

DOVER COLLEGE IN THE TWENTIES AS RECALLED BY ONE WHO WAS THERE

The following article was written by Colonel Andrew Man who, at the age of 93, must be currently one of the oldest Old Dovorians (if not the oldest). Andrew had a distinguished career both at the College, in civilian life and in the military in World War 11 and Korea. -He was at Dover in School House from 1921 to 1926. His remarks concerning the role played by Old Dovorians within the College are most interesting.

MVPH

"I was the eldest of a family of five. My father was a Parish Priest with no private means. He was often heard to say, "the Lord will provide". Long term, He certainly does, but how we managed each day will always be a mystery. We had a wonderful mother.

Father had been a member of the Rugby School XV and, later, of Emmanuel College Cambridge. He always hoped that I would follow in his footsteps, but I would have to win scholarships to do so. I failed to win one for Marlborough, but I did manage, the third for Dover College - £20.00 per year.

My father knew Dover College. He had been the Chaplain around 1909, had taken part in the Pageant on the Close. He was a friend of the then Headmaster Canon Compton and of one of Canon's successors, Mr W.S. Lee. (Incidentally, he and my mother took me to witness the arrival behind the Castle of Monsieur Bleriot of the first aeroplane to cross the Channel in July 1909).



Before and during the 1914-18 war, we lived in the vicarage at Lydden on the road between Canterbury and Dover; we frequently visited Dover, and so were well aware of its central part in that war,

I entered School House for the first time in January 1921. I probably recalled that my Father had done his best for me, but I do remember that I was delighted to find that I would have a bedroom and a "toye", and a miniature desk, myself with a seat against the wall of the Junior Room, where I would be reasonably private. At lunch, the Headmaster - Mr W.S. Lee known as "The Oiler" or "Piggy" - sat with his family at his own table where he carved the large joint for half the House, seated at two long tables, the carving for the other half was the responsibility of the Head of House.

There was not as much space in the House on the ground floor and the outside "loos" could be, and were, very cold in winter. Upstairs, past the door to the Headmaster's study and another into his part of the house, was the room in which the Assistant House Master lived, and some six small "studies" occupied two to a room - by the Prefects and some senior boys.

Under the stairs lived our Matron known as "Jezebel" - a little old lady who could surely not have been born of Woman! She had two remedies for all ills - a thin, sharp rod for earache, and a large No. 9 pill for everything else. What memories we must all have today of the consequences of that pill!

We in School House considered ourselves somewhat superior to the boys in the other Houses. Priory House under Mr C. L. Evans - "Evangel" - with some thing of the "gravitas" of a Roman Senator was a kindly man, to be respected, with a young wife who, we thought, liked to be "different", with their two young children and their donkey.

St. Martin's House was run by Mr R.D.G. ("Toothey") Munns - an OD and popular with the boys in his house, but not with the rest of us. He was prepared to go to any lengths to further their interests at the expense of boys in other houses. As President of the Games Committee, he had all the scope he needed. Crescent House - the Day boys' House - and for that reason, as we saw it, somewhat inferior - was run by Mr. Fitzmaurice, who also ran the Officers' Training Corps. He was friendly, efficient and liked. The 1914-18 War Armistice had only been signed, some thirteen months previously. The Junior House, Leamington was under a Master with personality - and that may well be the reason why Old Boys of that House have kept together as a club for a considerable number of years. Mr Thompson-Evans was certainly "on the ball".

We knew very little indeed about girls, except that they must be avoided - but here, I am happy to admit, that others may well have been more worldly wise than I - brought up in a Vicarage. It was a "taboo" subject. We did notice that the only young blushing maid among the older four or five who served at meal times, left quite soon after she had arrived, and that E.S. Till - a senior boy-disappeared at the same time!

Later we could none of us fail to notice a girl with head in the air, a shorter skirt than was then normal, and who invariably walked on the pavement denied to us when on the Folkestone Road on our way to the Farthingloe Playing Fields. We learned - probably from a Crescent House dayboy that she was a doctor's daughter, Muriel McConnell. One Sunday, T.B. Littlewood, the Head of the House, a Canon's son and the Headmaster's godson, managed to arrange a meeting with her and a friend on the heights between the College and the sea Unfortunately for him, and the two seniors in School House who were with him, they were seen by Mr. G.S. Rivington, a Master, and reported. Littlewood was expelled and the other two were dealt with seriously.

This leads me to the Chapel. We had many a dull sermon from the Chaplain and often from the Headmaster. I think some were based on what seemed to be sex, but we never knew. Those interested were invited to meet one Preacher afterwards in the Vestry. Some of us turned up - but did not come away any the wiser.

The Officers' Training Corps was run, as I have said, by Mr. Fitzmaurice, who had recently served in the War. He was a good leader ably assisted by Hiram G. Bowells - "Hiram G. Guts" we called him - a one time Army Physical Training Instructor. Underneath the gymnasium, he was to be found doing his best to make the most of our inadequate equipment, and out of date rifles, and in assisting us to look like soldiers of whom there were many to be seen in the streets. Dover was still a garrison town and with bugles sounded throughout every day. I well remember the Colours of

the Connaught Rangers being taken to the station en route to Windsor Castle on that regiment's disbandment. Very soon after my arrival, the Duke of York - later King George VI - came to inspect the O.T.C. I like to think we deserved the kind things he said about us, but I shall never forget, nor I expect will any of us who were present, the quite terrible stammer from which the Duke suffered. He could hardly get a single word out it was so bad. What a wonderful job the Queen "Mum" was to do so much later to help him! We used to march through the town and elsewhere, singing silly worded songs and many of us enjoyed the Summer Camps at Tidworth or Aldershot.

Now I come to Education. Dover College was more concerned with good examination results than with the needs of us boys. I took the School Certificate Examination with good results and the Higher Certificate twice, when I should have received the coaching necessary to help me to get to Cambridge with a scholarship, which was vital. On arrival, I had been placed in the Upper Fifth form under Mr A.S. (Alf) Dixon, and then in the next term, in the Lower Sixth form. I, and two others, were "unusual" in that we had to wear wide stiff Eton collars until we were sixteen (or was it fifteen). Boys with those collars were not expected to be in that illustrious form! Mr C. Evans did his best and so did Mr B. W. Thomas, a young man straight from Oxford University. He was later to become a much-liked House Master at Repton but of the other masters, some were inefficient. For instance, in Mr. Coles classroom, the pictures were made to swing, and the black board to fall when he pulled out the duster and in other classrooms the standard was little better. The Army class could be heard at a distance. They were a law unto themselves. Their undoubted athletic prowess seemed to exceed their intellectual ability. They were being crammed to pass the Army Entrance Examination. I never thought that our Headmaster had any idea of what we were likely to find in the outside world once we had passed out of his control. As for punishments, beatings were permitted with the House Master's approval. This was accepted as just and normal and so far as I know, did no one any lasting harm.

It was the visits from the Old Boys that "made our day"! They were splendid. They got to know us, they took us out, and they made us feel important. They seemed to represent our respective futures. I don't recall names now as I should, but Roy Heathcote Hacker always comes to mind.

Looking back over these eighty or so years, I still recall with affection the "atmosphere" of the College, the grounds, the Chapel and some of the masters, but I deeply regret my wasted time in the classroom. When the Headmaster learned that I had enlisted with a view to obtaining a Cadetship at Sandhurst and thereafter a commission, he told my father he had laughed. I wonder why? Was he thinking of the great difference in the College between the Upper sixth and the Army Class? I shall never know.

I have much to be grateful for today and I am.

"The Lord will provide" as my father used to say - and He has so far.

Colonel Andrew Man

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