him when he wants to tell her. When he is upset at half-term she says "But you have such a lovely time in the summer term," and when he replies he hates it, she replies "Nonsense."\(^{189}\)

It is difficult to assess how parents' relations with their children were changed by going to prep school. Part of the problem lies with separating the effect of public school from prep school but the greater complication is simply one of imponderables and human emotions: who knows what would have happened if one had not gone away to school? Why were some sources' conceptions so completely different from others? While some thought early separation had distanced them emotionally from their parents others agreed with the maxim 'absence makes the heart grow fonder.' One thought "Home was never the same. I'd call my father 'Sir' by mistake\(^{190}\) while another thought it "made home infinitely more attractive and dear to me."\(^{191}\) An investigation was made of this issue with a representative sample of Sandroyd survey respondents.\(^{192}\) The results showed that 36% thought boarding at prep school enhanced their relationship with their parents. This group thought it made them fonder of each other, holidays became more special, company more precious and that they were less

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\(^{189}\) J.T.C. Pember, *Not Me, Sir* (1942), p89.

\(^{190}\) The Downs survey respondent no.49.

\(^{191}\) Mr.Peter Ansdell (Sandroyd), interview 8/1993.

\(^{192}\) See Appendix A for an explanation of how this was undertaken.
inclined to take their parents for granted. About half, 46%, thought it made no difference while 14% thought it did distance them but they did not necessarily see this as a negative development. One feeling was that it accelerated "the natural change in the relationship" and that "gradually, very gradually, we all became more self reliant and independent of our parents - but that, after all, was the aim of the exercise, and was certainly encouraged by my parents." A number made the point that they felt the relationship between parents and their children in this period was a more distant one anyway. This was partly due to having nannies and servants but also a consequence of social behaviour at the time. Fathers, certainly, played a far less important and active role in the rearing of children in the inter-war years. Less contact time probably meant fewer arguments and, as boys progressed through puberty into their more assertive years, it seems there was less conflict than might usually have been expected. One wrote he escaped "some of the trauma of disillusionment with my parents." A small number of Old Boys were unhappy that boarding so young had somehow prevented them from really developing a relationship and knowing their parents and brothers and sisters. For those coming to school from overseas, unable to return home in the holidays and apart from their parents for extended periods, the unavoidable cost of boarding was a distancing in the relationship. One Temple Grove boy left his parents in India aged 7 and didn't see them

193 Sandroyd survey respondent no.129.
194 Ibid, no.28.
195 Mr.Phillip Hobbert, letter 1/1993.

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again until he was 10. He could not even recognise his mother, nor she him, when she arrived. Another source told of a boy who had said goodbye to his mother and father on the quayside in Singapore in 1939 as he headed off to school in England. He never saw them again for they were tortured to death by the Japanese. Another small group were pleased to be divorced from their parents. These were boys whose parents were mentally or physically cruel to them or those whose parents' relationships were undergoing difficult times. Richard Todd's parents were in the process of obtaining a divorce and he wrote: "I know I was fortunate to be privileged to spend most of my formative years in this kind of refuge; blinkered, maybe, but at least shielded and reasonably carefree, and able to get on with the business of learning." Ultimately this aspect of the prep school experience seems a very personal one. The effect of separation varied between families and it is impossible to generalise. However, the notion that it destroyed family relationships was true only in a small number of cases. For the majority there was no change and for a large minority there was a positive improvement.

196 Todd (1986), p44.
Conclusion:

The prep school parent in this period was at least moderately wealthy. They chose to send their sons to boarding school because this was common practice in their class. Their choice of school was most heavily influenced by personal connections, mostly by recommendation. Once at the school they were not permitted, and did not expect, to have any say in the running of the school or free access to their children. Indeed, parents were regarded as something of a nuisance to most headmasters - taking up their time and disturbing the environment of school - and they were regulated and firmly treated as a consequence. Although they received regular official reports of life at school they did not involve themselves in it or desire to talk much about it with their sons. Parents paid both financially and emotionally to have their son away at school but although the change in their relationship varied from family to family, on balance it seems to have improved. All parents were affected by the prep school experience and they formed an important part of it.
"The consequences of living a highly ritualistic life in an all-male community during the formative years of adolescence were immense. There should be no illusions about the psychological effects of the public school education. It was a traumatic experience that had repercussions throughout a boy's life."\(^1\)

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Ultimately, to determine the importance of the prep school experience, one must decide how profound this experience was and whether any long-term effects of immersion in this institution can be defined.

This is not an easy task. There is the problem of variety of experience and interpretation and the immense diversity of human nature. Added to this is the distance of time - even the youngest oral sources have tried to remember events which occurred over fifty years ago. Hindsight changes perceptions of events. Primarily there is the problem of separating experiences at prep school from those which came later at public school, university and service in the armed forces. It is impossible to accurately define the long-term effects of the prep school experience and what follows is offered as broad generalisation and must acknowledge the additional effect of later institutional life. That said, the deep and long-lasting effect of experiences undergone in a child's formative

years is widely acknowledged to be more important than events end episodes which came later in life. This is one reason why the prep school experience must be studied and why, in many ways, it is more important than the public school experience which followed.

The prep school formed part of an educational process - its particular role being to prepare boys for public school. Thus character building and long-term change were not supposed to end when a boy left aged 13. An Old Boy agreed: "Wychwood had moulded me, rather than knocked me, into shape and filled me with ardent dreams for the future. Haileybury was to provide the toughening process, the technique of survival." A retired headmaster added the important point that what was learned at prep school was "not unlearnt at public school as perhaps it is now."

The ethos of the prep school had placed immense emphasis on the formation of character. Therefore for these schools to have been successful in delivering their values they had to make a firm impression on the character of their product. The schools strove determinedly to ensure this was so and, at the time, claimed success. One said of the boys leaving that "Their minds well trained would be alert and receptive; their bodies active, healthy and strong; and that in character they would prove themselves to be reliable, manly, cheerful and

2 Peter Townsend, Time and Chance, p54.
3 Mr. Jim Stow (Norris Hill).

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friendly." Another claimed that "the impress received during these early years will be one of the decisive factors in determining their whole life". Other contemporary sources agreed that the prep school experience had a permanent affect. The Marquis of Normanby wrote, "The importance of the Preparatory School Training cannot be too strongly insisted upon. It stamps the character of the boy with an indelible impression." The Board of Education inspectors spoke of "influences that are likely to remain with them permanently." A retired headmaster later wrote, "The average boy, plunged into the rough and tumble of boarding school life, emerges with the confidence that enables him to keep his head above water, as well as with a better understanding and respect for his fellows. This develops the combination of toughness and tenderness that helps a man to face life's problems fairly and fearlessly."

The institutional perception of their role and importance was clear. The views of those who experienced the same institutions is broadly similar. Written and oral sources are united in the opinion that, for better or worse, their prep school did have an important and lasting effect on their characters. Anthony Quayle wrote "I recall that time with such clarity because it was crucial .... Potters leave their thumbprints in the clay before it is fired. In the same way,

4 Littleston Powys (Sherborne Prep.), The Joy of It, p155.
6 The Marquis of Normanby in introduction to Paul King, Preparatory School Ideals (1924).
8 H.D.Martineau, Half a Century of St Rugh's School, Woodhall Spa, p1.
though quite unconsciously, the men and women who taught me at Abberley left their imprints on me ... their example ... has stayed with me all my life."

Peter Townsend felt, "I still owe much to Wychwood; it was a sort of nursery garden where the seeds of manhood were planted in us." A source claimed that "so many of life's lessons did I learn at Earnseat that I have been forever grateful." Sandroyd survey respondents wrote, "I am quite clear that my Sandroyd years set me up in all the main spheres of my life" and "I owe more than I can say to Sandroyd .... It's the one thing upon which the whole of the rest of my odd career depends." Both contemporary and recent sources agree that prep school had a long-lasting and important effect. The question remains: what was this effect?

Some sources found it hard to be specific. One said "Well, I went as a small, spoilt little boy and I left there as a young adolescent and they knocked some of the stuffing out of me."

One writer referred to it as being "primarily a toughening or hardening process in which children learnt to conceal or repress their more tender emotions, and to create for themselves a fairly cheerful and self-controlled existence away from their homes."

However, from the comments they have

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10 Townsend, p44.
11 Mr. Jas. Temple (1931-35).
12 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 40.
13 Sandroyd survey respondent no. 77.
14 Mr J.H. Berrill (The Downs).
made it is possible to define particular aspects of character which were developed or implanted by the prep school experience.

First among these is the notion that they were emotionally hardened and became somehow more independent and resilient. A headmaster's wife referred to the desire to "Make a boy stand on his own feet"\(^1\), and certainly separation from the support and comfort of home forced this upon boys if they were to survive. A retired headmaster spoke of how "boys were taken straight from Mummie's knee and thrust into this world .... they had to learn to face up to the rigours of life."\(^1\)\(^7\) Old Boys spoke of being "on your own at prep school"\(^1\)\(^8\) and the need to develop "an ability to fend for yourself."\(^1\)\(^9\) Bravery and fortitude were qualities highly rated in the contemporary conception of manliness - the basis of character which prep school to large extent successfully implanted. Boys at Cottesmore had been told "If ever the terrible day should arise (which God forbid) when you must tread in the footsteps of the boys who have given up their lives for their country - Then see that you are fit to do so."\(^2\)\(^0\) Even in 1920 The Twyfordian had contained the obituaries of boys killed fighting in India and southern Sudan.\(^2\)\(^1\) Sadly many boys were to die just twenty

\(^{16}\) Mrs E. Kayte (Beaudesert Park).
\(^{17}\) Mr. Jimay Stow (Borris Hill).
\(^{18}\) Mr. M.D. Hopkinson (Upland House/headmaster of Cottesmore).
\(^{19}\) Lt. Col. B. Holloway (Stanmore Park).
\(^{20}\) The Cottesmorian 7/1919.
\(^{21}\) The Twyfordian 1/1920, p15 and p17.

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years later in the Second World War. Prep school boys were prepared for such toughness and unpleasurable conditions. One noted that in the uncompromising conditions of the East Surrey army recruiting depot in the Second World War the sergeant-major was able to break most raw recruits except most of the ex-public school boys who were inured to such hardness.22 Another person wrote, "My brother attributes the fact that he emerged absolutely sane and fit from five years as a prisoner of war solely to having been at St. Cyprian's."23

Linked to this was learning how to relate to other human beings. At boarding school one was constantly in close contact with other boys and had to develop strategies to deal with a variety of personality, some of it not always friendly or likeable. Some sources spoke of how it helped them adapt to different circumstances easily and find something in common with people very unlike themselves. One wrote "I learnt a great deal about nature and human nature - how to cope with difficult situations and people and the joy of friendship."24 They claimed it taught them how to build friendships and relate to other people. Kenneth More wrote of being taught "a wariness about dealing with some fellow human beings which has stood me in good stead during my career."25 An Old Sandroydian wrote, "The school believed that throwing someone in at the deep end was the least painful way of teaching him how to live

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22 Ibid.
24 Revd. H. F. Gibbe (Durnford).
with human beings outside his own family. It was all good medicine and gave one a resilience to outside events and a tolerance of discomfort which has lasted a lifetime."\(^{26}\)

Similarly sources thought that prep school taught them the value of discipline. One wrote "Both my books entailed a lot of hard work in research .... Everything had to be dead accurate; and to ensure that required a lot of self discipline, forcing oneself to plug on late into the night. Undoubtedly the regime of Summer Fields helped to instil that sense."\(^{27}\) Some thought they learned the importance of fairness. One wrote, "For example, no matter what the circumstances, I never asked any of my men during the war to do anything that I was not prepared to do myself and I think this must come from Sandroyd."\(^{28}\) A variety of other character traits were also developed by prep school. Several people mentioned the confidence they gained, both in themselves and to tackle difficult tasks. No doubt the schools would have been pleased to learn that at least one Old Boy believed "the constant emphasis on good manners must have made a lasting impression on most of us."\(^{29}\) One source summed all these character traits up when he wrote:

"I suppose my eight and a half years at prep schools resulted in my acquiring the attributes which were considered necessary for a member of the British upper class - a sense of fairness (play up and play the game), a social polish and good manners - rising when a lady enters the

\(^{26}\) Sandroyd survey respondent no.78.


\(^{28}\) Sandroyd survey respondent no.21.

\(^{29}\) David Porter in Gilbert Ashton, Abberley Hall 1921 - 1961, p49.
room - a knowledge of responsibility and leadership, an all-round ability to kick or hit balls
about, a sense of team spirit, loyalty, tradition, and general Englishness.30

Sources mentioned several less desirable impressions made upon their characters. In 1935 Osbert Sitwell denounced the way in which boys were standardized and individuality suppressed. He wrote, "I know of nothing more saddening than to visit a young relative at such a school: for the child that one knew as a delightful, original being, full of affection, has been converted into a horrid, stupid, hard-hearted little boy, his head full of shibboleths and cricket averages."31 One source felt he was desensitised and brutalised by the experience: "It turned me out as a pretty bloody little bastard with a strong streak of sadism in me and a lot of inhumanity and lack of feeling."32 E.M. Forster also referred to this lack of feeling:

"It is not that the Englishman can't feel - it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught ... that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow, or even open his mouth too wide when he talks - his pipe might fall out if he did. He must bottle up his emotions, or let them out only on a very special occasion."33

Opinion is divided over the way in which boys were taught to conceal or repress emotion. Some commentators maintain this has caused English upper class men to be extraordinarily emotionally confused while others believe that emotional reserve is the hallmark of being English. Suffice to say the

30 Mr. D. E. G. Lyon.
32 Mr. Charles Jewell.
prep school worked hard, with considerable success, to engender such control of feelings.

Another accusation often levelled at private schooling is that it bred snobbery and disregard for less privileged human beings. There is no disputing that prep schools were socially exclusive but it is less certain they actively trained boys to sneer at the lower classes. One boy thought "The whole atmosphere of conscious superiority, of the staff and parents, gave one a completely unrealistic outlook on life..."34 Charity and concern for less fortunate people was encouraged by the schools but equally the boys were constantly reminded of a social position that was perceived to be superior. If prep schools were guilty of inculcating snobbery and reinforcing the class system then they did so along with many other institutions in society at that time.

Individuals gained unfortunate lessons from aspects of their own experience. A few who were beaten unfairly claimed this permanently affected their view of authority. One Old Boy thought that, after being assaulted by a prefect having followed his instructions, his "ready trust" was ended.35 Another thought the extensive use of cribs in study had a "disastrous" effect on his moral character: "Even today I am not above cheating in order to avoid a difficulty and I am still surprised at how rarely I am found out."36 None thought

35 See Alan Ross, Blindfold Games, p85.
it had affected their sexuality or sexual orientation but at least one mentioned "I found it difficult to begin easy relationships with girls in my later teens."³⁷

Some found the experience difficult and unpleasant but were prepared to concede some beneficial effects on their character. An Old Sandroydian wrote "it did condition one to realise that life is not fair and that might be useful."³⁸ An Old Downian thought, "The world is a hard, cruel place. The Downs, I suppose, prepared one for this. I shall never recover from it. Trauma followed trauma. Small boys together are loathsome."³⁹

The long-term effects of their prep school years did not only affect the character of the boys. Sources revealed effects, mostly positive, in several other areas. A good number thought that the academic grounding had given them an excellent future foundation. One wrote, "I owe more than I can say to Sandroyd because it taught me how to learn and to enjoy learning."⁴⁰ and another felt, "What I learnt academically at Sandroyd is what I know today. I was excellently grounded at Sandroyd and I've learnt very little since in any form room."⁴¹ A Heatherdown Old Boy mentioned "It gave me a real love for the

³⁷ Mr. Philip Hebbert.
³⁸ Sandroyd survey respondent no.131.
³⁹ The Downs survey respondent no.26.
⁴⁰ Sandroyd survey respondent no.77.
⁴¹ Sandroyd survey respondent no.42.
Classics, for Latin and Greek."\textsuperscript{42} A sound academic grounding did depend on the school for an Old Boy of Upland House thought it taught him "not much academically"\textsuperscript{43} due to the poor quality of the teaching. A number identified prep school as a source of life-long interests. In the 'thirties The Downs had claimed, "Experience shows that many boys have learnt here an interest in Nature which has lasted them into manhood and provided them with a hobby of permanent delight and profit, while a few have gone on to do valuable and constructive research."\textsuperscript{44} This was true: a disproportionate number of Old Downians became eminent scientists - two gained the Order of Merit and two became Nobel prize winners. Many Downs survey respondents mentioned their interest in Natural History and also the artistic pursuits which this particular school fostered. A Durnford Old Boy recalled "My interest in birdlife and wildflowers and appreciation of the beauty of the country in all its forms began there and has remained with me."\textsuperscript{45} For boys coming from city backgrounds to the rural location of many schools it reinforced the Englishman's love of the countryside.

Particular personalities also made an enduring impression. One headmaster was remembered as "a most powerful influence for good on so many boys who, all their lives, will have remembered him with gratitude and affection."\textsuperscript{46} The remarkably

\textsuperscript{42} Mr. Richard Vickers.

\textsuperscript{43} Mr. H. D. Rogerson.

\textsuperscript{44} The Downs, Colwall prospectus, c.1934 (no pagination).

\textsuperscript{45} Revd. H. F. Gibbs.

detailed descriptions of staff provided by respondents in the two school surveys is testimony to the impact they made. An Old Sandroydian wrote "I am particularly grateful to two masters in particular, both presumably now dead, who awoke interests in me that have lasted for life." Friends made at prep school often became friends for life. One Old Boy remembers how one of the first boys he met "became a friend very close to me throughout all the rest of my schooldays. We shared lots of games, we acted together, learnt the piano together .... Years later I was best man at his wedding."

Conclusion:

The primary objective of this thesis was to test the popular conception of the inter-war prep school by exploring the reality and comparing the two. The detail of this study provides an accurate description of this institution. To what extent, then, is the popular conception true?

The idea that it was unkind and cruel to send young boys away to board is wrong. This impression stems from the experiences of a minority. Although most did find the transition to school difficult, and some aspects of school life could be tough, two-thirds of prep school old boys, even from this period, enjoyed their prep school days."

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47 J.P.Lesf in response to a questionnaire sent by boys at Sandroyd to old boys of the school, 2/1991.

48 Mr. Philip Rebbert.

49 This is discussed on pp139-140. 67% of Sandroyd old boys agreed that the majority of their time at prep school was enjoyable.

(497)
Character formation was very important and tough conditions formed part of this process but it is not fair to state that prep school was truly Spartan. There were, undoubtedly, harsh aspects but general conditions were not necessarily different from home or even disliked by the boys. We must be wary of judging the standards of the period from a modern perspective. Where school life was somewhat harsh this was due to the prep school ethos, dictated by parents and contemporary social mores, that emphasised the creation of 'manly' characters.

Life was highly regulated and rules manifold but again this was a reflection of the times. The bottom line was that prep schools were businesses and could not afford to ignore or contradict parental demands. They were obliged, financially if nothing else, to maintain their ethos. There were practical as well as ideological reasons for this control and discipline. The pupils were, after all, small boys. Close supervision was commonplace and very effective, for example, in reducing bullying - another aspect of the popular conception which has been significantly overstated. As investigated earlier\textsuperscript{59}, bullying was a problem which affected only about 10% of boys.

In connection with regulation and rules, there is no doubt that the discipline described in chapter eleven was strict and one might well argue that corporal punishment was over-used. Beatings were frequent, especially by modern standards, but

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\textsuperscript{59} See p150.

(498)
were an effective method of enforcing high standards of behaviour and although they hurt they were rarely cruel. This too was part of the important character training these schools were supposed to provide and firm discipline was expected by parents and accepted as normal by boys.

Classics did dominate the curriculum but not exclusively so. Other subjects were not ignored and English became increasingly important. Academic standards were very high and boys worked hard to achieve remarkable results. Attendance at prep school virtually guaranteed public school entry and within its narrow curriculum the prep school was academically very successful. Work in the classroom was supplemented by a range of extra-curricular activities which included Scouting, woodwork and riding.

Games were important and, it would seem, were over-emphasised to the extent that a games cult often developed. However, contrary to the popular conception, games were enjoyed by most prep school boys. The fact that the popular conception indicates otherwise reflects the extent to which this conception has been formed by the views of influential men who were precisely those least likely to have enjoyed the prep school regime.

Amongst the staff described in Chapter Twelve there were some weird and wonderful figures: such men invariably stand out in the memory on which the popular conception is based. Again, though, it would seem that the majority were satisfactory and occasionally outstanding. Despite the fact that they were
usually poorly paid and career prospects were limited their dedication can rarely be faulted.

The popular conception correctly identifies the headmaster as a dominant figure. The prep school was, after all, often his own business. It fails to note their tremendous devotion and concern for the well-being of their pupils. If, on occasion, they were tough, then they were tough because they genuinely believed that this was what was best for their pupils.

Throughout this thesis it will have become apparent how institutional perception and reality can vary. Often this is due to the difference between the view of those in authority, or adults, and that of the children under their control. In some areas, such as religious education, it is clear that what schools though they were achieving, and what the actual results proved to be, might be remarkably different. This variation in view serves to prove the importance of gathering information from as wide a variety of sources as possible and comparing their divergent perspectives.

The popular conception is superficial and only occasionally correct. It is unduly unfair to the reputation of the prep school and dwells only on the negative and unpleasant aspects of a remarkable and unique institution. It conveys a false impression. The prep school experience has left its mark on all the men who attended them. While the extent of this effect may vary, and it has negative as well as positive aspects, there can be little doubt that for most boys their years at
prep school were highly influential. If nothing else, Old Boys were left with vivid memories:

"55 years have passed since my first term in Colwall but I still remember that moment of pure delight: it was hot; we had been bathing; and there was ice-cream for tea."\(^{51}\)

"There was one evening in the hall of late golden light and the unmistakeable noise of the marbles ringing and rolling on the wood floor, hundreds of them, and the voices of my school mates, all in a state of pleasure and purposeful activity, and I was running round, not even, I think, playing 'he', just swinging up on to the platform off the parallel bars. I looked down into the hall and I thought in a flash, I will remember this all my life. It came to me as certainly as one running foot before the other touched ground, and then I was off again. But it was true."\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) The Downs survey respondent no.13.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

It was not possible to develop a statistically correct sampling procedure to select those to be interviewed. The opportunity to interview arose only occasionally. Often names were suggested: men with good memories of their prep school years, men and women who had retained links with a particular prep school. From responses to the case study questionnaires it was possible to identify those who had good or interesting recollections and to follow these up with a request for an interview. There is no claim that those interviewed are representative (in some cases they were seen simply because they lived nearby) but a wide range of views were expressed and, in any case, oral sources constitute only one form of evidence used in this study.

The questions and techniques used in interviews varied. Some of the questions asked are given below. Sometimes interviewees were sent these beforehand in order to enable them to give more considered responses. The questions asked were tailored to the research needs at the time (if a sufficient body of information had previously been acquired then the question was not asked) and the likely knowledge of the interviewee (an old boy, for example, would be unlikely to know about the financial backing of the school). Additional lines of enquiry were developed during and after the first interview. Some interviewees were seen more than once. If permission was forthcoming interviews were taped. If the use of a tape recorder seemed inappropriate or was denied then written notes were taken. Interviews usually took place in the interviewees own home. The dates on which interviews took place are given in the bibliography.

Questions asked in interviews:

1/ Where was the school founded? Why?
2/ What was the financial backing behind the school?
3/ What were the numbers of boys and staff in the school during the 1918 - 1940 period?
4/ What schools did the boys go on to?
5/ Is it possible to define the guiding ethos: the ultimate aims and goals of the school?
6/ How were the goals established in 5/ achieved? How was the ethos of the school manifest in daily life there?
7/ What were the subjects taught, in order of importance?
8/ What was the justification or rationale behind 7/?
9/ How would you describe the nature of the teaching?
10/ How was the school structured academically?
11/ How did the school cope with boys of different learning abilities?
12/ What sports were played?
13/ What were the most popular sports among the boys? Why?
14/ Do you think there was a "games cult" in the school?
15/ What happened to those who were not keen on playing a particular game?
16/ What other activities took place out of the classroom?
17/ Can you describe the school "regime" - the day-to-day life at the school?
18/ What were the physical conditions like?
19/ Can you describe the buildings and their condition? What were the grounds like? How good were the sanitary/heating/etc. conditions?
20/ What was the system of discipline?
21/ To what extent was individual expression encouraged? Was the emphasis on the group or the individual?
22/ What happened to boys who did not conform? Were there expulsions and why?
23/ How was "character" trained?
24/ Can you remember your first experiences?
25/ What do you think the psychological effects were?
26/ What sort of boy was produced?
27/ On what grounds were boys/parents selected?
28/ What was the relationship between:
   a. the school and parents.
   b. a boy at boarding school and his parents.
29/ What were the parents expectations? What was their attitude toward the school?
30/ Who were the staff? How many were there and what were their qualifications (if any)?
31/ What was their marital status? What was the school's attitude to marriage/married teachers?
32/ Who became a preparatory schoolmaster? Why?
33/ What sort of life did the master lead?
34/ What was the relationship between staff and boys?
35/ What sort of man was he?
36/ What was his background?
37/ What role had he in the running of the school?
38/ What emphasis was placed on religion and how this was expressed?
39/ To what extent was this absorbed by the boys?
40/ To what extent was health an issue in school life?
41/ What were the highlights of the school year?
APPENDIX B: THE BOYS BOARDING PREPARATORY
SCHOOLS OF ENGLAND 1924 -1942

A complete list of all such schools (excluding London) including approximate location and foundation (and closure) dates where these fall within the period.

Notes:

1. Schools identified as day only in 1936 have not been included unless they started taking boarders after this date.
2. Some schools may have duplicate entries if they are near a county boundary.
3. It has not always been possible to identify schools whose names changed.
4. Schools which took both day boys and boarders in 1936 (the first date such information is available) are identified by a *.
5. Co-educational schools are not included. Nor are schools described as "boys private" (i.e. taking boys over prep school age).

Based on information in Truman and Knightley’s Schools.

Bedfordshire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedford Prep.*</td>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>1928 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horton</td>
<td>Ickwell Bury</td>
<td>1926 - 1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orkney House</td>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>- 1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkfield</td>
<td>Biggleswade</td>
<td>- 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rushmoor*</td>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St.Gregory’s*</td>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>1927 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St.Peter’s</td>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>1929 - 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Knoll</td>
<td>Woburn Sands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Berkshire:

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Years</th>
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</thead>
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<td>9 Victoria Square*</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1926 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allenby House</td>
<td>Wokingham</td>
<td>- 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdown Park</td>
<td>Shrivenham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigshotte</td>
<td>Wokingham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckhold</td>
<td>Pangbourne</td>
<td>1934 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheam</td>
<td>Newbury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiltern Court*</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1935 - 1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College School</td>
<td>Maidenhead</td>
<td>1932 - 1935(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cothill House</td>
<td>Abingdon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>Maidenhead</td>
<td>- 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowthorne Towers</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>- 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle House</td>
<td>Sandhurst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earleywood</td>
<td>Ascot</td>
<td>- 1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farnborough</td>
<td>Sonning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heatherdown</td>
<td>Ascot(^2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heatherley</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horris Hill</td>
<td>Newbury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Listed as as boys private in 1935.

\(^2\) 1941: evacuated to Downton Hall, Nr.Ludlow, Shropshire.
<table>
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<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.S.C.J.S.</td>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>1937 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilwarlin</td>
<td>Wokingham</td>
<td>1926 - 1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambrook</td>
<td>Bracknell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludgrove</td>
<td>Wokingham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlborough House*</td>
<td>Radley</td>
<td>1929 - 1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Cross</td>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>1929 - 1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oratory</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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**Buckinghamshire:**

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<td>Gerrards Cross</td>
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**Cambridgeshire:**

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<td>St. Gregory's</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>1924 - 1928</td>
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---

3 Imperial Service College Junior School.
4 From 1938: Moved into buildings vacated by Wixenford which had closed.
5 1941: moved to Little Abbey, Great Missenden.
6 Moved near Bletchley.
7 Became co-ed at this point.
8 1941: evacuated to The Golden Lion, Ashburton, Devon.
### Cheshire:

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beech Hall</td>
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<td>Braeside*</td>
<td>West Kirby</td>
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<td>Cheadle House*</td>
<td>Cheddle</td>
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<td>Dormie House*</td>
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<td>Wallasey</td>
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<td>Bowden</td>
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<td>Chester</td>
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<td>Hoylake</td>
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<td>Hoylake</td>
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<td>Heswall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostyn House</td>
<td>Parkgate</td>
<td>1932 -</td>
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<td>Ramillies Hall*</td>
<td>Cheadle</td>
<td>1937 -</td>
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<td>Alderley Edge</td>
<td>1937 -</td>
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<td>Somerville*</td>
<td>Bromborough</td>
<td>1937 -</td>
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<td>Somerville*</td>
<td>New Brighton</td>
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<td>Beeston Castle</td>
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### Cornwall:

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<td>Falmouth</td>
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<td>Penzance</td>
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<td>St. Petroc's*</td>
<td>Bude</td>
<td>1927 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treliske*</td>
<td>Truro</td>
<td>1937 -</td>
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### Cumberland:

| Name                    | Location | Years | |
|-------------------------|----------|-------||
| Carlisle Prep.          | Carlisle | 1936  | |
| Harecroft Hall          | Gosforth | 1927  | |
| Kent House              | Whitehaven| 1926 - 1931|
| Lime House*             | Wetheral | 1931  | |
| Rickerby House*         | Carlisle | 1934  | |
| Seascale Prep.          | Seascale  | 1934  | |
| Silloth Prep.           | Silloth  | 1930  | |

---

9 Co-ed from this point.
10 Became co-ed at this point.
11 1942: evacuated to Glenrhydding Hotel, Ullswater, Cumberland.
12 1940: evacuated to Llanbedr, Merionethshire. 1941: evacuated to Wrexham, Denbighshire.
13 1941: Moved to Bromborough.
14 Became girls prep at this point.
### Derbyshire:

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
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<td>Matlock</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Etwell</td>
<td>- 1937</td>
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<td>Etwell</td>
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<td>Matlock</td>
<td>- 1928</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darley House</td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>- 1926</td>
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<td>Ashbourne</td>
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<td>Mickleover</td>
<td>1937 -</td>
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<td>Normanton*</td>
<td>Buxton</td>
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<td>Riber Castle</td>
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### Devon:

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<td>Lynton</td>
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15 Information from another source.
16 1941: evacuated to Posbury House, Crediton, Devon.
17 1940: evacuated to Helston, Cornwall. Moved in 1941 to Tavistock, Devon.
18 Moved to Tiverton in 1929.
19 Described as boys private at this point.
**Dorset:**

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**County Durham:**

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**Essex:**

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20 1941: becomes Clayesmore Prep.
21 1941: evacuated to Watt's House, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton.
22 1941: evacuated to Earnshill, Currey Rivel, Taunton.
23 1941: evacuated to Penn House, Amersham, Bucks.
24 1941: evacuated to Hembury Fort, Honiton, Devon.
25 Evacuated in 1941 to Bowness-on-Windermere.
26 Became co-ed day school at this point.
27 Evacuated in 1940 to Buckfastleigh, Devon.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Institution</th>
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<th>Start Year - End Year</th>
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<td>Felsted</td>
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<td>Frinton-on-Sea*</td>
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<td>Holland House*</td>
<td>Clacton-on-Sea*</td>
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28 Evacuated in 1941 to Canonfforme Court, Ledbury.
29 Became boys private at this point.
30 Evacuated in 1941 to Dendraeth Castle, Penrhynedraeth, Merionethshire.
31 Day only from this point.
32 Evacuated in 1941 to Linden, Colwall, Malvern.
33 Became boys private at this point.
34 Evacuated in 1941 to Bedstone Court, Bucknell, Shropshire.
35 Evacuated in 1940 to Measage, Cumberland.
36 Became boys private at this point.
37 Became day only at this point.
38 Amalgamated with Braidlea, Stoke Bishop, Bristol.
39 Moved to Wraxall outside Bristol in 1927.
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40 Evacuated in 1941 to St.Briavel's Castle, Lydney, Gloucs.
41 Evacuated in 1941 to Cockpole Green, Wargrave, Berkshire.
42 1940: evacuated to Wellington, Somerset.
43 1940: evacuated to Amersham, Bucks.
44 1937: moved to Sonning.
45 Evacuated in 1941 to Carleton Hall, Penrith.
46 1941: evacuated to Stowell Park, Fossebridge, Cheltenham.
47 1941: evacuated to Underley Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale.
48 Became boys private at this point.
49 1940: evacuated to Bartley, Hants.
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50 1940: evacuated to Romsey. 1941: evacuated to Postbridge, Devon.
51 1936: moved to Wimborne.
52 1940: evacuated to Endsleigh, Tavistock, Devon.
53 1941: evacuated to Arnold House, Llandulas.
54 Became boys private at this point.
55 1942: evacuated to Stoke Lacy Rectory, Hereford.
56 1940: evacuated to Lewes, Sussex. 1941: evacuated to Polzapit Tamar, Launceston, Cornwall.
57 1941: evacuated to Glenapp Castle, Ballantrae, Ayrshire. 1942: evacuated to Blair Castle, Blair Atholl, Perthshire.
58 1941: evacuated to Crow-How and St. George's, Pull Wick, Ambleside.
59 1940: evacuated to Polzeath, Cornwall.
60 1940: evacuated to Bilton Grange, Rugby, Warwick.

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61 1940: evacuated to Woobley, Hereford.
62 1940: moved to Woolhampton, Reading, Berks.
63 Became co-ed school at this point.
64 1940: evacuated to Eccleshall, Staffs.
65 Became co-ed day school at this point.
66 1938: moved to Wixenford, Wokingham.
67 1940: evacuated to Lifton Park, Devon.
68 1940: evacuated to Akeley Wood, Bucks.
69 Became co-ed school at this point.
70 Amalgamated with Stanmore Park in 1940 to become Stratton Stanmore Park. 1941: moved to Benington House, Herts.
71 Became boys private at this point.
72 1940: evacuated to Eardisley, Herefordshire.
Isle of Wight:

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Kent:

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From 1925 - 1937 listed as boys private.

1941: evacuated to The Wells House, Malvern. Returned to Ryde in 1942.

1940: evacuated to Woollacombe Sands, North Devon. 1941: evacuated to Ashurst Wood, East Grinstead.

1940: evacuated to Karenza Hotel, Carbis Bay, Cornwall.

Listed as boys private at this point.

1940: evacuated to Stone St., Sevenoaks. 1941: evacuated to Evercreech House, Evercreech, Somerset.


1940: evacuated to Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire.

1940: evacuated to Nutley, Sussex. 1941: evacuated to East Mosley, Surrey.

Day only at this point.

1940: evacuated to Cranleigh School, Surrey.

1940: evacuated to Madeira Hotel, Falmouth, Cornwall. 1941: evacuated to Fairfield, Peterchurch, Herefordshire.

1940: evacuated to Exeter, Devon.

1940: moved to Wimborne, Dorset.

1940: evacuated to Hyde, Bruton, Somerset. 1941: evacuated to Sexey's Hospital, Bruton, Somerset.
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100 1941: evacuated to Bryanston School, Dorset.
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101 Became boys private at this point.
102 Listed as boys private at this point.
103 1940: evacuated to Llanfyllin, Montgomeryshire.
104 1940: evacuated to Hemingford Grey, Hunts.
105 1940: evacuated to Glaston Tor School, Glastonbury, Somerset. 1942: evacuated to The Rectory, Duntisbourne Abbots, Nr.Cirencester.
107 1940: evacuated to Basingstoke.
108 1940: evacuated to Malvern.
109 1941: evacuated to Cloggatta House, Platt, Nr.Sevenoaks, Kent.
110 1940: evacuated to Shobrooke Park, Credenhill, Devon.
111 1940: evacuated to Ingleborough Hall, Clapham, Yorks.
112 1940: evacuated to Barrington Court, Ilminster, Somerset.
113 1941: evacuated to The Vyne, Basingstoke.
114 1940: Rannoch Lodge, Rannoch, Perthshire.

XXX
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**Lancashire:**

| Ainsdale Lodge        | Southport | 1935 - |
| Bishop's Court        | Freshfield | 1936 - |
| Blundellsands House   | Liverpool | 1928 - |
| Charney Hall          | Grange-over-Sands |        |
| Croxton*              | Southport |        |
| Eldon House*          | Liverpool | 1926 - 1940 |
| Hodder Place          | Blackburn | 1936 - |
| Hollylea*             | Liverpool | 1936 - |
| Holmwood*             | Formby |        |
| Huyton Hill*          | Liverpool | 1936 - |
| Lawrence House*       | St.Anne's | 1936 - |
| Oxford House          | St.Anne's | 1936 - |
| Parkfield*            | Liverpool | 1927 - |
| Pembroke House        | Lytham | 1936 - |
| Ribbleton Hall        | Preston | 1925 - 1927 |
| Rossall Prep.         | Cleveley | 1921 - |
| Sandringham           | Southport | 1936 - |
| Sandy Knoll           | St.Anne's | 1931 - |
| Seafield*             | Lytham | 1940 - |
| Stanfield             | Liverpool | 1931 - 1935 |
| Terra Nova*           | Southport | 1931 - 1935 |
| Winterdyne*           | Southport |        |

**Leicestershire:**

| Grace Dieu Manor      | Whitwick | 1926 - |
| Higham Hall           | Higham | 1925 - 1938 |
| Nevill Holt           | Market Harborough |        |
| Stathern Rectory      | Melton Mowbray | 1938 - 1941 |
| Stoneygate*           | Leicester | 1926 - |

115 1940: evacuated to Holford, Bridgewater, Somerset.
116 1941: evacuated to Upcott, Barnstaple, Devon.
117 1941: evacuated to Lake Vyrnwy Hotel, Llanwddyn, Oswestry, Shropshire. 1942: evacuated to Astrop Park, Banbury, Oxon.
118 1940: evacuated to Penmaenmawr, Caernarvonshire.
119 1940: moved to Ambleside, Windermere, Cumberland.
120 1940: evacuated to Southport.
121 1940: evacuated to Kirklington Hall, Carlisle, Cumberland. Returned to Cleveley by 1941.
122 1940: moved to Jodrell, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire.

xxxii
Lincolnshire:

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<td>Seacroft</td>
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Middlesex:

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123 Listed as boys private at this point.
125 1930: moved to Pluckley.
126 1940: evacuated to Chard School, Somerset. Returned to Northwood 1941.
127 Listed as boys private at this point.
Kingsmill*  Cromer  1933 -  
Lydgate House  Hunstanton  1928 -  
Lynfield  Hunstanton  - 1941  
Old Buckenham Hall  Attleborough  
Priory, The  Gorleston  1927 - 1931  
St. Peter's  Sheringham  1931 - 1935  
St. Peter's  Bacton-on-Sea  1937 - 1941  
Suffield Park  Cromer  - 1928  
Taverham Park  Norwich  1929  
Town Close*  Norwich  1933 -  
Victory House  Sheringham  - 1925  
West Runton House  West Runton  - 1927  
Winton  Norwich  - 1933  

Northamptonshire:

Brackley Lodge  Brackley  - 1928  
Maidwell Hall  Northampton  1934 -  
Manor House, The  Brackley  1928 - 1929  
Westbury House  Brackley  1935 -  
Winchester House  Brackley  1928 -  

Northumberland:

Ascham House*  Newcastle  1932  
Corchester  Corbridge  
Foxton Hall  Alnmouth  - 1927  
Hexham Prep.*  Hexham  
Shawdon Hall  Glanton  - 1929  

Nottinghamshire:

Bramcote Hall  Nottingham  
Lodge, The*  Radcliffe-on-Trent  
Roclaveston  Nottingham  - 1932  
Waverley*  Nottingham  
Worksop College P.S.  Worksop  1935 -  

Oxfordshire:

Cathedral Choir School  Oxford  
Dragon*  Oxford  
Grove Park  Oxford  1941 -  
New College*  Oxford  
St. Louis  Banbury  1929 -  
Summer Fields  Oxford  
Warren, The  Caversham  - 1925  

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128  1941: evacuated to Ogston Hall, Nr. Matlock, Derbyshire.  
129  1941: evacuated to Penoyre, Brecon.  
130  1941: evacuated to Barbon Manor, Kirkby Lonsdale.  
131  Listed as co-ed in 1928. Closed 1929.  
132  1940: evacuated to Holm Park, Moffat, Dumfries.  
133  Moved from Hawkesyard.  

xxxiii
Rutland:

Oakham J.S.*

Shropshire:

Aldenham Park  
Brockhurst  
Chelmash Hall  
Kingsland Grange*  
Mill Mead  
Old Hall, The  
Oswestry Prep.  
Prestfelde*

Oakham

Bridgnorth 1930 - 1934  
Church Stretton  
Bridgnorth 1927 - 1930  
Shrewsbury  
Shrewsbury  
Wellington 1926 -  
Oswestry 1931 -  
Shrewsbury 1931 -

Somerset:

Alcombe Hall  
Brean House\(^\text{134}\)  
Brynmelyn  
Cathedral School  
Chantry, The  
Clarence  
Combe Florey  
Downs, The*  
Etonhurst  
Etonhurst*  
Fairleigh*  
Glaston Tor  
Glenmore  
King’s J.S.  
Monkton Combe J.S.*  
Monmouth House  
Naish House  
Oakover  
Palmer’s*  
Petergate*  
Rocklyn  
St. Christopher’s  
St. Decuman’s*  
St. Dunstan’s*  
St. Nicholas*  
St. Peter’s*  
Sylvester House  
Taunton J.S.  
Thone  
Walton Lodge*  
Westgate*  
Westwood  
Wraxall House

Minehead - 1932  
Weston-super-mare - 1928  
Weston-super-mare  
Wells  
Frome 1940 -  
Weston-super-mare - 1933  
Taunton 1934 - 1937  
Portbury  
Ashcott Hill  
Weston-super-mare\(^\text{135}\)  
Weston-super-mare  
Glastonbury 1931 -  
Portishead - 1932\(^\text{136}\)  
Taunton 1940 -  
Bath  
Chard - 1932 - 1935  
Burnham\(^\text{137}\)  
Burnham 1932 - 1933  
Taunton  
Weston-super-mare - 1940  
Clevedon - 1932  
Bath  
Williton 1933 -  
Burnham  
Yeovil 1932 -  
Weston-super-mare - 1926  
Taunton 1940 -  
Taunton 1937 - 1940  
Clevedon  
Weston-super-mare 1936 -  
Bath\(^\text{138}\)  
Wraxall - 1927

\(^{134}\) Listed as a boys' private school from 1930 - 38.  
\(^{135}\) 1938: moved to Glastonbury.  
\(^{136}\) Listed as co-ed at this point.  
\(^{137}\) 1941: evacuated to Trefriw, Caernarvonshire.  
\(^{138}\) 1940: moved to Prior’s Court, Newbury, Berks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffordshire:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alton Castle (St. John's)* Alton</td>
<td>Stafford</td>
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<td>Baswich House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birchfield*</td>
<td>Tettenhall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broughton Hall</td>
<td>Eccleshall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hints Hall</td>
<td>Tamworth</td>
<td>1926</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manley Hall College</td>
<td>Shenstone</td>
<td>1927</td>
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<td>Leek</td>
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<td>Rocester</td>
<td>1929</td>
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<td>Smallwood Manor</td>
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<td>St. Bedes</td>
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<td>St. Louis</td>
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<td>Felixstowe</td>
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<td>Chertsey</td>
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<td>Belmont*</td>
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<td>Branksome-Hilders</td>
<td>Haslemere</td>
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139 Listed as co-ed day school at this point.
140 1935: moved to Banbury.
141 1938: moved to and renamed as Orwell Park. 1941: evacuated to Bedstone Court, Bucknell, Shropshire.
142 1941: evacuated to Sun Hotel, Coniston, Lancs.
143 Listed as boys private 1927 - 1931.
144 1937: moved to and renamed as Old Buckenham Hall, Attleborough.
145 1941: evacuated to Flaxey Abbey, Newnham, Gloucs.
146 1941: evacuated to Ashbury College, Ottawa, Canada.
147 Amalgamated at this point.

XXXV
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>Years</th>
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<td>Tadworth</td>
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<td>Coombe Hill House*</td>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>1931-1940</td>
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<td>Corbet House</td>
<td>West Byfleet</td>
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<td>Cordwallers</td>
<td>Camberley</td>
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<td>Cuddington Croft</td>
<td>Cheam</td>
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<td>Whyteleafe</td>
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<td>Esher</td>
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<td>Leatherhead</td>
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<td>Purley</td>
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<td>Hesketh*</td>
<td>Cranleigh</td>
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<td>Hillside*</td>
<td>Reigate</td>
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<td>Hillside*</td>
<td>Godalming</td>
<td>1937-1938</td>
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148 Listed as boys private at this point.
149 1936: moved to Newbury.
150 Moved to Ipswich.
151 1941: evacuated to Broughton Hall, Eccleshall, Staffs.
152 Listed as day only at this point.
153 1940: moved to Farnham, Surrey.
154 1940: evacuated to Whitechuch, Blandford, Dorset.
155 1940: evacuated to Hurspierpoint, Sussex. 1941: evacuated to Ellesmere College, Shropshire.
156 1941: evacuated to Hurspierpoint College, Hassocks, Sussex.
157 1942: evacuated to Ogston Hall, Higham, Derbyshire.
158 1940: evacuated to Littlehampton, Sussex. 1941: returned to Surbiton.
159 Listed as boys private at this point.
160 1940: evacuated to North Perrott Manor, Crewkerne, Somerset.
161 1940: evacuated to Wadebridge, Cornwall.
162 Listed as co-ed at this point.
163 1941: evacuated to Knapp, East Anstey, Nr. Tiverton, Devon.
164 1942: evacuated to Crownpits, Godalming, Surrey.
Hoe Place* Woking 1927 -
Homefield* Sutton 1937 - 1940165
House of St. Nicholas Esher 1937 - 1940165
Killcott* Godalming 1937 -
Kingswood House* Epsom - 1937
Kite Hall Purley - 1936166
Lanesborough* Guildford 1931 -
Limes, The* Croydon167 - 1942
Lingwood Cobham 1935 - 1938
Melbreck Farnham
Milbourne Lodge* Esher 1932 - 1938
Mount, The* Weybridge 1927 - 1930168
Newlands Thames Ditton 1927 - 1930168
Oakdene* Croydon - 1938
Oast House, The* Farnham 1935 - 1938
Old Hall, The Wallington 1928 - 1931
Oxted Prep. Oxted - 1925
Parklands Guildford 1934 - 1935
Parkside* Ewell169
Radnor House* Redhill
Ravenscroft Purley 1932 - 1933
Richmond Hill Richmond 1939 - 1941
Ripley Court Ripley170
Rock, The Reigate 1926 - 1934
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Sandroyd Cobham172
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Shrewsbury House* Surbiton173
Southern Meads Reigate - 1926
Southey Hall Bookham174
St. Andrew’s* Epsom 1932 - 1938
St. Anselm’s* Croydon175 - 1942
St. Cross Walton-on-the-Hill - 1941
St. Dunstan’s Cheam 1937 - 1941
St. Edmund’s Hindhead
St. John’s Walton-on-Thames 1932 - 1934
St. Mark’s Guildford - 1932
St. Martin’s* Walton-on-Thames176 1935 -
St. Michael’s177 Limpsfield

165 Listed as co-ed at this point.
166 Listed as boys private at this point.
167 1941: evacuated to Garfield House School, Langton Matravers, Dorset.
168 Listed as co-ed at this point.
169 1934: moved to Epsom.
170 1941: evacuated to Belton Strange, Nr.Shrewsbury.
171 1940: moved to Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire.
172 1940: moved to Tollard Royal, Salisbury, Wiltshire.
173 1940: evacuated to Kelly College, Devon. 1941: returned to Surbiton.
174 1941: evacuated to Fullford, Nr.Dunsford, Exeter.
175 1940: evacuated to Barton-on-Sea, Hampshire.
176 1940: moved to Crewkerne, Somerset.
177 A co-ed school from 1928 - 1935.
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<td>1941</td>
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<td>Guildford</td>
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<td>Surrey House</td>
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<td>1925</td>
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**Sussex:**

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178 1932: moved to Crawley.
179 1941: evacuated to Stonehouse, Hele, Taunton.
180 1941: moved to Shackleford, Godalming, Surrey.
181 1941: evacuated to Llangedwyn Hall, Oswestry.
182 1941: evacuated to Ampleforth College, North Yorkshire.
183 1941: evacuated to The Manor House, Swanbourne, Bletchley.
184 1941: 1/2 evacuated to Nassau, Bahamas, 1/2 to Stow House, Lichfield, Staffs.
185 1941: evacuated to Lee Abbey, Lynton, Devon.
186 Not listed 1927-1934.
187 1941: evacuated to Michael Stow House, St. Tudy, Cornwall.
188 Not listed 1932-1935.
<table>
<thead>
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189 1941: evacuated to Yarlington House, Wincanton, Somerset.
190 1941: evacuated to Woodlands, Wellington, Somerset.
192 1941: evacuated to The Close, Bradfield, Berkshire.
193 1941: evacuated to St.Uny Hotel, Carbis Bay, Cornwall. 1942: evacuated to Grove Park School, Brightwell Baldwin, Oxford.
194 1941: evacuated to Lee, Nr.Illfracombe, Cornwall.
195 1941: evacuated to Oakley Arms Hotel, Tan-y-Bwlch. 1942: evacuated to Cors-y-Gedal Hall, Dyffryn.
196 1941: evacuated to Woodleigh Hall, Cheriton Bishop, Nr.Exeter.
197 1941: evacuated to Astrop Park, Banbury, Oxon.
198 1941: evacuated to Longnor Hall, Nr.Shrewsbury.
199 1941: evacuated to Monkton Court, Nr.Honiton, Devon. 1942: evacuated to Combe Hill, Combe Raleigh, Honiton, Devon.
200 1941: evacuated to Ashton Gifford House, Codford St.Peter, Wiltshire.
201 1941: evacuated to Larkhill House, Faringdon Road, Abingdon.

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202 1941: evacuated to Little Abbey, Great Missenden, Bucks.
203 1941: moved to Brent Knoll, Somerset.
204 1941: evacuated to The Manor House, Dauntsey’s School, Wiltshire.
205 1941: evacuated to Llanddeinol, Aberystwyth.
206 1941: evacuated to Wrekin College, Wellington, Shropshire.
207 1941: evacuated to Withedon, Beaworthy, Devon.
208 1940: evacuated to Moreton, Bideford, Devon.
209 1941: evacuated to Salperton Park, Cheltenham.
211 1941: evacuated to Yarlet Hall, Stafford. 1942: evacuated to Benthall Hall, Bredon, Shropshire.
212 1927: moved to Eastbourne.
213 1930: moved to Hawkhurst.
214 1941: evacuated to Oxenden Hall, Market Harborough.
215 1941: evacuated to Great Walstead, Lindfield, Sussex.
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217 1941: evacuated to The Liberty, Wells, Somerset.
218 1941: evacuated to Pudleston, Nr.Leominster, Herefordshire.
219 1941: evacuated to Tregothnan, Nr.Truro.
220 1941: evacuated to Highullen, Umberleigh, Devon.
221 1941: evacuated to Mynde Park, Hereford.
222 1941: evacuated to Metropole Hotel, Padstow, Cornwall. 1942: evacuated to Sheathayne Manor, Honiton, Devon.
223 1941: evacuated to Penarvor Hotel, Bude, Cornwall.
224 1942: evacuated to Alfriston Park, Holford, Nr.Bridgwater, Somerset.
225 1941: evacuated to Two Bridges, Dartmoor.
226 1941: evacuated to and amalgamated with St.Cuthbert’s, Malvern retaining name Seaford House.
227 1941: evacuated to Calvva, Witney-on-Wye, Herefordshire.
228 1941: evacuated to Froxmer Court, Crowle, Worcs.
229 1925: moved to Surrey.
230 1941: evacuated to St.Bede’s, Rugeley, Staffordshire.
231 1941L evacuated to Voclas, Betwa-y-Coed, Caernarvonshire.
232 1941: evacuated to St.Edward’s, Oxford.
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234 1941: evacuated to Newland House, Nr. Coleford, Gloucestershire.
235 1941: moved to Tawstock Court, Nr. Barnstaple, Devon.
236 1941: evacuated to The Rectory, Dunstonbury Abbots, Gloucestershire.
237 1941: evacuated to Castle Hill, Fillleigh, Nr. Barnstaple, Devon.
238 1941: evacuated to Bicton House, East Budleigh, Devon.
239 1941: evacuated to Dob-Ilys Hall, Llandiloos, Montgomeryshire.
240 1926: moved to Hawkhurst.
242 1941: evacuated to Wilsey Down Hotel, Davidstowe, Cornwall.
243 Became boys private at this point.
244 1936: moved to Uckfield.
245 1941: evacuated to Hillside Cottage Hotel, Mortehoe, Nr. Woolacombe, Devon.
246 1941: evacuated to Killerton Park, Clyst, Devon.
247 1941: evacuated to Black Hall, Avonwick, South Brent, Devon. 1942: evacuated to Bigdon House, Buckfastleigh, Devon.

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**Warwickshire:**

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248 1941: evacuated to Croft Lodge, Ambleside, Westmorland.
249 1941: evacuated to Downside School, Bath.
250 1940: evacuated to Llanhaisad, Oswestry, Shropshire.
251 1940: amalgamated with Winton House to form Dunchurch-Winton Hall.
252 1940: evacuated to Llangurig, Montgomeryshire.
253 Became co-ed school at this point.
254 1941: moved to Featherstone Castle, Nr. Haltwhistle, Northumberland.
255 1941: moved to Ruyton Park, Ruyton XI Towns, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.
256 1940: evacuated to Gayton Hall, Ross-on-Wye.
257 Listed as boys private at this point.
258 1941: evacuated to Millholpe Park, Craven Arms, Shropshire.
259 Listed as boys private at this point.
### Westmorland:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cathedral School*</td>
<td>Salisbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chafyn Grove*</td>
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<td>Kingwell Court</td>
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<td>Little Meads</td>
<td>Wootton Bassett 1919 - 1930</td>
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<td>Loosehanger</td>
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<td>Purton Stoke</td>
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<td>St. Probus*</td>
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<td>Walton House</td>
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### Worcestershire:

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<tr>
<td>Cleeve House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downs, The</td>
<td>Malvern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draycott Lodge</td>
<td>Kempsey 1929 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elms, The</td>
<td>Malvern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield</td>
<td>Malvern 1935 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fininstall Park*</td>
<td>Bromsgrove 1932 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill, The</td>
<td>Malvern 1933 -</td>
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<td>Hillstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lickey Hills</td>
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<td>Malvernhurst</td>
<td>Malvern</td>
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<td>Priory, The</td>
<td>Malvern 1939</td>
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<td>School, The</td>
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<td>Southlea*</td>
<td>Malvern 1942</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Cuthbert’s</td>
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<td>St. Michael’s College</td>
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<td>Tannachie</td>
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<td>Tredennyke Court*</td>
<td>Worcester 1890 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wells House, The</td>
<td>Malvern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood Norton*</td>
<td>Evesham 1927 - 1937</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodroughs*</td>
<td>Moseley 1926 - 1942</td>
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---

260 Listed as boys private at this point.
261 Listed as boys private at this point.
262 1935: moved to Malvern.
263 1940: evacuated to Brampton Bryan Hall, Bucknell, Shropshire.
264 1926: Moved to Evesham and renamed Wood Norton.
265 Amalgamated with and became Seaford House at this point.
266 Previously The Priory, Malvern.
267 1941: evacuated to Stanway Manor, Rushbury, Shropshire.
Yorkshire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abbey, The*</td>
<td>Whitby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aysgarth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birkdale*</td>
<td>Sheffield²⁶⁹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bramcote</td>
<td>Scarborough²⁶⁸</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carigmore*</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>1930 - 1936</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clevedon House</td>
<td>Ben Rhydding</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ghyll Royd*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marton Hall</td>
<td>Bridlington²⁷¹</td>
<td>1926 -</td>
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<td>New College</td>
<td>Harrogate²⁷²</td>
<td>1932 -</td>
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<td>Norman Hurst</td>
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<td>1929 - 1936</td>
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<td>Oatlands</td>
<td>Harrogate²⁷³</td>
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<td>Orleton*</td>
<td>Scarborough²⁷⁴</td>
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<td>Overslade</td>
<td>Harrogate</td>
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<td>Harrogate</td>
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<td>Prospect Hill</td>
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<td>Woodleigh*</td>
<td>Hesle</td>
<td>1932 -</td>
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²⁶⁸ 1940: evacuated to Hassop Hall, Derbyshire. 1941: evacuated to Thornbridge Hall, Nr.Bakewell, Derbyshire.
²⁶⁹ 1941: evacuated to Edston Hall, Corgrave-in-Craven, Nr.Skipton.
²⁷⁰ 1941: evacuated to Nest Hall, Alston, Cumberland.
²⁷¹ 1941: evacuated to Lock Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmorland.
²⁷² 1940: evacuated to The Hydro, Windermere.
²⁷³ 1940: moved to Goldsborough Hall, Knaresborough.
²⁷⁴ 1941: evacuated to Aldborough Hall. Nr.Boroughbridge.

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This index is not exhaustive and is appended only as a guide to future researchers interested in a particular school.

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