



The early days, as recorded by Tom Weston and published in *The Gazette* between 2003 & 2004

She who must be obeyed has commanded. Accordingly I have searched my memory - ageing fast - for "early events in my teaching days, especially cricket". Here goes, then.

On my first day at Ottershaw, in September 1951, I met Mr. Foot and, for the first time, one 'Jake' Buttery, outside the Mansion as I arrived on my ancient bicycle. Arriving parents and boys were all over the place. I was introduced to AFB - "Just call me Terry" - and at once was despatched down to the new half-built West House to supervise the raising, by means of an improvised hoist, of my own and some twenty boys' luggage into the building via an upper-floor window, which appeared to be the current only means of entrance.

There I found a number of boys seemingly already being supervised in this operation by a strange-looking figure, unshaven, clad in a dirty-looking suit and with a gap-toothed grin. The boys were treating this gentleman with great respect, and I assumed he must be another member of staff.

When he saw me, this strange figure rushed forward and, without any preamble, demanded to know whether I supported Arsenal.

When I admitted that I did (largely because Denis Compton and his brother, Leslie, both played for Arsenal and England) I was immediately embraced with a wild shout of joy. Fortunately, at this juncture, AFB arrived and explained at a suitable moment that this was Cooper, one of the 'Bothy Boys' on loan from the mental rehabilitation centre at the nearby St. Peter's Hospital, to help work in the School kitchens, and not one of the teaching staff. Cooper and I remained fast friends for years.

Baggage loading completed, I moved into my unfinished flat - bedroom, sitting room and bathroom - over the top of the Housemaster's house, and was left in charge of some twenty West House boys, mostly new like myself and the new West House housekeeper, Miss Batchelor, for the first fortnight of term, while Jake lived with the rest in Lyne Hill House. Our meals were given to us in the Mansion, since nothing was as yet operational in the new West House. Evening prep, as well as daily lessons, was done in the classrooms. All we did in the new building until the end of that term was wash and sleep.

Saturday night passed peacefully. Sunday night, however, at about 1 am. we were awakened by the most appalling racket, a deafening thunderous clangour which made the whole building shake. It was, of course, the fire alarm, a most efficient machine. Young Weston rose manfully to the occasion, and assembled boys and Miss Batchelor in their dressing gowns and slippers on the roadway outside, checking carefully that no-one was left inside. /4s far as I could see, there was no sign of a fire. No-one, naturally enough, had shown the new Assistant Housemaster where the alarm was situated, and how to switch it off. Rescue arrived in the form of 'Oboe' Hartley, musician extraordinaire, who lived in a private house next door and ran a 'wind' group. For some reason he knew where the alarm control was situated, and succeeded in switching it off. We all returned to bed. In the morning we learnt that Bill Penfold, our famous groundsman and village cricketer (frequently reached 50 in thirty balls or less), who was in charge of the maintenance of everything at Ottershaw had, some time before the start of term, connected our fire alarm to the main school sewerage pump, which was somewhat temperamental, so that he would be warned if it broke down. He had forgotten to disconnect it before we moved in. At least he got the pump repaired the next day!

These little adventures formed an early bond between the new young master and his charges at West House, and I was soon to be made to feel even more at home by Terry and Monica Buttery. I soon learnt of Jake's monumental enthusiasm for cricket. I am sure I had only been chosen to be his Assistant Housemaster because of my own modest past prowess at, and deep-seated enthusiasm for, the game at school, at Oxford, and in the Army, though we discovered other common interests such as a love of classical as well as English literature. Jake had been a pupil at the Perse School, where Latin and Greek lessons were conducted in Latin and Greek only.

I believe strongly how lucky early Ottershaw boys were to learn their English from AFB, Ralph White and myself, all brought up on the prime importance of correct grammar and the proper usage, meaning and derivation of English words, not to mention correct punctuation, and correct use of apostrophes! There's a bit of the old schoolmaster for you!

Another bond with the Buttery family was cats. I have always been a great cat lover, and Monica B used to breed Siamese cats.

Summer and cricket, however, were two terms away. First, besides teaching Latin and English - and a variety of most interesting lessons on 'Civics', Early English History, where a prize pupil was one Perks, and what was known then as 'Divinity', where I made the acquaintance of the half of the school who did not learn Latin - I had to learn how to play Rugby football. Brought up on Soccer at a London grammar school, having helped my College at Oxford win the Inter-College Cup,

I did not realise what I had missed by not playing Rugby. For most of that term, being young, strong and reasonably fit, I became cannon-fodder on the then First XV pitch in front of the tennis courts, for the School First XV probables, many of whom were splendidly fit and skilful players, trained to a high standard by Peter Cunningham. I can remember the first time I tackled one Gopher Marsden in full flight - head on, for I had not yet learnt the niceties of going in from the side; he seemed to me to have a body made of iron, and for a few moments I thought I had broken my shoulder; two minutes later I was required to do my best to stop Lamerton, the future Campbell-Lamerton who a few years later captained Scotland and the British Lions, in the same way. The following year I was allowed to coach the Under 14 XV!

That term was the last occasion when the Staff played the boys at Rugby, though we continued to play them, and very often beat them, at Soccer and cricket for many years to come. Eleven masters, out of a total of thirteen, played, plus four boys from the Second XV. Mr. Foot, though keen to play - he had played for his county in his younger days - was persuaded by senior staff and his wife Sylvia from turning out. As far as I remember we lost 15-3.

Then, of course, there was 'estate-work', and occasionally on a Sunday afternoon taking a party of West House boys to pick up mangelwurzel, or some such vegetable, on a local farm. This was a 'House activity' for we were allowed to keep a portion of the money paid us for our own House fund (to pay for such things as table-tennis equipment) though more than half, as I remember, had to go to the 'School Fund'. My estate work consisted of a couple of hours of hard labour once a week, in combination with one Iain Hislop, digging over, manuring, levelling, rolling, weeding and removing thousands of stones from what was to become in a year or two the Under 15 cricket square. There were times when I was on my own, when Iain was up at the White City where he did very well competing in All-England sprints and long jump.

If my memory is correct, the new West House building was completed just before the last week of my first term, and we all moved in for the last few days. In the final week of every term we had full-dress exams in every subject, including the infamous 'General Knowledge' papers on the Thursday evening. Seating was organised so that no boy sat next to another in his own class, or to anyone doing a paper in the same subject, and discipline was very strict. By lunch-time on the Friday all papers had to be marked, and the results submitted to Mr. Foot's study. During that Friday morning every boy had to recite a poem by heart, chosen by him from the Dragon Book of English Verse, before a panel of three judges, some in the library, some in the Art School and some in the H.M.'s study. The judges included Mr. & Mrs. Foot, the Housekeeper, Miss Baker, and members of Staff.

On the Friday afternoon Mr. & Mrs. Foot added up all the marks for all subjects and all classes, put them in order of merit, and awarded prizes. All these results were read out at the final Assembly on the Saturday morning.

I vividly remember that first term. At 3 a.m. on the Friday morning, having spent the whole of the Thursday night marking, I was dead tired, and I still had one set of English papers and one set of G.K. papers to do. There was a knock on my door and in came Jake Buttery. "Bed for you, young man! I'll deal with these". In the morning those two sets of papers, meticulously marked, were there on my desk.

My teaching, throughout my twenty-nine years at Ottershaw, was done in the classroom at the front end of the Bothy, upper floor, above what was Peter Cunningham's room. My first day I discovered in the master's desk drawer a whole sheaf of postcards, signed by some five or six different girls' names, some with most attractive photographs, sent from various different holiday resorts to my predecessor in that classroom, one Mr. Fry, who had left Ottershaw the term before I arrived. I was most impressed by some of the loving messages. "What a man!" I thought. Some months later I learnt that he had five sisters.

When I came to Ottershaw my world was dominated by my interest in sport, most importantly cricket, a wish to further my knowledge of Classics begun at school and thoroughly enjoyed there and at college, and by a burning desire to give boys of every sort of race and social background the same opportunities to develop mentally and physically which a scholarship to a London day grammar school with magnificent playing fields, and a place at Oxford, had given me.

At Oxford I had met for the first time boys from good boarding schools. I soon lost the prejudices which my 'lower-class' (grandfather a plumber, father who left school at 13 although he had won a scholarship; his parents were too poor to pay for the fares, the uniform and the books required in those pre-1914 days) family upbringing had instilled. None of my fellow students cared a button. I was so impressed with the all-round qualities they possessed that I determined that, if I had the chance, I would teach in a boys' boarding school, and that if I ever had any sons I would do my utmost to send them to one also.

I was very young and inexperienced, although two years National Service, including eighteen months or more Army service abroad, had taught me a great deal about life, but I was very willing to learn from those older and more experienced than I. Ottershaw in 1951 was staffed by a magnificent set of masters, almost all apart from one young New Zealander "on loan" for a year, in their early thirties. Most of them had seen war service, and were confident, experienced and hard-working teachers and leaders. By example, and when asked for advice, they and Mr. Foot taught me my job, and I shall never cease to be grateful to them.

At the end of term, after completing our Tutorial reports and Sunday morning's Staff meeting, we all repaired to the playing fields to lift out the Rugby posts. Robey Johnson always managed one on his own; it took two or three of the rest of us to manage the other. We then slotted in the Soccer posts and cross bars ready for the Easter Term. This task was needed

since Bill Penfold had no-one to help him other than the teaching staff. After that, I cycled home to my parents in Ashted near Epsom for Christmas.

Next came the Easter Term and Soccer, and another New Zealander, Tom Kennedy, again with us on loan for a year to replace Tom Newnham. In New Zealand the school year goes from Christmas to Christmas. With Tom Kennedy came his wife, 'Maavis' by her husband's pronunciation when he called for his mid-morning cup of coffee. I have a classroom story about that, for perhaps a later date.

This term I acted as Robey Johnson's assistant coach with the First XI, spending most afternoons, when not refereeing matches, playing in the opposition on practice-days. As I remember, the First XI lost only one match the whole season, including those against Eton 2nd., Winchester and Charterhouse Under 16, as well as Woking Grammar, Egham Grammar and a number of other local schools. The match they lost, 2-0, was against the Staff XI, and weren't the boys furious! If my memory serves me, our team consisted of Jake Buttery in goal (he had almost won a Cambridge Blue in that position), Oett and myself as full-backs, Robey Johnson at centre-half (he had played regularly for Manchester United Reserves, and no centre-forward ever got past him); Peter Cunningham and Handel Goddard I think were the wing-halves; Twinkle-Toes Hall was a fast outside-right, Ralph White inside-right, Tom Kennedy centre-forward, Harry Sharpe inside-left and Harry Burrow on the left wing. Our second goal I remember was a magnificent overhead scissors kick from the master in charge of French! I may have got the positions a little wrong; if anyone has a more accurate memory, I shall be glad to be corrected.

Another important event in my life this term was the arrival of Roily. The lady from the village who cleaned my flat once a week soon learnt of my liking for cats, and early in February brought me a kitten which would otherwise have perished. He was soon adopted by the West House Prefects, who gave him his name by 'rolling' him down the top corridor in his early days. Every morning before Assembly he travelled up to the Bothy in my bicycle basket, and spent the day with a saucer of milk, a saucer of scraps and a dirt-box, in the bookstore at the back of my classroom, for several weeks unknown to my pupils.

During this term also I had a strange experience. A steady stream of old pupils from Mr. Foot's previous school at Dehr Dun in India came to visit him. Some evenings, if he himself were busy, he would ask one of the Staff to entertain the visitor for the evening. On one occasion I showed my Indian friend round West House, and later in the evening we had coffee in my flat. He told me of his childhood spent in an Indian hill-village, quite often visited by a 'holy man', who spent the winter in the mountain snows attired only in a dhoti, keeping himself warm by some sort of exercise of will-power. The holy man had given my friend some instruction in palm-reading to forecast the future as well as discover the past. A complete cynic in these matters, I challenged him to read my palm. The result was truly remarkable.

Now for the palm reading!

First of all, my Indian friend told me some details, unusual and quite complicated, about my family. He could not possibly have known or discovered these, since he had never seen or heard of me before that day, and no-one at Ottershaw knew them. From my palm he worked out that my father had been married twice, that his first wife and their daughter had died, while their son, my step-brother, had survived, and that my sister and I had been the children of my father's second marriage.

He was a little uncertain whether he had got this right, saying apologetically that he was a 'little out of practice'. He then spoke of the present, asking if he were correct that I was engaged to be married. He was correct.

Then on to the future: he told me that I should break off this engagement, and that some years later I should meet another young lady, to whom I should in due course be very happily married. Then he forecast that we should have a son, then a daughter, and then a second daughter. At this point he broke off, rose from his chair and said that he thought that that was as far as he would go.

The following day he returned to India. I, never to my knowledge saw him again. Everything he told me I dismissed out of hand. It was not until our second daughter, Fiona, died that I recalled his words, and his refusal to forecast more than he already had. By that time it had all come true - a remarkable prophecy.

The Easter Term continued, and with it came a number of challenges to my authority in class, though never in the House. To cope with my difficulties in class, I followed the advice of my friend and mentor, Jake Buttery, who quickly became aware of what was happening. Engineering a public incident, which in these days would have led to newspaper headlines and permanent disqualification as a schoolmaster, I found it solved all the problems more or less overnight. On only perhaps three or four other occasions, in the whole of my forty-odd years of teaching boys, were such methods necessary, simply because it was known that I would use them if challenged. It enabled me to win the respect and trust without which I could never have dealt with generations of boys, in what I hope was an honest, natural, no-nonsense, just, fair and genuinely friendly manner. It also meant the making of many genuine friends during my twenty-nine years at Ottershaw. It may surprise some with more 'modern' ideas that three of the boys involved in these 'incidents' have personally thanked me in later life for doing what I did.

The spirit in the House during these times was splendidly supportive. Support was rendered with humour, and what I hope was a growing realisation that I would take a joke the way it was meant. The following story might illustrate this.

For misdemeanours within the House, the miscreants concerned had to report to me at a very early hour, whatever the weather, in running kit. They were given two slices of bread and butter, and were then required to complete two, three or four circuits of the running track, which in those days was sited between the end of what was later to become Tulk House and the edge of the First XI cricket field. I ran with them, and they had to finish their, say, three circuits by the time I had run four, or else they had to run four also. At age 24 and able to run a mile in comfortably under five minutes, I felt pretty confident of my fitness.

The House as a whole approved of this system, since it all helped to get boys fit for the Inter-House Cross-Country towards the end of the term. A plot was hatched, however, to put one over the master. The Praefects, of course, were at the bottom of it. One day, two boys were sent to me as having committed some offence worthy of a four-lap penalty. Their names were Edgar and 'Shops'

Colley. Unknown to me, Edgar had, I believe, won the Inter-House Cross-Country the previous year, and 'Shops' had done pretty well, also.

When morning came we started off - four laps for them, five for me. As we started, I caught sight of rows of faces watching from the West House windows, and soon realised why.

As I recall, I just held my own with Colley, but was left standing by Edgar. To the great delight of all, I had to complete two more laps than he.

Classroom life went on, including Tom Kennedy's daily stentorian call for "Maarve's" at coffee-time, while the rest of us repaired to the Staff Common Room, at that time a small room on the bottom corridor of the Mansion facing onto the formal garden. Just before break Tom K. would sometimes visit my classroom to get books from the Bookroom. Most classes in those days possessed a recognised 'humourist'; one such in one of my Latin classes was, as far as I remember, named Fletcher. One morning in the lesson before break his class was undergoing their periodic revision of the seven Latin irregular verbs. One of these is 'malo', the verb 'to prefer', whose present tense in the singular is 'malo', 'mavis', 'marvult'. Boys used to be pointed at with my 'aid-to-teaching' and had to stand up and recite whatever verb they were asked. By pure chance, just before the bell for break, it was Fletcher's turn on 'malo'.

Footsteps were heard on the stairs up to the Bothy. Fletcher began, "malo," then paused as though he had forgotten how to proceed, and waited until Tom K. had knocked and put his head round the door. At once he shouted out "Maaavis" in his best N.Z. accent. General laughter ensued.

It was about this time that I acquired a rather unfortunate nickname. On the timetable, masters were designated by initials - By, Bw, etc. That term there were, for the first time, three masters whose names began with 'W': White, Wigram and Weston, or W, Wi and We. On one morning I had two successive free periods, and the spaces were marked We, We. Boys do not miss opportunities like that.

In those early days classroom life could be quite exciting. On a Thursday morning I used to teach Class H Latin in the lesson after break. At the start of the lesson one member was invariably missing, for he was a regular attender of Mr. Foot's 'Bill'. Robin Marco was an astonishing character; a small boy with a large head, he was of high intelligence, but unstable and totally unpredictable. At about 11.30 or so he would come running across from the boys' entrance to the Bothy, dropping books on the way and shouting imprecations about the injustice of life in general and of one Headmaster in particular. On one such occasion, when even more upset than usual, he burst into my classroom, ran straight to the window, and hurled his books, pens, pencils, 'buff card' and Headmaster's card onto the grass below.

My first introduction to Marco was his first lesson with me. I set the class a test to see how much Latin they already knew; the standard at Ottershaw in September 1951 was not very high! They all settled down to it, including Marco. With about ten minutes to go, he gave vent to a heart-rending cry, stood up, waved his arms about, burst into tears of rage and tore his answer-paper into shreds. Apparently he had been writing down the second person singular of the last ten questions instead of the first person singular as required.

I calmed him down - no mean feat - and gave him fresh paper. With one minute to go he handed in his paper. He had completed every question, which only one or two others had managed to do in the whole lesson, and scored 95%.

For some reason Marco seemed to take a fancy to me. He used to visit me in my classroom, sometimes in break, and explain in detail different plans he had in mind. These included manufacturing a bomb to conceal in Mr. Foot's study, diverting the waters of the Black Mole to flood his Housemaster's cottage, and other similar projects, which he took extremely seriously.

A year or two after he left Ottershaw, the poor chap had to undergo psychiatric treatment. Some time after his release I happened to run into him in London at Euston Street Underground Station. He greeted me like a long-lost brother, and over coffee in the station buffet told me that he had just passed his 'A' Level Russian. I have not seen him since, and have often wondered what became of him - just one of the Ottershaw characters of those early days.

On another day - I am not sure now whether it was during this term or another - a loud explosion caused my class and me to rush to the windows. Boys and smoke were issuing forth from the chemistry laboratory opposite. One of Mr. Foot's experiments had misfired. "Not the first time!" I was told. "One of these days he'll blow us all up."

Saturday night entertainments, under the auspices of Ralph White, were very much a part of School life at that time. Most me got up by boys and junior Staff, though occasionally we had a visiting speaker or entertainer.

One of these visits was by Colonel Hunt in 1953, not long after the famous British ascent of Mt. Everest. We were shown a film of the ascent.

Another was a visit from a well-known Australian pianist, who gave a recital in the Assembly Hall. I have forgotten his name. It was not Liberace, who had a reputation not only of playing the piano but also for being very fond of male companions. In those very different days that sort of thing was quite unacceptable among ordinary people.

Whether the school associated all Australian pianists of the time with the same proclivities I am not sure, but unfortunately our visitor wore what is now known, I believe, as 'deodorant'; in those days, in masculine company, 'scent' was 'scent', which only women or 'semi-viri' (as mentioned most disparagingly in Virgil's Aeneid) wore. As he entered the Hall to walk down to the piano by the stage, whispers of "What a pong!" and "Poofter!" were audible from the back rows of the audience. He was clapped politely at the end of his recital with good Ottershaw manners, but as far as I recall was 'called away' after the interval. 'Political Correctness' had not been heard of in those days, and freedom of speech remained a British birthright.

Another vital part of School life as it was then, to which I was introduced this term, was taking the children of the teaching staff to school. In those days not all mothers could drive, and there was no public transport to speak of, and certainly no bus to The Otter. A rota was therefore drawn up of masters who had a free period first lesson on any given day. I had learnt to drive and passed my test at 17, but had scarcely driven since. Though I had no car - it took me several years to save up for a second-hand Ford - I was roped in for one morning a week. I drove whichever car was available, with about six or seven children packed in, to be dropped off at their various schools within a radius of perhaps five or six miles.

By far the worst cars to drive were the Headmaster's Austin 7 and Jake's huge and heavy old Vauxhall. The Austin 7 had the fiercest clutch I have ever experienced; on more than one occasion I came within inches of smashing it into the front porch of the Mansion; lift your foot a quarter of an inch off the depressed clutch, and you shot forward like a rocket. The Vauxhall was like a tank. I was scared stiff of keeping accelerator and clutch balanced at a major road at the top of a hill. It is a wonder I survived without any accidents.

There were some advantages, however, with the Vauxhall. You could open the top, as Roger Holroyd particularly will remember. Some evenings after dark AFB, TW, RKH and others used to go hunting rabbits in the Park. Caught in the powerful headlights, mesmerised bunnies were potted at by RK's shotgun. All part of life in Ottershaw Park!

In my first term - largely, I think, owing to the homely atmosphere of life at Lyne Hill House - I had been made to feel very much a part of West House. By the end of my second term, Easter 1952, I had been accepted as a part of the School as a whole.

At the end of term I left my bicycle behind and, with a suitcase in either hand and Rolly draped round my neck, walked down to The Otter to catch a bus home. The conductor was quite happy to accept all these extra items without charge.

Next instalment - the Summer Term and cricket!

My wife tells me that I must be boring you stiff with this reminiscing and that you are all too polite to tell me so. I therefore submit this further instalment with trepidation. For goodness sake let me know if you have had enough!

During the rest of summer 1952 I played cricket regularly for Leatherhead in Surrey, and occasionally for a team called, I think, Olinda, a roving Surrey team of which Jake Buttery was a regular member. At that stage in my life my damaged knee gave me comparatively little trouble, and I thoroughly enjoyed all departments of the game, particularly cover-point fielding against an aggressive bat.

In the Christmas and Easter holidays for a few years I kept fit by playing soccer for my own School's Old Boys XI, who played competitively in the London Old Boys league, but I could only, of course, play for four or five games a year. In September 1952 I began my second year at Ottershaw, walking up from the Otter as usual with case in hand, and my cat, Rolly, draped round my neck. This time I felt very much an accepted part of the School. My cat and I were firm fixtures in the flat above the Housemaster's house at West House.

I was earning the princely salary (no value in those days, or very little, on the "Burnham Scale" for a University degree), of £330 a year, plus £104 a year for "extra boarding duties (nominally 15 hours a week, but in fact for me, as one of the only two masters doing continuous residential duties, nearer 40 extra hours a week) less £78 a year for board and residence in term time only. I was lucky if I got three evenings free - and that included, of course, Saturdays and Sundays - in each term when I had enough time to bicycle off to Weybridge to see a film or have a meal out at the "Ship". No one these days would contemplate working such hours, but then it was all part of life as a boarding school.

This new term meant Rugby, and this term I was put in charge of coaching the under 14 XV. The more I became involved in, and the more I learnt about the game, the better I thought it was - infinitely superior, especially for boys, to soccer, the game I had played with such enjoyment all my life. In between times I was still roped in as opposition for the First XV in their practice games. In recognition of my efforts, towards the end of term I was accorded the undoubted privilege of being driven

up to Twickenham by Arthur Foot, accompanied by the formidable Sylvia and their children, to watch the Oxford and Cambridge match. What I remember most about this was not the match (both sides in those days sported several international players) but the return journey. There was no M25 in those days, but there was a road with separate carriageways of two lanes each, for a good part of the way. On the return journey there was heavy traffic travelling our way, moving at about 10 miles per hour or less. A.E.F, observing that there appeared to be only the occasional car using the inside lane only in the London bound carriageway, proceeded to drive down it, the wrong way, in the outer lane at high speed, completely ignoring the wild hooting and gesturing of the normal, law abiding citizens desperately avoiding a head on crash. I have seldom been so petrified in my life, but A.E.F and Sylvia thought it was great fun.

At the end of the Easter term, in what became a regular fixture for the next few years, I accompanied Robey Johnson and the first soccer XI, this time in the School van or "jalopy", to Wembley to see the Oxford and Cambridge soccer match. We always sat in the same seats, which were reserved for us, and for the next few years we sat next to a portly figure in a dog collar and gaiters, who, I was told, was the Bishop of Oxford. He spent most of the match asleep - we could hear him snoring - but at intervals, once even during half-time, he would wake up, give vent to a stentorian shout of "OXFOOORD, OXFOOORD!" and then resume his nap.

During this Easter term I was also given the honour one day of accompanying Arthur Foot on his visits to schools to interview boys who had applied to come to Ottershaw the following year. Until the previous year he had always driven on his own, but after he suffered a minor heart attack, Jake Buttery had insisted that he should always be accompanied by a master who could drive. It was most interesting experience, and it took you to an extraordinary range of very different schools, in various parts of London as well as Surrey. The interviews usually took place in the School's headmaster's study. The headmaster concerned might be friendly or hostile. The accompanying master had to examine the candidate's school exercise books in every subject, while A.E.F conducted the interview, but had the chance to ask a question or two at the end. During the car journey to the next school there was lively discussion about the candidate's merits and de-merits, and he was placed into category A, B and C with copious accompanying notes.

Only A.E.F. knew about the boy's family background, which of course weighed a great deal in the final decision on who was awarded a place. I understand that in those days there were always five or six candidates for every vacancy. During these terms my ability to drive was turned to useful, or not so useful, account on the School's behalf. On Sunday afternoons I was deputed to teach Miss Baker, the popular, larger than life Housekeeper of the Mansion, to drive, for it was planned that she should collect food supplies for the School in the School van from Woking and Chertsey. We used to career round the park in an attempt to accomplish this task, not an easy matter, as Boudicca, or more often Boadicea, as she was popularly known amongst the Staff, was the most excitable lady. Alas, I failed miserably as a driving instructor. She was splendid at driving forwards, but never mastered reversing: whatever the situation, she always turned the wheel the wrong way. On other occasions, however, I had a rather different kind of passenger in the School van. I think it was this year, but it is possible it was the next, that a certain John Reed joined the Staff and took over the running of the Young Farmers' Club. This he did with considerable success, but it was handicapped by the fact that he could not drive. An influential member of the Y.F.C., the elder of two brothers named Sayles, was put in charge of a new Y.F.C. investment - a large, wild, powerful billy goat, purchased to bring in much needed cash for the club in the form of stud fees for servicing local farmers' nanny-goats. This, of course, involved evening visits to a number of outlying farms, often only accessible along narrow, bumpy lanes, which brought high risk of a puncture in the tyres of those times. Guess who volunteered to help out John Reed by doing the driving?

Legend has it that the elder Sayles, who came of farming stock near Godalming - I used to drive him home, with the goat, sometimes at the end of term - on meeting this huge, voracious and rampant beast, equipped with outsize horns, had been beating it into submission in its pen, somewhere I believe at the rear of the tennis courts, with a length of iron chain. Certainly only he could control the smelly animal. Somehow he used to drive it into the back of the van, which was divided from the drivers cab by what seemed to me a pitiful flimsy and inadequate partition. Sayles and I then set off at the start of Toly-time to find the requisite farm.

As we bumped along uncertainly in the weak light of the van's run-down headlamps, the nearer we approached the awaiting she-goat the more excited our stinking beast became. Time after time those lethal horns would come battering into that feeble partition - whether he mistook me for his prospective mate I leave to your imagination. By the end of the return journey of the stench filled evening, I felt a renewed bond of sympathy with Denys Hall. Sayles always used to feed the wretched goat in the mid-morning break. Invariably his class seemed to have geography in the lesson after break. Denys simply refused to have Sayles inside the log cabin until he had washed off some, at any rate, of the ghastly pong. What a privilege it was to have these opportunities to enjoy such varied experiences in my early years as a teacher of Latin and English language!

Tom Weston