

## MEMORIES - Mike Longyear

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Mary Allen prompted these memories during a long chat after breakfast in the Hotel am Stadtpark Wilhelmshaven on Sunday 24th August 1997.

We should have been at church (so what has changed?) with all the other 500 or so ex-pupils but we became so engrossed with reminiscences of a remarkable school in the company of:

Mary Allen (Ogilvy-Stewart), Peter Mettyear, Joe Kinson, Heather King (Maule), Pat Fitsimons (Easton): That we did not finish breakfast until about 1130. It is thus that my small contribution is made.

### THOSE FIRST DAYS IN GERMANY

After a brief period of stability in Devon recovering from the evacuation from the Siege of Malta during which I attended 5 schools, having been bombed out or closed through a polio epidemic. The family packed up and went to Germany to join my father who was already serving there having landed on D-Day.

Having arrived in Germany in the early days of September 1946 my father arranged for some education in the form of lessons by members of the Intelligence Corps for about six children. The lessons were given in the centre of Hanover just off the roundabout opposite the Rathaus. I then received some attention from a private tutor at my home in Lange Hop Strasse, Kirchrode, Hannover. Later on a day school was started in Hannover. This school left no lasting impressions on me other than it was in a converted house of no great distinction.

Eventually an opportunity arose to take part in a new venture in a place called Wilhelmshaven. This opportunity was taken with some misgivings having never been away from home for any length of time.

### THE WILHELMSHAVEN EXPERIENCE

Having arrived early with hardly a soul about I was directed to Drake House in which my room was on the first floor. Going up the quarry-tiled stairs I noticed the oversized wet pug marks of Henry, the St Bernard dog belonging to "The Duck", as J.N.Duxbury was soon to be known. Having little experience of wild life (later rectified by Michael B Bunce) I reckoned the size of the pug marks indicated something of the size of a lion.

The room that I was to share with four others was a bit of a shock. It was very nearly bare with five iron bedsteads, two wardrobes of about 18 inches in width with a single chest of drawers with a little fold down mirror. Heating was by two old fashioned steel radiators sited under the windows. These areas were the most desirable position for your bed when winter came. Gradually we livened the room walls with pictures of all kinds and a wicked looking cosh with a spiked metal ball on the end. That belonged to Taffy Ferris. My companions for that first short term from July to August were Taffy Ferris, Ian Reynard, Derek Valencia and Paddy Hemmings. We had the misfortune to be placed (deliberately?) adjacent to the Duck's study. This resulted in several visits from him at night trying to keep us quiet.

I remember well the initial interview with "The Duck". Little realising that he was the history master my response to his question on my interest in history did not go down well. At that age I considered that history was boring and could serve little useful purpose in the New World that we were then facing. He still did not let on that he was the history master but I think that he never forgot. Later he made a point, when for some reason or other, I received a prize in the Fifth form.

The prize was the history book "The Years of Victory" by Arthur Bryant: a book that I still possess and read. I have been forever grateful for the book because on reading it some 10 years later I became intrigued with the Peninsular Campaign and Wellington's involvement. It also led me to read virtually all of Bryant's books such as "The Makers of the Realm", "The Years of Endurance", "The Age of Elegance", Etc: all really good stuff.

### HENRY

Henry, being of a most amiable character, became a welcome, regular visitor to the dorms and Peter (Porky) Kelly and Kenny Fowler became his grooms; a fatal move on the "Duck's" part but most entertaining to us. We were able to accompany the two grooms on walks outside the grounds of the school. He (Henry) used to attempt to round up the horses in the paddocks at the stables: much to the consternation of the riders being put through their paces on the ponies.

Henry was also good fun in the house. On occasions when Henry was in our part of the house he would join in the game where we would close all doors to the rooms, open one and call him. On his arrival the door would be slammed which was the signal for another door to open and Henry to be called again. This was repeated until

Henry, and we, became so excited that the noise woke up the "Duck" who appeared and dished out lines again. Another game with Henry was a tug-of-war with the coconut matting carpet that ran the length of the corridor Henry would take one end and the rest of us the other and fight and pull until we all collapsed or Duxbury appeared and dished out lines again.

People who were new or upset either Kelly or Fowler could find a fully night-attired Henry in their bed when they retired for the night. Henry would be dressed in their pyjamas and often a balaclava helmet. The jacket of the pyjamas was fitted correctly but the trousers were reversed in order that his tail could stick out of the split. Another game with Henry was a tug-of-war with the long coconut matting carpet in the corridor. Henry would take one end and the rest of us would take the other and fight and pull until we all collapsed or the Duck appeared and dished out lines again.

Poor old Henry was eventually exiled to the stables, as Duxbury could no longer afford to keep supplying shirts or trousers to Germans whose clothes had been torn by Henry. There was no truth (I think) in the rumour that Kelly and Fowler had trained Henry for this.

## STAFF

I remember:

JN Duxbury, The Duck as being rather flat-lipped, thick spectacles and a wart on his face. He was the History teacher and was mad on riding. Later on he was a lieutenant in the RNVR for the Sea Cadets.

The Misses Fallows and Thomason as the housemistresses of Drake girls who were most suspicious of Drake boys intentions on their girls. We had as little to do with them as possible (the Mistresses, not the Girls).

George Wright. The sports (Football really) master (I believe he also taught rudimentary biology) with a centre parting in his hair. Whether that was to emulate some well-known footballer of the time I do not know. I never really got on with him.

Miss Drummond. The hustling, bustling ginger-haired Sports Mistress who gave the boys a hard time when she refereed the hockey match between the football team and the girls hockey team. More of her later.

Stan Sacket. Music master and a thoroughly good guy. I liked him playing "Jesu Lover of My Soul" before church sometimes. I reckon he did wonders for the singing. If I go to church now I still sing the bass parts of the old hymns he taught us.

George (Kleine Beine) Tyson. Maths master who suffered with us forever playing practical jokes. One I remember was to stick the blackboard rubber just beyond his reach so that he had to jump up and down trying to get it. Most of the jokes were of this infantile level and are best forgotten. Mind you, he at least got maths into our heads to the extent that most of us obtained credits in maths in the GSC so that many matriculated.

Miss Sellar. English mistress supreme. She used to frighten me to death because she was so intense and could not understand how we could not share her enthusiasm for Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" (particularly when it came to Malvolio's cross garters. So what, we thought) and George Eliot's "Silas Marner". We did not play tricks on her even though we were convinced that she wore a wig. Don't ask me why. Once again a superb teacher. We all got Credits in English Lit. and English Language.

Mr Slimming. He was our kind of guy. He (so it was said) played football for the Corinthians and was a good amateur cricketer. He was also the Science master. He was also an officer in the RNVR for the Sea Cadets. He taught us all of the science- physics, chemistry, the lot- to the extent that I do not know of anybody in our group failing the GSC exams. He was one of the easiest to get on with. If I remember rightly he smoked like a trooper. Which we probably thought made him one of us. It was through him that I played cricket from my school days until I retired from work.

Henderson: the Art Master. He tried his best with us but I do believe it was a lost cause from the beginning. He used to float around in another world, which was not populated with little heathens like us.

JAB Harrison Housemaster of Rodney? I have no idea what subjects he taught My contact with him was always to do with sailing or Sea cadets and particularly the scraping down of the TS Prince Rupert in dry dock after it was first recovered from the sea bed. If this was to be done now it would be considered slave labour. I do remember him fitting out the smallest pram dinghy that I have ever seen with a cabin. His intention was to sail across the North Sea with his dog. I never knew whether he made it. He was a Commander in the Regular navy before teaching.

Slade, the woodwork master. A great lump of a man who taught woodwork in the rooms between Drake and Rodney. His way of distributing one's work was to throw it down the room. His aim wasn't that good so you

had to keep your eyes open otherwise you were clouted with somebody's exercise in cabinet making. I had a beating from him once. That was enough. He had a very strong arm. I have heard that he taught at Borstal Schools before PRS.

Lastly, the Head. Old Smitherman was, initially to me, a remote ascetic having little to do with the likes of us. My first contact with him was to receive 1,000 lines for chewing gum in Churchill. We attributed his attitude to his education, spending his formative years at Christ Hospital School followed by university in Jesus College ending up with a degree in Divinity. He taught RE. One thing he did have that fascinated us was the marvellous model railway layout in the attic above Nelson. It covered a large area and had all the level crossings with bells etc remotely controlled. There was also a superb model of Dusseldorf Hauptbahnhof incorporated in the layout.

At least he was a just Head.

The remaining staff of that very early time made little impression on me and they probably would not have remembered me, as we could not have come into any conflict.

## FOOD

The food in those first terms was really quite grim and little of it. On going home after that first part term - at least I think it was then - we were in a small train running from the back of the school. We had journeyed, I think, as far as Jever when we all had to get out and remove the large chalk signs on the train declaring it to be "The Belsen Express". People of that time would realise the enormity of that sign being paraded through Germany.

In later terms we all had to parade outside the house and then march to the dining room. I never understood the rationale behind it.

The food did improve particularly if you were in one of the school teams. The opposing German side was always invited back for tea, which was always a good spread. I think that this is why the German lads liked playing us. I remember really looking forward to the mid-morning break at Nelson when we had a mug of hot chocolate and a sticky bun during the cold weather. It was in those first terms that we were pleased when evening hot soup was introduced. The Duck even mentioned it in the Drake House notes in the first Cavalier.

Talking of food. The Cookhouse manager was a very understanding chap, as far as our group was concerned. Bunce's father was posted back to England and left a shotgun (a 4-10) in his hands and some Reich Marks (which is another story). With the gun Bunce was known to shoot the odd wild goose on the marshes. On presentation to the Dining room manager he would arrange for it to be cooked for a certain day on which we would all sit on the same table and have a feast.

With the Reich Marks we made a foray into town and bought something like a couple of dozen coconut macaroons (or the German equivalent), bottles of Aquavit (a Danish spirit not unlike Pernod) and brandy. We removed a glass bowl lampshade, emptied the bottles of drink in and drank this cocktail whilst eating the coconut macaroons. We never made it to supper.

Food also prompts me to remember, in a roundabout way, of the sick bay at the far end of the campus. Each term on returning to school it was my habit to bring a large bread-pudding, that was rather like a cake, to share at night with roommates. However, on one particular term, before I was able to eat any I went down with a severe attack of tonsillitis resulting in me ending up in sick bay with my bread pudding left under my bed in the dorm. Whilst in sick bay I suffered more than if I remained outside. To start with I was given hot menthol inhalations in bed. The nurse managed once to spill it in my lap, which necessitated another day or so in bed. This has left me with a deep distrust of nurses with hot liquids. Anyway, when my girlfriend of the time came up to talk to me and throw up some cigarettes through the window I heard Sister coming and ran back to bed managing to break my toe on the bed leg. This I found out some years later when I had an X-Ray for some damage at cricket. The radiographer informed me that I had broken my toe some years before. After a few more days I had recovered enough to leave my bed to go to the loo and also have a cigarette. Within two minutes of lighting up the nurse threw some water over the top of the loo and told me to put it out. I was so pleased to get out and get at my bread pudding. It was still under the bed but it was all hairy with fungal growth - a poor term. Bunce and I did, at odd times, get down to the Saddle Club and have a brandy or two at 6d a tot sitting on the saddles that were used as bar-stools. But at 2/6d a week pocket money and having to buy soap for exchange for cigarettes we were hard pressed to do it very often.

I have since learned (this year) that Carter, Peter, would ring up the transport office and demand a car to go

to the stables for riding. In those early days a request from a Britisher was to be considered as an order by a German employee. I do not know how long he kept it up. This then reminded us of the little enamel Union Flag that one wore on one's coat to differentiate us from Germans. This also gave us carte blanche to ride on trams etc without any payment. Peter Carter tells me that he used his to ride on the bumper cars all afternoon without paying once at a some local fair.

Later on in our school career we were able to get a packed lunch from the dining room of a Sunday and go sailing nearly all day. On those odd balmy days it was bliss to be able go at your own pace and smoke without fear of being caught. I do remember losing all of my cigarettes, one plimsoll shoe and a watch on such a trip with Johnny Ransom when we capsized the dinghy late in the afternoon. We got back very late and with some difficulty with the heavy, waterlogged canvas sails not helping one bit.

Johnny Ransom's name reminds me that he and I played cricket for an adult Army team at odd times. He for his batting and me for bowling. We used to play at Osnabruck and Oldenburg. I think the Head stopped it as we used to come back late from these matches having had dinner in some Mess or other and we would bring back sausage rolls etc.

Who can forget the "Easy Weekends" when we had no school on Saturday and parents visited and took one (and one's friends) out for something and chips. They were good times as there was usually a show, review or dance on the Saturday evening.

Howe (I think) gave a review at one such weekend that sticks in my memory. Some young thespian started to recite "the Green-eyed Yellow Idol to the North of Khatmandu" when an army officer got up in the audience declaring it to be rubbish. He argued that the idol was not green-eyed and probably did not face the north etc. This officer was in full Staff Officer uniform with rank of colonel or brigadier having the florid features of someone who had served the British Raj for many years. We all squirmed with embarrassment for some poor pupil, whose father it must surely be. Lo and behold. Another officer of similar bearing who then began arguing with the first, compounding our embarrassment. It gradually transpired that this was all part of the act. The protagonists were, I believe, the Carter brothers who had been made up by Fletcher, Howe housemaster.

## SMOKING

Obtaining materials for smoking was a constant trial and led to all sorts of initiative by some people. One method was to bribe the night watchman, Creeping Jesus, (I never knew his real name) with a bar of soap to bring in cigarettes from outside. In hindsight I think he ripped us off because the cigarettes, Sonder Mischung (Special Mixture) in a rather grubby paper packet were little better than burning tealeaves and we did not realise the value of soap on the black market. I must admit that his supply improved with a brand called Fox. That was after an American tobacco company opened up in Bremen.

Bunce had a supply of exceedingly good tobacco which he used to keep in a tin with a piece of potato (or apple) to keep it moist. His unwitting supplier was the Duck. Duxbury's study was immediately passed the partitioning door to the rest of the house. Bunce would knock on the study door and wait to be told to enter. If there was no reply he would go in, take the Duck's tobacco jar - hermetically sealed and with his college crest on - back to his room and put some in the tin and then return the jar to the study. I remember the tobacco well. It was John Cotton Smoking Mixture No1 and No2. A rather superior brand.

Our smoking was done in the loo or in the handicraft block and sometimes up by the boiler house. Sometimes even in the loo in Churchill House before assembly. We always chose cross country running when it was athletics training day because we could run to the ranges nearby and sit down and have a smoke and return gasping which George Wright took for a sign of effort.

The Duck was a most civilised chap. Even though he used to beat me about once a month for smoking (at least until I became a prefect) he would at a later stage, when we were a little older, invite us to his flat at the end of term. There his wife would provide sandwiches, beer and I have even been known to have a cigarette. I suppose we must have been sixteen by then. On reaching the age of sixteen we were, under the military regulations, entitled to 50 free cigarettes per week and allowed to buy no more than 300 per week! And that at 9d for twenty. But not at school! We did have an argument about our rights to cigarettes when we stayed on during the holidays for riding or trips on the TS Prince Rupert.

## ENTERTAINMENT

From the above you might gather that we had little entertainment and were forced to make our own. This was



not really true. We just did not fit in to the standardised clubs of stamp collecting, music, etc. etc. We were just philistines. Regardless of the whys and wherefores we tended to make our own entertainment in the evening. One I remembered well was the small 8mm-film projector owned by Bunce. Unfortunately there was only one film, that of woodturning and making a chair. When this was exhausted we ran the film backwards. In running backwards the projected picture was upside down and laterally reversed. The only way that we could see the miracle of pieces of wood being made from a chair was for all of us to lie on the floor and project it on the ceiling.

Another game was penny ha'penny football. This required a good flat table which we sand papered, two penny coins and one halfpenny coin and about 4 to 6 inches of a wooden ruler. The coins were well polished and the halfpenny was used as a football and the penny coin as the kicker. The ruler was used to propel the penny coin. Drilling holes at each end of the table and sticking bits of wood (matchsticks from smoking) therein made goal posts. That game lasted for ages.

We also did boxing in the attic of Drake. I had been given boxing gloves by my sister's boyfriend who happened to be in charge of the Regimental PRI. A useful guy!

One can see that our activities were not particularly mind-bending. That reminds me. Who was it in Drake who sent for the Charles Atlas course of bodybuilding? We were all to be converted from seven stone weaklings, who had sand kicked in their faces, into a "Mr Atlas"? (Who kicked sand into other peoples' faces?!). Ironsides (Tinribs) was transferred from Howe (for some reason that I was not able to fathom) and started a chess club which didn't go down too well with us. Perhaps that's why he was posted from Howe.

One particularly cold winter provided us with some more adventure. It would appear that the times of the tide and bitter cold combined to freeze the sea just beyond the dyke. After several days of bitterly cold weather and the tides breaking up the ice the conditions produced a mass of jumbled ice rather like some rough arctic scene. A gang of us (who, I can't remember now), thinking we were Scott's crew went out on this tied together. We did not see the danger but the staff did a put a stop to it when they learned what we were doing.

One escapade involving Howe (and the Carter brothers I believe) was the carbide experiment. Having pinched some carbide and sodium metal from the lab some people went to the attic of Howe with a bucket and some water. Water was placed under the bucket, a piece of carbide was thrown in, producing acetylene. When this was going well a piece of the metallic sodium was introduced and the whole thing blew up on the spontaneous ignition of the hydrogen produced by the action of the sodium on water. A very satisfying Bang!

At some later stage we had old time dancing in the squash court in Collingwood. We learned the Valeta, St Bernard Waltz, Gay Gordons and presumably some other things. I did not know until 50 years later that one had to be one of the "in" crowd to be invited. This we were informed of this year by Heather Maule, who came all the way from New Zealand to tell us, and was certainly was one of the "IN" crowd if anybody was. I would love to know what I had missed at these dances by not knowing that I was one of the 'in' crowd. Something esoteric I would imagine if Heather Maule was involved.

Dancing brings to mind the dances we had in Churchill on special weekends. Everything was done correctly by announcing the next dance to be, e.g. "A ladies invitation waltz" or "Gentleman's excuse me". It was always an opportunity to embarrass two people who fancied each other but had not the nerve to do anything about it. A "Snowball Waltz" would be announced and the couple named to start would be the hapless potential sweethearts. This couple then had to dance on the floor until the music stopped before they could part and select a partner of the opposite sex to carry on and so on. The idea was to leave the embarrassed first couple to dance for a long time on their own. When one thinks of it those dances were really quite civilised and later in life were quite a good entrée in some societies.

We did also have the house productions of plays and reviews etc for school presentation which, at times, were fun. I was in one Drake House play about Elizabeth I and Drake: naturally. Dinah Hughes played a haughty Elizabeth. Other members of the cast were Mettyear, Heather Maule, young Biggs, Douet, Bunce etc. My part was in the opening scene with Bunce. That put me off any thoughts of future amateur dramatics.

I do remember an orchestral concert being held one evening in Churchill and several of us went clambering in the roof void trying to drop things on the stage. We did not manage it but were contaminated with the glass wool that was used up there for insulation. We itched for days.

I remember being in Churchill for the rehearsal for the Christmas broadcast with Stan Sackett in control and the other staff present on the stage. I was with Taffy Ferris chatting and reading a comic or some other forbidden material. Slade, the woodwork master made me stand in the front facing the congregation. Taffy and I had

developed a rudimentary hand sign language with which I was able to communicate my views about Slade to Taffy. The sign language was so rudimentary (spelling every word) that Slade was able to get the gist of it. On the completion of the rehearsal as I was about to leave Slade got hold of me and marched me off to his room in Matthew and gave me six of the best. That was the worst caning I've had. Walter Sanders still remembers it even after fifty years having seen the result although I can't remember showing anybody

## BUNCE AND OTHER ANIMALS

My introduction to wildlife (i.e. fauna: not fun and games) was through Bunce who was a Member of the British Ornithological Union, or so he said, who got me type out long lists of birds with their Latin names after Linnaeus the great naturalist. Any knowledge that I have of the avian kingdom is a result of those months with Bunce. Anyway, we used to get out to Oldeooge or Wangerooge (who can forget those marvellous fast trips in the R-Boots) which were bird sanctuaries and look at all sorts of birds etc. I believe he brought an avocet back once, as the avocet was very rare in England. It ran up and down the corridor for a few times but I have no idea what happened to it afterwards.

He had a rabbit in a cardboard box under my bed one night. It thumped all night so we got rid of that.

We also had a baby tern chick that we found abandoned on the end of the jetty where the Sea Cadets started. We kept it behind the wardrobe and fed it with fresh chewed up mussels. It was doing quite well until matron found it and got rid of it.

One interesting experiment was to see how a duck ate. We filled the bath and put the duck (not Duxbury) in and then sprinkled breadcrumbs in the water. The duck, probably starving by then, gobbled them up and we had to stick our heads under the water to see exactly how it was able to eat under water.

Bunce's efforts in catching rabbits for the pot around the playing field came to a sudden end when he found one of Smitherman's cats in the snare. He threw it over the fence and kept quiet about it. I was reminded forcibly of this at the reunion in W'haven when we read the excerpts from the unofficial school log. In that there is reference to 28th September 1947 "Silver (the cat) Smitherman has 4 kittens". Further on for an entry in 29 September 1948 "There is still no sign of Silver's kittens". Perhaps Bunce got more than one.

## TRIPS

Who can forget the trips to Hamburg and Plön for the sports weekends? I remember one trip to Hamburg where we had the embarrassment of beating the local forces day school at cricket by a massive margin. We got them all out for 7 runs and four of those were off the last ball of a seven ball over. I must admit we were hospitably treated as we stayed with the families of our opponents. We had some fun in the Canadian Forces Club (I forget the name - the Malcolm Club, or something like that) in Hamburg. I remember eating several Peach Melba - a real luxury. There was also a continuous running lift in which you got in on the move. We would stay in to see what happened when it came down the other side. Luckily it did not turn upside down. We also found that you could stop it between floors and as they were open doors other unsuspecting lift users had either to climb to the floor above or lower themselves to the floor below to get out. Great fun!

Plön was the best trip. The surroundings were marvellous with trees and the lakes. How we ever won any of the competitions there I shall never know. We seemed to spend most of the night out by the lakes with the current girlfriend and were fairly shattered by the next day.

Another trip that comes to mind was to Bremen Dom. The cathedral that had a variety of mummified humans and animals in the crypt. Although they were some hundreds of years old some of the teeth were still white, the hair was still long and the fingernails were intact even though the skin was of a brown parchment-like consistency. On the way back we stopped at the American PX in Bremerhaven and had (my first) Coca-Cola. Dinner that night at school consisted of an indeterminate roasted meat that had a brown parchment-like quality. Needless to say I was a bit put off my food by thinking of cooked (or even uncooked) mummy.

Sometimes, in the summer holidays, we could stay on for a couple of weeks and ride every day. Those were very good times. We (I can remember Heather Maule and Peter Mettyear on one occasion) would stay at the transit mess with the Duck and go riding every day and look after our ponies every morning and evening. We would ride some miles into the country and stop at some small Gasthaus to eat our packed lunch and have a beer. The first couple of evenings we would be tired and stiff as boards but later took it in our stride. There were even discussions on the merits of methylated spirit to harden the skin. Those evenings were so different from school with the Duck being more human than one could think possible. On one of these trips the Duck, poor

fellow, fell of his horse. The first time that I had ever seen it happen. We were riding slowly in single file up a narrow leafy track when a horse to the rear, ridden by a Danish officer, bolted through the lot of us and knocked old Duxbury off. The riding master (Herr Leu?) as quick as lightning said "How brave of you to dismount so quickly in an attempt to stop the runaway". Nobody even smirked. That reminds me. It was said that the Duck wore silk stockings for the ease of getting his riding boots on and off. To us this seemed to be the height of extravagance and somewhat effete. Our attitude then must be considered in the light of availability in the war. The only time one was able to have things made of silk was if a parachute became available to cut up. There are so many other memories lurking at the back of my mind which only require the stimulus of the others to bring them flooding back as vividly as yesterday.

#### OTHER THOUGHTS

The official opening of the school was marked only by the fact that we were given the day, or afternoon off by the dignitary. We were not impressed by the speaker who was George Tomlinson, Minister for Education of the Government of the time. The only part of his speech that remained in my memory was that "He didn't take kindly t' bowing" when he was talking about entering the House. When he left we were dutifully lined up to cheer him off the premises but many of us saw him off in silence with folded arms. I can not remember who the ring leader for this was.

The Chaplain to the Forces visited the school and was shown around Drake by Smitherman. It must have been when we were in the VI Form (Lower) as we had a free period and were in the House when the Head came. We were playing ice hockey in the corridor with a walking stick, broom and one hockey stick, using a tin of boot polish for the puck. We tried to disappear when the Head came in with visitor but were not successful. The Head then introduced us as "Some of the more responsible students". I can only believe sarcastically.

Another political figure to visit us was the First Lord of the Admiralty, whose name I am unable to recall. It must have been later, when the Sea Cadets had uniforms etc as we were on parade for him. As he was in a crumpled dark suit with a peaked cap he looked like a deckchair attendant rather than the resplendent figure of an admiral, with cocked hat and plumes, that we expected. I think that we got him mixed up with the First Sea Lord, a true sailor.

The first issue of equipment was of the World War I vintage with great wide webbing belts with enormous brass buckles. We also had the really old Lee Enfield 303 rifles to play about with (without firing pins, I hasten to add).

Thinking of the Sea Cadets reminds me of the regular sailor who taught us signalling. He was a Yeoman of Signals and was always known as Fox Dog, presumably the initials of his Christian and surnames. He was a short muscular man who played left back for the local naval football team. I know this as I played right wing for the school and was marked (literally) by him in the odd matches we had against the navy side.

I lost my position of right wing when some chap called Steel, or something like that, came to the school. He really was a natural winger but I did not appreciate it one bit at the time. George Gladwish and the Carters would probably know the name as they were playing at the time under Derek Lewis as skipper. Actually it was not a bad team with the training we had from the German pro footballer.

This also reminds me of the boxing lessons we had in Churchill. That was also with a German Pro. He and I were sparring in one lesson when I managed (how I don't know) to catch him on the mouth and drew blood on his lip. He retaliated with a straight left which hit me and everything went grey and I had no legs from the knees down. He just supported me to one of the gym benches and sat me down to recover. Quite a salutary lesson.

I had a similar experience playing football. We were playing on a rain-sodden pitch (when was it ever different in W'haven?) with the old fashioned leather ball. There was a 50:50 ball which the full back got to first a booted it is hard as possible. The ball hit me full in the face from about 5 yards. It was like being hit by a cannon ball. Once again everything went grey and lost the use of my legs from the knees down. I was dumped on the side-line until George Wright allowed me back on the pitch.

There were lots of accidents when one thinks about it. There was Taffy Ferris who, when keeping wicket, was hit in the face during one over from me. The cheek swelled up by the time I arrived at the other end of the wicket. Later on his eye turned black, even the actual eyeball which looked really grim.

Shiela Cuffe (at least I think it was Shiela) had an accident riding and broke her arm badly to the extent that it was pinned above the elbow with a spring attached to a bit of gantry supporting her arm. This must have impressed me as I remember it so well.

Someone, I know not who, broke into the bunker by the gate and we had to investigate. We found the phosphorescent strip of paint on the walls. It was dry and flaky and we were thus able to get it on our hands and rub into the face. We would go out and expose ourselves to the sun, return to the dark and put the fear of god into anybody who came in with our glowing ethereal hands and faces floating around.

One is brought to mind when sex first reared its (interesting) head. Miss Drummond's room was on the ground floor facing East, towards Drake House. Being games Mistress it was her practice to do her early morning physical jerks in the nude with the curtains drawn back. Presumably to catch the early morning sun. However, Drake boys became aware of this. Wolfed their breakfast, tore back to the house and lined the attic windows to watch this introduction to the female form. Eventually it stopped. Whether through boredom on our part or the fact that it became colder and she didn't like the W'haven weather any more than we did I do not know. Somebody told her that we did this some 50 years later.

Another one on the same lines is when Taffy Griffiths wore his girlfriend's clothes- skirt and everything- for one whole day. I remember Miss Sellars asking me at the end of the day whether "Griffiths was alright" and was visibly relieved when I explained that it was for a dare. Knowing nothing of transvestites then I could not see why she had been so worried.

I remember sitting on the tiny roof of one of the attic roofs when my girlfriend came looking for me whilst I was with another. Looking at the height of those roofs on this trip put the fear of God into me. Presumably a woman's wrath even then was more fearful.

One can not continue with this topic without possible offence or embarrassment to other good and kindly folk. Therefore I will not divulge any confidences. That aside I would dearly love to remember the name of the boy who was expelled for enticing one of the German maids into his room with a sticky bun! Most enterprising. He, not like us, knew the value of things on the black market.

#### END OF TERM

End of term was always a good excuse for more mayhem. The last evening of term was always used to make forays into the girl's part of the house or attack the girls of Howe. It never seemed to be any other house. But then, in those early days there was a special relationship between the houses. Quite what that relationship was I was never sure – possibly a love/hate one. In Drake house we always had the "Bog Race" on the last morning. This involved all of the males of the house congregating in the bogs at the far end of the house and then racing to one's room, dressing and on to the dining room. I have no idea what the prize was. Presumably it was for the honour. It was also one day that we did not have to march to the dining room.

#### END OF SCHOOL

I left the school at the end of the spring term of 1951 as my father had been posted back to UK the year before. During the interim period I stayed with Taffy Ferris whose father was my guardian for that period.

The trip on TS Prince Rupert to Rotterdam was my last contact with the School and was one full of incident. The "Duck" was very good about the Rotterdam trip as I had left the school the term before but was still allowed to return for it. I came over the Harwich-Hook of Holland route and lo and behold met Fletcher, the Housemaster of Howe, who had come to meet his Mother-in Law, who gave me a lift to school. On arrival at school the Duck had me in to dinner with his wife. Which was very civil of him although I think he may have had an ulterior motive. He asked me to tell the Head boy of the House at that time to stop bedding a certain female. The recipient of the message nearly had a fit as he thought that he had been so discreet. I sometimes wonder whether the staff missed anything at all in the relationships that went on amongst us all.

Our departure for Rotterdam was delayed for some 24 hours due to bad weather. When we did set sail it was still very rough and most of the crew, including JAB Harrison's dog, were sick. Harrison, the Skipper, was OK but the Duck who was first officer looked like the soldier he was. It wasn't too bad after a couple of days when we could use the galley, which had been virtually wrecked in the bad weather. When the weather quietened down we lowered a boat (a whaler?) with about eight of the crew to row around a bit. We then steamed off putting the fear of God into them for a few minutes. It was not many days out when we had an accident. Someone had left the bosun's store hatch open in the Leading Hands mess deck. On swinging down the ladder to the mess deck somebody (I thought it was Thorne) went straight down and broke his leg(s). We ran up the international signal requesting medical aid, which elicited response from a Dutch Cargo-Passenger ship. We hoisted him on to it by crane. Never saw the chap again!



On that trip we sailed through mile upon mile of jellyfish. There must have been millions of them. We kept hooking them out of the water with boat hooks onto the deck. Quite massive they were.

If I remember correctly a storm-battered pigeon land on the ship and was looked after in the PO's mess. Peter Mettyear was a PO (I think) and may know.

In Rotterdam we were berthed beside a submarine mother ship and we were given the opportunity of looking over a submarine - an interesting experience. Whilst we were there a large exhibition of the sea called "The Ahoy Exhibition" was being staged. A large area of parkland had been transformed into a town of bars, restaurants and various sideshows. We, some of the crew, were part of a 'Sunset' ceremony where we provided a guard of honour to the lowering of flags: or something like that. We were therefore in naval uniform. After the ceremony we removed our Sea Cadet hatbands and replaced them with Royal Naval names such as Illustrious and Nelson even though Nelson was, and probably still is, a shore station. This impressed the girls and provided us with free drinks as the Dutch were still very pro British and would, after a few drinks, shout "Remember Arnhem" and down another beer. I still have a beer mat from a pub called the "Onderweld" with the signatures of Bunce, Taffy and Mike Griffiths, Johnny Ransom, Ginger Gatti, Alec Little etc, etc. We managed to get a taxi back to the ship and we paid the driver in BAFV's ( Remember the paper money and tufnall coins when the lowest denomination note was 3d!). That was after some of the Dutch ship's crew had been out looking for us in Rotterdam.

Our return journey was also full of incident. We had to keep a lookout for mines. We had a ship's concert and on arrival in the Jade Busen we didn't have a clue as to where we were exactly we just dropped anchor before we ran aground. In the morning we found that the whole of the anchor chain had been let out. It took us hours to get it all in by that hand machine thing.

That was my last contact with the School and I went back to England as happy as a sandboy to face the rigours of National Service in the Royal Engineers in Egypt during the revolution led by Neguib and finally Gamal Abdel Nasser against King Farouk. Running a Filtration Plant on the banks of the Sweet Water canal on the edge of the desert was a welcome change to the raw cold of W'Haven. I did bump into Trevor Creech on a Church Parade in Moascar, a Military camp just outside of Ismalia on Lake Timsah. The privations suffered there were as nothing compared with PRS (and no where near as rewarding as far as I was concerned)

Mike Longyear