

“Forty Years On”

Written at the turn of the century for the benefit of the RSD Archivist.

There's something extraordinary about RSD; perhaps that's what has given rise to the nickname 'The Old Grey Mother' over the years. What is this extraordinary thing? Quite simply that RSD, whenever one attended, lives on in the memories and reminiscences, and, like any mother, draws her sons – and daughters too, nowadays – to keep in touch and visit every so often long after they have flown the nest.

As a greying son of the Old Grey Mother, I wait with eager anticipation each year for the latest copy of the Magazine – a huge document nowadays, compared to what it was in my day when I was Editor. One feature which interests me nowadays is Norman Cardwell's article about life at RSD forty, fifty, or even sixty years ago – I remember Norman as a small boy starting at RSD many years ago; his elder brother, Jim, was in my class! I was not at RSD sixty years ago; my memories are rather more recent. I shall reminisce on my very first year at RSD – to do much more would become rather tedious! I entered RSD as a nervous member of Form IIA in September 1961, in the days when small boys wore short trousers, and, in my case, National Health spectacles. (In those days the first-year intake was called Form II) The School seemed enormous compared with Moy Primary School where I had been for the previous six years. Looking back now it was really quite small. The buildings at that time were the 18th century stone buildings, along with the red brick buildings which had been added in 1956 or thereabouts. On the ground plan on [page 28 of RSD 1999](#) these are the buildings marked **A**,

The main school entrance in those days was by the Bingham Gates in Northland Row from which the drive led to the Headmaster's House, past the Nicholson Statue. Prior to that the main entrance was on the SW corner of the campus, right on the corner of the junction between Northland Row, Northland Place and Perry Street. Imagine that in today's traffic conditions! A side gate led, by a drive parallel to the main one, directly to the North Wing and the yard beyond. In those days the old farmyard building (we called it 'Shantytown') was still standing, though in a dangerous condition and consequently out of bounds. This, along with the outside lavatories, was demolished in 1964 as part of the New Building project.

The School at that time boasted two Rugby pitches. One, beyond the Cloisters, was known in my time as the 'School Field,' though previously it had been called 'The Bowl'. It subsequently became the site of the buildings marked **B**, the tennis courts and the proposed extension marked **C** on the ground plan already referred to. Buildings **B** were begun in 1964, and the foundations were being dug while we were sitting Junior Certificate in the Summer Term. (As a matter of interest, these buildings cost £120,000 – a huge sum in those days.) Beyond the 'Bowl' was the cricket pitch, which had a rather fine square, overlooked on one side by the old 'Prep. House' and by a wooden pavilion on the other. This, of course, is now the Armstrong Field. The other Rugby pitch was parallel to Ranfurly Road, on the site of the old Northland House, demolished long before. It was known as the 'Memorial Field', though to this day I don't know whose memorial it was!

I discovered this year that it was a memorial to Old Boys who had died in World War 1. In the Summer Term this field was turned over to Athletics, the track being marked and maintained by the boys. In my first year this was the responsibility of RM Lyons, known as 'Big Leo', and the work became something of a family business over the years! The

Memorial Field bordered on the old High School grounds – *terra incognita* in those days. Running between the Memorial and School Fields was an access road known to us as 'Patton's Lane', leading to Mr Patton's timber and building supplies business. Beyond Patton's Yard was 'Cheeser', a wooded area dropping down the side of a little valley, where we enjoyed many a good Scout activity, as well as other activities which were much less legitimate! There was a third pitch in Dungannon Park, used mostly by the 1st XV for their home matches. It was rather a trudge if you happened to draw duty as ball-boys, though I seem to remember that the home team nearly always had a lift in the visitors' bus, and, sometimes, if the ball-boys were quick doing their jobs they could get a lift back to school at the end.

With regard to the actual buildings, the classrooms were numbered 1 to 14, Room 15 being the hut in the yard. Room 1 was the room where I sat my Boarding Scholarship exam the summer term before joining the school. At that time it was, I think, a music room, but when I returned in September it had become the Headmaster's Study. Room 2 was the Art Room which, with the coming of the New Buildings in 1965, became a Language Laboratory. Room 3, down the steps towards the dungeons, was the French Room, the domain of JH Crook, very popular on a cold winter's day because it had a pot-bellied stove. Room 5, behind the stage of the Hall, was always known for some reason as "The Cage." Does anybody nowadays know why? Room 10 was the Chemistry Lab; Rooms 11, 12, 13 and 14 (all part of the 1956 extension) were, respectively, the Geography Room, Physics Lab, Lecture Theatre and Library. No doubt they have all changed use over the years. This extension also contained lavatories, a cloakroom and, in the basement, changing-rooms and storerooms. A boiler room completed this extension. What was the preparation or backroom of the Geography Room subsequently became part of the overhead corridor joining the 1956 extension to that of 1965. The School Hall was in the old building – nowadays it is the Library, I believe. Even at the beginning of my time at RSD this hall was too small to accommodate the whole School along with parents for Speech Day. In my first year Speech Day was held in the Parochial Hall across the road – I remember that the guest speaker was Lord Justice McDermott, the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland. In subsequent years we borrowed the High School Hall for Speech Day until our own new hall was completed. The old Hall also served as a gym. I was rather intrigued as a boy to see in the School prospectus that the Hall and the Gym seemed to be two different places. In fact they were illustrated by photographs taken from opposite ends of the room! It was here that School Assemblies took place each day, and here also that external exams were held in the summer term. I sat Junior and Senior Certificate exams here, as well as A-Levels. While the hall was being used for exams assemblies were held in the cloister.

There were three dormitories in the main buildings in 1961 with two smaller ones in the Prep House. The North Wing dormitory was where the junior boys slept, and this is where I spent my first night at RSD. In charge here was **Mr D.P.Kirkwood**, who moved out of residence at the end of my first term to marry Miss Innes. He was replaced the following term by **Mr W.A.Ward**. One had to behave there, because just along the corridor was the Masters' Common Room! Across the quadrangle which contained the Headmaster's garden was the Middle Dormitory accommodating 3rd and 4th form boys. In the 5th form one rose to the dizzy heights of the Senior Dormitory which was directly above the School Hall. On the ground floor of the North Wing was the Dining-Hall and adjacent kitchens. I don't know what this room is used for nowadays, but in my time it was where the boarders had their meals. At lunchtime some dayboys ate with us, but

these were few because accommodation was so limited. This room was interesting in that it had photographs of former 1st XVs going back to the very early days of Rugby Football at RSD. From these photographs we gathered that the School last won the Ulster Schools' Cup in 1906! We did have hopes during some seasons in my time, but it was not to be. Also on the walls of this room were skulls of big game animals shot by Viscount Northland early in the century. Dominating one end of the room was the head of a huge moose. On the wall at the opposite end were two Union Flags which had flown over the Residency at Lucknow when Francis Verner Wylie was Resident. When India became independent, Sir Francis, as he later became, gave these flags into the care of his old school. There was also a board with a long list of distinguished Old Boys. This list included Brigadier General John Nicholson (whose statue faces the Headmaster's House) **without his sword these days!** who, after a distinguished career in India "fell in the hour of victory" at the relief of Delhi in September 1857 during the Indian Mutiny. I understand that his statue, which came to the School in 1959 some 2 years before I joined, had originally been erected at the Kashmir Gate at Delhi, marking the spot where this distinguished warrior fell. The School was honoured to have this statue unveiled on its new site by the late Earl Mountbatten of Burma, last Viceroy of India.

Opposite the door of the dining-hall was the Tuck-Shop, run in those days by Messrs. **J.H.Crook**, and **D.P.Kirkwood**. One or other of these gentlemen was always on duty after lunch, after lessons and after tea, assisted by a prefect. Both stationery and tuck could be bought here. An exercise book cost 1/0 (5p) as did a large bottle of C&C lemonade: one could have 3d. back on returning the empty bottle, or, if one was particularly thirsty or impecunious, one could have a glass for 3d. Mars bars were 6d. (2.5p) and Tayto crisps were 4d. (about 1.7p) If these prices seem ridiculously low, the average 2nd former's weekly pocket money was half a crown (12.5p) which boarders could draw from the Bursar's office on Fridays at break. Boarders could purchase stationery and toiletries here and have them charged on the termly bill. The school television set, which lived in Room 13, was bought out of tuck shop profits. Nowadays, of course, TV sets are a necessity rather than a luxury in schools.

In September 1961 I think that there were about 300 pupils, all boys, with some 60 or 70 in the Boarding Department. (Those with access to accurate figures for that time will be able to correct me where I'm wrong.) To a small boy that made Primary School seem very small beer indeed!

The Teaching Staff in those days was much smaller (numerically!) than it is now. Some had been at RSD a long time when I arrived and stayed a long time after I left. I suppose one's memories of school are very much coloured by the memories of one's teachers. To this day I can give complete list of those who were teachers during my first year. J. Kincade, M.A., B.Litt, Ph.D. (HM), A.B.B. Cartlidge, M.A (VP) (English), J.H. Crook, B.A (French, Housemaster of Mountjoy) W.R. Hutchison M.A. (History, English, Housemaster of Beresford), W.T. Bennett M.A.(Chemistry, Housemaster of Bullingbrook), S.K. Ginn M.A. (Latin, Ancient History), T.M. Boland B.A. (Maths), Miss M.P. Innes B.A. - later Kirkwood - (Maths, RE), J.A. Kennedy B.A. (Geography, History), R.D. Stewart B.Sc. (Physics), M.R. Falkner M.A. (English, History, Latin), C.A. Montgomery (PE, Games), J.B. Campbell B.A. (French), D.P. Kirkwood B.A. (Prep Department), G.N. Semple, B.Sc. (Physics, Maths), K.J.A. Barber ATD (Art), A. Taylor (Music) (Mr Taylor died very suddenly after Half-Term in our first Autumn Term and was replaced by Mr R. Stanley - In those days music-teaching was very much a part-time job) - Miss V.E. Nevin B.A. (History, Latin) - who left during our first term, being replaced by Miss J. Barcroft B.A. - these both being temporary appointments. The Bursar was

Captain C.L. Barcroft, assisted by Mrs Knox, the matrons were Miss Leopold and Miss Clarke and the HM's secretary was Mrs McVittie. Ancillary staff whom I remember include Billy Gallagher, Bertie Reid, Joe Weir, John the gardener. **(Someone told me that Billy, on his deathbed, was heard to mutter: "Dr Kincade! Them boys is climbin' the spoutin's!" Possibly an apocryphal story!)** The kitchen was presided over by Cassie, assisted by Agnes, Brigid, Bridie and others. Chairman of the Board of Governors was The Revd. Dr S.W. Thompson. W.A.Ward, B.Sc. joined the School in January 1962 to teach Geography, and W.K.Armstrong arrived in September 1962 to take over PE and Games.

My classmates and I began at RSD at the same time as Dr James Kincade took over the reins as Headmaster, so we were the first group to go right through to A-Level under his aegis. IIA very soon became notorious as the noisiest class in the School: – I'm sure that I made a large contribution to this reputation – I wonder if we got any quieter as we grew older? I was one of two boarders in this class, so my memories will be slightly different from those of the majority of my classmates.

The main difference between Boarders and Dayboys in those days was that the Boarders lived on the premises all the time, and were at school over the weekends. I imagine that most parents nowadays intending to entrust their offspring to the Boarding department would find our facilities rather Spartan to say the least! Dormitory floors were bare boards, just like those of the classrooms, sometimes with splinters. Therefore the wearing of slippers was compulsory. Overhead lights were unshaded and the windows were uncurtained. Beds were of the old iron type with hair mattresses and sheets and blankets – no duvets in those days! – but, once in, one was surprisingly comfortable! Hot water depended on what part of the school one lived in! I remember that it was good in the North wing, but erratic once you moved across to the Middle or Senior Dorms.

Routine for Boarders only varied from that of the rest of the School outside lesson times. Rising Bell was at 7.30 a.m.; Breakfast was at 8.00 after which we were supposed to return to dormitories and make our beds. Lessons began at 9.00 a.m. with two periods before Break at 10.20 – the first half of Break was taken up by Assembly at which hymns were sung on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Three lessons followed, leading to Lunch at 12.45. Afternoon lessons were from 1.40 to 3.40 p.m. Once a week the last two periods were given over to Games. After school, boarders were left to their own devices – within reason! Juniors were allowed up town once a week, but had to be back well before tea at 5.30. Friday afternoons after school were given over to Scouts and ACF. When I joined the Scouts in my first term, there were so many of us that we had to be divided into two troops – Chocolate and Magenta! It is because of these early experiences that I am still in uniform nowadays. (I finally 'retired' in 2002, 40 years after being invested as a Scout.) Scouters were **S.K.Ginn, D.P.Kirkwood and R.D.Stewart**. Nowadays, Scouting is very heavily 'professionalised' with leaders having to gain certain qualifications before specific activities can be undertaken. In those days anything could be done provided that it was governed by common sense! Thus we had aerial runways consisting of just a rope and a stick, and water activities supervised by staff who were enthusiastic and sensible, but not specifically qualified. I think that this made it much more enjoyable for lads of our generation than it is now for the children of the last few decades! I seem to remember that at my first ever Scout Camp at Auchengillan in Scotland there were no fewer than thirty-six Scouts in camp - where would you find that nowadays?!?

Prep followed tea: juniors worked from 6.15 p.m. to 7.45 p.m. (3 subjects at 30 minutes each), and as one progressed up the school, so prep time increased. In my first year, however, deliverance came at 7.45. Juniors were then expected to go straight to their dormitory, and, as far as I can remember, Lights-out for us was at 8.45. On some Friday nights the Debating Society met in Room 13 under the Chairmanship of **J.A.Kennedy**. This, at first sight, would have seemed a good 'skive' from Prep, but those who attended were expected to do extra Prep on a Saturday morning!

Saturdays were free of lessons, but, for Boarders, there was Prep beginning at 9.30 a.m. It was also on Saturday mornings that most rugby matches were played, and we juniors acted as ball-boys. This involved collecting the match ball - very carefully dubbed and laced up in those days! -and the pre-match kick-about balls from the Sports Store under the North Wing staircase, going to the pitch and putting out the flags, and seeing that all was put away and returned at the end. This was a pleasant duty, as it often got one out of Saturday morning prep.! A less agreeable duty was the cleaning of 1st XV boots in time for a match. These were given out by prefects as a penalty for misdemeanours, usually beginning on Thursday nights. The boots had to be returned by Friday evening, shining so that one's face could be seen in them - and that included the soles! - with the laces properly threaded and snow-white! If only players turned out like that nowadays! Saturday afternoons were free, and, in my first year Boarders could opt for approved activities to keep them out of mischief - well, in theory! TV was still quite a novelty in 1961, and was available on Saturday and Sunday evenings in Room 13.

On Sundays boarders had a lie-in! Breakfast was at 8.30, and at 9.30 we came to our prep rooms for an hour's Novel-reading, supervised by the Headmaster, who was always very interested in - and usually encouraging about - the books we were reading. Following this there was Church Parade. We lined up in denominational groups to be inspected by the Head before going off to morning service at either St Anne's, the Presbyterian or Methodist churches. This inspection was the occasion for the Head to 'suggest' haircuts in the coming week, (the School Barber attended on Monday afternoons) as well as being an opportunity for him to have a word with anyone whom he had not seen much during the week. Sunday dress for boarders was either: grey herringbone tweed suit (long or short trousers) and School tie, or black jacket, pinstripe trousers and black tie. The latter outfit was very unpopular and was subsequently discontinued in favour of charcoal grey suits. All boys below sixth form also had to wear the school cap, and fawn gabardine raincoats were *de rigueur* when an overgarment was required!

After lunch on Sundays, boarders were required to go to prep rooms and write letters - this was in the days when letters were regarded as a more courteous and certain method of communication than a 'phone-call. Of course, there was no such thing as e-mail in those days - that was still science fiction! Then followed the Sunday Walk. The route depended on the master on duty and was usually circular. Length varied between two and six miles. We walked the 'First' and 'Second Circles', the Black Lough, The Bush and various other routes. What usually happened was that the boys went round one way and were met by the duty master and duty prefect who were walking the other way and who would tick our names off on a list. At least we didn't have to follow the practice of some other schools and walk in 'crocodile'!

On Sunday evenings all boarders from 3rd Form up went to Church again. Prep House

and 2nd formers didn't go, but had a Sunday School taken by the Head. It was a good opportunity for him to get to know us better, as he didn't teach most of us in class. TV was available afterwards. I wonder what the weekend routine of RSD boarders is nowadays. Very different, I imagine, for of course, times and customs change.

One great difference between those days and these was the method of discipline. Those were the days before corporal punishment disappeared, and one could expect to receive the cane for certain offences (known in our language as 'getting skit!') Any member of staff and any prefect could administer this gentle correction for the good of our souls, or maybe to relieve their own exasperation! I am reminded of part of a verse in the old School song: "...*And masters will exhort them, as they dust their little pants, To learn the holy Latin in Dungannon.*" Perhaps it didn't do us any harm, but it didn't do much good either, except to help us learn the basic law of cause and effect! There was nothing cruel or sadistic in all this (at least where the masters were concerned!); rather it was the norm and was accepted as such, usually with no hard feelings afterwards. As a matter of fact, prefects sometimes gave us the choice between a 2 - page essay and one or two strokes of the cane: in these cases it was considered very bad form to opt for the essay, as the cane was a way of getting the punishment over and done with quickly. Being a rather naughty 2nd former, I soon reached the stage where if a week went by without my receiving this kindly correction, I regarded it as very unusual! Also, in those days boys could be caned for bad work. - Yes, I was, frequently, and deservedly so! - This might horrify modern educational theorists, but the fact was that no boy was ever unjustly caned because he couldn't cope; rather, this punishment was administered for idleness. Whatever one may think about it nowadays, it was a contributory factor to the dramatic improvement in public examination results in 1961 and subsequent years. Again, this was not a matter of deliberate unkindness or cruelty: it simply was what was done in many boys' schools at that time, and no doubt today's methods are just as effective - *Tempora mutantur!*

This has been as brief an overview as possible of life as a junior boarder in RSD in the academic year 1961-62 when I joined the school. I hope that it has not been tedious; rather that some useful material might be contained here that will help our archivist. In conclusion, those of us who now live far away feel that the odd time we get back is a rare privilege which doesn't come round nearly often enough. Best wishes for the Millennium.

**APPENDICIES - Two lists from memory
(Some names are possibly missing)**

(1) the North Wing (Junior) Dormitory in September 1961	2) Form IIa September 1961
Jim Allingham Jack Mitchell David Anderson Edward Sturdy Denzil Campbell Marcus Dunn David Johnstone John Sykes	Armstrong Raymond Campbell Victor Cardwell Jim Clarke Roy Crook David Davidson Eric Devlin George Harkness Robert

Paul Sykes
Philip McDonald
Andrew Mulholland
Ronald McKittrick
Warren Hately
Gordon McNeil
Meredith Rountree
Kenneth Hammond
John McVitty
George Wheeler
Michael Sheane
Desmond Wilson
Paddy McKee
Prefect:: Christopher Mason
Master i/c: D.P.Kirkwood, Esq.

Knox Malvern
Lee Cecil
McKee Patrick
McKeown David
McKeown Robert
Magowan Samuel
Marshall Dennis
Morrison Geoffrey
Paul Adrian
Robinson Tonie
Rogers Philip
Simpson Leslie
Stewart John
Sykes John
Wylie Graeme