

MAIDSTONE
TECHNICAL
HIGH SCHOOL
FOR BOYS
1918-1968

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1918 - 1968

Kent County Council

Kent Education Committee

A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of its great ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by its remote descendants. (Macaulay)

Although many have contributed to this record the task of collating material and writing the book has been the work of Mr. C. E. C. Barham, M.A., Senior History Master. We extend our very sincere thanks to him.

EVENTS OF THE JUBILEE YEAR

1967

17th November Speech Day: Visit of Lieutenant General Sir Brian Horrocks, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

1968

27th March Planting of commemorative grove of trees. Anniversary Service in All Saints Church, Maidstone: Preacher, the Reverend Leslie J. M. Timmins.

6th April O.P.A. Dinner and Dance.

13th - 20th July Celebration week of sport and entertainment at Oakwood Park.

Open Day: School open to the public.



" THE SCHOOL — FAITH STREET — 1918 "

MAIDSTONE

TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

TECHNICAL education in Maidstone as elsewhere was carried on in medieval times in the various guilds, but it was mainly a personal matter between the apprentice and the master craftsman with whom he lived. With the Industrial Revolution apprenticeship became a wider affair and the concern of larger units. The need for technical instruction was not confined to apprentices, and so Mechanics Institutes were formed in the early nineteenth century to give craftsmen a background of theory. General education was so poor, however, that many of the original schemes failed for lack of a good foundation. In a few larger centres, such as Manchester and Birmingham, the idea persisted and consequently Technical Colleges were developed.

Enlightened employers and social reformers began to foster the demand for technical instruction alongside general education, but technical instruction in the modern sense did not develop in England on any substantial scale until the last decade of the nineteenth century. The recommendations of a Royal Commission which sat from 1881 to 1884, brought about the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, which empowered the newly created County Councils and County Borough Councils to give limited aid to technical education out of public funds. In 1891 the Local Taxation (Customs & Excise) Act unexpectedly made further large sums of money available for this purpose, and this so-called "whisky money" was to a large extent responsible for the founding in Faith Street of premises to expand the Science and Art Classes which had begun in Maidstone in 1867.

The new buildings were opened by H.R.H. Duke of Cambridge in 1894. Almost all the work was done in Evening Classes and consisted of "instruction in the principles of Science and Art applicable to industries". The articles of government laid down that "the name of the Institution shall be 'The Maidstone Municipal Technical School' . . . an Institution established for the purposes of study and encouragement, advancement and dissemination of Science and the Fine Arts exclusively . . . by courses of study and by examination of students . . . by the grant of Certificates . . . and by the exhibition of Works of Science and Art . . ." (7th July, 1899). Thus the present School may well claim an older nineteenth century foundation than that which it is at present celebrating as its Golden Jubilee.

However, "this useful Institution", as the then Chairman of the Kent Technical Education Committee called it, served those who had left school rather than those still of school age. Nevertheless there was by 1914, according to Lamprey's Guide to the Borough of Maidstone for that year, "a Junior Department for boys and girls under sixteen years of age, preparatory to the classes at the Technical Institute, held in the Union Street Council School. The curriculum is based on Commercial and Industrial lines, and instruction is given during the winter session". It might therefore perhaps be more legitimate to regard the Union Street School as our ancestor, although "instruction" in 1968 is (alas) carried on over more than just the winter session.

The Education Act of 1902 came into force in Kent on 6th April 1903, and from this date responsibility for Technical and Art Education in Maidstone was taken over by the Kent County Council acting through the newly established Kent Education Committee. It was under the auspices of this body that the foundation whose Jubilee we now celebrate took place, when in January, 1918, the co-educational Junior Technical School for Boys and the Junior Commercial School for Girls was formally opened, with the Principal of the Institute of Science and Art, Mr. James Quick, B.Sc., as its first Headmaster.

The School was fortunate in many respects in the Headmaster who was to guide its early footsteps. James Quick received his own education in Bristol, first at the Merchant Venturers' Technical College and then at University College itself. He had worked in industry and had most wide and varied teaching and administrative experience, having been for the twelve years before coming to Maidstone Director and Principal of the Technical Institutes at Ashford and Folkestone. He was a meticulous and efficient administrator, and a man who believed strongly in the merits of vocational training, so that at the inception of the School he was ideally suited to promote its particular approach to education. Although few will now remember him, Mr. Quick continued in his retirement to teach and coach until he was nearly ninety years of age.

The new schools, which were housed in the Technical Institute in Faith Street, together had ninety pupils, sixty-six from the borough elementary schools, twenty-two from county elementary schools, and two from private schools. As the new school was supported by the County Authority the Borough children had no priority over those from rural areas, and in addition to the four scholarships offered by the Borough Education Committee, ten were offered by the County — five for boys and five for girls. Two classes of boys were formed of twenty pupils each, and two of girls of twenty-five each. In the case of both boys and girls, the forms were named simply A and B. The Kent Messenger of 26th January, 1918, in reporting the opening,

remarked that "The start is considered a good one, and the teachers appear to be very pleased with the material they have to work on" (sic!).

The year that saw the start of the School was the year of H. A. L. Fisher's Education Act which, inter alia, raised the school-leaving age to fourteen. In implementing this provision in Kent, the Education Committee now began to establish Central Schools for that vast majority of pupils over eleven years of age who had not obtained a free Grammar School place, and whose only other option was to remain at the all-age elementary school. Thus the amount and variety of Secondary school provision was dramatically increased at the end of the Great War; but from the outset the Technical School differed from the Central School in several important respects. In the first place it was fee-paying, the minimum fee initially being £1 10s. 0d. per annum; but although this was soon to rise, assistance from the Kent Education Committee, in addition to the free-place scholarships, was available through a scheme of graduated maintenance allowances.

The Technical School was further distinguished from the Central school by its form of admission (which was by examination on a boy attaining the age of twelve or in some cases thirteen) and the length of its course, which lasted three years. The Headmaster was ever-anxious to emphasise to a generation unused to full-time education beyond the age of thirteen, the importance of completing the course of instruction. In 1919 he reported that "... our upper classes have now passed through the preliminary stages and are this term entering upon the real work for which the Junior Technical and Commercial Schools were established ... but parents and pupils should realise the great advantages of the latter completing the full three year course; this would bring them up to about sixteen years of age, a much better age to take up some permanent progressive employment ...". Moreover, the Report of the Kent Education Committee for the same year remarks, "with regard to Junior Technical Schools the Committee may have to consider whether those which fail to retain their pupils until sixteen years of age are fulfilling the purpose of Secondary Schools. In such cases they will be performing the function of Central Schools with a particular bias ... The difference in leaving age should denote a difference in function".

That there was a difference in function is clear as far as Maidstone was concerned, and there was little likelihood of confusion between the Technical School and other forms of education for this age range. In December, 1918, the Headmaster emphasised in the "first issue of the first magazine of the first Junior Technical and Commercial School in Maidstone ... our School is a special type of Secondary School, and as its name suggests one in which special facilities are given for boys to qualify in technical work, such as the various

branches of Engineering, Building and the Allied Trades". In practice this meant (to judge from the school reports for December, 1919 of one D. Randell) a considerable amount of specialist instruction in woodwork and metalwork, technical drawing and practical geometry, heat and light, magnetism and electricity and mechanics, each separately enumerated.

The School's link with the Institute (subsequently to be known as the Maidstone Technical College and more recently the Maidstone and Medway College of Technology) was always a strong one: the offices of Principal and Headmaster were vested in the same man; the buildings were shared, and the same staff taught boys by day and older students in the evening, a practice that did not finally cease until the physical separation of the two institutions some forty years later. Similarly, from the earliest days, many boys on leaving school continued their education at the Institute; the Report of the K.E.C. for 1919 welcomed the establishment of the School for this very reason when it said that it "is sure to strengthen the Further Education work in future by providing a solid foundation, the lack of which has been a weakness in previous years . . . In the past Technical and Art Education, including training in Arts and Crafts, has been unduly dependent in the County upon instruction in Evening Classes: this should no longer be the case. Opportunity should be provided in Day Technical Schools for the study of crafts such as those of the plumber, the painter, the printer, etc . . ."

That edition of the Kent Messenger which had reported the opening of the School noted that there was "a long waiting list of candidates for entry to the School from which it is hoped in September to select twenty more boys and ten more girls. The School will then be full, and the Higher Education Committee will be up against the problem of an extension of premises". This was a prophetic remark, for the difficulties of inadequate accommodation were from the outset to dog the School's history, as also that of almost every similar school throughout the country. A further entry of both boys and girls in September, 1919 (among them Mr. D. Randell who returned to teach Metalwork here in 1942 and has been Head of the Craft Department since 1958), brought the numbers in attendance up to 125--54 boys and 71 girls, and the roll of the boys' section continued to rise. The maximum number of places available was strictly 120, and in December, 1919, the Headmaster commented ". . . We have been allowed to use, for the present, a large room in the Art School". In the years to come the pressure on space was to increase and considerable ingenuity (and sacrifice!) was needed in order to cope: Mr. Quick had good reason to remark in his address to the Old Pupils' Association in 1928 that "One real difficulty we have to face at present is the horribly congested conditions under

which we have to carry on", for at this time it had become necessary to use both the Staff Room and the Headmaster's study for the ever-expanding boys' classes.

One reason for the great increase in the number of boys on the roll was the closure of the Girls' Commercial Department at the end of the Summer Term, 1921, with the result that places that became available were taken up by boys. The official reason for the closure was lack of numbers: certainly the chances were slight for many girls to find commercial employment at a time when more and more men were returning from the Armed Forces. This was undoubtedly a discouragement to enrolling at the Girls' School, but even more significant was the "Geddes axe"—those measures of widespread economy in the nation's finances (with which we are just as familiar in the Jubilee year) which had been recommended by the government committee of which Sir Eric Geddes was Chairman. Although the Technical School escaped, the Commercial School did not, and it was not until 1940 that this section was revived. Yet in its brief existence the Commercial Department had contributed much to the early development of the School, particularly to its social life, in concerts and dances, in its Literary Society, and in tennis and hockey, both against the Girls' Grammar School and in Inter-House matches.

The House system was begun in January, 1919, amidst great enthusiasm, the names of the Houses—Allington, Brenchley, Chillington—being chosen because of their association with the School or with the district: thus Allington was named after the castle that was the home of the Wyatts; Brenchley Gardens virtually surrounded the School; and the School itself, together with the museum and library, was built on land that was once part of the fourteenth century Manor of Chillington. Detling House was a later edition, but from its inception in September, 1945, it was to provide more than worthy opposition for the older established Houses.

Although the playground was too small for inter-House sports or indeed for any organised games, the School counted itself very fortunate to receive a New Year Gift in 1919 of gym apparatus, and from the Autumn Term of 1918 until 1931 it had the use of the Maidstone Recreation Ground for boys' football and cricket and for a short time for girls' hockey and tennis. The first Sports Day was held there in July, 1919, for which Councillors Sharp and Armstrong presented silver Victor Ludorum Cups, one to be competed for by the boys and one by the girls. July of the following year saw the first activity of the newly formed Technical Schools Sports Association in the form of an Athletic Sports meeting at Gravesend. The School did not greatly distinguish itself, and the "Inter-Tech" remains one of the few sporting competitions where victory still continues to elude the School.

Other extra-curricular activities that were started early in the School's life were a Cadet Corps and a Scout Troop. The Cadets, who made up Company 4 of the Maidstone Battalion, The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, were formed early in the Autumn Term of 1918 and held their first camp the following summer. Their formation was almost immediately followed by that of the Scout Troop in November, 1918, and they too enjoyed their first camp, at Hythe, in the summer of 1919, a summer holiday that was all the more memorable for being lengthened by a week in celebration of Peace.

The Scout Troop was begun by Mr. F. H. Knowles, one of the original members of the School and Institute Staff, who taught woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing, and was later in charge of the Kent Education Committee Summer School at Folkestone. The other original members of the School Staff, Messrs. Partridge and Paddock took up other appointments in September, 1919, and it was at this time that Mr. Ferrier Pryor and Mr. Letchford joined the staff to teach science and mathematics. They were to remain closely associated with technical education in Maidstone for many years to come, the former being concerned largely with the work of the Institute and the latter with the School.

Leonard Letchford, a graduate of London University, and a "Man of Kent", came to Maidstone from the Rochester Technical School, having previously had practical working experience at H.M. Dockyard, Chatham. For the next forty years his name was to be inextricably linked with that of the School: in turn as Mathematics Master, Housemaster of Chillington and Deputy Headmaster. In addition as Secretary and Treasurer of the Old Pupils Association and a prime mover in its formation, he was to know every boy who passed through the School.

Another of the most enjoyable features of the social life of the School during Mr. Quick's Headmastership was the Christmas Concert, and it was in this connection that two new-comers to the staff, J. Hill and W. Veevers — appointed after the addition of further forms in 1920 and 1921 — first made their mark: performances of a musical show produced by Mr. Hill, together with a one-act play directed by Mr. Veevers (given on a makeshift stage, the various sections of which were erected specially for their few moments of glory) were the start of a cherished tradition. Perhaps just as memorable as the productions themselves were the refreshments between afternoon and evening performances, provided free and on a gargantuan scale.

William Veevers, M.A., LL.B., taught English, French and History in the School; and in the Evening Institute, in addition to these subjects, Economics and Law principally for the London Matriculation

and Intermediate Examinations. He brought with him to Maidstone, as the Principal was to remark twenty-seven years later on "Bill's" retirement, "that subtle atmosphere of scholarship and distinction which is imparted by the universities of Edinburgh and Cambridge", while the School Magazine recorded that he would be remembered for his "air of fatherliness towards the boys, especially by those who have now resolved 'never to do it again'". The "Veevers phraseology" and "monitory forefinger" became something of a legend, and through the thirties and forties the two elder statemen, Leonard Letchford and Bill Veevers acted as perfect foils each to the other.

By 1926 the number of boys on the roll had risen to 122 and it was scarcely possible to accommodate all of them in the "School Hall". This was in reality two rooms divided by a partition. In addition to this there were two other classrooms, one in the form of a fairly large gallery, two "laboratories", and a metalwork room in the artificially lit basement. Woodwork classes were held in the Maidstone Handicraft Centre at the junction of Wheeler Street and Brewer Street. Nevertheless, if one is to judge from the Maidstone Education Week Handbook of 1926, the School was fulfilling the function which was envisaged for it at this time as "one of the best possible feeders to the more advanced instruction given at the Technical Institute; a good percentage of its pupils attend evening classes on leaving the day section. Several are fit to begin right away on the Third Year Senior Course of instruction in some subjects. There are about sixty such ex-Junior Technical School pupils in evening attendance at present . . . The success of the School has been highly satisfactory, a fact which is supported by the Report of the Board of Education on their inspection of the School a year ago". Eight years later, in 1933, a second General Inspection was to take place, which again reported favourably on educational standards, although its comments on the facilities that were available were less complimentary: little could be expected in the economic climate of the time, but at least certain minor arrangements were made that enabled cups of tea to be provided, and a small oven was installed!

In the meantime, however, January, 1927 was to see the formation of the Old Pupils' Association, following a concert given at Christmas, 1926, by the School to former pupils of both the Technical and Commercial Schools. Within a year of its existence — inspired by the enthusiasm of its first Honorary Secretary, Mr. L. P. Letchford — it had an active Dramatic Society, Tennis and Football Clubs and ran its own magazine, The Torch. The first O.P.A. Annual Supper was held in December, 1927, and has become a tradition — interrupted only in the war years — which has continued to the present day. It is to be hoped that the present Jubilee Year celebrations will help to revive its flagging fortunes. A much stronger body in the pre-war

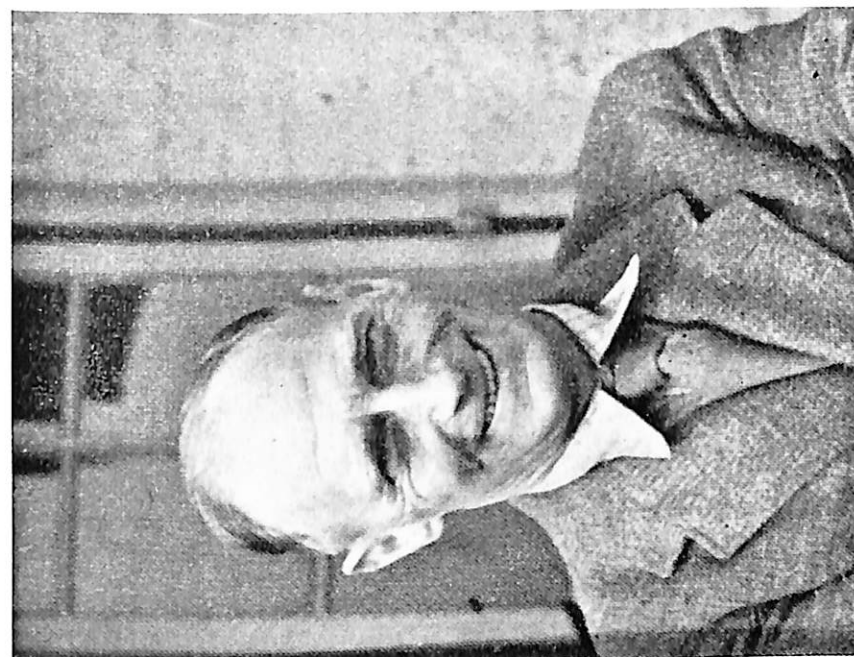
and immediately post-war years than it is today, one of its first actions was to make a generous contribution towards the cost of a new games pavilion erected shortly after the School secured the use of two football pitches at Little Buckland in 1931.

In connection with sports and games mention should be made of an episode which seemed, according to a Kent Messenger report of April, 1929, to be gaining the School some little notoriety. This was the system of punishment by which the too-prolific begetter of red marks was compelled to indulge in pugilistic bouts with one of the School's better boxers, admittedly of similar size and age. When asked to verify the rumour, and indeed to justify the system, the Headmaster declined to comment, but the practice lasted for only a short time.

It is interesting to note a remark of the Headmaster's in the second issue of "The Torch" that "During the last year or two we have had very little real difficulty in placing our Junior Technical School leavers in promising openings". This represented quite a remarkable achievement at a time of considerable unemployment, and undoubtedly Technical Schools were beginning to make their mark. The Minister for Education commented at this time that "No class of school has been more successful in securing good employment for its pupils than the Junior Technical School, although these schools have never had any leaving examination whatever. The employers who receive boys from these schools accept them on the recommendation of the Headmaster, and not on account of any examination certificates they may possess".

Technical Schools had begun as schools preparing pupils for particular trades in industry, but by 1933, the year which marked the end of James Quick's Headmastership, they were already broadening their basis. The Hadow Report of 1926 on "The Education of the Adolescent" had urged that "... the vocational elements must not submerge the claims of general education"; and it is thus not insignificant to find in a School prospectus produced in the early thirties the first aim of the School defined as "the provision of a liberal education" whilst the last point to be made was that "The work of the School also leads to more advanced courses at the Technical Institute". Here possibly can be detected the first small sign of a departure from the original narrow and frankly vocational basis of the School policy and curriculum.

The school of which Mr. H. Collins became Headmaster in September, 1933, nevertheless continued to have as its basic *raison d'être* the provision of sound technical instruction. Harry Collins, a former Whitworth Exhibitioner and graduate of London University, had taught at the Rochester Technical Institute and Junior Technical



H. COLLINS



J. QUICK

School, and for the four years prior to his coming to Maidstone had been Principal and Headmaster of the Heginbottom Technical Institute, Textile School and Junior Technical School. Apart from the period 1941-1945, when he was serving in the Royal Artillery, Mr. Collins was to be at the head of both School and College for the next twenty-three years, years that were to see the School acquire fresh premises and almost double in size, the re-instatement of the Girls' School, the turmoil of the war and the 1944 Education Act, the extension of the School course for a fourth — School Certificate — year, and finally, upon Mr. Collins' retirement, the separation of School and College.

In his "farewell message" to the School in the Magazine of 1955 Mr. Collins looked back over more than twenty years to "a small school of 150 boys and eight staff inhabiting the ground floor of the Faith Street premises, now occupied wholly by the Maidstone College of Art. We assembled for prayers in two rooms thrown into one, we chanted the Lord's prayer, and we dispersed into ill-lit and ill-equipped rooms for various subjects. Probably the most alarming place of all was the basement. Here in the nether regions Mr. Wickham, as metalwork master, presided as chief god of the underworld . . . Up above was the all-purpose science room: it could not be dignified by the name of laboratory — the room was tiered and the tables had two long legs and two short ones so that the table tops should be level. This was Mr. Ferrier-Pryor's domain. Round the corner were the rooms where Mr. Letchford taught Maths, Mr. Leppard French, Mr. Veevers English. Mr. Bonny for woodwork had a more pleasant detached shop where the sun was known to shine on a bright day . . ."

Letchford, Veevers, Ferrier-Pryor, Bonny, Wickham and Leppard: these six men during the period of Mr. Collins' Headmastership were the backbone of School and College. The contributions of the first two have been noted; Mr. Ferrier-Pryor was the moving spirit behind the development of the College as its Head of Engineering; Mr. Bonny — himself an Old Boy who joined the School as a member of the very first Form A in January, 1918 — became Head of the College's Building Department; Mr. Leppard continues in 1968 to instil the mysteries of the Gallic tongue and culture into embryonic Common Marketeers and is the longest serving of all the present Staff, whilst Mr. Wickham only retired from the full time staff in 1959. He had joined the School in September, 1926, and from the cellar in which Mr. Collins pictured him, he sent out many young men who were to achieve great success in life. Perhaps it was a refining fire that burned there. At all events "Smiler" Wickham did more than teach metalwork and technical drawing for over thirty years: as Careers Master he made each and every boy his concern, and many Old

Boys will still remember the school camps that he ran in this country and the holidays abroad that he and Mr. Leppard organised.

Two of those Old Boys from the nineteen thirties are still with the School today: Mr. W. J. Corbin and Mr. E. H. Mills. As boys each of them had remained an extra year at School to work as laboratory assistants, a privilege not accorded to many of their contemporaries. Perhaps this may be regarded as a happy reflection on the ability of schoolmasters in general. Be that as it may, the laboratories they tended were primitive by the standards of 1968, and indeed the Chemistry Laboratory was only used as such in evening classes: its chief purpose in day time was to provide hot water for tea, for there was no canteen or dining hall and there were no school meals. Nor was there, of course, a gymnasium as such: only keen and forceful teaching could have overcome the handicap of trying to take games in a confined space with boys who were not clad for the purpose, and who had no means of practising elementary hygiene afterwards. Yet, on the football field the School team won the Sharp Cup with monotonous regularity and often took the local Schools' League Championship Shield as well. One reason for this, admittedly, was that many of the boys at this School were a year older than those in the Central Schools, and in fact the roll of the School was all the time increasing.

Indeed possibly the greatest concern of all those connected with the School in the nineteen thirties was over the old vexed question of inadequate accommodation. Even before Mr. Collins had become Headmaster some classes had of necessity been held in premises outside Faith Street, at the Boys' Grammar School. Since 1870 this had been housed in buildings in the Tonbridge Road, but in 1930 the Grammar School took over its new buildings in Barton Road, and the Technical School overflowed into its old premises. It was not, however, a wholesale removal of the School from Faith Street to Tonbridge Road: indeed only a few classes could be held in the "new" building because the front part was taken over by the Public Assistance Department. Thus where once the classics had held sway, now the "dole" was given out, and in the background the craftsmen and engineer were taught their trades (O tempora, O mores!).

For some time both the Faith Street premises and the old Grammar School housed Technical education. The School continued to assemble in its old hall each morning, and immediately after assembly some classes would set off for Tonbridge Road for instruction in woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing. Mr. Collins remarked that some masters crossed and re-crossed the Medway so often during the week to reach a class in one or other of these buildings that they never quite knew whether they were of Kent or Kentish Men! Eventually, however, the building of

additional School premises began: the gymnasium and refectory block was built first, and for a time woodwork, which had been taught in the Grammar School's old gymnasium, was transferred to the refectory, with the kitchen being used as a timber store until the new workshops were completed. Finally the Science Block was finished, the Public Assistance Department handed over the front portion of the old building and all was ready for occupation in September, 1939.

But on the third of that month, while the sirens were going at full blast, the staff was engaged at a Reception Centre in the town arranging for the dispersal to outlying villages of evacuees from London. For the period of the war years the capacity and resources of the School were strained to the utmost in accommodating even more pupils and staff and in playing their full part in the war effort. The "phoney war" provided a breathing space so that the windows of the buildings could be blacked out and air raid shelters could be constructed in the playground; and when the war did indeed become a grim reality — with black outs, shelters, sirens, bombs, meals and lessons below ground — the school resembled a veritable bedlam. But it survived unscathed, and after a time the warnings went unheeded, the shelters were neglected, and classroom desks were used as protection from possible blast. The nearest the School came to sustaining a direct hit was from a V2 "doodle-bug" which shattered most of the glass in the workshops and on one side of the main building. This, fortunately, occurred during the summer holiday of 1944.

The Headmaster himself returned to the Royal Artillery, but before he did so he was largely responsible for the re-institution of the Girls' Technical School in 1940. In 1948 when it moved into its own premises in Albion Place, it was to become completely independent of the College and under Miss Thomas it became a thriving institution. Even more recently it has moved into completely new buildings under a new Headmistress, Miss M. Osborn, M.A. The two schools continue to share the same governing body, and although theirs has not been a continuous existence, in a sense of course, 1968 is as much a Jubilee Year for our sister school as it is for ourselves. It is fitting that co-operation between the two Schools, particularly at Sixth Form level, is closer now than at any time since 1940, when at the height of the Battle of Britain, Mr. Collins took the bold step of restoring the Girls' Section of the School.

Nor were these the only girls to be found in the Boys' School: amongst the evacuees from Woolwich Polytechnic, Technical and Art Schools who shared the Tonbridge Road premises, were girls as well as boys, together with their Heads and Staffs and camp followers. Some of their staff continued to live at Woolwich, and often arrived late in the morning or left in mid-afternoon because of train delays. Over the confusion that inevitably ensued and bringing order out of

chaos, there reigned a new Acting Principal and Headmaster, Mr. J. W. Riddell, B.Sc., Principal of Folkestone Technical College, who remained at the helm until Mr. Collins returned in 1945.

The war brought about the re-forming of the old defunct Cadet Corps, officered by members of the staff; other masters were involved in fire-watching duties, or were members of the Home Guard, but the School, under Mr. Riddell's guidance and inspiration, made a contribution to the war effort that was much greater than this. Initially work was taken that was within the capacity of the boys from some of the local engineering firms. It was then resolved that men should be recruited for industrial training, and a series of three-month courses was instituted in which about twelve trainees at a time were given basic instruction in fitting, turning and milling. When the supply of suitable men began to diminish it was decided to train women for the same basic crafts. Two six-hour shifts were run each day, and to do this, extra staff were recruited. These were found largely from craft teachers from Technical Schools which had been evacuated from more vulnerable areas and it was under this scheme that Mr. Randell and Mr. Jeeves — woodwork master until his untimely death (on the verge of retirement) in November, 1959, joined the staff. All the trainees from this scheme were successfully placed in engineering work either in Maidstone or in the Medway towns.

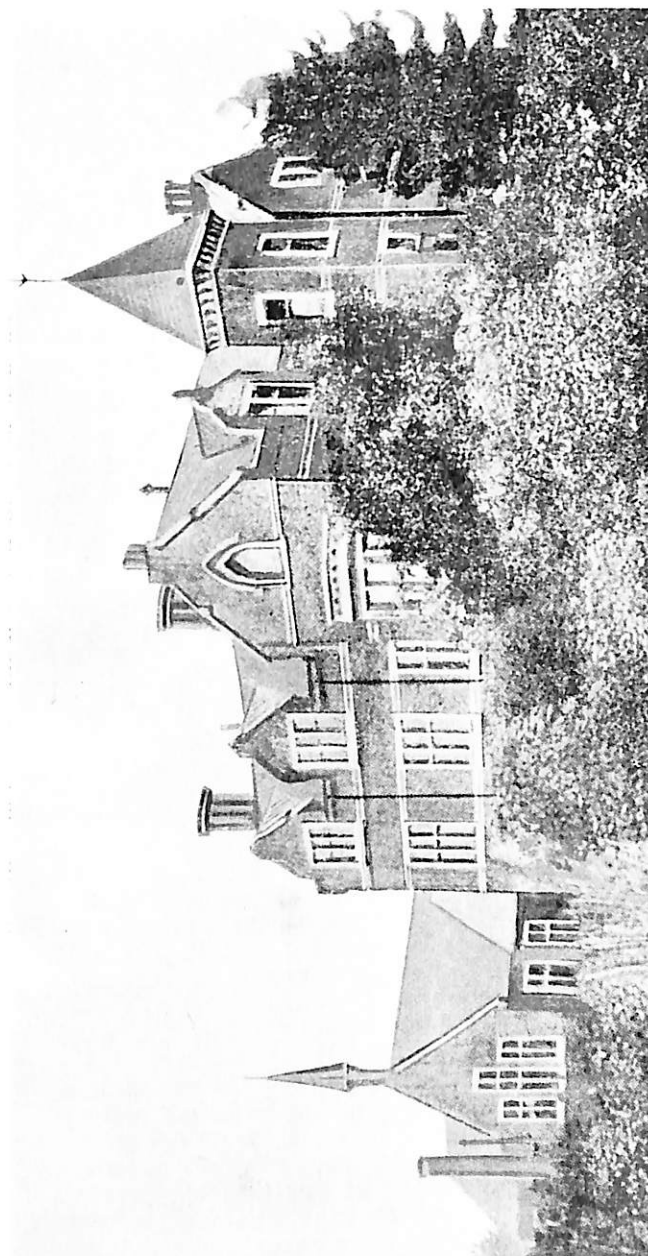
Former pupils of the School played a very full role in the war-time effort in many fields, not least as members of the various armed services, and many won decorations and gained high distinction. The war, which left its mark on so many sections of the community, took its toll of Old Boys: at least 47 of them died in the struggle, and for a School relatively so small, and which opened only at the end of the first Great War, this was a heavy sacrifice. After the war a tangible memorial to them was provided in the shape of a lectern for use at daily prayers. At the foot of the lectern is a glass fronted recess in which rests the book of remembrance containing the names of the fallen. This war memorial was dedicated on 10th July, 1948, by the Vicar of Maidstone at All Saints' Church and today is in the School at Oakwood Park.

Before the end of the war a decision was taken that was to have a lasting and very considerable effect on the development of the School: in September, 1944, a start was made with the scheme of retaining for a fourth year, boys wishing to prepare for the Cambridge School Certificate (which became from 1951 the General Certificate of Education). In 1945 eight boys sat for this examination: all were successful and between them gained 42 credits out of a possible 48. Over the next five years another 74 boys took this examination and from 1945 to 1950 only five failed. In addition it is interesting to note that boys of the Maidstone Grammar School attended for

instruction, and as an example the figures for 1947, when the class made up of those who stayed on was first dignified by the title Sixth Form, are illuminating: fifteen boys sat and passed the School Certificate with 27 distinctions and 54 credits out of a total possible of 90; 23 Grammar School Boys sat the School Certificate in Engineering Drawing, all passed, and the two who sat the Higher School Certificate in Engineering Drawing and Practical Applied Mathematics both passed as well.

The year 1944 was also, of course, a very significant one from the point of view of education on a national scale. The Hadow Report nearly twenty years before had established the principle of a clean break in education at the age of eleven, and the provision for all children regardless of their circumstances, of secondary education suited to their individual capacities. The Education Act of 1944 now attempted to put this recommendation into practice and in view of its provisions, it was decided to admit boys (although not girls) at 11+ to what was now to become the Maidstone County Technical School. In addition during the last years of the war a new course was begun for boys expressing an interest in agriculture as a career, so that admissions to the School in September, 1945, embraced 58 boys in the Engineering and Building Sections, 18 for the pre-Agricultural Course and 26 (out of 118 candidates) eleven year olds. The total roll had now risen to 279, all of whom were housed in the Tonbridge Road premises, although Art lessons were given at Faith Street.

Early in 1946 the Kent Education Committee decided that no more boys would be admitted at eleven until the School was housed in its own premises, completely independent of the Technical Institute, so that this "eleven plus" entry lasted for only a year. The pre-Agricultural course, however, flourished. Specialist tuition was given by a succession of part-time teachers from the Kent Farm Institute at Sittingbourne and the School was very dependent on the Institute: boys made regular visits there in term time and longer visits in the holidays, so that the K.F.I. made a very substantial contribution to the course. Perhaps as much as anyone, however, Mr. Howard Blake — nominally a gardener-instructor — was responsible for the development of the horticultural course, for the boys who knew him could not but fail to catch some of his skill and his love for all living things. The great majority of the boys came from country districts or from other Educational Authorities from as far afield as London, Tonbridge and Ashford; indeed some had to refuse places because of the difficulty of transport. Although by 1948 arrangements had been made for these pre-Agricultural forms to have the use of the gardens and glasshouses at Oakwood Park and the use of two or three rooms in Oakwood House, it was the provision of hostel facilities that the



"THE SCHOOL — TONBRIDGE ROAD — 1938"

Headmaster pressed for more than anything else. For a time this seemed likely to materialise when the Kent Rural Music School vacated the rooms in Oakwood House that they had occupied; but it was not to be. Nevertheless the agricultural side of the course went ahead: Mr. Ryman was transferred from the Estates Department to the Education Committee as stockman, more land was taken over, and by 1951 livestock and a tractor had been acquired. For a time in the period of post-war austerity a pig-club had been formed and rumour had it that, for some rather obscure educational purpose mink was bred as well! Perhaps an extract from the Headmaster's Report to the Governors in March, 1954, gives a more accurate picture, "There are only seven hens, five having been killed by the fox at the end of last term; there are seven rabbits and more due at any moment now . . ."

One who was most directly concerned with the boys who were taking the pre-Agricultural course was Mr. Kendon who joined the School in January, 1948, to teach Chemistry and Biology, and who was to be seen like the Pied Piper leading his young charges up and down the Tonbridge Road to and from Oakwood House. For sixteen years Harold Kendon was the boys' friend, guide and father-confessor, and came to be known affectionately as "Doc" through his care and understanding of the sick and the maimed over the years. In addition he inspired in many boys a knowledge of and a deep love for the whole world of nature. His coloured slides of plants and flowers formed a unique collection, and latterly that collection was augmented by delightful pictures of school holidays abroad, times which Mr. Kendon counted as among the highlights of his years at the School.

The summer holiday parties and excursions had really begun in 1931 when Mr. Leppard organised a visit to Belgium, but the devaluation of the pound, when Great Britain went off the Gold Standard, soon meant a virtual end to holidays abroad other than day-trips to Calais and Boulogne. The first two camps in this country were in 1934 and 1935 at Ingham in Norfolk. The idea being established, trips usually lasting a week were organised in subsequent years to the Isle of Wight, to Conway and to Kessingland on the Suffolk coast. With the improvement in the country's financial situation it was possible by 1939 to plan a real holiday abroad, and Mr. Leppard took a party to St. Adresse, a suburb of Le Harve. But a few weeks after the party's return to England war broke out and there were no more school trips until July, 1946, when Mr. Wickham and four other masters took ninety boys to St. Mary's Bay, Dymchurch. This was the first post-war venture, and at this time the number of holiday camps available in this country was very few, so that eventually school parties were restricted to an annual camp at Kessingland near

Lowestoft. This was for many years very popular; its cheapness of travel and the terms of the Holiday Fellowship for accommodation were so reasonable that, in the day of post-war austerity, it was within the reach of many boys to have a holiday by the sea which they would otherwise have been denied. Meanwhile Mr. Leppard made arrangements in 1947 to take a party to Blankenburghe in Belgium, only for a polio epidemic to intervene and frustrate this plan at the last moment. From 1948 to 1951 however joint School and College parties visited Brittany and Switzerland in alternate years, and since that time Mr. Leppard and Mr. Kendon have taken parties of increasing size to the Continent regularly each summer.

The resumption of holidays abroad was only one of several school activities that had begun again with the return to peace. Another was the Parents' Association which was formed in November, 1945, and which presented to the School two Honours Boards to be placed in the Hall, one to record honours won by School Houses since 1919, the other to record the achievements of individual pupils. The Boards were unveiled at the O.P.A. Silver Jubilee Dinner in March, 1953. The Young Farmers' Club was formed in September, 1946, and remains one of the most active of all school societies. The School Magazine made its re-appearance with the Spring issue of 1947 and the first Christmas Concert since before the war was staged in December, 1946.

Those gargantuan feasts associated with Faith Street had been discontinued in the more stringent climate of the nineteen-thirties, and the concert itself had become more restrained, normally taking the form of two one-act plays. It was largely in this form, together with some choral items produced by Mr. E. Ball, that the concerts of the post-war years were produced. Many masters were in turn involved in one aspect or another of these productions, but more than any Mr. Leppard, who had returned from war service in September, 1946, and Mr. Sherwen, who joined the School in 1948, each of whom would produce a play designed to be contrasting in character so that one might be a comedy, the other having a serious theme, or one a costume play, the other in modern dress.

There was a resurgence too in school football in these years, when the Maidstone Schools F.A. resumed operations in a small way with the Sharp Cup competition towards the end of the 1945-46 season. The school team was defeated in the final that year but for the next six years it was to win both the Cup and the League Championships.

On the other hand, the School Cadet Corps ceased to function: approximately 250 boys had been at some time members of the Company, and had contributed greatly to the success of the Maidstone

Battalion in County Contests, but interest waned once the war ended. In 1946 there were sufficient recruits to form only one platoon, and in the following summer — on the 18th July, 1947 — the Corps had its final inspection and parade.

But despite the general renaissance in school activities, the growth of the Sixth Form and the development of the pre-Agricultural course, for the whole of the post-war decade the School laboured under conditions that were disturbing and unsettling. Sharing premises with the College with its different time-table and different disciplines was never easy, especially in buildings which looked out over a builder's yard on one side and the West Station on another, and seemed to collect all the noise from both. Mr. Collins lamented that "We are unable to make proper arrangements for special instruction for those going into the building industry owing to the non-appearance of the promised huts on the adjoining allotments, and although a certain amount of bricklaying can now be done in the cellar, plumbing is held up because of lead shortage . . ."

Even before the war there had been high hopes of a new School independent of the College, and indeed the Spens Report of December, 1938, had recommended that a new type of secondary school, the Technical High School, with a five year course from eleven to sixteen, should be established as an alternative to the ordinary Grammar School. By February, 1949, the Minister of Education had approved the Development Plan for the County which included provision for new Boys' and Girls' Technical Schools in Maidstone, each with a four form entry. At the end of 1954 sketch plans were submitted for new buildings in Oakwood Park; throughout 1955 consultations were held with the architect over the detailed plans; the first instalment of the new school found a place in the major building programme of the following year; and stage 1 of the new School was put in hand in January, 1957. A further two years were to pass before the building was finally complete, and the School had at last a separate identity of its own.

Before this, however, at the end of 1955, Mr. Collins had retired, after having guided both School and College through many difficult years, and in January, 1956, a separate Principal of the College (Mr. R. W. Wilson) and Headmaster of the School were appointed. Headmaster for the next ten years was Mr. R. H. Voice, B.Sc. A graduate of London University, for ten years Senior Mathematics Master at Wimbledon Technical School and for twelve years Headmaster of Guildford Technical School, he brought to this School at a critical juncture in its history, experience, understanding, the energy and enthusiasm of a man of half his age, and a firm belief in the Technical School's approach to education — "the alternative road".

At the time of Mr. Voice's appointment the School admitted each year nearly eighty new boys at thirteen years of age, and the approach to their education had a vocational bias. As the Headmaster remarked in his first Prizegiving Report, "Before they enter, they or their parents are obliged to decide the approach their education shall have: to which of the great industries their work shall be linked, and therefore by which it shall be coloured — Agriculture, Building or Engineering . . . We long for the time when in our own premises, admitting boys as we shall at eleven years of age, there will be no thought of bias and where the studies are truly liberal". It was Mr. Voice's achievement that over the next few years there was a broadening of the curriculum to meet a wider range of needs whilst retaining many of the characteristics of the approach to learning which were such an incentive in the old Junior Technical Schools.

The new Headmaster made an immediate impact on the boys themselves as well as on the direction of the School's future development. In his own person he symbolised the new School motto — Strive and Serve — which he invited the School to adopt in the summer of 1956; he set up the School Council in February, 1957, to provide boys with the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions on school matters and to involve themselves in charity work and social service; he encouraged the development of clubs and societies and vigorously supported School teams. In addition to this, of course, he had to oversee the building of the new School and arrangements for its takeover.

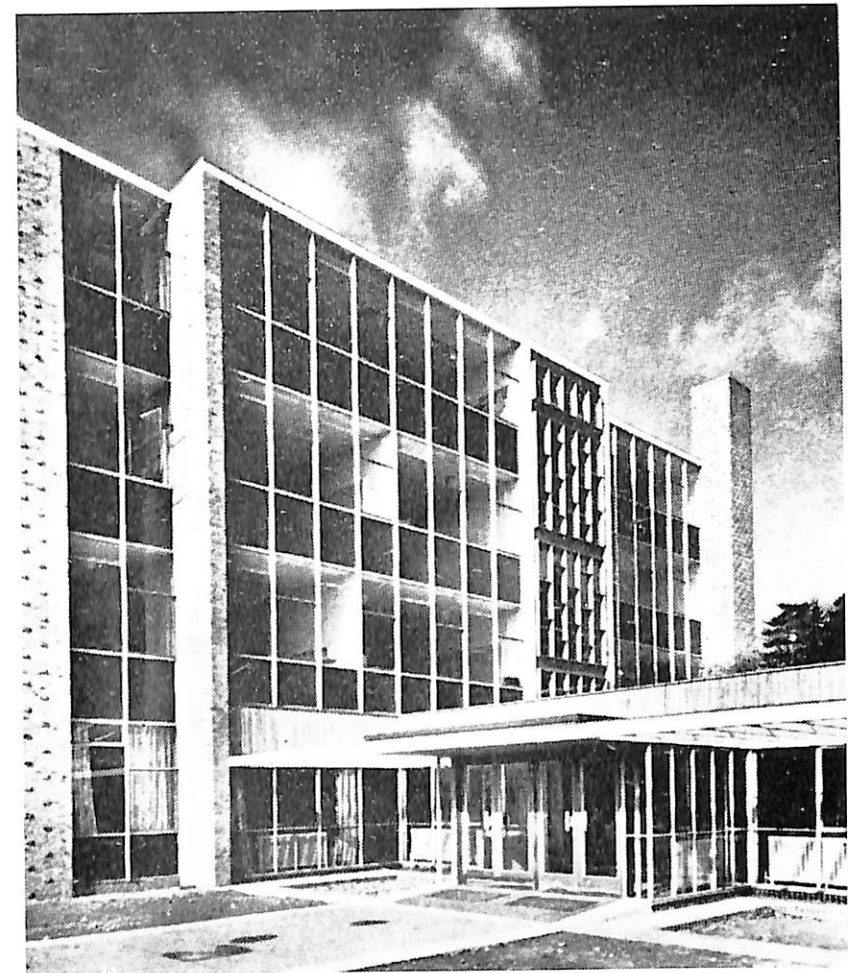
By the Autumn of 1957 the workshop and science blocks had been roofed, the Assembly Hall and Gymnasium were taking shape, and the classroom block was well into the second storey. September of the following year saw the School with one foot in the promised land: 177 new boys were admitted that month, 90 of them eleven year olds, and these, together with the three forms of the agricultural section, were fitted into the new and as yet incomplete school, using workshops for classrooms and taking their school lunches (sent in containers from Aylesford) in one end of the half-finished Assembly Hall. Throughout the Autumn Term it was the masters who traipsed back and forwards along the Tonbridge Road, until finally after Christmas the whole of the senior school moved up to Oakwood Park. Even then the Spring Term was forced to start two days late, to enable the contractors to finish the work, but at last, on 12th January, 1959, the 353 boys who made up the school assembled together for the first time. Even so the whole age range was not complete, for there were no second forms, and it was not until September of that year when there was a final entry of thirteen year olds as well as a new intake of eleven year olds that this was so. By this time the

school had expanded, or perhaps exploded, to a total of 535 boys, and Mr. D. V. Baughan who had joined the staff in 1950, became Head of the Lower School.

It was in this month — September, 1959 — that the Official Opening of the School and the Service of Dedication took place. The School was to have been formally opened by Sir Edward Boyle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education, but a General Election made it impossible for him to carry out this engagement, and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury who performed the Dedication Service also undertook the ceremonial opening. The architects were justly proud of "the golden Kentish Stock brick walls and glass faces which rise to a height of nearly fifty feet", although Dr. Fisher in his address was to describe them as "... so many pieces of glass held together by nothing". But this was, of course, the most significant day in the forty years of the School's existence. The Headmaster had commented "I believe the School is on the threshold of a great educational experiment", and certainly in the next few years it grew rapidly in numbers and in reputation.

It had been decided in September, 1958, that boys in the Fifth Form were to be allowed to enter for the General Certificate of Education Examination even though they had only three years at the School and would normally have stayed into the "Sixth Form" for this purpose. But although they had only nine months' notice, 88 boys were entered in over 500 papers in June, 1959, and achieved an overall pass rate of 65%. Thirty-three boys returned to School to take Advanced Courses for one or two years in Engineering and Crafts, Physics and Mathematics, so that the move into new buildings coincided with the establishment of a real Sixth Form where boys could for the first time study subjects to Advanced Level. The School at the same time began to build up an enviable reputation in many other fields, particularly in sport, both in Maidstone and the County at large.

Several new masters had joined the much enlarged School in the Autumn of 1958, prominent amongst them Mr. R. Jeal as Deputy-Headmaster, who had behind him eleven years' experience in Beckenham and Bromley Technical Schools, and Mr. E. H. Mills, an Old Boy of the School. Together Mr. Jeal and Mr. Mills carried on the tradition of school holiday parties by organising school camps each year, the one at Windermere the other a canoe camp at Hadlow. Amongst Mr. Jeal's many other interests has been swimming and life saving and tremendous success (including an appearance of the School Team in the 1964 Final of the All-England Life Saving Championships run by the English Schools' Swimming Association) has attended his efforts, efforts that have begun for so many years in the cold light of very early morning at the Maidstone Baths.



"THE SCHOOL — OAKWOOD PARK — 1959"

However, since 1964 the School has had its own outdoor swimming pool. This has been made possible by the efforts of the Parents' Association who expressed their desire to help the School in this very practical way shortly after the move to Oakwood Park. The cost of a suitable pool at that time was estimated at £2,500, but before this amount could be collected, the price had risen; and each time a new target was reached the same thing happened, until Mr. H. Hammill, the Association's Vice-Chairman launched the scheme to build the pool and raise the balance by loans from parents. Its eventual cost was £6,800 and on Wednesday, 28th October, 1964, when one brave boy swam one length, Mrs. Hammill performed the official handing-over ceremony of the Pool, a fitting memorial to the efforts of her husband who had died two years before.

Another of the new staff in September, 1958, himself an Old Maidstonian, was the master in charge of games: Mr. John Smith. The successes of the next few years were due in no small measure to his coaching and organising skill. By 1960 School teams had won the local league and knock-out football competitions for three successive years and opposition was sought further afield. School teams played 42 matches in the 1958-59 season and by 1961-62 they had a fixture list of 94 games, many of them against grammar schools and colleges from London and all parts of Kent. The Headmaster was able to announce at Prizegiving in November, 1963, that "Over a period of four years the First Eleven had lost only four matches". In other sports there were similar developments: Rugby was begun as a School game, initially for juniors, in 1960; by 1962 there were four teams in existence with a fixture-list of over fifty matches; and the following year saw the formation of a First Fifteen, and in addition a School Hockey team; whilst a year later, in 1964, a School tennis team was begun. In Athletics School teams regularly won one or other of the Championship Shields in the Maidstone School sports, and the Cross Country team won the newly instituted Maidstone Harriers' race in 1961 and 1962. The cricket First Eleven was undefeated in 1961, and that season Colin Fagg played in the English Schoolboys' team. Another outstanding all-round sportsman at this time was David Sadler who won an England Amateur International Football cap while still at school, and was subsequently to achieve the same honour as a professional. Throughout his long series of successes in many sports whilst at School, unusual skill and genuine modesty went hand in hand. Now that he is, to boys of the School, perhaps the most famous Old Boy it is satisfying to know that this image remains untarnished.

In addition to his skill in physical education, Mr. Smith had a flair for drama and the theatre. With the move to Oakwood Park a tremendously large stage and much more elaborate equipment

became available, and at the end of the Autumn Term, 1960, at the request of the boys through their School Council, Mr. Smith and Mr. Barham produced the first of the Christmas Revues that took up again the tradition of the old Christmas Concert, and subsequently became a regular feature of the school year. These productions alternated with three one-act plays or a more serious full length play in the Spring Term. In 1961 Mr. Kendon produced his own Chronicle play, "In Whom I Am Well Pleased", and the following year saw the first three-act play, "Badger's Green". There thus developed a very varied pattern of drama, from the pantomime style of "Treasure Island" (for which Mr. Gracie designed and constructed the existing apron stage in 1963), and "1066 And All That" (the first joint production with the Girls' Technical High School in December, 1966), to the work of Golding, Pinter and Wesker. The very absence of a particular tradition has made variety and experiment more easily feasible.

Two other sections of the School that made a distinctive contribution to its corporate life were the Agricultural and Art Departments. The Kent Education Committee decided in 1959 to close the Agricultural/Horticultural courses at Dartford and Canterbury, and centre this particular approach to education on the new school in Maidstone, and it was in September of that year that Mr. A. W. Page joined the staff to take charge of the course and the School Farm. At the same time Mr. T. House came to Maidstone to teach Art. Mr. Voice remarked at the School Prizegiving in November, 1960, "It has been something of a thrill to me to have this year the introduction of Art to the curriculum". Many boys since then have had reason to re-echo that comment, and the School as a whole has been much the richer for Mr. House's influence and inspiration.

Mr. D. H. Moore too had joined the School in September, 1959, to make music, and since that time a school choir has performed regularly at many different services and functions. Mr. Moore's part in the Christmas entertainments has been invaluable, but most exciting seems the prospect of a fully-fledged orchestra, which in embryonic form, gave its first performance at the Christmas Carol Service, 1967.

As Secretary of the Parents' Association from 1962 to 1966, Mr. R. D. Byers had been another moving spirit behind the plan to build a swimming pool. But more than this or his teaching of Mathematics, boys owe to him an even greater debt for his work as Careers Master, the excellence of which is partly reflected in the fact that scarcely ever does a boy leave the School without securing a job or place in further education which will enable him to make full use of his potential abilities. It is interesting to note that whereas in 1952, 52 boys out of 72 began careers in engineering, building or agriculture,

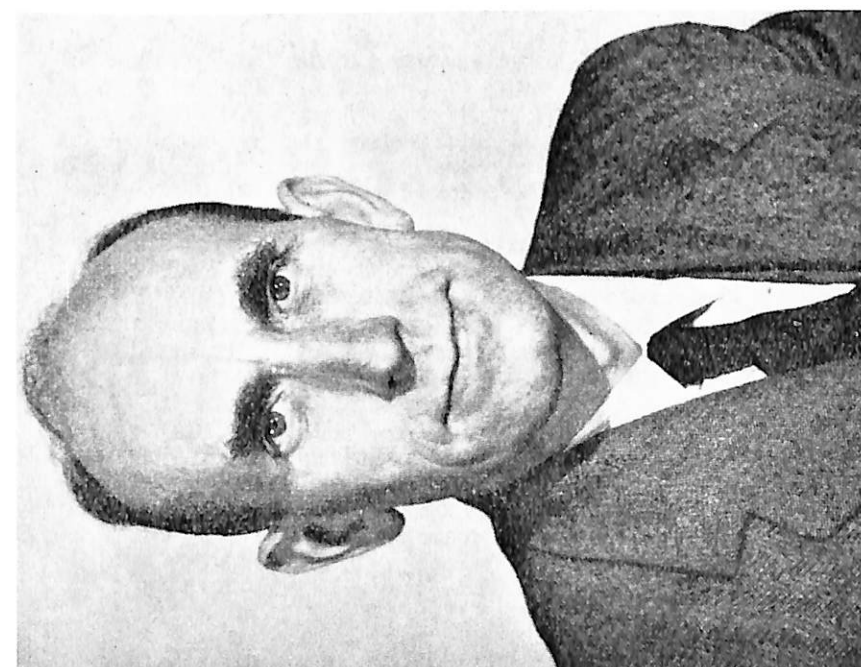
and only three continued with further full-time education, ten years later fewer than 40% directly on leaving school started practical training in one of the three industries to which the School's curriculum had for so long been geared, whereas 13% went on to further education. This trend has continued since that time, so that of 112 boys who left in 1967, only 9 entered the building or constructional trades; 31 boys began work in some branch of the engineering industry, while 37 went on to some form of full-time or sandwich further education, largely but not exclusively concerned with some aspect of engineering.

Whilst undoubtedly statistics can lie, these figures nevertheless illustrate strikingly the move away from courses arranged according to vocational demands towards a wider concept of education, and towards higher levels of achievement by boys while still at School. In November, 1960, Mr. Voice had said: "We look forward to the time when I can report that a boy has gone from us direct to University", for in the past boys seeking University entrance had generally transferred to the Sixth Form at Maidstone Grammar School to do Advanced Level work. The following year Roger Wilmshurst and Norman Tester became the first to do so when they went to Queen Mary College, London University to read Engineering. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the School's Prizegiving that year the Headmaster should claim, "In a sense we have arrived"; nor that the following May (1962) the Kent Education Committee should announce that they had decided "in view of the need to give the public a more accurate indication of work being done in these schools, all technical schools in the County are to be designated Technical High Schools, and they are being renamed accordingly".

The work being done in this School undoubtedly merited this: as befitted its history and background, the first boys to embark on a two-year Advanced Level course had done so in Mathematics and Physics. Science had held a very strong place in the curriculum under the direction of Mr. F. J. Drake, and when he left to become Headmaster of Dane Court Technical High School in the Summer of 1957, Mr. A. G. Rollinson continued this tradition to the point where all of those original Advanced Level candidates in Physics passed this examination in 1961. Two years later the success of the three candidates in Art and one in English Literature heralded a new phase — a small but flourishing Arts Sixth, which over the next few years was to grow in numbers and take its place alongside the Scientists. As yet none of these arts students has graduated, but they have been set high standards to emulate by the scientists, Roger Wilmshurst and Michael Parsons both of whom, having gained "Firsts", are now reading for their Doctorates.



J. A. SKINNER



R. H. VOICE

Her Majesty's Inspectorate, following the General Inspection of May, 1965, commented on the many factors of life and work which gave the School a growing sense of unity, purpose and self-respect. As an institution where high standards of work and endeavour were set, its discipline was sound but not regimented, and there was no doubt that by this time the School had established itself firmly in the esteem of the community it was serving so well.

The following year (in April, 1966) Mr. Voice retired. The reputation which the School had come to enjoy since its move to Oakwood Park was eloquent testimony to his guidance: no one ever sought to translate ideals into reality more vigorously, and every boy and master at the School during that time could with truth re-iterate the tribute Mr. Jeal paid to him on the occasion of his retirement, "Thou wert my guide, philosopher and friend". The following term was to see the retirement of Mr. W. H. Ayling, who had served the School for more than twenty years in many capacities, not the least as Secretary of the Parents' Association, Housemaster since its birth of Detling House, and Senior Mathematics Master; Mr. E. A. Jones, formerly Senior History Master and Librarian of the School, under whose guidance the Library had grown in stock and stature out of all recognition; and Mr. A. R. Sherwen, Head of the English Department, a post that latterly had given scope to his extensive scholarship and wide cultural interests.

Within a year two other long-serving members of the School had left: Mr. N. S. Vick who had been on the staff of School and College since 1946 decided to transfer all his energies to the College where he went as a Lecturer in Mathematics in September, 1967; whilst Miss McKenzie-Smith finally retired in the same year, "finally" because for three-quarters of the Schools' total history, she had been deeply involved as School Secretary, in almost every aspect of its life and development and had come to be part of the very institution itself.

The years 1966-67 were therefore in some ways the end of an era. The School had grown in size from 90 pupils to 680, it had survived the vagaries of war and the re-organization of the educational system, and it had found a permanent home in modern buildings of its own where it could establish its own identity. A thousand boys had passed through the School in the first twenty years of its life, and more than double that number in the same period after the war. At the same time many different men had taught in the School, serving under three Headmasters who themselves had had the great fortune to have behind them the support and advice of Governors such as Alderman W. Egerton-Martin and Miss M. Maplesden-Noakes, each of whom was Chairman for many years.

In April, 1966, Mr. J. A. Skinner, B.Sc., formerly a Draper's Company Mathematical Scholar of Queen Mary College, London, became Headmaster. It is perhaps appropriate that the last words of this record should be his. Mr. Skinner concluded his Speech Day Report in 1967: "What the future holds for us we cannot tell, but now, in our fiftieth year, as we enter the Comprehensive era, we are confident that our School is in many ways comprehensive already. We see ourselves as passing through tremendously exciting times when education has a greater rôle to play in moulding history than ever before".

And to history we leave the future, confident that if the School remains true to its motto "Strive and Serve", it cannot fail.