

WELLINGTON'S PAST

Memories of Secondary Schooldays



Allan Frost

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Everyone remembers something about their days at Secondary school. They may not have liked them but can often recall experiences as if they happened only yesterday.

This book relates the evocative memories of folk who attended Wellington's Secondary schools from the 1920s to the 1960s; it's fascinating to see how much (and how little) changed during that period.

This is a memory-jogging trip into past lives, where some things are probably best consigned to oblivion but others are well worth remembering. From sports matches to lessons in the classroom, from crimes to their inevitable punishments ... it's all here!

For those who weren't there, these reminiscences will shed a glimmer of light on how their parents, grandparents and even great grandparents behaved, played, learned and coped ... and thank their lucky stars that some aspects of school life have improved over the last 40 years or so!

The author is renowned for his nostalgic, informative, perceptive and highly entertaining books covering the history of his home town of Wellington in Shropshire. This is the eighth book in his popular WELLINGTON'S PAST series.

Allan, with help from a variety of former pupils, has written this book specifically in aid of Wellington Civic Society funds; the Society's main interest is the preservation of important aspects of life, past, present and future, in Wellington.

'Were schooldays the happiest days of our lives? Well, if we didn't enjoy them, we certainly won't forget them thanks to Allan Frost.'
(Telford Journal)

Wellington
Civic
Society

UK £5.99





THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, KING STREET, 1920S.



GIRLS' SECONDARY MODERN (LATER CHARLTON) SCHOOL, DOUTHILL, 1966.



SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOL, ORLETON LANE, 1954.



BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL, GOLF LINKS LANE, 1940.

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ALLAN FROST

Published by Wellington Civic Society

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ISBN 978-0-9520173-7-0

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Published by Wellington Civic Society
18 Barnfield Crescent, Wellington, The Wrekin, TF1 2EU, England.

Acknowledgments

Author's collection, J. Butler, M. Edwards, G. & N. Evans, D. Frost, J. Gilmour, M. Greatholder, G.R. Horton, M. Miles, D. Noble, D. Norgrove, B. Parker, *Shropshire Star*, Shropshire Archives, R. Sykes, P. Turner, D. Vickers, *Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News*, Wellington Library, J. Westwood

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Extract from a panoramic photograph of pupils at the Boys' Grammar School, Summer 1962. The author is second from the right on the front row.



Schools weren't just for learning subjects to pass exams; they also provided a wide range of other activities. Above: The 3rd Wellington Scout group at the Grammar School, 1948. Below: Pupils at Orleton Lane Secondary Modern School display blankets they have made for refugees, 1958. From left to right, standing behind on the left: -?-, Gail Standing, Peter Smith (head boy). Front: Christine Smith, Carol Everton, -?-, Mary Bradley, Maureen Cotton, Caroline Barr, -?-, Susan MacGregor, Brenda Cooks, -?-, -?-, Valerie Griffiths, Dorothy Perry, Melody Shorter, Valerie Aires?, -?-, -?-, Edith Ralphs, -?-.



Foreword

Following the success of the last book (*Memories of Early Schooldays*) written for Wellington Civic Society, I have been asked for more. It seemed a good idea to ask folk for their recollections of time spent (some would say 'served', rather like a prison sentence) at the town's Secondary schools. This book is the result of their contributions.

Whereas so many people like to read about the academic successes and painful experiences of their schoolmates, getting them to retell their stories is not quite so easy, which is why I am all the more grateful to those who have shamelessly and honestly described the situations they encountered during the years they spent at the Girls' High, Boys' Grammar, Girls' and Boys' Secondary Modern and the Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College.

I am particularly grateful for the memories by George Evans of the original Boys' High School; the school was the forerunner to the Boys' Grammar School which opened in 1940. There are now so few men of George's generation who are in a position to write first-hand accounts of what that particular school was like, which is why I am pleased with the comprehensive notes George has made.

What I find equally fascinating is that some of the teachers who taught him in the mid 1930s had also taught my father Leslie in the late 1920s ... and me in the 1960s! It strengthens my belief that a few select teachers have an uncanny ability to go on ... and on ... and on!

And, judging from the comments their students over the decades have made, some certainly made more of an impression than others, even if that impression took the form of smarting red weals across the backside!

It's equally interesting to see what people remember about their experiences: for some, sport played an important part; others enjoyed their lessons; more than a few remember the punishments. I suppose the same will be true of the present generation's future recollections, although I doubt they'll be quite so graphic.

What follows is a collection of memories of Secondary school education. It will undoubtedly conjure up feelings of nostalgia for those who were there, and provide an insight into bygone days for the young. Teachers might easily learn some new ideas ... although I would venture to suggest that some may regret the loss of much of the freedom their counterparts had in days now long gone ...

Allan Frost, 2008



Clerical (5th Year) class group, Girls' High School, 1939. Back row: Margaret Clay, Jean Darrall, Gladys Smith. Seated: Doreen Delves, Dorothy Dumbell, Nancy Edge, Miss Thewlass (Typing, Bookkeeping), Peggy ?, Betty Holmes, Trixie Roberts.



Extract from a 1935 panoramic photo of the Girls' High School. The first year included both young boys as well as girls at that time.

1. High School for Girls, King Street

Naomi Evans, born Hurdley, 1928.

'The day war broke out' (September 1939), I started at Wellington Girls' High School. I had passed the 'Scholarship' as it was then called and went into 1A. My classroom was in 'The Row' (a long wooden building at the bottom of the hockey field). Several girls from Prince's Street school came with me and we went through the years together. Unfortunately, most of them are gone now but occasionally I meet one or two at the meetings of the Old Girls Association.

Miss Etches taught junior maths and she lived with her widowed mother quite close to me; I was hopeless at maths. Miss Morley, senior maths, lived nearby too. Miss Forster (the Headmistress) lived in Roseway next door to some more friends of my mother and I really did feel surrounded even after school. Miss Skillen taught music, Miss Robinson taught biology and Miss Bence cookery and needlework. Miss Jones PE later married Mr. 'Dag' Tomlinson from the Boys' Grammar School (and how fascinating that was to all the girls). Miss Charnley also took us for English, Miss Cormack French, Mrs. Geldart Art and in the fourth year Miss Turner took French and held us enthralled with her accounts of life in a convent in France.

I lived at the 'Pop' works on Holyhead Road so was able to walk home for lunch together with Sheila Kirwan, who lived on Mill Bank, and Margaret Stokes, the butcher's daughter. We had to wear our school uniform at all times and must never remove our hats (black velour in the winter and panamas in the summer). I enjoyed English, scripture, French, biology and art. I did not like maths or geography (and I married a geographer!). I played tennis but not hockey (some girls were quite vicious with their hockey sticks). I wasn't very good at needlework and if there was some apparatus to be vaulted over in the gym – I got stuck halfway. I did so admire those girls who flew over effortlessly.

My walk to school was interesting. George (my husband) has quite 'a thing' about smells and I well remember the pop works chimney, Woodhall's stables in Prince's Street and the Wellington laundry chimney – all in close proximity. In those early days boys occupied half the High School and girls the other half. George was there in the fifth year as I started in the first. Our paths certainly didn't cross then.

The years passed by – not too eventfully – until Americans arrived in the area. One of the girls in my class became very friendly with one, who met her from school



Girls' High production of St. Joan, 1950, including boys from the Grammar School.



Girls' High School Form IIIA Hockey team, 1933. Back row, from left: G. Crowe, Miss Webster, E. Tunnock. Others in the photo are: N. Ward, P. Fletcher, G. Bailey, G. Shelley, A. Pidgeon, M. Piggott, N. Harris, S. Ricketts, G. Fish.

occasionally (more excitement in the ranks). They married – she was a GI Bride and lived very happily ever after in America. She is a widow now but has many happy memories, as we all have, of an exciting time in our lives.

We had two little girls staying with us as evacuees from a junior school in Birmingham during the ‘Blitz’. I don’t think we fully realised how frightened they must have been a long way away from their parents. They returned to Birmingham fairly soon and were replaced by pupils from Holly Lodge High School for Girls at Smethwick, who shared our High School with us. The boys had left by now for their new school in Golf Links Lane. We again took two girls into our home and some years later I met up with one girl who had stayed with my friend in Roseway, who was chairman of the conference and later president.

The other girl, who was extremely clever and very good at art, joined the radar station staff at Malvern. I wonder where she is now – and how involved she must have been during the War and later on. In the summer, some girls went fruit picking at the fruit farm at Histon, Cambridgeshire.

It’s strange how a tune can stay with you for years. I can still see a friend from Oakengates walking across the stage to the piano and playing *Fur Elise*. Last week we attended a friend’s funeral and *Fur Elise* accompanied the entry of the coffin.

Some years ago now, George and I went to America to see our eldest son and his family. Our grandchildren were very eager to show us their school. Imagine our surprise when we saw what could have been Wellington Girls’ High School – almost identical! But we didn’t have armed guards in our playground as they did.

Eventually it was time to leave the High School and move on, and I was not unhappy to do so. I always felt I could have done better if I had worked harder and I enjoyed a more relaxed atmosphere during my twelve months at Shrewsbury Technical College. I still have happy memories of my High School days and am pleased to have been in the class of ’39.



High School Sports Day, 1948, with the old classroom block along Regent Street.



Girls' High Hockey team, 1958. From left, back row: Joyce Elcock, Jennifer Morris, Sheila Thomas, Marion Dolby, Pamela Small, Margaret Brown. Front: V. Smith, Sandra Shepherd, Diana Evans, Eileen Thomas, Sheila Bardsley.



Headmistress Miss Ethel Barnes sits with Girls' High Prefects, 1960/61.

2. High School for Boys, King Street

George Evans, born 1923.

THE SCHOLARSHIP

In 1935 I was 11 and at Wrockwardine Church of England Boys' School, a long name for a place with only two teachers and under 50 boys. My parents were dissatisfied with the education I was getting and wondered if they could send me to the Boys' High School in Wellington. So they sent me off to 'take the scholarship'.

I was terrified when I arrived at this huge place, completely on my own. Nobody else from Wrockwardine was there and so far as I know none had ever gone. High schools were for posh kids, and whatever we were, we were not posh. The very idea that I might have to go to this place had me shivering with fright. However, in those days we did as we were told; there was little choice.

There were other boys walking down the wide drive on the right hand side of the school and I just followed in through the door at the back. The other lads were in little gangs, staying with boys from their own school and chatting nervously. None had any concern with anyone they didn't know.

There were strange, large men dressed in academic gowns ordering us about. They sat us at single oak desks and made sure we had dipping pens, ink in the inkwells and sharpened pencils. Then they put papers in front of us and told us to start. I'd never heard of examinations before and hadn't a clue what to do but I read the paper and tried to answer the questions.

My dad had been told there might be questions about things I'd never been taught, so he advised me that, whenever something came up that I'd no clue about I should write, 'Not taught at our school' as the answer. Just as well, for there were plenty of them. Over and over again I found myself writing, in my best copperplate, 'Not taught at our school.'

Someone must have read my answers because the school was soon closed and amalgamated with the girls. The headmaster seems to have disappeared.

MY PREVIOUS SCHOOL

The syllabus at our junior school was strictly '3 Rs' plus Scripture. So I could juggle numbers, read, write in a spidery script and recite chunks of the Bible. Otherwise nothing from school, though I had read the *Daily Mail* every day, the *Wellington Journal*, the *Christian Herald* and every one of the thousands of pages in the

Children's Encyclopaedia at home. Oh yes, and Bacon's *Excelsior Atlas of the World*. At school there were a few well-thumbed books, some in class sets, which were read 'round the class'. It took a long time to have everyone in the class to read a paragraph or two but looking back it seems that this was the object of the exercise; to use up the hours of the day. In the 'top' class with me were boys of ten to fourteen and the older ones had read the same book several times.

Writing consisted mainly of copying from the blackboard to paper. The letters had to fit exactly between lines; two blue lines for letters like o or m and two red lines above and below to make room for f and g. Capitals were really fancy, like this: *A B C D*. Boys making mistakes were regularly caned. Arithmetic was often a matter of 'cross tots and long tots'. There would be a square of numbers on the blackboard and we had to add the digits across, putting in the total. Then we added down columns and wrote in the totals. Finally we added the 'cross' totals and the 'long' totals and these should both come to a grand total in the bottom right corner. The cross and the long totals must be the same or you started again.

STARTING AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

A long time after the scholarship examination, a letter came to say that I had failed the scholarship but would be allowed in the school if my folks would pay the fees. It was over £3 a term and a man's wage was only around £2 10 shillings a week. Goodness knows how they afforded it for the next six years but they did, and I'm very grateful. There were also uniform and books to be paid for. I bought second hand books and still have some of them. My uniform was always too big to start with and gradually became too small. Mum, who was a dressmaker, could always mend it until there were more mends than trousers.

I went to school on the train from Admaston station, on my own as usual, sometimes running down the milk churn shoot when I was late. I think the fare was a penny-halfpenny return. It's a major wonder how it comes that the people who run railways now are so much less competent than those who ran them in those far-off times seventy years ago. They were never late, never cancelled, always clean, always had seats and you couldn't get away with not paying, damaging the carriage or smoking in a non-smoking compartment. There were plenty of staff, porters, stationmasters and everything, all of whom were proud to work for the LMS or GWR railway and were responsible in their dealings with the public.

TWO LOWER

It took a long time to make any friends because everyone else had come with others from their junior school. I didn't even have enemies. We were herded into two groups – those who had done best at the exam went into 'two upper' and the rest, including me, into 'two lower'. It was some time before I discovered that the 'first form' was for the 'prep' boys, below eleven, and in the girls' side of the building.

That was very strictly out of bounds. All the rules were strictly enforced by these large, threatening monsters called 'masters', in their flappy black gowns, who could 'award' detentions of half an hour or an hour, Saturday mornings or a caning from the Head or his deputy.

Two Lower's classroom was next to the study of Mr. H.W. Male, the Head. Any boy sent for punishment had to go through our room to enter his room. We watched, with fiendish glee, as the poor devil knocked at the door and we sat silent listening for the 'thwack' sound, counting up to the usual six. Most of the staff found it impossible to teach us until the boy came out, either pretending not to have been hurt or weeping bitterly. These fairly regular experiences put the wind up us, presumably just as they were meant to do.

Timetables took a bit of understanding, as did parading along to fresh rooms. And there were subjects like Latin, Chemistry, History, French, Geography, Physics, Art, Music and Physical Education that I'd no idea of, as well as English, Scripture and Mathematics of which I knew a little.

SUBJECTS AND TEACHERS

Latin came as a great shock. I can even now recite the first page of *Porta Latina*, the first textbook, so fascinated was I at this strange, long dead language and especially 'Cassie' Martin, the deputy head, who taught it. Cassie (from Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*) was tall and dark and had just that 'lean and hungry look' that had earned him his nickname. He meant to frighten us and he succeeded.

Chemistry (or 'Stinks') was in a laboratory upstairs off the balcony to the main hall, shared with the girls' school. So sometimes we were able to watch, for a few seconds, the girls in their tight blue knickers doing P.E. This became more interesting as we got older. The lab was presided over by 'Buster' Wellings, who was quite young but sharp enough to ensure you didn't turn on the gas tap twice. He also taught football and P.E. Having been given a 'chemistry set' of various materials and test tubes and such I had played at stinks and thought I knew a bit. It was the one subject I failed at School Certificate.

History was back to Cassie, so had to be taken seriously. In those days it was mainly about remembering dates, kings and battles, so not much interest. I can, however, remember that the Battle of Bannockburn was fought on 24th June 1314. That's only because I learned it on my birthday, 24th June, as I was changing from 13 to 14. I remember it was Scots versus English but not who won.

French was by 'Titch' Hanby, a fair-haired young chap. I wasn't good at it and we did no conversation, just verbs, nouns and all that. In Normandy, when I needed it, they didn't understand a word I was saying. I've since learned that they had a strong accent and their French was not correct either.

Geography came with the red faced 'Dag' Tomlinson, whose accent was from Barrow in Furness. He once sent me for some 'wosted', which puzzled me no end

until I realised he meant worsted, meaning wool. The *Geographical Magazine* came out in 1935 and he showed us the first. Apart from during the war, I've read pretty much all the magazines since then and had it delivered monthly since 1950. Whether my degree, diploma and fellowship are down to Dag I don't know but I'd call myself a geographer.

We had a real character in the physics laboratory, who ruled with a metre ruler. He swished it over our heads and it was discovered to be safest to duck. He was 'Studs' Sturgess, a tall, rangy chap, who had been in the Navy and claimed to have read a Portuguese newspaper because he knew Latin. He sometimes talked about hygiene and occasionally about Girls. We didn't have biology, which was deemed to be a girlish subject. Boys had physics instead.

The Art room had a small, young, not over-confident chap called Newland. We christened him Dolfus because of his similarity to the infamous Dr. Dolfus. It was all about pencils and watercolours and I'm sure he knew a lot but we had fun with him. He used to make long lists of boys for detention and put them in his pocket. Near the end of a lesson it was my job to keep him talking while another lad (who later



Boys' High School, mid 1930s. Extract of a panoramic photograph showing the teachers.

had a career in television) picked his pocket. He once stopped me in the street, demanding to know why I was not wearing my school cap. I laughed and showed him that it was on the back of my head and he wasn't tall enough to see it. I learned a useful rule for my days in teaching, 'Any person who presumes to take charge of a group of children is in play and fair game.'

Music (singing only) was taught by Johnnie Clark, who was rather deaf but not deaf enough to ignore my growling voice. He told me I was out of tune and must try harder. When I had tried and failed to make satisfactory noises he made me sit at the back and be quiet, thus enabling me to do a little homework and putting me off singing (in public at least) for the rest of my life. I do remember, however, the words of many of the songs, like *Farewell Manchester* and *The Massacre of McPherson*. My voice broke in the middle of singing the National Anthem.

Physical Education was taught by 'Buster' Wellings. It was fine in the gym with exercises, wall bars, vaulting horses, climbing ropes and dancing the 'Strathspey' but I disliked games, probably because I was no good at any of them.

Maths was 'Lennie' Marshall and I managed to keep up most of the time, though



Headmaster H.W. Male is sixth from the right on the second row up.

occasionally was reproved for not doing enough homework. He once said I'd get a job on the Council – on the bin cart. A dozen years later, when chairman of the council, I reminded him. Some of the intervening years, as a temporary teacher, I would have been much better paid if I'd been on the cart.

'Skipper' Priestley also taught maths and was much more popular, partly because he ran the school's Scout Troop. That was an inspiration and we all enjoyed it, mainly for the camping and wide games on The Wrekin. We learned to look after ourselves and to enjoy an outdoor life, much of which came in useful in the Infantry and when leading school and club expeditions.

'Dickie' Richardson was the English man and he was inspiring. I still have many of the books I bought for his lessons. He introduced me to a whole world of literature and taught me enough about syntax to write my twenty published books. We learned thousands of lines of poetry, much of which still comes out on occasion. He had a sense of humour and, when we read 'The Scottish Play' of Shakespeare and I was 'First Witch' and 'Third Murderer', he called it type casting. He introduced us to what were then modern stories, like *Swallows and Amazons* as well as Dickens, Wordsworth, Macaulay and Keates. I especially enjoyed writing essays and still do for *Wellington News*.

Looking back, I wonder how many of our staff would now be officially regarded as 'qualified teachers'; although they all had university degrees in their subjects, I rather think they had no specific qualification in teaching.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

For several years I had seen war coming. I'd written 'Pen Pal' letters to various people all round Europe advocating peace, though of course it made no difference except that I knew French, German, Polish, Spanish and Belgian boys among others, who agreed with me.

Then the League of Nations announced a competition for an essay on 'Peace' and I entered. I wrote solidly for three hours, explaining that the war was inevitable unless the League took drastic action and gave itself some authority. Almost before the ink was dry war broke out, exactly as I had predicted.

THE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

The rules of the old School Cert, as we called it, were that you had to pass in English, Maths, a foreign language, a science and three other subjects. Otherwise you'd failed, however good you were. We were entered for eight subjects and had to pass in seven. I ended with credits in English Language, Literature and Geography, passes in Maths, French, Physics and History, failing at Chemistry, so they gave me a certificate.

It was a near thing; a couple of months before the exam, 'Titch' took me on one side and said, 'GT (that's what I was called, the school was full of boys called Evans),

you're going to fail. You'll fail in my subject so you'll get no certificate. And several other masters say you might fail for them too.'

That shook me. I set about revising, taking it very seriously. They were 'instant death' exams, no course work or anything else, just the paper and that's it. So I swatted up everything, devising a scheme to drill all known facts into my head that has worked many times since then.

On the exam days I put a rose in my buttonhole, went off to school and concentrated very hard on answering the questions. There are more marks lost by not reading the questions properly than by not knowing the answers, I had been told. To avoid panic I always waited until the others had started, looked around at their scared faces, smiled and got on with it. It works.

CAREERS ADVICE

I had been persuaded to ask the Head for advice about a career. He sent for me in his office and I entered with the usual trepidation. He didn't reach for the cane at once so I perked up a bit.

'Evans,' he said, 'Only thing you're good at is Geography, right?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Only things you can do with Geography are teach or make maps.'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Evans, you don't have the brains to teach, so you'd better make maps. Write to the Ordnance Survey and get a job. Off you go.'

So that was it. I wrote to the O.S. and found they had two kinds of jobs on offer; there was squinting through a theodolite or holding up a pole for the other chap to squint at. The fellow with the theodolite had a university degree, so that was out. You had to be either rich or brilliant to get to university and I was neither. Only the top one percent went there in those days. So it was holding up a pole. I didn't fancy doing that for the rest of my life. I'd have to think of something else.



Like George Evans, the author's father Leslie Frost attended the Boys' High School in King Street. This is how he looked in his school uniform in the late 1920s (without, it has to be said, his tie) while on a walk up The Wrekin Hill.



Boys' High School Cricket team, early 1930s, including Jeff Ball (first on left, back row), Ken Hayward (third from left, front) and Alf Grindley (second from right).



Combined Boys' and Girls' High School, bottom left. Photo possibly taken in the 1920s.

SIXTH FORM

There was a special test called the Civil Service Examination and I entered for it. It was to take an extra term in the sixth. Just as I had started to find out about the syllabus, the exam was postponed due to the War, so I idled my time away reading and making maps for a term. Then it was postponed again. I was quite enjoying school, learning anything that happened to interest me, though I was almost expelled for smoking a pipe in the classroom. Cassie told me that the reason I was the only boy in the sixth not a prefect was because I was 'too wild'. That may have had something to do with a fight I had with the Head Boy.

A new Head – Yorke-Lodge – took over. His wife, a petite Parisienne, tried to teach us correct French pronunciation but that didn't work. She was so charming and sophisticated that we felt like clumsy oafs and were thoroughly embarrassed.

So over Easter holiday I decided to leave and get some sort of a job to 'help the War effort'. I'd taken the view that there should not have been a war because it would solve nothing and kill a lot of people, but since my country was in it I'd better help us to win.

FINALLY ...

The regime at the Boys' High School was very masculine and often punitive but I have to admit that it was the basis for the rest of my life. Without it I would have been someone quite different. My eyes were opened to many wonderful concepts and ideas and my head was crammed with facts, only a few of which were mistaken. I made friends, some of whom are still with us. Long and happily may they live.



George Evans, seen here in his 3rd Wellington Scouts uniform and pet dog, c. 1933/34.



Grammar School Staff Cricket team, c. 1957. Back row, from left: Jack Burr, -?-, John Speller, David Hughes, Peter Hitchcock, -?-. Front: John Lowe, John Hanby, 'Robbie' Roberts, Alan Newman, Roger Sykes.



'Dag' Tomlinson passes a comment to headmaster J.P. Thorpe during a Speech Day visit by Chief Scout Lord Rowallan, c. 1948.

3. Grammar School for Boys, *Golf Links Lane*

John Butler, born 1937.



In September 1949, I was one of 60 new pupils who walked through the school gates to join a 2-Form entry Grammar school of 320 boys. Not a female in sight except for Mrs. Eatough, the school secretary. Waiting at the top of the steps below the then woodwork room and toilet/cloakroom block was the gowned headmaster: J.P. ‘Tool’ Thorpe, MA Oxon – as he continually reminded us. Gownless bearded woodwork teacher ‘Bushy’ Boreham was at his side; he was to become our Form teacher and confidant. We were called forward in solemn tones: 30 to Form 1X, 30 to 1Y. We had new everything

... caps, ties, short trousers, pencil cases ...

Having narrowly avoided an attempted ritual ducking by Nigel Vickers in the water butt behind the cricket pavilion, I settled into a rigid curriculum of Mathematics, English, Science, French, History, Geography, Art, Music, Woodwork and Physical and Religious Education. I somehow won the Maths/Science prize in 1X but only because Colin Hamer had come top of the form by a considerable distance and was restricted to one prize. Latin took the place of Woodwork for half of us during our second year.

No computers, Powerpoint, overhead projectors or videos/dvds – chalk and talk was the order of the day. Staff had to know their subject – most did, some exceptionally so – supported by a strong prefectorial system. Discipline was rigid and, by modern standards, sometimes harsh: detentions for not wearing a cap or tie, occasional public caning in front of the whole staff and school for serious miscreants – not murder, but fighting or stealing. In Physical Education, boxing was compulsory. I could never understand how anyone could enjoy an away boxing fixture against Boreaton Park (a young offenders institution; read into that what you will).

This, then, was the regime of J.P. Thorpe – ex-William College, Isle of Man – who did, however, with the rest of the staff, take the entire school by train from Wellington via Snow Hill, Birmingham, Tyseley and Leamington Spa to Paddington and the London 1951 Festival of Britain, complete with the Skylon and

W.G. Grace's cricket bat. *Ian Allan* books were to the fore – a steam buff's paradise. Later in 1951, 'Tool' went around classrooms informing everybody that the Conservatives had won the election! The regime of fear, pomp and circumstance needed to give way to a more enlightened approach. 'Tool' moved to Holly Lodge Grammar school, Smethwick, to be replaced by J.L. ('The Beak') Morgan-Jones, an Oxford historian from Ashby de la Zouch Grammar school.

Caning and compulsory boxing went into the background almost immediately; substance replaced pomp and circumstance, respect was earned rather than imposed, exam results improved, new pitches appeared between the playground and the houses on Holyhead Road. I can remember Morgan-Jones helping to level topsoil on the new cricket square. A new athletics track also appeared!

These developments involved other staff and fellow pupils. R.R.K. 'Snoz' Roberts, head of P.E., was keen on a wide range of sports. Rugby was established alongside a strong football tradition. Cricket, athletics, basketball and gymnastics were strongly encouraged. In my experience, Snoz worked tirelessly for the school with fundraising and the provision of a bus service to outlying districts. A vivid



Boys' Grammar School, May 1952. Extract of a panoramic photograph.

memory of the newly-arrived RRKR – 1950 – was his appearance with Mr. Lloyd (Latin) in a three-wheel Bond mini car just before assembly bell.

Most staff lived within walking/cycling distance of the school although ‘The Beak’ arrived in his Triumph *Mayflower*. ‘Buster’ Wellings (Chemistry) lived in Christine Avenue, Frank Arkinstall, ‘Titch’ Hanby (French) and ‘Mit’ Marshall (Maths) lived in Herbert Avenue at that time, Eric Cliffe (Music) in Haygate Drive and ‘The Bard’ (later ‘The Bogue’) Bardsley (Physics) in Wrekin Road.

Frank Arkinstall rescued our A level French group in 1955-56, and encouraged Dave ‘Daz’ Beechey, Keith Padmore and myself to embark on a Youth Hostelling cycle trip which began in Wellington and took us via Stratford, Reading, Folkestone, Calais, Amiens and Reims to Paris via the Marne Valley. After three days in Paris – Chatenay/Malabry – we returned through Beauvais, Le Touquet Lydd, Goudhurst and Paddington. Two weeks abroad cost £14 in old money.

In 1952, Frank initiated some of us in mainland European travel with a school trip to Middelkerke in Belgium with other trips to Bruges and Middelburg in the Netherlands. A prefect (Nigel Coggins) managed to get lost; I’m sure he was 20 and



Headmaster J.L. Morgan-Jones is ninth from the left on the second row up.

certainly very vague. We finally spotted him in his blue prefect's cap obviously crossing a canal bridge as we glided through on our guided boat tour.

The onset of puberty and myopia – you really are at a disadvantage if you can't see the blackboard for 18 months – and a lot of sport led to a mediocre 'O' level performance. Luckily, Dr. Priestley's eye test led to National Health glasses and, finally, decent 'A' level results.

The Beak, Frank Arkinstall and 'Dag' Tomlinson changed my life. Many other staff and fellow pupils helped along the way. Looking back (I left in 1956), it's almost invidious to pick out contemporaries, especially when memory can play such tricks.

Academically, did anyone surpass Colin Hamer or David Frost who both went on to be outstanding Cambridge mathematicians? In sport, Derek Tart's All-England Schools Championship high jump win in 1954-55 is a vivid memory; we were even allowed to hoist him aloft on the quadrangle grass!

Football was always my greatest sporting interest from U13 to 1st XI Captaincy in 1955-56. John James from Crudgington was a hero as 1st XI football and cricket captain as well as Head Boy. He was followed by Alan Davies, also from Crudgington, as football captain, and then myself from Ellerdine. We were fellow travellers to and from school on the Midland Red bus; not a bad record for 'backwoods' north Shropshire and its absence of football pitches (apart from a small playing field at Ellerdine)!

My 1st XI spell was not the most successful but included fixtures against Bridgnorth GS, Adams GS Wem, Oswestry Boys High, Bedstone School, Market Drayton GS, the Royal Wolverhampton School, Coalbrookdale High School and Harper Adams Agricultural College. It was at Edgmond that we nearly walked off the pitch after some savage, agricultural knee-high tackling.



Boys' Grammar School as it was in 1943. The Art room, with windows projecting into the roof tiles, is on the right.

Gilbert Band from Oakengates was a good friend and skillful inside forward. We, along with George Benbow, went on to Liverpool University to do Geography. After we left, Peter Hughes, Roger Jones and Johnny Westwood restored the team to former glories.

Cricket was an equal pleasure with Terry Woodward as a benign and canny 1st XI captain (and Head Boy in 1955-56). Colin Hamer was a meticulous scorer and Gilbert Band a very capable batsman. Stan Boden was a regular Coalbrookdale High School adversary, and Priors GS umpiring a touch harsh. Graham Challand was another good friend in this team; we often made for the library to read E.W. Swanton's cricket reports on the fortunes of Denis Compton and Cyril Washbrook.

Manchester United/Manchester City and Wellington Town figured in constant winter debate. After not seeing Graham Challand for 20 years, was it chance that brought us to park alongside one another in Stanley Park, Liverpool? It was in the mid 1980s, 5th Round FA Cup tie (Everton 3, Telford United 0). 10,000 had travelled to support Telford, including Roger Parton and R.R.K. Roberts. I had come from Bristol, Graham from Reading.

It was always said that Jake Hames from Ketley had a 100% attendance record. He left after the 5th Form to train as a bricklayer – a heinous crime at the time. He was student of the year! Peter 'Gassy' Evans from Dawley (so called because of his



Unveiling of the War Memorial tablet, 22 May 1948. From left to right: Rev. S. Hemming, Geoffrey Carr (Vicar of Wellington), Lt. Gen. Sir Oliver Leese, Rev. R.L. Hodson (Bishop of Shrewsbury), headmaster J.P. Thorpe, Rev. J.E. Noble (Wellington Wesleyan Methodist minister), Frank Arkinstall.

constant chatter) challenged the authorities with a crew cut in the mid 1950s. Johnny Turner and Graham Peaceful caused a further ripple by setting up a potentially unsettling rival U14/15 local football league. Why did Bernard Boycott travel from Coalbrookdale every day? Why did Willy Waldock come from Market Drayton? Why did school finish at 3:25p.m.? (So that the Albrighton boys could catch their train home, that's why.)

Shakespearean plays and music performances were regular quality events. 'Dickie' Richardson directed the plays and Eric Cliffe was the musical maestro. M.E. Jones was an outstanding *Macbeth* in 1956, and for several years Nigel Pessall (violin) and Nigel Rogers (tenor) provided top notch performances. Why did Eric Cliffe spend nearly one year rehearsing *The Mikado* after suffering several years' anguish in Changhi prison, Singapore, as a Japanese P.O.W.? He never fully recovered from his experiences and would often wear a scarf in summer to keep warm. He was a talented pianist, and he and his wife had trained with Dame Myra Hess. The war cut short their promising joint careers as professional musicians.

I was in awe of anyone who taught Maths, especially Mr. Kyriacou (who changed his name to Kaye upon naturalisation) – but not his 'The Bible says ...!' Mr. Francis was an excellent English teacher and A.G. Newman good at a range of subjects. 'Mo' Hartley (History) would come into our lessons with his feet at 10 to 2; after adjusting his glasses, he would ask us, enigmatically, to get out our 'Richards'. (I have to explain that this was the name of our textbook!)

One of the things I valued most was the mutual respect and sense of fun that developed between staff and pupils. We rarely knew staff Christian names, nicknames were the order of the day.



Members of the cast from the 1948 production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

I was once asked by a prefect to go to the staffroom and ask 'Mr. Cassius' to come and sort out a lunchtime classroom fracas. The staffroom collapsed in laughter as Deputy Head 'Cassius' Frank Martin appeared. He saw the joke. ('Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look' – *Julius Caesar!*)

My only Shakespearean stage appearance was as a Scottish nobleman – Caithness – in the 1956 production of *Macbeth*. His opening line 'Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?' leads me to ask: Where are they now? – Ian Bradley, Cyril Bright, John Gough, Peter Gough, 'Tich' Bailey, Paul Ramsden, Jimmy Beeston, Alan Villers, Eric Fidlin, Johnny Ferrington, 'Tank' Yapp, 'Tutsy' Edwards, Les Vickers, Johnny Owen, Nick Daws, Terry Whittingham, 'Was' Phillips, 'Swill' Shepherd, Harry Mason, David Price ...

I know where Mike Greatholder is, having recently met him at a relative's funeral; he remembered my nickname ('Jack'), but he probably doesn't know his mother used to give me extra custard!

Wellington Grammar school was a good school – mutual respect, courtesy, good manners, high academic achievement, excellence in sport, a competitive house system and a wide range of extra curricular activities. I did sometimes wonder why the Honours Board at the back of the main hall was only for university successes. What happened to those who didn't pass the 11+? There was a degree of elitism and



1st XV Rugby team, 1959/60. Back row, from left to right: R. Edwards, G. Charlton, J. Pardoe, B. Earle, M. Lunn, R. Briscoe, A. West, I. Holloway, E. Farthing. Middle: P. Reynolds, N. Summerton, W. Newbold, D. Frost (captain), A.P. Anslow, K. Edwards. Front: R. Harris, M. Corfield, P. Edwards, J. Johnson.

there was a need for change, yet it was sad to hear of some of the gloating pleasure expressed at the change and status of Wellington Grammar school.

A perusal of league tables, OFSTED reports and the national press shows there are many good schools in the Telford area at all levels – Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form College. I hope the qualities I had the fortune to experience have not been lost. There is still some way to go to reach the new Jerusalem ...

John Westwood, born 1939.

I was in no doubt that luck was on my side that day in mid-1950 when a letter arrived at home announcing that I had passed the 11-plus examination and that I would be attending Wellington Boys Grammar School.

Following the written exam, I had been categorised as ‘borderline’, meaning I would be required to attend an interview at the school to decide between final selection and rejection. I cannot remember what I said at that friendly interrogation (by the headmaster and two other teachers) that could possibly have induced them to feel safe enough to offer me a place. But I was elated to a level beyond responsible description by the document of acceptance, as were my parents.

My first day at WGS was cold, windy, and not a little frightening after six or



1st XI Football team, 1956/57. Back row, from left to right: ? Morgan, Michael Hartland, Tony Proctor. Middle: Chris Dawe, John Westwood, Bob Wiley, R.R.K. Roberts, Tony Taylor, Peter Hughes, Peter Shotton. Front: Keith Croxton, Roger Jones, John Duggan, Eric Rigby, ? Bradley.

seven cosseted years at Princes Street Junior School. So many boys, of all ages, in dark blue and light blue uniform, whirling around in the playground before morning assembly, scowling masters in black gowns, and, stretching away into the distance ahead of me, the seemingly vast school sports fields, soon to prove my salvation, for it was sport and sport alone that made my grammar school days bearable.

Wellington Grammar School was revered among all other local secondary schools for the sporting prowess of its teams. Whether football, cricket, boxing, cross-country, rugby, athletics – it seemed we were unbeatable. I recall a football match where we defeated one school team 26 goals to nil, and another 17-0. In all my matches in the school senior football team, I believe we were defeated only on two or three occasions.

None of this is intended to draw attention to what good players any of we boys were, but is a tribute to a remarkable man, the late R.R.K. Roberts, our sportsmaster. ‘Robbie’ was a doyen among physical educators, possessed of enormous energy, authority, and utter dedication to his job. Any former WGS boy with but the slightest interest in, or connection with, sport at the school would agree with that.

Robbie coached us, managed us, encouraged us, inspired us, crushed us when enraged, but always with intelligence and for the sake of the school’s sporting reputation, which he was determined to cast in steel. Woe betide any boy representing Wellington Grammar School who did not look his best or give of his best, or who lacked respect for his opponent(s). The ‘sporting spirit’, where no act of unfairness or insolence on or off the field could be tolerated, was R.R.K. Roberts’ creed.

I was fortunate to play in school football and cricket teams every year I attended. Football was on the ‘far field’ bordering farm land, and cricket on the lower field which had been excavated level out of a sloping piece of ground parallel to Holyhead Road, with a fine roped-off square in the centre. This large, flattened field doubled as the 440-yard athletics track, of which R.R.K. was particularly proud (I believe it must have been through him that these major earthworks went ahead).

One of my earliest, and most disappointing, setbacks in school sport was cross-country. There was an annual, compulsory, intra-school race (out of the school gates into Christine Avenue, up Ercall Lane, through the woods to the top of Limekiln Lane, down the lane, onto Holyhead Road near Murphy’s pop works, then along the main road and wheel left into Golf Links Lane and back to the school grounds). You finished to the cheers, or jeers, of the handful of boys ‘excused’, for medical reasons, from taking part in any sport. My first ever annual race, as a 10-year-old, was physical agony for me. I ran virtually the entire course with an acute attack of the stitch, and finished at an embarrassing stooped hobble, stone cold last, as might be guessed.

For me, it was an honour to represent WGS at cricket and football. For ‘away’ games, we would be bussed to exotic spots like Bedstone School, Shrewsbury

School, to other grammar schools, and to other secondary schools. There would always be tea after the game, and always a jolly journey home, although not too jolly because 'Mr Roberts' would soon call us to heel if we became excessively boisterous. At all times, in all places, school standards were to be firmly upheld.

A significant treat was the annual summer trip to Kent (via coach through the centre of London) to take part in various contests, mostly athletics and cricket, against Northfleet Secondary Modern School, near Tilbury docks. This was a fine school, several notches high in the academic league table, and their sports teams were sometimes almost a match for ours. We would board for a long weekend either individually as guests of the families of Northfleet SMS pupils, or en masse in temporary dormitories within the school buildings. If memory serves me well enough, R.R.K. was a teacher at the Northfleet school prior to moving to his post at WGS, in 1950, hence the sporting exchange, by which Northfleet reciprocated in the winter (football and cross-country).

Rugby came late to the grammar school. It was rare for football players to also indulge in rugby, but a few (excluding myself) did. The majority at first vehemently mocked the game, but later it became a signature sport at the school, as did badminton, and chess.



Mid 1950s Cricket team. Back row, from left: Norman Earle, Bill Smith, Tony Taylor, John Westwood, Peter Hughes, Neil Summerton. Front: M.E. Jones, George Benbow, Terry Woodward, Robert Purcell, Gilbert Band.

Boxing was compulsory, unless you lay among the already referred-to 'excused.' In that stop/start first year at the school, I also won myself no kudos for being soundly, and quickly, beaten by an older boy in my first (of several) boxing finals in front of, that particular year, a large Friday evening crowd of spectators comprising mostly parents and other visitors. For me, one to try and forget. To this day, I truly shudder to think of it.

David Frost, born 1943.

I attended the Grammar school between 1953 and 1961 before reading Mathematics at Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge. There were two entry forms (1X and 1Y) which became 2A (which included more able pupils) and 2B in my second year. After studying the usual range of subjects for three years, we had to choose either History and Geography or Physics and Chemistry, or Woodwork or Art for our 'O' levels. During the Sixth year, pupils had to take three 'A' levels and Physical Education/Games, plus one other 'minority' time subject.

Classrooms had single desks with either separate chairs or integral tip-up seats, with high benches and stools in the science laboratories; a new laboratory building was opened around 1958. The main hall (on the west side of the quadrangle), which also served as dining room (run on a two-sittings, hatch system with masters eating their meals on the stage), was used for assemblies and music lessons. During the 1956 Suez Crisis, radio broadcasts were turned on at lunchtime.



Grammar School Prefects, 1961/62. Back row, from left to right: J.M. Smith, D.J. Pittman, J. Tranter, D.O. Pointon, P.M. Boughey, P.R. Edwards, R.A. Manning, D.T. Otley, R.B. Spencer, G.D. Cubbin. Front: A.R. Jones, M.A. Fox, S.R. Green, D. Russon (school captain), headmaster J.L. Morgan-Jones, S.T. Honess, G.R. Gittins, T.G.J. Bushell, R.C. Poole.

Prefects strolled the school premises during lunch and ‘playtimes’, read the lesson during assembly, supervised detentions and the school library and helped run ‘Snöz’ Roberts’ tuck shop. They entered the names of miscreants and the nature of their offences into a ‘Book of Penances’, which recorded when a punishment of writing lines or serving detention had been satisfied. There was no excuse for not knowing what the school rules were as each pupil had to buy them in the form of a small booklet (price sixpence). Boys were required, for example, to wear caps when travelling to and from school.

Playground games included football, when a large oak tree served as one of the goalposts, and conkers was very popular during the autumn. Shove ha’penny was also popular, and during my years in the Sixth form a variation of the game (which entailed rolling a rounded stub of chalk or rubber to get as near to the end of a row of tables as possible without it falling off) helped fill in spare time between lessons. Some boys also sold postage stamps via the ‘on approval’ scheme.

The school had a strong tradition in sports (no walking on the gym floor in outdoor shoes!), extending to Inter-school competitions, including against Snöz’s former school at Northfleet. Everyone was expected to take part in some form of physical activity ... even those who brought notes excusing them from Games found themselves allocated to one of Snöz’s ‘roller gangs’ to keep the cricket pitch level!



Roger Ogden, Timothy Pegg and Roger Ridley show their skiing abilities to boys on the Grammar School sports field, January 1963.

4. *Mixed Secondary Modern School, Orleton Lane*

Dorothy Vickers, born Perry, 1946.

I started school at the Secondary Modern in Orleton Lane in September 1957 after having attended first Constitution Hill and then Park Junior schools. On my first day I remember we were all assembled in the main hall and allotted our classrooms for the next few months, after which we were split up into other classes. Each class had a separate form teacher who took the register.

One of my favourite lessons was Cookery, which was then known as Domestic Science; our teacher for this was Mrs. Eldridge. She was a lovely person and very kind and thoughtful to us pupils. I think that she was Austrian. I got on very well with her and she entered me into a McDougall's schools competition for cookery. We had to make a Victoria sponge cake. A lady came to the school and watched us make the cakes, and then cut and tasted each one. I came second in the competition and Angela Davies came first, I can't remember who came third. My prize was a cookery book which I still use today, some fifty years later.

In the first year we learnt how to wash tea towels by hand using a scrubbing board; they then went into the boiler before ringing, drying and ironing. We were taught how to make polish from bees wax (the boys had to look after the bee hives in the school garden). We learnt how to cook on gas, electric and Aga cookers fuelled by coke. I found the Aga the most difficult as it was not easy to gauge the temperature.

There was a flat adjoining the classroom which we learnt to clean and look after. This included making the bed, and even wallpapering. In the last year we had to cook a three course meal, lay up the table and wait on one of our teachers. During the first year we had to make our own cooking apron and cap. I found this very hard as I was never good at sewing and it's still a chore I don't like. At the end of the first year I still had not finished sewing my cap or apron so a friend of mine finished them off for me.

One my other favourite teachers was Mrs. Hubblebee. She took us for games. I was in the school rounders, hockey and netball teams, for each of which I gained my school colours. The boys' colours were a badge to wear on their blazers and the girls had a black girdle with a blue tassels which they wore with their uniform. I was very proud of gaining my school colours and still have them today.

Mr. Mills (known as 'Rubber Neck' because of his long neck) took us for Maths.

I hated him; I used to pray that he would leave. He was cruel to the boys and would throw the blackboard rubber at them if they misbehaved. I was not very good at Maths and still can't understand why $A + B$ should equal C , and I'm glad I didn't fill my head with it as I have never needed to make use of it! My prayers were answered as Mr. Mills did eventually leave the school. Mr. Pierce then became our maths teacher, he was so patient and kind and I started to enjoy the subject.

Mr. Hatfield was one of the other teachers I remember. When the boys had been naughty they had to hold their hands out, palms down and fingers straight: then he would hit them across the knuckles with the edge of a ruler. I wonder how many of them now suffer with rheumatism in their hands. He was a religious man and a lay preacher at the Tan Bank Methodist Chapel, so I wonder how he interpreted 'suffer little children that come unto me'.

Miss Whitfield took us for History. She made everything so interesting that I could never get enough of King Charles II and the oak tree at Boscobel and went there on many Sunday afternoons. Mrs. Rainford took Religious Education (R.E.); I still see her at All Saints church on a Sunday with her daughter. She had a lot of patience, particularly with the boys.

The school catered for pupils from the farming community. They were taught gardening and agriculture. There were hen pens at the bottom of the field and the boys had to look after them, feeding and collecting the eggs. Mr. Schimeld was headmaster and very strict. He would give the boys the cane for smoking or doing



Janet Burden (front table) in Domestic Science at the Secondary Modern School, 1954.

anything wrong out of school hours, especially if he saw them in 'His Uniform'. Miss Watson was the deputy headmistress and took biology.

Some of the pupils who came from out of town were given bicycles with a number on the back mudguard. We didn't have to buy books, pencils, pens, or plimsolls for sport as these were all supplied by the school. When we left school in the afternoon, all our things were kept in a storeroom and next day were given out again; there was never the need to carry everything around as we see children do today.

In the last year we went out on school trips. One of the main ones was to the West Midlands Agricultural Show at Shrewsbury. My friend Margaret came from a farming area and the farm traders would leave free vouchers to be used at the Show for food, so we spent a lot of the time there eating.

During the final year I was lucky enough to go on a school trip to Blanes in Spain. We started our journey by train from Wellington to London, where we stayed overnight. The next day we went to Newhaven where we caught a ferry to Dieppe. The boat journey was dreadful with the sea being so rough and we had to sit on our suitcases as there were not enough seats, so we were nearly all seasick. We arrived in Dieppe tired and depressed. The next stage of the journey was by train to Perpignan; I ended up sleeping on the luggage rack as it was so cramped in the carriages! We then travelled by coach to Blanes. The overall journey took some two and a half days and we were very tired on our arrival at the hotel.



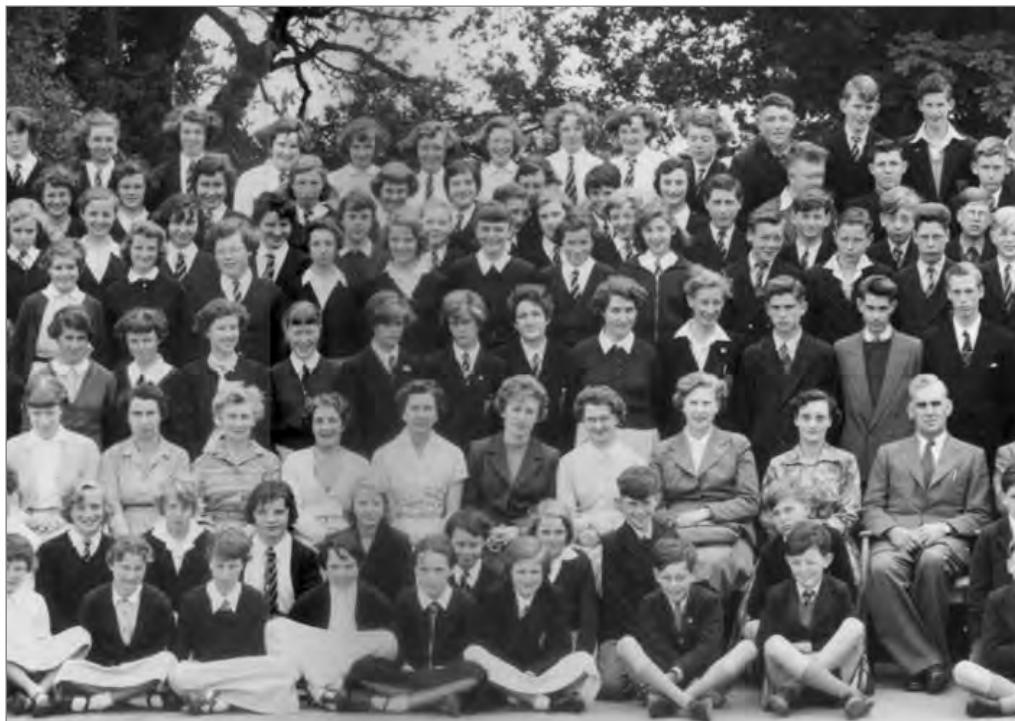
Barry Mills helps out in the chicken pen, c. 1950.

My first impression was how poor the Spanish people seemed as there were many beggars in the streets. It did not occur to me that it was only a short time after the Franco War. Nevertheless, we had a most wonderful experience and I am left with many fond memories. One thing I do remember is that the overall cost was around £35, which was quite a lot of money in those days. I know that most of the children took sums of money each week to pay for the trip and I was quite upset because my father would not let me take it weekly, much preferring to keep his money in his account and not somebody else's. The two teachers that took us were Miss Davies and Mr. McClay ... quite a responsibility for them.

Michael Edwards, born 1946.

I remember most of the teachers, and the headmaster Mr. Shimeld. I certainly remember the punishments handed out by the teachers and I was often on the receiving end of them. Mr. Monither, the P.E. teacher, would make us touch our toes, then ask the boy with the biggest feet for his plimsoll and proceed to deliver two to four whacks across the backside.

Mr. Firth who, if I remember correctly, taught Geography, would also make us

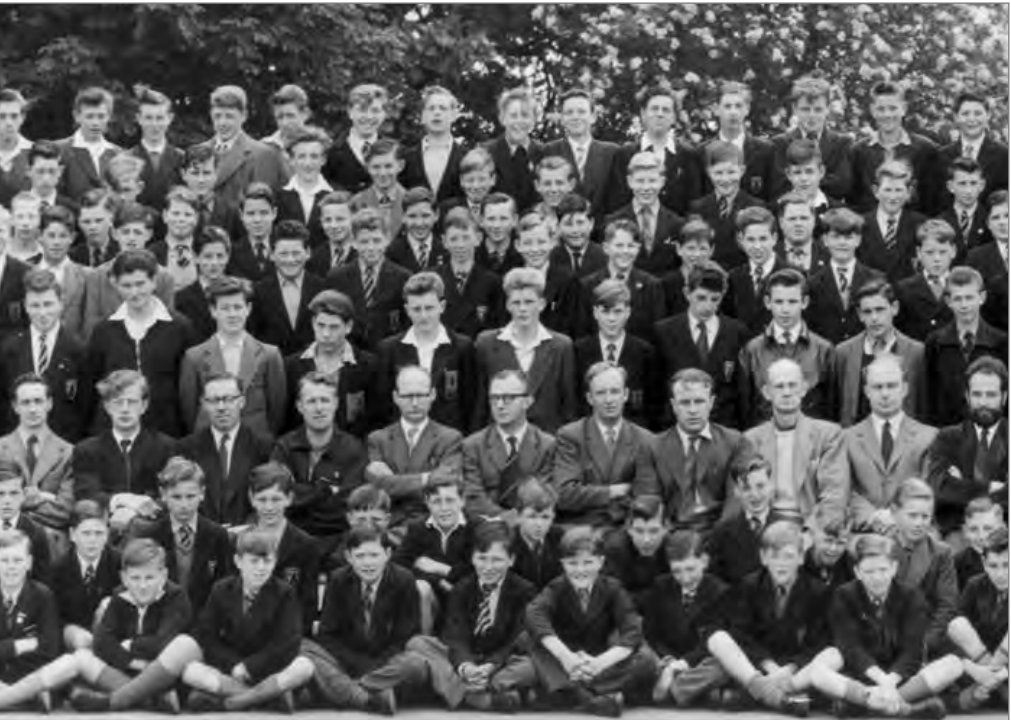


Orleton Lane Secondary Modern School, June 1958. Extract of a panoramic photograph.

touch our toes, then cane us. Mr. Wilde, the Arts teacher, had a ring on his finger and would poke the boys in the muscle of an arm, which could be very painful. Mr. Pearce, the Maths teacher, gave us a clip around the ear. Finally, there was Mr. Shimeld, an expert with the cane and could whack the ends of your fingers with precision, and six of the best meant just that; it could leave your fingers numb for a long time.

I remember playing truant on occasions by lining up in the playground, marching into assembly, signing the register, and then nipping out through an entrance in the corner of the quadrangle, then onto the old recreation ground ... and away!

I also recall Mr. 'Holy Joe' Davies (Religious Instruction), Mr. Bradburn (History), Mr. Jones (Gardening) and Mr. Evans (Technical Drawing). The school did, at one time, keep chickens and pupils would be put in charge of looking after them. Mr. 'Pecker' Priest (Woodwork) had a cat called Timber; it used to lie in the drawer of one of our desks. The boys would take great delight in shutting the drawer when they walked past. There was a storeroom at the back of the class, and the cat was shut in there on more than one occasion.



Headmaster Mr. Shimeld is to the right of the last female teacher on the second row up.

Beryl Parker, born Davies, 1950.



I started at Wellington Secondary school in September 1961. In those days, entrance to a senior school depended on results from the 11+ exam taken earlier in the year, unlike now with feeder schools and catchment areas. Occasionally, I had a lift there in the mornings, and I always walked home afterwards. The uniform was black skirt (trousers for boys), white blouse (or shirt), gold and black striped tie and a black blazer with the school badge stitched on the breast pocket. Girls also wore a black beret (the boys had caps) with a smaller version of the badge.

At that time it was a mixed school and had a good reputation, with teachers who had taught there for many years; some had even taught my elder brother David! The school was well built and had a quadrangle with a lovely garden. Teachers were well respected and the behaviour of the children was good. Classes were structured around the level of children's attainments (streamed into A, B and C with D for those who struggled and needed more help).



The cast of Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure, performed by the school in 1953.

Practical lessons were taught but it was always boys who did wood- and metalwork while girls took cookery and sewing – no equal opportunities in those days! The girls had to make their cookery aprons and head bands in their sewing lessons for use in Domestic Science periods, where we learned not only to cook but also how to hand wash and iron.

Some children were allowed to dig the school garden to grow vegetables and look after the pets (I particularly remember a rabbit). The curriculum was full, and we learned well. We knew our ‘times tables’, and correct grammar was extremely important; both of these stood us in good stead for the future.

We had one hour for lunch; meals were nutritious and, unlike nowadays, was limited to meat, potatoes and vegetables.

I don’t recall many school trips but I do remember going to London by train for the day. I remember, too, walking to the baths off Foundry Road via ‘Tin Pan Alley’ (down the side of the old gasworks) for weekly swimming lessons. The school held a Summer Fair during the year I was there, when the headmaster was Mr. Shimeld.

As the new Wellington Girls Modern school was opened at Dothill in September 1962, all the girls were transferred there; the boys remained at the Orleton Lane school.



Above left: Roy Barnes examines school bees for disease. Right: Ruth Davies (on the horse) supports a schoolmate during a P.E. Lesson. Both photos c. 1950.



Modern School boys pay careful attention during their gardening lesson, c. 1950.



Athletes Mike Ison, Peter Williams and Keith Treherne at a 1950s Annual Sports Day.

5. *Girls' Secondary Modern* *(later Charlton) School, Dothill*

Beryl Parker

The school opened 4 September 1962, following reorganisation of Wellington's Secondary Modern schools. Although the school was more or less ready on time, the access roads were incomplete and buses and cars had difficulty arriving; many pupils had to walk over rubble from the top of the road. Fortunately, the head teacher, Miss Nagle, soon sorted things out with the Council. In the early days, pupils had to change into their pumps on entering the premises to save getting mud on the new floors.

If you lived more than three miles away, you were entitled to a free bus pass and had to use bus services W41 and W43. I caught the bus sometimes, but also walked or rode my bike: only pupils who had passed their Cycling Proficiency Test were allowed to ride their bikes to school. The buses were always crammed full (three to a double seat on many occasions). In my last year I was appointed as a bus monitor, which meant making sure all the pupils travelled sensibly but also to speak up for them if there was a problem with the driver or standard of service.

The school was large and spacious, on two floors; its glass corridors made it seem very light. Tennis courts and a number of fields were provided for games lessons and Sports Day. Our winter uniform was a navy skirt, white blouse, navy jumper and navy tie (which replaced the black and gold ones we'd worn for a while when the school opened). The summer uniform comprised lilac and white striped shirt-waister dresses. We were expected to wear sensible black shoes. While in our final year we wore navy suits – straight skirt and long sleeved jacket; these were made locally at the Clifford Williams 'Pyjamas Ltd.' factory at Madeley. Prefects wore yellow sashes which hung from the waist.

The school caretaker was Norman Foulks, and he and his family lived in a newly built bungalow in the grounds. Teachers parked their cars at the front of the school. There were four school 'houses': Charlton, Eyton and Steventon (the surnames of Wellington's former gentry) and Darwin (the evolutionary from Shrewsbury).

I was streamed into Class 2¹ in my second year (the '1' signifying the top stream); my form teacher was Miss Wilson, who was Deputy Head and also transferred from the Orleton Lane school. She was a strict but nice teacher. In my days at the school, teachers were respected and the behaviour of pupils, on the whole, was good.



Meals were an important aspect of school life. Girls' Secondary Modern School cook serves (from the left) -?-, Anne Whittingham, -?-, Sophie Lambre, Jacqueline Hoggins, Beryl Davies and Eileen Irving. The photograph was taken shortly after the school opened, when girls were still wearing their former Mixed Secondary Modern uniforms.



Taking part in a Dance Display, 1964 or 1964. Joyce Aplin is in the back row, centre. Front row, left, is Beryl Davies, and Carol Round is fourth from the left.

The curriculum then was very different to today: we didn't learn languages, and trips were basic but interesting – inter-school sports or maybe a visit to a theatre. We went to Ludlow Castle to see an open air play, for example, but there were no continental excursions during my time at the school. Music lessons were spent learning about composers and their music (today's schools often encourage students to play their own instruments and some even have their own bands or orchestras). Singing was taught during music lessons but I don't recall there being a school choir in the four years I was there.

As at Orleton Lane, we made our own aprons and head bands for use in Domestic Science lessons. In the lower school, the aprons were white with our initials embroidered near the top; in upper school they were coloured at the top with gingham. We progressed from hand-operated sewing machines to electric ones, although they were in short supply. Domestic Science was renamed Human Physiology and Hygiene while I was there, I don't know why.

We also had a school 'flat' (just a long room which was made to look like a living room with tables, chairs, carpet, etc.), used by older students to cook meals in their lessons and then serve a starter, main meal and sweet to the teachers. It was a good way of producing a whole meal, and not just shepherd's pie or cheese flan.

In my third year, my form teacher was Mrs. Husselbee, who also taught Games. In my fourth it was Mrs. Rickett, our Art teacher. Other teachers I remember were Mr. Bagnall (Geography), Mrs. Eldridge (Domestic Science), Miss Sockett (English), Mrs. Hawkins (Needlework), Miss Goode (Maths) and, I think, Mrs. Shaw (Music). Many of them lived in or near Wellington.

In the quad on the last day at school, July 1966. Back row, from left to right: Anne Smith, Christine Faulkner. Middle: Sandra Palin, Jillian Bennett, Helen Duckfield, Kathleen Button. Front: Beryl Davies, Norah Perkins.



Assembly was held on most mornings. We all stood up when the head teacher walked onto the stage; monitors gave out hymn books on the way in as we always sang a hymn. We were led in and out in form order, and sat on chairs (which was different to infants schools where we had to sit on the floor).

Dinner time was for a full hour, unlike today when children have to queue and gulp their food down within 45 minutes. As with Orleton Lane school, meals were nutritious; I enjoyed them. After taking a silver-coloured tray, dinner ladies served each meal on a plate. Tables had large aluminium water jugs and glasses for drinks. There was always plenty of time to eat your meal and spend time with your friends before going back to class for afternoon lessons. Buses turned up at 3:40 ready for home time at 3:45.

I left school on 22 July 1966, the same day as the term ended. During my time there I had been the school House Secretary, bus monitor and a member of the School Committee. There were about five of us that left at the same time who had a 100% attendance record, and we were all awarded a book of our choice as a prize.

To mark the 25th Anniversary of the school opening, a reunion of past students was held; along with many others, seven of my contemporaries came. We were all married and had children. Three of us now work in local schools, one is a nurse and another a dental receptionist. It was an enjoyable evening, and good to see old friends again after so many years.



Reunion of former pupils of the Girls' Secondary Modern School, September 1986. From left to right (using their maiden names): Valerie Jones, Delyth Jones, Christine Carline, Susan Thomas, Beryl Davies, Elizabeth White, Shirley Latham.

6. *Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College, Whitchurch Road*

James Gilmour, born 1949.

I was in the first group of pupils from St. Patricks that went to BRJ on its opening day in 1963/64. I was in Class T4 and the headmaster was Mr. Anslow. Sadly my memories have faded somewhat over the years; however, I do have one or two left.

I recall the very first day; we met a brand new bunch of pupils from Shrewsbury and remember thinking, 'Why are they here at our school?' It was very confusing ... in fact, looking back, my mind was in turmoil as there was so much going on: new school, new pupils, and new teachers.

I settled in quickly and became good friends with the new pupils from Shrewsbury, two of them being David Jones and Philip Phew (where are they now?). We all played for the BRJ football team. I was not the brightest of pupils but I got on well enough.

I became a prefect due to the fact that, according to Mr Anslow, I had good organisational skills. At that early age I had a talent for sorting out the milk deliveries and making sure they were available every morning for the two assemblies.

Hey, it was great fun getting out of class every morning going down to the canteen to meet the milkman! He would give my pal Garry and I a Woodbine cigarette, which we smoked whilst sorting out all the milk bottles. We also used to drink about two pints of milk every day. (I stopped smoking at about 25, by the way.)

There were loads of schoolgirl sweethearts, but the most popular was Jessie Roberts: she was beautiful and all the guys liked her.

School was good; the Beatles were at their most popular, the boys used to turn in the collars of their school uniform jacket to make it look like a Beatle jacket. Sadly, it was over far too quickly; my class was only at BRJ for just over a year.

On my final day I walked home from school for the last time with three friends, two of them being girls. I remember giving one of the girls a wicker tea tray, which I had made in a craft class, as a goodbye gift. I wonder if she still has it? Probably not.

Fond memories ...



Cast of Blessed Robert Johnson pupils taking part in a play at the school in 1968.



For the second time in 1968, the school invited members of the Wellington and District Helping Hand Association to enjoy a pleasant afternoon in (as reported in the Dawley Observer) 'young and willing company.' The report continues: 'A grand time was had by everyone present, and the youngsters themselves enjoyed giving pleasure to those less fortunate than themselves. The concert programme was organised by one of the teachers, Mr. Ted Mullally. Pupils of the school had made the afternoon tea of sandwiches, cakes, biscuits for their visitors, with teacher Miss D. Gray.'



BRJ school staff enjoy an evening buffet at the Charlton Arms Hotel, 1968.



Official opening of the new BRJ Sports Hall, 2004. From left to right: Cllr. Pat Fairclough, Cllr. Jim Hicks (Mayor of Telford & Wrekin Council), Robert Hall (headmaster), Cllr. Veronica Fletcher, Bishop Brian Noble of Shrewsbury.



Entrance to Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College, July 2008.

And finally ... Howlers!

Teachers marking exam papers can't resist a chuckle at some of the comments made by their pupils. Whether they're down to poor teaching or a child's inability to learn properly is anyone's guess. These are a few from Grammar School boys in the 1960s:

He was berried in Westminster Abbey :- 'Me voici' = 'Here is me.'

'Le chat est dormant sur la plafond' = 'The cat is sleeping on the ceiling.'

Pastoral farming is where they pasteurise the milk :- She likes a pashonate lover.

Grain is harvested with a cycle :- They reap their corns with hand scythes.

Arable farming is where you plant soil :- The sentance needs a coma at the end.

The gavenment is trying to get us to attend school :- Deff and Dumm.

A man with an unclean sole :- They gave him gold, frankinsense and mirth.

The gospel is in the Bible which tells us of the profits :- He was a blast femer.

When Jesus was alone, a mute came to him and said, 'Could you make me well?'

Scotland's main work is industry :- Crofting is a dying living.

Arabs are now settling down in towns owing to many people in the deserts.

This is the latreen, where all the cooking is done :- Sweat biscuits.

Expensive mow-haired sweaters :- 'One wide!' shouted the humpier.

Etna sends out ashes and larva :- Heat the crucible for a few minuets.

Salt is put on snowy roads in winter because it makes a freezing mixture and prevents ice melting :- Every nook and granie was cleaned and painted.