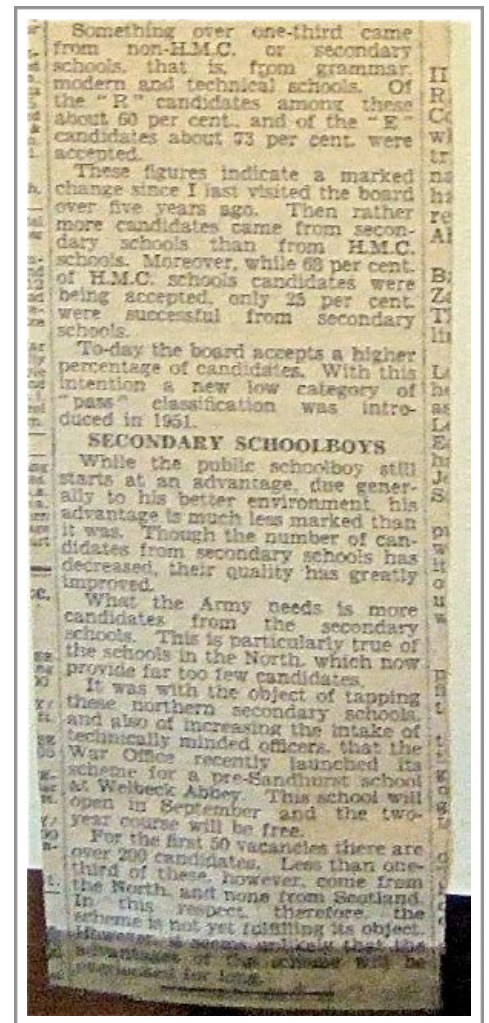
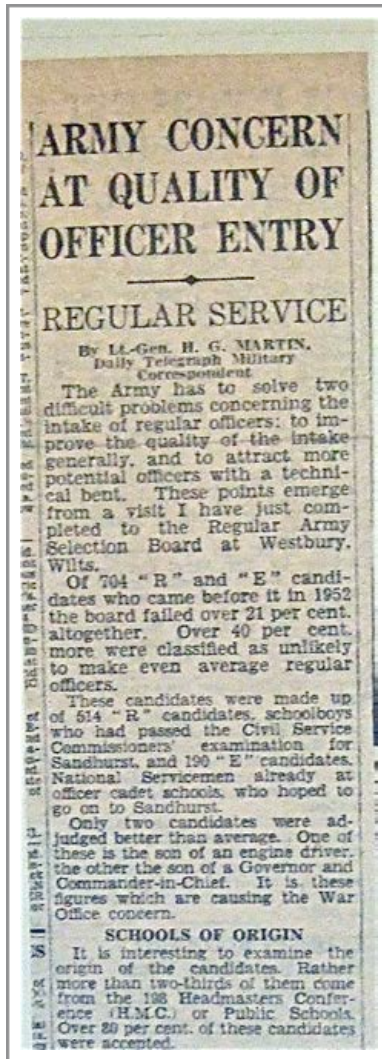


1. SETTING IT UP

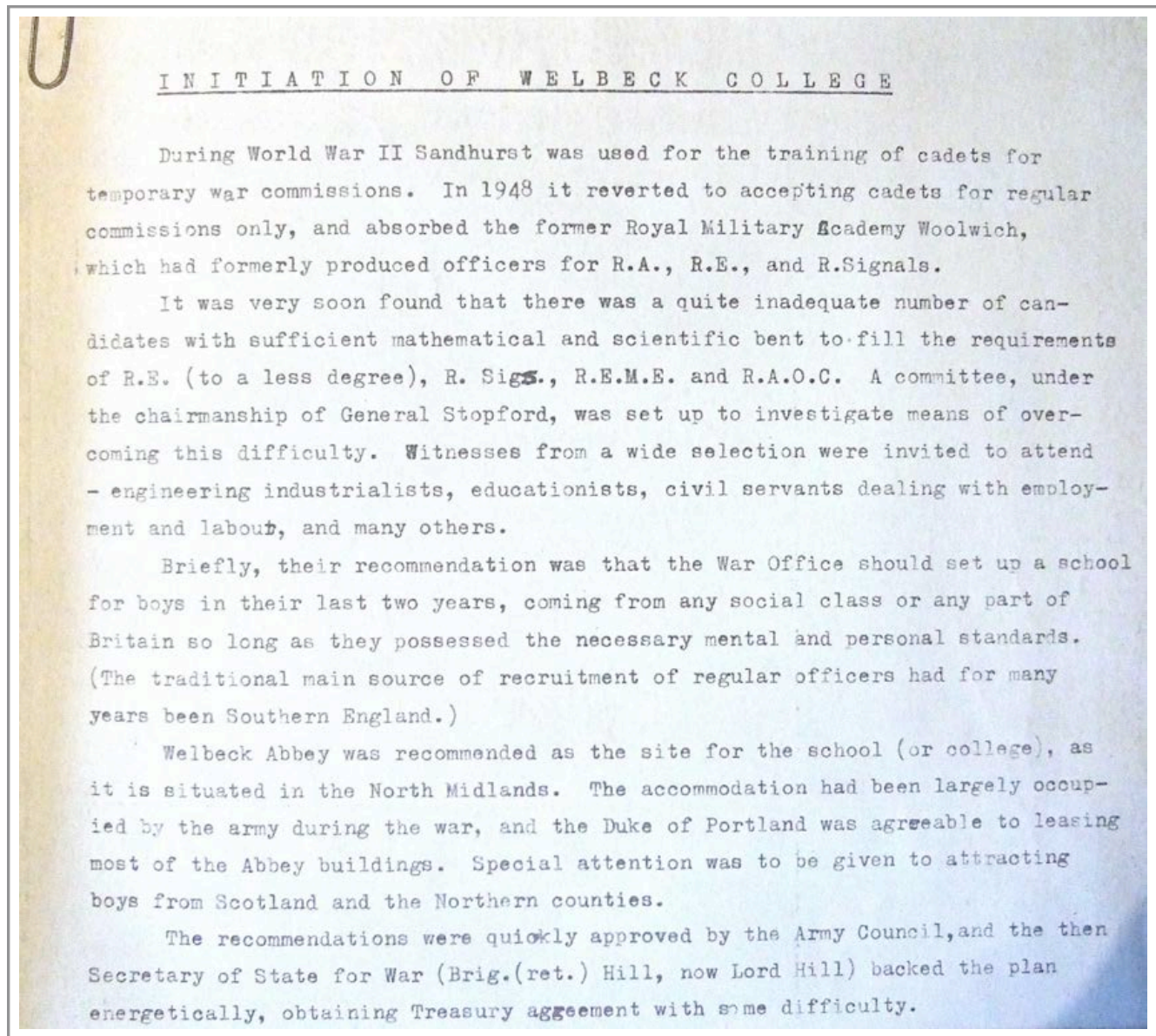
External Action

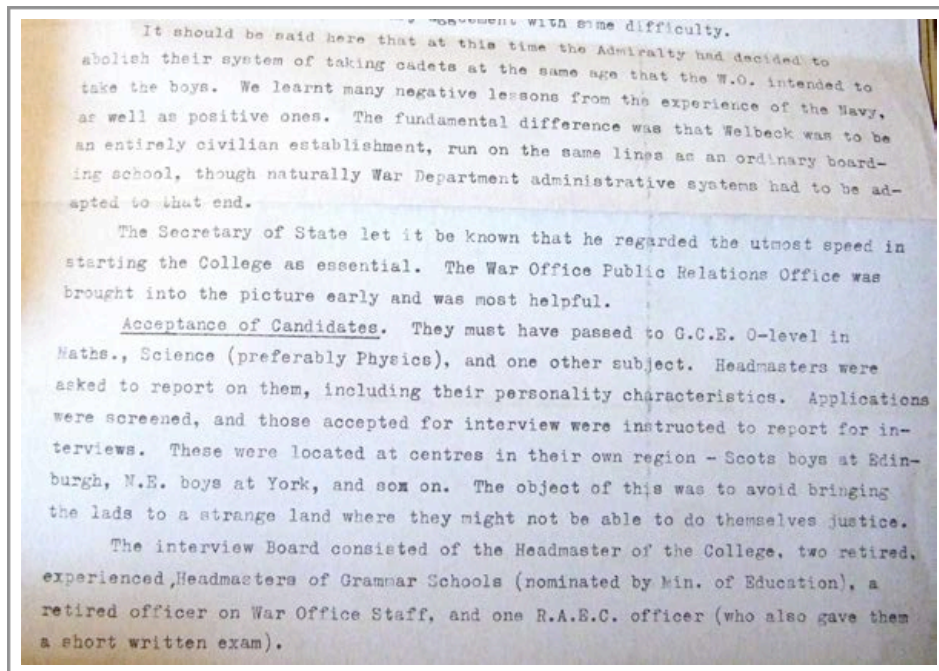
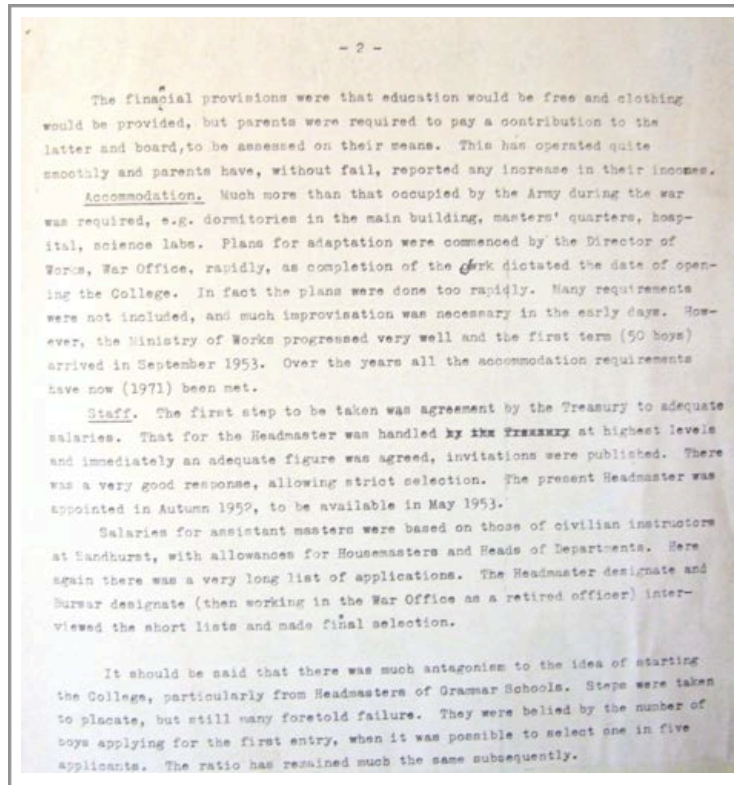
No doubt there are stacks of files buried somewhere in the MOD archives, and possibly the College. However the only two pieces of information I have are a piece from the Daily Telegraph (when the Defence Correspondent was a Lt Gen!) and a paper which was passed to me as the archivist from the Welbeck files - without any reference or dates. Both are reproduced here.



General Martin, after a visit to the RCB during 1953, explains that "The Army has to solve two main problems concerning the intake of regular officers: to improve the quality of the intake generally, and to attract more potential officers with a technical bent". He goes on to remark that the Army needed more candidates from the secondary schools, particularly from the North. The decision to open Welbeck is included in his report noting that there were over 200 candidates for the first 50 places, although less than one third came from the North and none from Scotland.

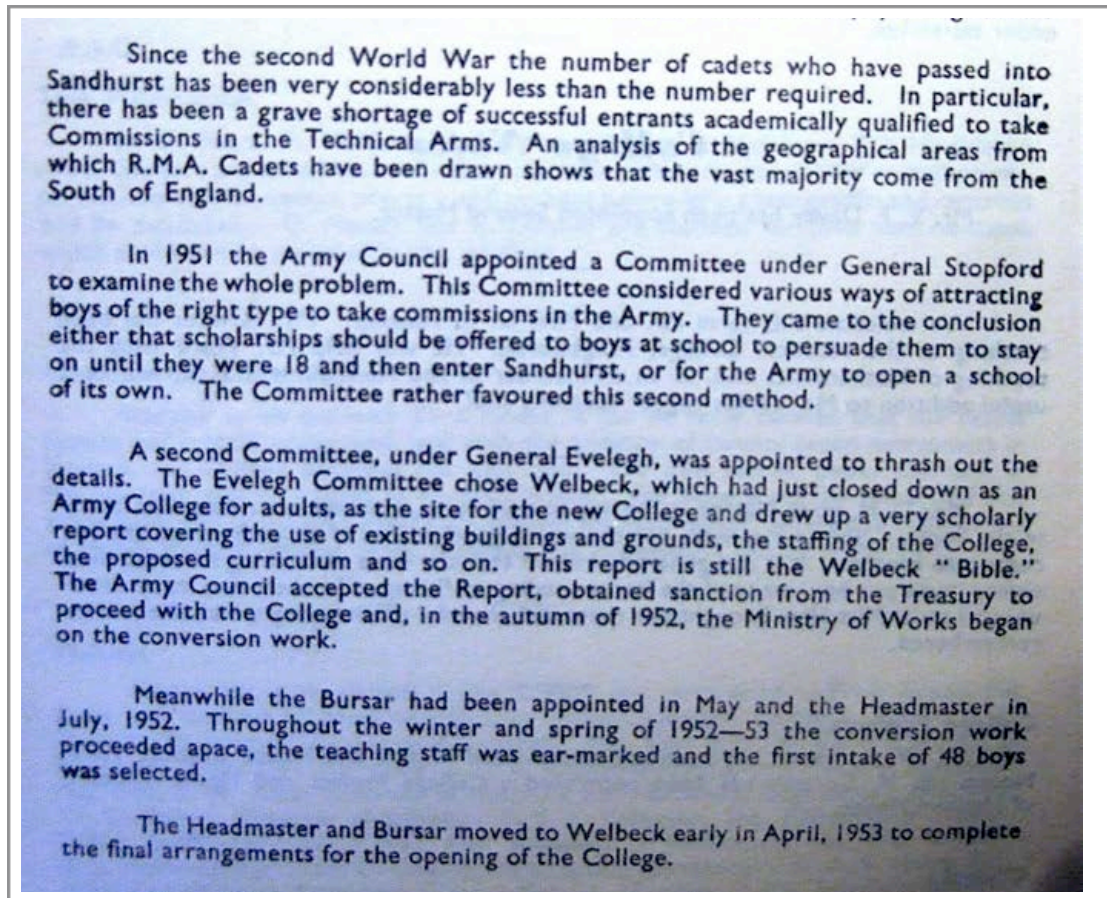
The second paper, shown below, and headed " The Initiation of Welbeck College" was a summary put together in 1971, 18 years after the College opened. It calls up The Stopford Report which, in the light of a dearth of applicants with sufficient technological bent, recommended that a school be set up for boys in their last two years of schooling. Welbeck Abbey, which had been used by the Army during the war was selected ; it had the benefit of being in the North Midlands and The Duke of Portland was agreeable to leasing most of the Abbey buildings. The intention was to concentrate recruitment amongst boys from the North of England and Scotland.





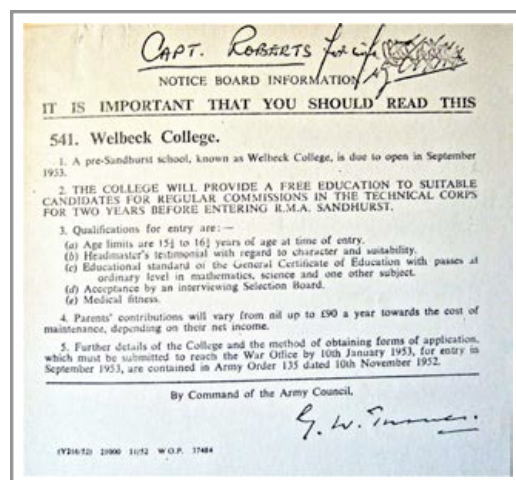
The recommendations were accepted and the Secretary of State for War backed the plan energetically although Treasury agreement was difficult to obtain. From the outset it was determined to run the school on normal Boarding School lines in an entirely civilian environment. The Secretary of State "Let it be known that the utmost speed in starting the College was essential".

In the first (January 1954) issue of the Welbeck College Magazine, WM1/1, The Headmaster, David Rickards, gave a "potted history" of the Birth of the College is reproduced below.



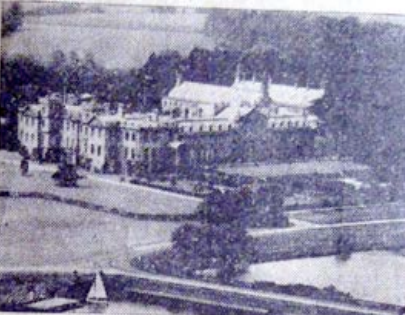
Note he calls up the "Eveleigh Committee" who produced "A very scholarly report" which chose Welbeck as the location for the new College and laid out the basic framework. This, as David Rickards points out, became "**The Welbeck Bible**". It would be interesting to obtain a copy of the Eveleigh report.

The details were quickly put in place - the appointment of the Staff, the accommodation requirements, the standards required of applicants and the publication of ACI 541 (1952) (shown below)



Various adverts appeared in the National Press and two are shown below. Derek Baughan kept his (shown on the left) whilst Sam's souvenirs are shown on the right and below.

The "White Paper Army" in the making



This College gives free education to boys with a scientific bent.

The White Paper on Defence has made it clear that re-organisation is to give to Britain a highly technical and streamlined Army in which there will be good career prospects under increasingly attractive conditions. To secure officers for the Technical Arms the Army offers today a great opportunity to highly intelligent boys of character. At WELBECK COLLEGE they will get a first class education with a technical leaning plus free board and the chance to go to Sandhurst, followed by a university degree course. If your boy is around 15-16 now, and will be up to G.C.E. (ordinary) standard or the equivalent this year, in subjects including Mathematics and some Physics, why not enter his name?

For the full prospectus of Welbeck, and the application form, write off immediately to: **THE BURSAR, (B31) WELBECK COLLEGE, WORKSOP, NOTTS.** Complete applications for next year's entry must be in by June 1st.

1956 SAM ROBERTS

WAR DEPARTMENT. Applications are invited for **ENTRY OF BOYS** in September, 1953, to **WELBECK COLLEGE, WORKSOP, NOTTS.** The object of the College is to prepare boys for entry to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, with a view to their eventual commissioning as Regular Officers in the Technical Arms of the Army. The age of entry will be between 15½ and 16½ years of age (approximately), and boys who would otherwise leave school at that age will be given special consideration. Tuition and board will be free but cost of other personal maintenance will be borne by parents according to their net incomes. **CLOSING DATE for APPLICATIONS is 10 JANUARY, 1953.** Prospectus and application forms can be obtained from the Under-Secretary of State for War (A.G.10/101), The War Office, Whitehall, S.W.1.

APPLICATIONS are invited from CERTIFIED ALMONERS for the post of **ALMONER** for duty at Hospitals and Clinics providing maternity services within the Group. The duties of the person appointed will include the allocation of maternity beds on social grounds in conjunction with the Obstetricians, Medical Officers of Health and Health Visitors. This post is a new departure offering wide scope for a person with initiative and interest in this kind of social work. Travelling between hospitals and clinics will be necessary. Salary on national scale. Applications, stating age, qualifications and experience, together with the names of two referees, to be sent to the Secretary, Windsor Group Hospital Management Committee, Kipling Memorial Building, Alma Road, Windsor, by 12th November, 1952.

THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL GROUP. Applications are invited for the post of **LABORATORY TECHNICIAN (female)** to the Radio Active Isotope Laboratory. Applicants should have passed either the School Certificate or Higher School Certificate examinations or equivalent. M.S.R. would be an additional qualification. Salary in accordance with the appropriate scale laid down by the Ministry of Health. Applications, stating age and qualifications and experience, together with copies of two recent testimonials, should be made to the Secretary to the Board of Governors, the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1, not later than 10 days after the appearance of this advertisement.

ASSISTANT MATRON required for Endsleigh Residential Home for Old People, Newquay. Salary £200 by £15 to £245 plus residential emoluments. Pensions. Applications, stating age, experience, etc. with copies of two recent testimonials, to Director of Welfare Services, Cornwall County Council, 11, Strangways Terrace, Truro, Cornwall.

By Lt. Col. SAM ROBERTS
(No. 1 Entry)

Tucked away amongst the advertisements for Certified Almoners, Laboratory Technicians and Assistant Matrons in the Daily Telegraph in early November 1952 was an announcement which stated "War Department. Applications are invited for entry of boys in September 1953 to Welbeck College, Worksop, Notts. The object of the College is to prepare boys for entry to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, with a view to their eventual commissioning as Regular Officers in the Technical Arms of the Army... Closing date for

Following this Interview Boards were set up in various parts of the UK. Anthony Head, The Secretary of State for War, explained in the House of Commons that of 202 candidates examined only 60 were from the North of England. Of the 202 boys, 37 were from Northern Command (N Midlands, Yorkshire, Durham and

Northumberland), 40 from Western Command (Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland, counted in Mr Head's Northern figures) Southern Command 37 and Eastern Command including London 88. Not one candidate was from Scotland to the concern of the War Office who are aware of the excellent material existing there.

The Selection Board was chaired by Mr Rickards (see below) and Mr W V Cavill, former Headmaster of Hymers College Hull (Tony Iveson's school) served on the board. This press picture is from the Edinburgh Despatch. A later press report gave the selection board statistics for 2 Entry, 120 for the 27 vacancies nearly 6 to 1, but this time nine boys applied from Sotland, there had been "no interest in Welbeck for the first entry". Half of the applicants were North of the Wash to the Bristol Channel, an encouraging proportion from Liverpool and Tynemouth but Manchester Birmingham and Wolverhampton again poorly represented.



Nick Thompson (1) recalls: "Attending for interview in a rather un-prepossessing building in London and meeting only Ron Taylor (1) and Peter Hodkinson (1). His reason for applying was to go into the Royal Engineers (his fathers Regiment) and the prospect of a science education leading to a degree." He remarks that at that time less than 3-5 % of the population attended university. Sam's recollections are below.

Applications is 10th January, 1953. Prospectus and application forms can be obtained from the Under Secretary of State for War (AG10/101), the War Office, Whitehall, SW1". At about the same time the familiar 'Notice Board Information' IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU SHOULD READ THIS 541. Welbeck College, etc. appeared on unit notice boards. "By Command of the Army Council". In response to the various announcements 203 boys applied for the first entry. Some of us reported to the imposing looking Wellington Barracks in Birdcage Walk where we attempted a technically biased IQ test, and nervously sat on a hard chair before a very important group of gentlemen, in line behind a row of blanket covered tables in front of us.

The press cutting below names the first 48 boys selected together with the schools from whence they came. One newspaper reported that of the 48, 28 were from the South and 17 from the North and the Midlands with 3 from British Schools in Germany; 7 came from Independent schools, 35 from Grammar Schools and 3 from Technical schools. Nick Thompson remembers "that the fees were a maximum of £30 per term and free for the poorest families. This was in comparison with about £100 at my previous school"



Derek Baughan, who finished his career as the Brigadier, effectively second in command of the RAOC gave me this interesting perspective:

I have always understood that Welbeck was founded to cope with the rapidly increasing technology and complexity surrounding military equipment being introduced in the 1950s. There were few officer cadets, whose ambition was an Army career, who were attracted by the technical Corps, and so shortages began to be felt. The final deciding factor was, or so I had often heard, the decision by REME to develop an "all engineering degree" corps of officers was decided therefore to catch potential officers young, to prepare them to read for a science degree, to admit them to Sandhurst without the requirement to pass RCB, and to restrict them to RE, R Signals, REME and RAOC. Whilst the need of REME for such officers was clear, the other Corps' reasons for joining the scheme must have varied, but I can only guess at what they were.

The Sappers never had a shortage of cadets applying to join them. This is borne out by the fact that most accepted, eventually passed out high in the Order Of Merit. As I recall, the Gurkhas and Sappers were said to be the hardest to get into. They probably joined the scheme on the basis that they could gain some good officers, but set "the bar" very high for Welbexians, and were particularly interested in those who could gain a place at Cambridge for the Science Tripos.

R Signals probably joined in because they like to think of themselves as an "Engineering Corps". A good leavening of technically qualified officers would have been attractive, but, of course their radios, and now computers, are, as far as I can recall, maintained by REME. I have never seen the basis for their "Engineering Corps" claim, but that is by the by. They probably gained a lot from Welbeck and some Welbexians did very well indeed in R Signals.

RAOC had very few officers commissioned directly from Sandhurst at the time, and probably saw Welbeck as a good chance to gain officers who would be useful in the increasingly technical aspects of the Corps such as ammunition and the very early days of computing. Perhaps it was thought that by taking some officers directly from Sandhurst, it would also be possible to bring the Corps together more. Certainly, when I joined, most RAOC officers adhered to the traditions and outlooks of their former Regiments or Corps, and so Alan Knipe, Ken Phipps and I were looked on as unusual to say the least. Many officers had been transferred due to injury - go to RAOC or out - and many did very well.

We reached the stage when most of our Brigadiers, and the Major General, had severe limps. (we used to sing " Who wants to be a Brigadier - I do " to the tune of who wants to be a millionaire - and limp across the bar!! How very non PC we used to be). We had a lot of ex- Gunners, infantry and very many others. It used to be quite usual for officers to transfer when they found the original Regiment of their choice too expensive. At that time, before World War 2, we had " Corps Pay " which made us particularly attractive. In 1947 we had a large influx of ex - Indian Army officers when India became independent. Some were from the Indian Army Ordnance Corps, and some directly from their Regiments. Most considered transfer to RAOC a personal affront and became a pretty difficult and unpleasant bunch. I do believe RAOC gained a lot from Welbeck, but it was not essential as it was for REME.

Rather than a social experiment therefore, I believe that the decision to establish Welbeck was a pragmatic one to fill a specific need. As it happened, almost all applicants were at Grammar Schools, Secondary Moderns, Technical Colleges and a few from Army schools such as the Duke York's, Queen Victoria's Dunblane and the Gordon Boys. As you will recall, very very few applied from Public Schools and hence the appearance of a social experiment - particularly when we of the First Intake reached Sandhurst.

Personally, I applied for Welbeck to get a commission in the Army. I joined the CCF at Saltly Grammar School, Birmingham at age 13, and by the time I was 14, I was totally convinced that the Army was for me.

Internal Action.



Work proceeded to convert the buildings into suitable use for the College, master minded by the first Bursar Major General C D de Le Gausson a distinguished Sapper who was appointed in May 1952. He is shown on the left in the Titchfield Library before all the Portland books were removed. Throughout the winter and spring of 1952-53 conversion work at Welbeck proceeded apace, the teaching staff was earmarked and the first intake of 48 boys was selected. (WCM1-1)

The press cutting below shows the Bursar chatting with the workmen during the conversion. The text goes on to say that the education would be comparable with that of public schools with fees of £200-£300 per year but were according to parents means - nothing under a net of £300 rising to a maximum of £90 per year at £700 net per year.



Yesterday, the bursar of the school, Maj.-Gen. C. de L. Gausson, led a party of newspaper men through the great rooms of the Abbey, and along a labyrinth of dark corridors below. He said: "You will get something of the spirit of adventure which is inherent in the whole project."

The parts of the Abbey which the boys will occupy have been leased from the Duke of Portland. He will retain, as Lord Lieutenant of the County, certain state rooms in the west wing, and Winifred Duchess of Portland will have a suite in the wing.

Beautiful Things

The duke will get a nominal rental, but the Army will keep the buildings and garden in good order, though "not in mansion state."

The boys—there will be 75 the first term, rising to 150—will live in the west and Oxford wings and these wings will give their names to the two school houses. The masters will have flats in the stables.

The Abbey's famous underground ballroom will be a gymnasium and assembly hall. The Abbey chapel will be the school chapel and the boys will also use the Titchfield library. Music rooms are being turned into laboratories and dining and ante rooms into classrooms.

The Duke is allowing many valuable paintings to be hung in the library and the boys will have the benefit of the beautiful grounds and the lake. General Gausson commented: "It will give a wonderful background for the boys, to have such beautiful things around them."

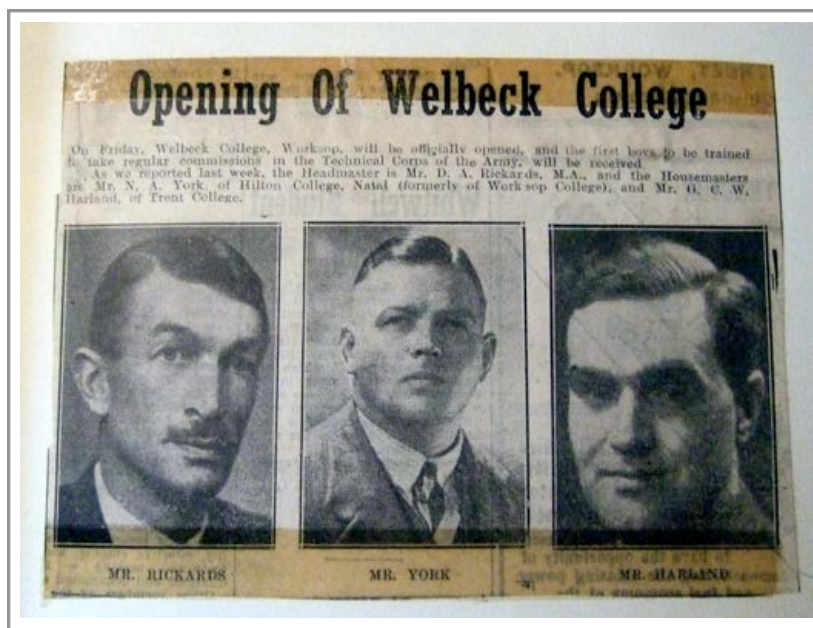
"I don't think there can be another school in the country which has a finer combination of compactness, beauty and accommodation."

The boys will have no other military training, other than the normal cadet corps periods, as at any public school, "but it will be one of the finest of contingents." The education will be sixth form standard and classes will be small, about 16 to each.

The Teaching Staff

The senior appointments of the Headmaster, Mr D A R Rickards (appointed in July 1952) and the two Housemasters are shown in the newspaper clipping below. Mr Norman A York (of Hilton College Natal) was the Housemaster of York House in the first term and Mr Godfrey C W Harland (Trent College Notts) headed up Harland House in the second term when 2 Entry arrived. The Rev Lound Vicar of Cuckney was appointed Chaplain and Dr Kershaw of Cuckney the Medical Officer.

Mr Rickards was formerly a housemaster at Blundells School. One newspaper report had it that boys from the North would "meet one of their own kind in him - a lean soldierly looking schoolmaster of the modern type, under 40, educated at Sedbergh and served during the War in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment reaching the rank of Lt Col".



The Head and the Bursar had moved to Welbeck in April 1953 to complete the final arrangements for the opening of the college scheduled for 25 September 1953. The remaining Masters who greeted us from Day 1 were: Mr V F Davey, Second Master who taught Physics, T G C Ward, on "Loan" from Sandhurst to teach Maths, L C Moss who headed up the "Arts" faculty, J Steel (Kilmarnock Academy) who ran the Workshops and Engineering and J Thomson (Rossall School and Cambridge - the only single master) who supported the Arts. Thus for the first term there were **only eight** masters. They were joined later by Mr D C Hawker (Jan '54) to teach Maths, Mr J P Broadbent (Jul '54) teaching History and French, Mr B E Lord Physics and Chemistry, Mr J Hindshaw Physics, Mr G V Holroyde Physics and Maths, Lt Col R E Black Maths and Mr G Partington "promoting the Arts generally bringing the teaching staff to full strength at 15.

Meanwhile the conversion work was by and large completed save for the laboratories and Hospital. The Cricket field was taken over in "poor" shape and the 14 Acre "Abbey Bottom Field" was ready for use in September '54. Because of lack of funds the "swimming pool" and tennis courts were relegated to self help (WCM1-2)

Putting the "Welbeck Bible" into practice.

The Headmaster held a series of 8 Staff meetings between 1st and 18th of September to lay out the organisation of the College from Day 1. The full set of minutes are at Annex D.

1 September. This meeting was to establish the routine. HM gave out notices affecting the Staff (dress, Chapel attendance, smoking etc) and went on to announce that there would be some 30-40 press on the first day, 25 September, and The CIGS Field Marshall Lord Sir John Harding would visit on 14 October. Given that there was only one bachelor on the staff it was necessary for the Masters, including HM and the Bursar, 8 in all, to sleep in the College and a "Duty Rosta for the first term was drawn up "Orderly Officer" about 11 times each - the first time a Major General has done Duty Officer? The boys, when commissioned, would have had to commit some pretty serious crime to attract that frequency! The daily routine was established at this meeting. What is striking are the three central themes underlying the routine. Leaving aside feeding and sleeping these were first, the academic routine including Prep, then came Chapel including House Prayers followed by Sport which in the first term was to focus on "rugger". Close inspection of the detail show that the boys were kept busy morning noon and night with, as a part of the "routine", only some 90 minutes "free time" on weekdays and precious little more at the weekend.

Other details fixed at this first meeting, which endured certainly in the first two years, were: The allotment of extra curricular jobs to Masters - Sport, CCF, Library etc The CCF, printing of a Term Calendar (an example of which occurs later), The School bell (announcing lessons, lights out etc.) and a duty bell ringer, Exeats and the routine for these, the Tuck Shop (which incidentally sold "groceries and cigarettes..." for the staff to buy and finally arrangements for Detention.

2 September This meeting outlined the routine for the opening weekend 25-27 September.

On the Friday the first day boys would arrive - by lorry - met by Bill Forrington the uniformed Hall Porter who was to conduct them to Mr York who would collect matches and lighters, ration books (remember these?) and medical certificates. Matron was then to show them to the dormitories. After this the Bursar was to conduct the boys around the underground areas including the library, chapel and dining room. DAR would address them at 7.45 in the Common Room and at 9.45 Mr Thompson would see them to their dorms with lights out at 10.15.

On **Saturday** breakfast at 0750, 0900 Chapel, 0930 Library and allocation to forms - (L6A, L6B and L6C), after this clothing and books were to be issued. After lunch all to the Sports Pavilion in "rugger kit" - all to be marked with the boys number. Mr York and Mr Thompson then to "kick off". After tea Mr Moss to brief the boys on the library set up then supper, House prayers and lights out.

Sunday - 8 am Communion, 10.00 DAR to go through the school rules and after lunch they would beat the bounds with him "regardless of the weather". At 7 pm a briefing on societies and activities planned.

Monday - Normal routine as far as possible with Medical and Dental inspections - agreed the boys could play cards but not gamble! Societies suggested were: Science (VFD), Literary and Debating (LCM), Chess (TGCW), Art (Bursar), Music (CCWH) and Photographic (JS).

3 September This meeting to discuss College Rules. College Prefects were responsible for the discipline of the College, "lock up" to be 9.45 pm, on leave days boys must watch College matches - with parents - and then may go out, parents weekends (2) agreed, it was decided "darts" would not be allowed! The full set (rules not darts!) are included in Annex D.

Some interesting bits: boys may not use cycles motor bikes etc without permission, sweepstakes and lotteries forbidden, no eating except in Dining Hall, Tuck Shop and Common Room, catapults or any other weapons which propel missiles forbidden and stones may not be thrown - or - snowballs (within 100 yards of a building).

4 September This meeting concerned academic matters and decided:

Report forms would show A, B, B+ etc - War Office required an annual report for each boy Staff meetings to discuss academic progress every three weeks. The marking system was defined - Maths/Physics out of a hundred others 50 less divinity and workshops together with + or - for effort. Internal Exams at the end of term agreed for all the sciences, English French and History/Geography. Although not mentioned I recall that we had a "test" every three weeks under "exam" conditions. That for Mr Davey in L6A simply required we remember verbatim the notes he chalked up on the blackboard and which we had to record in note books.

7 September This meeting was to discuss "kit". Note the weekend of 5/6 September seemed to be free! The following issues were decided:

Books and stationery issue - not enough folders available.

Clothing The need for care was necessary since only 4s 6d per boy per term was allowed to "cover repair, sewing cotton" etc.

Sports kit had a "generous grant" and would be stored centrally although there would be a casual store of "rugger balls etc" so that boys could get practice in "passing and kicking"

Cash grants for expenses such as sports travel were defined - out of this it "might be possible to purchase an "electric" gramophone"

Meals - Masters dining in would be charged 1s 6d!

Pocket money - the first mention that we were given 4s 0d weekly pocket money! More on that later.

8 September Now we come to the crucial bit for this meeting was to discuss **Discipline!**

HM said that initially this was to be ultra strict although he thought "the best discipline was by weight of character "rather than actual punishment". Whilst not an ordinary public school boys could be expelled as a last resort. In the classroom boys should stand on the entry of the Master and whenever the Headmaster entered. Outside Masters should be very strict about behaviour.

Forms of punishment:

Caning - only by HM or the Housemasters for the following offences: gross insubordination, smoking, carrying matches or lighters, bullying and breaking bounds. Any boy breaking bounds to go to a cinema or pub to be beaten and gated!

Indecency, lying or cheating - Housemaster to give the boy a good talking to and if repeated then he should be caned.

Detention - For poor work and regarded as a disgrace.

Impositions - Writing essays was dismissed and it was agreed that an “**Extra Duty**” system be set up; the Porter would supervise such duties as “sweeping up leaves” and a Book be kept in the Masters Common Room to record names and offences.

CCF - Offenders to wear “Sack cloth and ashes” (denims) for a full day

Some of this may be, in this day and age, considered barbaric, however bear in mind that all the Masters were very experienced and were implementing some well tried systems. It all seemed to work very well and caning in particular gradually died out after an initial period when clearly the Masters were making a very strong point. One curious aspect of all of this was that lying and cheating only drew “a talking to” as opposed to caning for having a box of matches on the person!

10 September .

This meeting discussed medical arrangements and fire precautions. There was clearly considerable discussion recorded but much of it standard routine and concerned arrangements for the College Hospital, sick reporting and First Aid. Initial medical and dental inspections were organised. As far as the latter a were concerned boys were warned off to have any work done during the holidays but in dire emergencies boys would be sent into a Worksop Dental Practice “In the College Truck”.

18 September

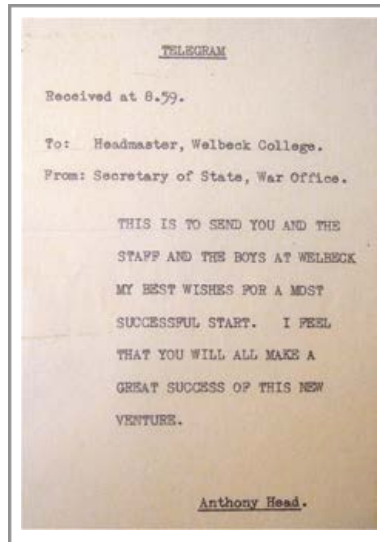
This last meeting was clearly a clean up session. The importance of looking after kit was emphasised but boys should not be “fined” for breakages etc especially since they only had four shillings a week out of which they had to buy toothpaste stamps etc. I don’t remember anyone being fined. Again curiously “borrowing “ was to be dealt with most severely.

So, in a series of what appear to have been short meetings HM and his 7 colleagues set the College into practice - imagine how it would happen nowadays!

2. THE FIRST DAY

The Headmaster said in the first Welbeck College Magazine (WCM1-1):

“None of those who were here will forget September 25th 1953, the opening day. Two BBC recording vans and about 35 Press Reporters and photographers arrived with the first boys. They spent the afternoon here and had tea with the Masters and boys in the Dining Hall. Almost every national and provincial newspaper carried an account of the opening of the College the next day.”



Note from the Secretary of State for War



A press photo of the opening Day

Back Row from the left: 4 - Jim Steel, 6 - Leicester Moss, 8 - Geoffrey Ward

Front Row from the left 1 - Vivian Davey, 4 - Rev Lound, 7 - DAR

How right was DAR, no one will forget. As boys we certainly didn't appreciate the importance of Welbeck and the national interest. The Sheffield Telegraph clearly enjoyed their "Tea with the boys" reporting a fare of "Dainty cucumber sandwiches and iced cakes"!



As the Head briefed, boys were picked up in lorries: Nick Thompson (1) explained that *“on reporting at Redford Station and piling into a three tonner, the group of the first intake coming from London arrived at the imposing edifice of Welbeck Abbey and Bill Forrington, the Porter, picture left, met us and directed us the slope (Chapel Hill?) to the first of many tunnels.”*

Jeff Barker says: *“At the time, I don’t think I quite realised what an opportunity Welbeck provided. Indeed when I did step off that train, was met by this chap in army uniform with a red sash and seemingly bundled into the back of an army truck, I did not relish the idea of continuing. Fortunately, I did not have the initiative to do anything about it*

As for Nig and I, since we lived only some 10 or so miles from the College we were given a bus warrant from Chesterfield to Worksop Station. We enquired of the driver how we were to get to Welbeck. *“Don’t worry son I’ll drop you off at the entrance and you just walk down the drive”*. In due course, through Clowne and Cresswell (of the crags and prehistoric cave painting), he duly dropped us at a T junction of the A60 the Mansfield –Worksop road and pointed out a dusty track (its marked Fish Pond on Google Earth!). *“Up there lads”*. We disembarked with our suitcases and began the trek up what was clearly a farm machinery track. As ever we were both in fine fettle with this new adventure before us and we walked on until we came across a junction from which we could see what we thought was the College – turned out to be the walled garden just up from the main entrance on the A60. We trogged on passing Abbey Court and the Riding School and down the long drive to what finally turned out to be Welbeck Abbey. HM didn’t say anything about foot slogging our way into Welbeck so where was our Lorry? In the event we were almost the first to arrive and were at once besieged by photographers. We were set up at the Abbey Main Entrance (not the entrance to the college) with our suitcases and the resulting pictures from the Sheffield Telegraph on 27 September Are below.



As reported the first day included a "tea of dainty cucumber sandwiches and small iced cakes", interviews with score of pressmen and photographs with the Headmaster in his study' (that below right is taken from The London Illustrated News 22 October Issue (Annex C on the DVD). On the left is John Skinner, DAR, JD, Nig Allan with Ken Phipps seated. To the right of Nig on the wall was a set of "Mug shots" of all the 48 - an aide memoir for DAR no doubt.



Some of the first day pictures are below, generally showing the arrivals and some initial views of their future environment. Below left are Sam Roberts and Tony Iveson in front of the actual College Entrance, Tony showing his sporting interest. The window top left is the Porters Lodge, a very small area where Bill Forrington sat. I don't know why Tony is not on the Sheffield Telegraph article below right, perhaps they just wanted to concentrate on the local lad!





NEWCOMERS get to know one another in the college library. They are left to right C. W. Arnold, D. Ridwell, J. Brown-Squires, R. Matthews, R. E. Taylor and A. Soar.

The boys in the picture left to right are: Chris Arnold, David Bidwell, John Brown Squires, Rob Mathews, Ron Taylor and Arthur Soar.

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26 1953

ARMY "PUBLIC SCHOOL" OPENS

All Usual Features—and Underground Passages, Too

From our Special Correspondent

WELBECK COLLEGE, FRIDAY.

Trunks and boxes, matrons, and dormitories of neatly made beds are all part of the familiar scene of boys returning to boarding school. But the scene is usually set in buildings less magnificent and bizarre than the home of the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey, near Worksop. Forty-eight boys, the first intake of the Army's "public school" of the Midlands and the North, were arriving here to-day at the beginning of the first term in a scheme which has been launched to encourage boys to take Regular commissions in the Army's technical corps.

The house, leased in part to the Army by the Duke of Portland, was built in 1823 for the Duke of Newcastle on the site of Welbeck Abbey. The abbey is believed to be eight hundred years old this year. Many alterations and additions have been made to the house, the oddest of which were the underground ramifications made by the fifth Duke of Portland in the last century. Part of the problem of the school authorities had been to utilise all that the Army had acquired, and the fifth Duke had certainly provided them with some interesting features to work upon.

The underground ballroom, 150 feet long and 60 feet wide, has been turned into a gymnasium. For the sake of the pictures around the walls, which include a Reynolds, nothing more potentially destructive than a shuttlecock will ever be used in there. One long tunnel that is associated with a new work containing stretches half a mile long, some of which were made to take a coach and pair, has been transformed into a miniature shooting-range. Three supper rooms attached to the ballroom have been turned into classrooms. The laboratories have been fashioned out of serving rooms. But not all of the tunnels have been used and some, eminently suitable in a boy's mind for exploration, have been boarded up.

First Rung

The boys who were arriving were all sixteen and were all on the first rung of a ladder that will eventually, if everything goes well, lead them to Sandhurst for eighteen months, to a commission in one of the technical corps of the Army, and finally to the Military College of Science, Shrivenham, or a science degree at Cambridge.

The curriculum at Welbeck College, according to the headmaster, Mr D. A. Rickards, differs in no way from the ordinary science sixth form at a school. About three-fifths of the term's lecture time will be given to science, predominantly physics and mathematics, with the remaining two-fifths devoted to the humanities. The total complement of the college will eventually be 150. Another 27 will be coming in January, making 73, and another year's entries will complete the total.

First-comers at Welbeck College, the Army's school for boys who are candidates for commissions in the technical arms, with a member of the teaching staff. The college opened yesterday

This picture shows Leicester Moss walking across the cricket field in front of the Abbey accompanied by Jeff Jukes, Robin Volkens, Ron Taylor, Greg Dillon and Peter Hodkinson.



Really can't make out the faces to name the boys in the underground ballroom although Leicester Moss can be seen looking after the new arrivals. Looking through Joseph Gillin's article below I assume the reporters all had a good briefing and tour before we arrived.

Now—the Old School Pip

FORTY-EIGHT of the luckiest boys in Britain are excitedly packing their bags this morning for a journey to a ducal mansion. There, in the heart of Nottinghamshire, they will begin their first term at Britain's newest and most original public school.

Its name is Welbeck College, and it opens on Friday at Welbeck Abbey, near Worksop, ancestral home of the Dukes of Portland. The boys will study under the care of the War Office, which has opened the college to end the serious shortage of young Army officers with high technical qualifications.

★

I have toured the college, and I can assure the nervous first four dozen students that a wonderful welcome and a great life await them.

The boys will be given the sort of education that could cost between £300 and £700 a year at ordinary public schools, but their parents will have to pay only £1 to £90 a year, according to their incomes.

At the end of their two-year course the students, all 16-plus now, will go straight to Sandhurst with a view to being commissioned in the R.E.S., Royal Signals, or R.E.M.E.

Head of the college is 41-year-old Yorkshireman David A. Rickards, son of a former M.P. for Skipton, who has been a housemaster at Blundell's School, Devon.

By JOSEPH GILLIN

"Our main task," he told me, "is to give the boys a typical boarding school education, but with the accent on science and mathematics instead of classics."

Welbeck is not likely to have to face any of the "snobbery" charges made against the selection boards for the R.N. College, Dartmouth, which M.P.s have said are prejudiced against grammar school boys.

All the first intake are from grammar schools, and Mr. Rickards, who is also chairman of the selection board, said:

"We don't care a hoot about family backgrounds or thick accents. We look for character, and the sort of boys we feel will be good officers as well as good technologists. Pure 'boffin' material is no use to us."

The number of boys at the college is to be built up to 150, and kept at that level.

Some of them will sleep in the Queen Mary room, where her late Majesty often stayed as the guest of the Duke and Duchess of Portland. The Duke and Duchess now live in the smaller Welbeck Woodhouse, on the estate.

For a gymnasium there is the fabulous underground ballroom, over 160ft. in length and reputed to be the largest private room in the country.

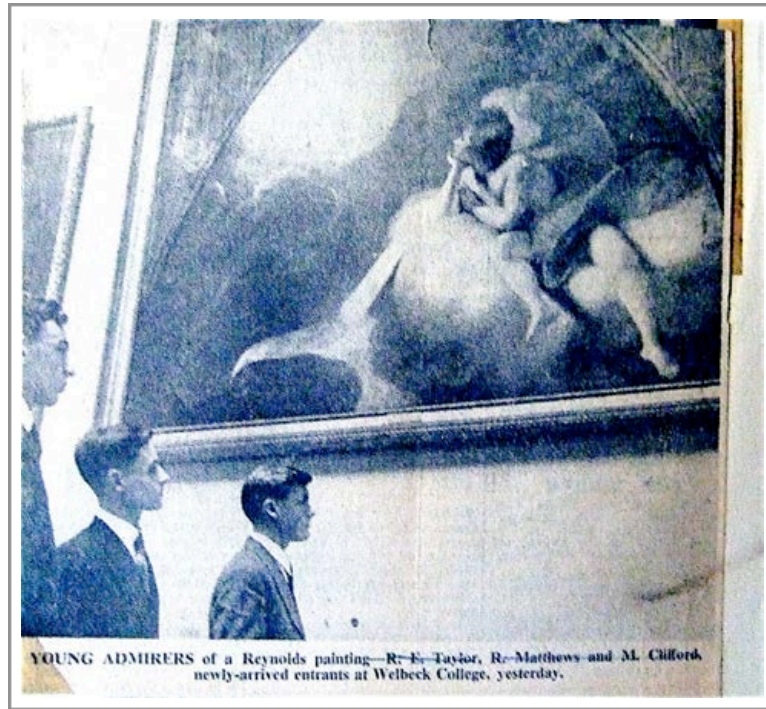
The old supper rooms adjoining the ballroom will become laboratories and classrooms.

★

Full use will be made of Welbeck Abbey's place in British history in building up the tradition of the college.

What do the parents think of this Army public school idea?

Mr. W. H. Jukes, Whitley Bay sales manager whose son Brian is one of the first 48, says: "This is a truly wonderful opportunity for boys. Brian is thrilled, and we are delighted that he has been chosen."



John Brown Squires, Chris Arnold and Arthur Soar (or Rob Mathews)

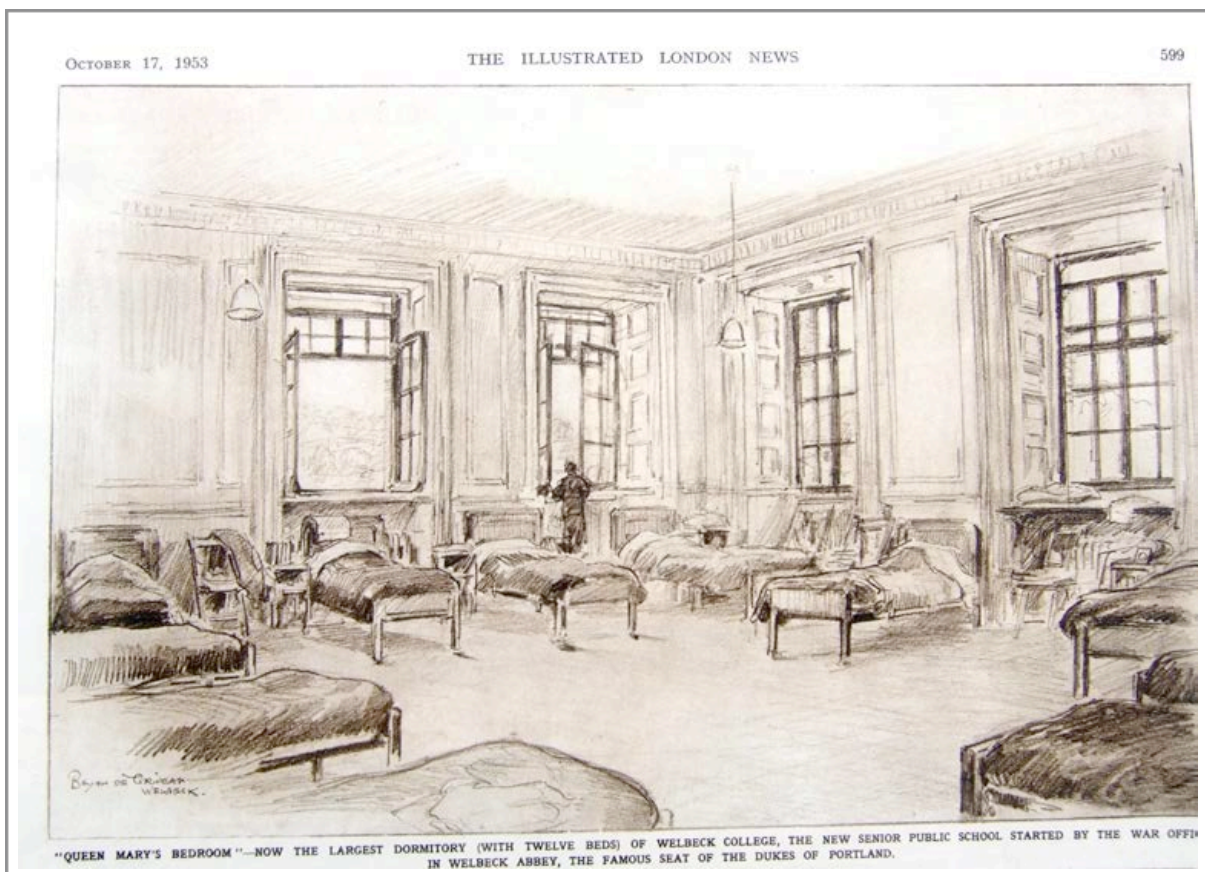


Robin Mathews, Ron Taylor and David Bidwell arrive

To be honest the First Day was something of a blur and I can't really remember much of it other than the Press and Bill Forrington. I suppose we scoffed the dainty cucumber sandwiches (would we see the like again – Steve Gilmore waxes eloquent about food later on). I recall very early on, and I think it was the first day, standing outside Bull's study with Nig and Sam. I think Tony Iveson may have been inside handing over his ration book cigarettes and matches. I had already secreted mine somewhere.

I guess that, as planned, the Bursar conducted us around the underground areas including the library chapel and dining room and that DAR gave us an address 7.45 in the Common Room. I can't recall any of this!

At 9.45 Mr Thompson escorted us up to the dormitorys which had been allocated by Matron. Nick Thompson recalls that the Queen Mary bedroom had a magnificent view over the lake. *"Matron bustled about and established a remarkably happy and efficient regime above ground"*. As far as I remember there were about four in the Oxford Wing. I was in the Queen Mary's Bedroom. I don't think bed allocation was in alphabetical order because Arthur Soar was next to me (Are you asleep Arthur/Jim being a fairly standard interchange). John Thomson the duty master next door to us. Lights out were at 10.15 and we probably slept well after an exciting and illuminating first day.



Queen Mary's Bedroom" - now the largest dormitory with twelve beds.

Note: I was in this dorm and I'm pretty sure there were more than 12 beds. I was on the second right on entering with Arthur next to me and I think there were about 5 or 6 beds on that side which would make some 15-20 beds overall.

THE WELBECK BIBLE IN PRACTICE

The events of the first weekend are described followed by a journey which tells of how the Staff and the First Entry settled into this ancient stately home, along with its vast acreage and underground systems, faced with setting up the first Sixth Form college in the Country - focussed on Army Officer entrance.



I am reminded of the only poem I can recall (from my school before Welbeck):

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
.....So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
...And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
.And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Emfolding sunny spots of greenery.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

Not, I think, too exaggerated a claim for the environment in which we found ourselves our own “fertile ground” is illustrated with a screen shot from Google Earth below.



A walk through The Abbey and its grounds, illustrates how all the rooms and spaces, mostly underground, were adopted and adapted to set up the school from a standing start. On the

way the developing College Ethos and Traditions will be mentioned, together with some anecdotes of what the First Entry got up to.

3. THE FIRST WEEKEND

On Saturday We were introduced to the reality of school food at the 8 am breakfast and then into Chapel for what would become a routine morning gathering for the College less the Roman Catholic boys. After that, into the library where we were allocated to one of the three forms - L6A, L6B and L6C. I suppose they were reliant upon our old school reports and the RAEC entrance exam which we all completed to divide the intake appropriately. It became clear that the A form were the school swots and the lightning brains of Dave Massey, Benny Goodman and Robin Volkens soon established them as "top of the form".



After this clothing and books were issued. As I recall a complete set of clothes were issued in the seamstresses room to the right of the Duke's bell board. (on the left). The first Matron was in charge. Nick Thompson recalls: *"We were all issued with a complete set of clothes including underwear, dressing gowns, pyjamas and even mackintoshes - my parents were amazed when I told them!"*



We handed in our "civvy clothes" and were then equipped with an entire wardrobe ranging from a complete rigger kit with two "Umbro" shirts, one white one striped, through to "socks suspender two, left and right". I vividly recall the latter with a blue strap and a suspender arrangement - goodness knows who actually used them. Shirts, blue were collarless and came with an issue of studs back and front- I still have mine! Derek Baughan is here modelling the three main outfits - his blazer along with his badge the "grey flannel suit" and the raincoat.



Every boy had a school number starting, for the first intake, at No 1 for Bill Abson. These numbers were appended to everything, all our clothes and our text books. Derek Baughan recalls hammering small copper nails into the CCF boots to spell out the number. He was only No 7, poor old Martin Wilson Brown hammering out 48!

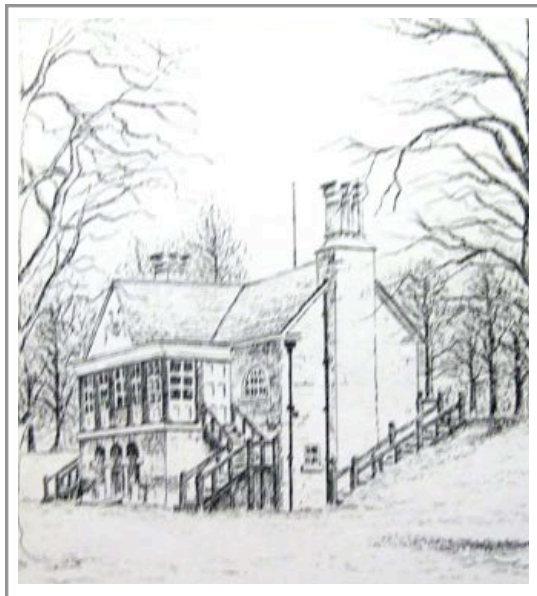


Our text books and stationery were issued in the classrooms by each of the subject teachers - there were a considerable and weighty number. At the beginning of the College these were all kept in a locker in the locker room situated round the corner from that of the Seamstress. We each had a wooden locker about 3ft by 18 inches with one shelf and there was a hell of a lot to pack in. We spent a lot of time in the locker room, where around a few tables, we bulled



our CCF boots, messed about as boys do and held the initial Pop Music Society when Sam Roberts played 78 records on a wind up gramophone. Derek tells me, because I couldn't remember, that we stored our suits and CCF uniforms etc in the seamstress room, macs were hung on a hook along the underground railroad system shown on the left, with our number on it. Our rucker boots (also numbered) were in a rack near the Admin offices not far from the main entrance and the Staff room - easy for Bull to check on cleanliness and protruding stud nails! Our clean laundry was placed on our beds and we had a chair and a small bedside table to "store" things as can be seen from the sketch of the Queen Mary Bedroom. Our dirty laundry - well there's a tale to tell courtesy of Derek Baughan see later.

True to the "bible" after lunch we all trooped to the Sports Pavilion (shown below taken from the front of an annual Welbeck College Magazine and skillfully sketched by Bill Jones the Lab Assistant). In our rucker kit - clutching our rugby boots "all marked with the boys number" Mr York and Mr Thompson "kicked off", which consisted of sorting out those who had and had not played the game before. This the start of what was almost a religion in the first two

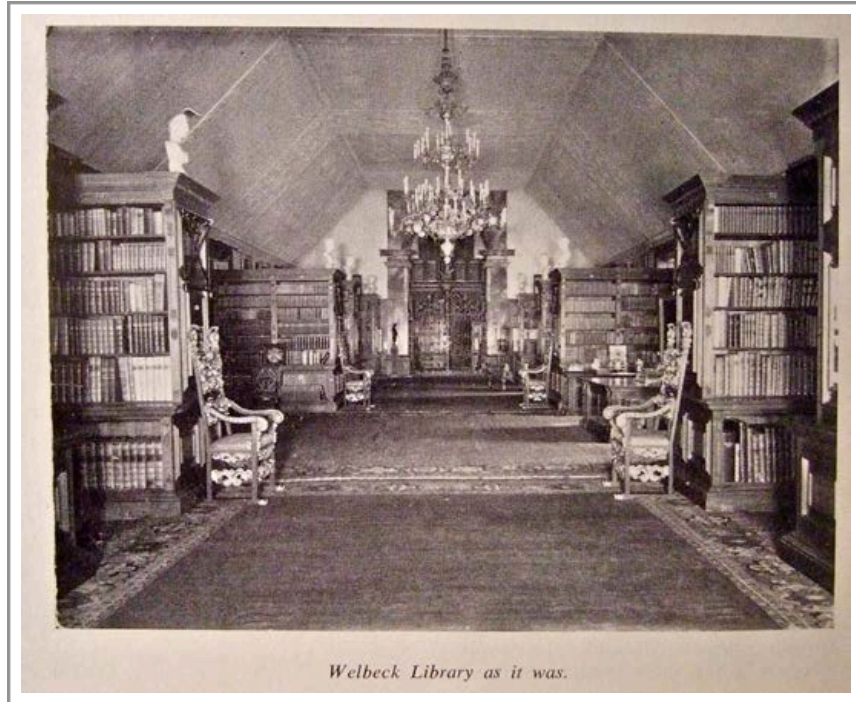


years. Peter Broadbent in a "look back at Rucker" says that "It was agreed at the start that the College needed a school game to provide a focal point at the start of the school year and to compete at the highest level." He continued "The Army is a physically demanding career and the experience of a hard physical contact game must be a great help. You've got to learn to give and take knocks in the right spirit and to play with, as well as against, others." (WCM 1978 p53).

WCM 1953 noted that of the first 48, 26 just over a half, had played before so it was not possible to get a complete game of boys familiar with the rules (but this was more than rectified by Bull later).

Nonetheless "from the very first afternoon it was apparent that there was plenty of enthusiasm and spirit". Jeff Barker the Captain of the 1st XV, has fond memories and recalls Geoffrey Ward scoring in the Masters versus Boys match. Geoffrey himself had pithy comment in his own memories (WCM 1978 p51)- "The agonies and fun of the early years - eg the halt, aged and lame pressed into opposition to the first ever 1st XV!"

After tea Mr Moss gave us a briefing about the library - set in the famous Titchfield Library seen in all its old splendour below. However the grand bookcases had been removed and the library consisted of the old oak shelves which were around every wall of the library. Initially the shelves were very bare but soon books appeared from various donations together with a sprinkling of periodicals Punch and The London Illustrated News being prominent. In fact the library went on to be a huge success as will be recounted later under "societies". After this - supper and House Prayers and so to bed.



Welbeck Library as it was.

On Sunday -



There was an 8 am Communion, after which we assembled in the library when DAR went through the the school rules. After lunch we were treated to a "beating of the bounds" by DAR. Tony Iveson remembers: *"On the first weekend at Welbeck, we went on a tour of the with the headmaster and in one of the underground coaching tunnels there were shards of thick glass on the tunnel floor underneath where one of the thick glass tunnel skylights had broken. For some reason I picked up one of these shreds and threw it to one side. As it left my hand it sliced a cut in my right thumb so I must have been one of sister's*

early patients and still have a scar to prove it!" Nick Thompson says *"I cannot remember the induction process but the Headmaster made an immediate impact calling us "chaps pronounced cheeyapps".*

The first Monday

This started with with Medical and Dental inspections - and then into the classrooms to start academic studies in earnest. Nick Thompson's recollections are the curriculum was packed and heavily scientific and maths oriented.

4. DISCOVERING THE INSIDE

The Chapel



It seems fitting to start the journey here for, as Leicester Moss explained in his sermon at DARs Memorial Service , before we arrived DAR had stood in the Chapel doorway and said *"I want this Chapel to be the centre and focus of all our aspirations"* Indeed in his final sermon prior to his retirement in July 1972 (and only a few short months before he went to meet His God) his theme was *"During the past 19 years this Chapel has meant a very great deal to me"*. It was the place where he took every boy for a rehearsal before he read the lesson the next day in front of the entire school- his way of getting to know us.

Whatever the feelings of the boys then, and in later entries, I think it did give us all, as DAR said *"A good start to every weekday, a few minutes to reflect"* A Choir was formed very early in the first term, I think by DAR himself. It developed later on under Mr Holroyd and Gordon Partington with a very good proportion of boys joining. Altogether the Chapel and Choir certainly helped us all weld together as a School.

The Library.



library was very much a central focus for many of the activities of the College. We all congregated there prior to morning chapel, lectures, concerts, societies, meetings and Speech days took place in these historic surroundings. DAR gave his first assembly to the College explaining the College rules on the first Sunday followed quickly by Bull York who took three Saturday mornings to *go through the laws of Rugby Football, one by one, in all their puzzling complexity.* That was making a point! Most of all this was Leicester Moss's empire, although he would not like that description. How the

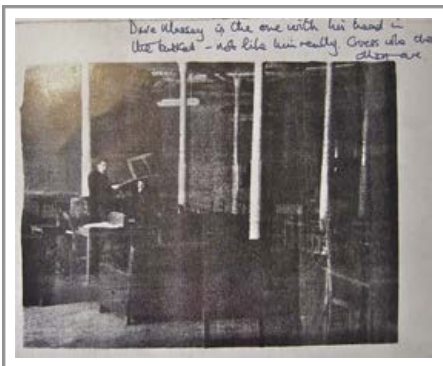
library progressed is shown in some detail in section 10

The Common Room



It may be self evident but at this point it is worth a note that we lived, like Morlocks, more than half of our time underground thanks to the 5th Duke! The Common Room was our Picadilly Circus, the hub from whence we went on our daily schedule. There was a large notice board which gave general information such as the daily timetable. The arrival of selection for the various Sports teams was eagerly awaited and the existence and various doings of the many societies publicised.

A very large table occupied one wall and was a focal point for mail both in and out. We were obliged to send, I think every Sunday Morning, a letter to our homes and on the rear of the envelope to mark our school number; Fred Revington collected and checked them off to ensure we had all written home. Many parents may have been surprised to receive empty envelopes but could be reassured their loved one was still alive! "Letters in" were prominently displayed on the table by Fred. Here is an incident from my life. Fred quietly took me to one side one day and said " There is one for you and I think there is a French Letter inside it. You might like to destroy it! "A great mate from my old school had joined the Royal Marines and taking great delight in his new found lifestyle he was anxious to tell me about the "Free Issue" they received on "Going ashore". Apparently they used them in all sorts of ways other than that intended - including blowing up a huge number and casting them into the air on Plymouth station! Shades of a version of "Porterhouse Blue" yet to come. Anyway the swine had included a free sample in the letter to me and, being buffeted around by the Royal Mail, had left a clear impression on the outside of the envelope which was why Fred had intercepted it. I tell this story to indicate how understanding all the staff were , both upstairs and downstairs; they had our best interests at heart and really looked after us. Thank you Fred. As to the offending item I have to confess of being so naive I had no use for it - but I know who did!



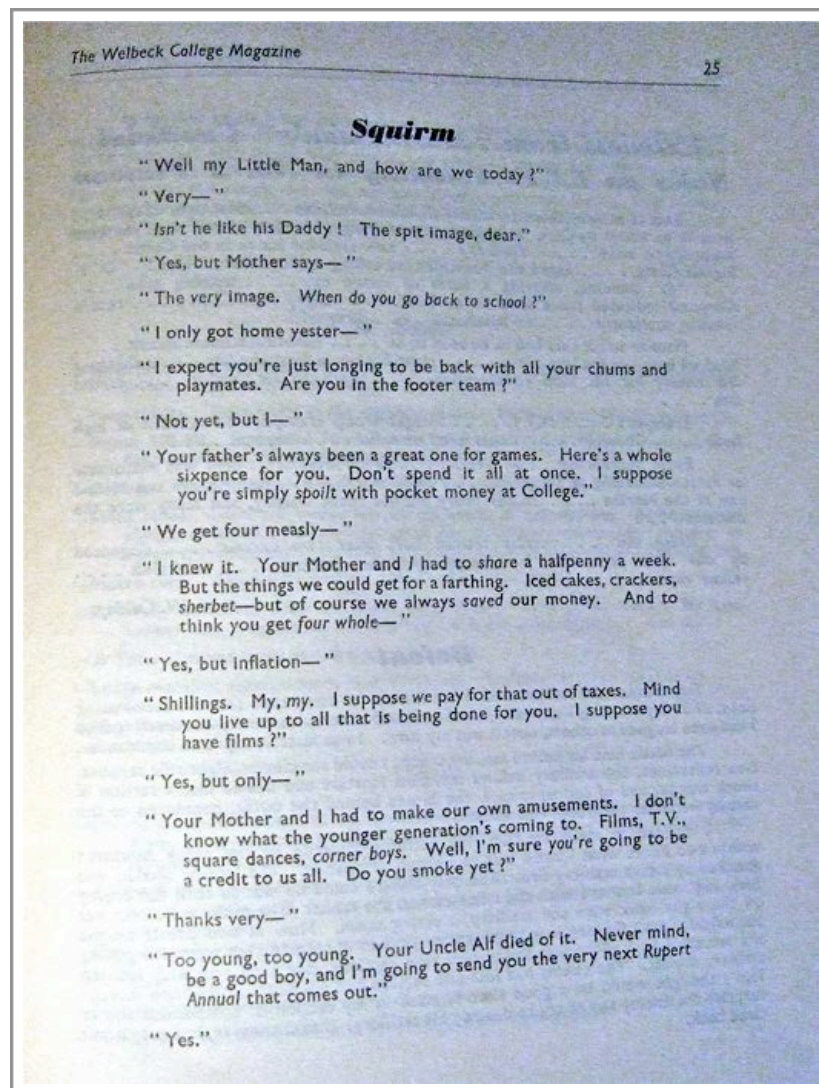
The other main item in the common room was the much used table tennis table which was continually in use. At every break time there was a mad rush to "bag it" and a queue soon formed for Table Tennis was one of the main "amusements". A ladder of 27 boys began with Bernie Goodman, Rob Mathews and Bren Kavanagh the leading players. There were a number of chairs easy officers mess type which can just be seen in this experimental picture, taken in the dark with flash by John Brown Squires of Dave Massey (head in the basket), and me hitting Nig over the

head. Some some card tables, (DARs meeting minutes ruled that boys could play cards but not gamble!) The common room also substituted for a cinema for the three termly film nights and also for one or two "concerts". These are a distant memory but I clearly remember Malcolm Campbell (2), reciting "T'Lions Ate our Albert" in a near perfect imitation of StanleyHolloway!

Steve Gilmore reported on the first film shows (WCM1 / 17); *The Gentle Gunman*, a film about the IRA starring Dirk Bogarde and John Mills, *Beau Geste* with Errol Flynn, *Double Dynamite* with Jane Russell (surprised they allowed this) and *Plymouth Adventure* with Spencer Tracy. Steve allocates a star grading. Now there's a blast from the past - suitable for a quiz night!

Pocket Money.

We were "given" 4 shillings pocket money per week, presumably to buy the odd essential - toothpaste? Most of it went on the aniseed balls from the tuck shop. We drew our wages from Bull York who kept a little account book for each boy. The pound in your pocket in 1953 would have bought: 7 half pints of beer, 4 portions of fish and chips, 8 loaves or enough stamps to send 16 letters! Other than for letters - 16 a week!-It wasn't much? A parents view sent in, anonymously, to the College Magazine (WCM1 / 4 / 25 is reproduced below. Whoever penned this piece seem to be just the type of author used by Monty Python some years later.



Tuck shop

This was another little underground room near the prefects study. For us it was the source of additional sustenance as described by Steve Gilmore, aniseed balls and Kit-Kat. With only 4 bob a week to spend I don't think there was all that much business from the boys. However cigarettes and pipe tobacco were sold for the masters. Fred Revington commented in the magazine later that it was initially run by NAAFI but didn't make any money. He eventually took over running the whole enterprise.

Classrooms



There were about twelve of these just off the Common Room, the old supper rooms to which those using the ballroom repaired after dancing. Two were equipped with a laboratory bench with gas taps and water - the Physics and Chemistry classrooms. All had a chalkboard and about 16 desks less the two labs which had tiered seating and were bordered on one side with large windows together with sky lights at the outside ground level. Most had a side connecting door to the Horse Corridor which ran parallel to the classrooms. The interesting things which went on in the classes are dealt

with later. However I was a "victim" of the early days in that, playing the fool as normal, I switched on a tap put my finger over the end of the spout to spray Nig Allan. Not for too long because Physics was about to begin and Vivian Davey walked in his gown flowing. Positioning himself behind the bench he suddenly hit the roof. "Where has all this water come from?" he demanded. To cut a long story short I confessed; unbeknown to me the plumbing to the sink had not been completed so the Masters side of the bench was swimming in water. I got four across the backside from Bull for this offence although he seemed to lay off the intensity this time.

The Gymnasium

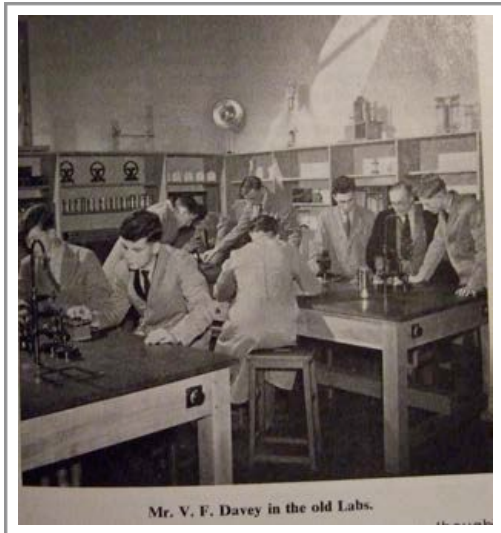


The Illustrated London News Welbeck Drawings

During 1989 and owing to the insight and prompt action of the Bursar and Mrs Morton, a series of pencil drawings of the College by the artist Brian de Goussau were bought at auction. They had appeared at the time of the foundation and opening of the College in the Illustrated London News together with an article by Cyril Falls, formerly Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford University. A selection of these drawings will be found interspersed with articles in the present magazine. The originals are now on display at Welbeck.

This was in the underground ballroom and as can be seen in the sketch from the Illustrated London News lined with paintings and portraits. Nick Thompson confesses to putting a ball through one of them but, as he says, thankfully no one seemed bothered! I trust this memoir will not provide evidence for a belated claim from the current owner of the portraits. RSM Cross is shown along with members of the first entry doing their thing - he was a very versatile man as will be seen later.

Laboratories.



Through the archway in the Ballroom were a number of rooms which had been converted into two laboratories. The picture shows Vivian Davey conducting a practical. An interesting “extra mural” practical took place here. Two of the boys, who shall remain nameless, mixed various chemicals to produce nitro glycerine. What they were going to do - the mind boggles. However the Lab Assistant, Bill Jones, quietly intercepted these illicit concoctions without letting on to Vivian Davey. Another example of how the staff had a fatherly view of young lads and made sufficient allowance to make the point without any serious implications.

Dining Room



At the end of the kitchen railway was what must have been the servants entrance leading up Chapel Hill. This was our normal way up to the dining room. On the left was a covered area used as a bicycle shed. John Skinner borrowed one of these bikes - for what I know not what, perhaps just a ride in the park. However returning to put the bike back he was met by Bernie Cornish saying “Bull wants to see you now. Its his bike” John , aghast, scukkkled off to Bulls study where Bull, looking over his glasses murmured; “Skinner you have caused me great inconvenience. Bend Over...”. I am sure that went into the famous sayings book!

At the top of the hill was Chapel Court and on the right hand building was our dining room and kitchen So, here a word about the food courtesy of Steve Gilmore.

Food Glorious Food

THE '48 (And the Duty Staff) Steve Gilmore's reflections

Were the War Department's ration scales suitable for the number of healthy well exercised growing lads? Or were they reliant on some NAAFI back up? But no NAFFI van ever called at Welbeck Abbey. Perhaps our chef had competing calls on the food supplied. Whatever the cause, there rarely seemed to be quite enough of it - unless “stodge” appeared on the menu! Meals were taken in the former Stable Block (parallel to the Chapel and the Library) and each house had its own long line of tables. The food was served and distributed by a boy think sat the head of each line and, unsurprisingly, those seated towards the lower end of the table seemed to find less on their plates than those closer to the “salt” - no doubt due to the prudence of the distributors in ensuring that the food did not run out before it was their turn (it would have been unseemly to load their own plates first of all).



Harland Benny Goodman, Matron, Nick Thompson Heads Table: John Skinner, DAR, Jim Dennis, Jeff Barker
 Far side table; Serving - Barry Learner or Steve Gilmore
 Next side table: Facing Nig Allan, ?, Terry Neyland, Jock Williamson, Back of Rob Matthews 5th one along
 Next: Derek Baughan and Ken Phipps Dave Watson Serving
 Next: Mark Smith, John Levers

(This photograph illustrates the practice adopted very early on for Masters to get to know the boys. The Headmasters table had 4 different boys rotating through the school whilst the House tables had the prefects and two or three of the hoi palloi.)

There was little waste except in the case of the “stodge” manifestation; no boy had food poisoning and there was plenty of tea, bread and syrup which, when warmed, could be spread more abundantly on the abundant bread. These rations could be supplemented, feebly, from other sources - the four shillings a week pocket money permitted could be spent on the limited range of confectionery held in the College



Tuck Shop (the sight of a Mars bar is evocative to this day) and its infinite stock of aniseed balls were good value for durability if not for nutrition. A disadvantage was that if accidentally dropped in classrooms they would bounce down the terraced floors to the front - to the annoyance of the Master in charge. Further, the trees in the Abbey grounds offered a rich crop of sweet chestnuts which were collected and stored in the boys lockers for sustenance throughout that hard winter (these also had the disadvantage of “bouncing”).

However the perishability of chestnuts and the unreliability of the crop (there were few the

following autumn) made the chestnut unsuitable as College currency!

Another source of food supplements had the blessing of religious devotion; Roman Catholic boys who took the long walk into Worksop to celebrate Mass on Sundays could import exotic items from such stores that were open in that Town, but there were not many such "mules" (to use a modern parlance) and there were competing demands from those boys who had a preference for tobacco products.

Then there was the occasional clandestine "feast" that could take place in the tunnels that the 5th Duke of Portland had excavated in the Abbey's vicinity. Utensils and pots were borrowed from the dining hall and "cooking pots" obtained from Batchelor's Peas Warehouse (which had been the largest indoor riding school in Europe). These "pots" were very large cans of pulped tomatoes from the United States. Rabbit from one of the Estate Lodges formed the meat element and vegetables - probably from the kitchens (there was no restriction on smoking during these sessions) -- whatever happened to the pulped tomatoes? Parents weekends, cinema nights and scottish country dancing sessions offered additional cover and relaxation of surveillance for such gastronomic reinforcement.

The food supply did improve during the two year incarceration (?), whether due to the greater number of boys, more generous rations or changes in catering staff. The only College protest march - the great breakfast time walk out did not seem to have any noticeable effect other than possibly the demotion of the courageous leader much later on - no names no pack drill!!

Whatever were the casualties among the first intakes of boys at Welbeck, none were due to starvation, malnutrition or even assault by the deadly "stodge". But the College motto could never have been:

"Bon Appetit!"

Derek Baughan remembers the breakfast walkout *"Food became so bad that a boycott of breakfast was planned. On the appointed day, about two thirds of the college walked out once food was on the table. As a result, KS (see nicknames) called an immediate assembly. He was quite irate, and his memorable phrase was "mass hysteria". After that, not much happened, although I think Tony Iveson got into trouble because he was the senior striker."* (I believe this was the time that Tony was "de-frocked" as head of College and Bernie Cornish substituted).

The Rose Corridor and Tunnels Beyond the Ballroom.



An underground passage through the end doors of the ballroom led into the Rose Corridor in our time clean but neglected. Band practice took place here. One side was glassed and the other walled side held a row of circular windows. It didn't take long to open these so as to explore what turned out to be one of the tunnels which led up alongside Lady Bolsover's drive until making a junction near to the Riding school. It was a bit creepy feeling our way along this tunnel which was thoroughly explored by one underground team of 4 or 5 intrepid and curious schoolboys. On the initial foray they had found that Bird's Eye the famous, at that time, canning company had a large store of tinned produce.

They set about a little later to make a meal with the find (see Steve's piece above) but discovered that concentrated tomato, as thick as mud, along with one or two other ingredients made for an uneatable meal! A good idea at the time. Returning to the Rose Corridor a central door led out into the sunk garden.

On the left, just leaving the Rose Corridor into the sunk garden was an empty "Palm House", later on was used as a sort of allotment by the Masters and their wives.

Masters Common Room



Afternoon tea in the M.C.R. 1954. L to r: Messrs. Moss, Thomson, Steel, Davey, Rickards, Hawker and Harland with backs to camera.

Somewhat a holy of holies located just through the main entrance and beside the Heads Study and the Bursars office. It was an imposing room although clearly a magnificent retreat for the Masters away from the hurly burly of school life. Just inside the door was a great side table upon which sat the Extra Duty book and I think the famous sayings and other books which will be mentioned later.

Dormitories



The first dorms were on the Oxford Wing, the main one being Queen Mary's Bedroom. There would have been about three initially and upon the arrival of the second entry those of Harland House were in the Oxford wing whilst York moved upstairs above the main building. The furniture was sparse, a bed, chair and bedside locker; we were not allowed any personal items eg ruc sacs, bedspreads etc (which I think appeared later) and this meant almost no clutter, the dorms were bright and airy and with views "to die for". Lights out was at 10 o'clock

and breakfast bell 7.20 am. With prefects nominally responsible for behaviour there was always a duty Master on call. In the beginning this was a smallish study cum bedroom just outside Queen Mary's bedroom and John Thomson lived there being the only bachelor Master. The bathrooms and toilets were of a really high standard, utilising the many rooms on the upper floors of the Abbey. The photo is of Sam's birthday party in the dorm L to R: Jeff Barker, Bren Kavanagh, Terry Neyland (in the issue dressing gown), Sam with issue bracers, Geoff Juckes and Mick Clifford (Looking very smart - must have been on Bell Duty!)

The Welbeck Ghost.

A dorm event gave rise to the fabled "Welbeck Ghost". Tony Iveson recalls this:- *"An early memory of John (Garth) Thomson is him living next door to Dormitory 16, or Queen Mary's Bedchamber, and had to do with my next bed neighbour, one Peter Hodgkinson.*

Nominally I was in charge of the dormitory, and as we had plenty of physical exercise, always slept well. However Peter on several occasions broke into my reverie during the night, by suddenly jumping up and down in his bed saying he was being attacked by a poltergeist, and the noise created inevitably led to a visit by John. Maybe John remembers more of the details."

What actually happened was that a few of us in this dorm started talking about ghosts and poltergeists; Hoddy was easily wound up and so it was decided that one of us would quietly leopard crawl under the beds and rattle his chair or bedside table. This continued for a number of nights until we had really got him going. On one night, pre arranged, the crawler gave a strong tug on Peter's bed leg whereupon he leapt out of his bed, I swear levitating into the air, and with a wail ran out of the dorm as fast as he could. John Thomson then emerged in the doorway switched on the lights and enquired as to what was going on. I think Hoddy was moved to another dorm for the night. No disciplinary action was taken, Maybe John knew it was a prank, and enough said. Suffice it to say the "Welbeck Ghost" was born!

Heckler from pavilion

Early during the first term, normally on a Friday night, we were treated to a drunken heckler who stood on the veranda of the Cricket pavilion hurling abuse and vitriol at us as a band of "Rich Toffs" who were only there to grind the poor down and we were all a load of stuck up bastards and sundry other epithets. Needless to say the entire 48 lined up and cheered him on to great amusement. It happened on two or three occasions after which he never came again. I guess he had had his fill in the Welbeck Club situated up near the Headmaster's House. I wonder if DAR got similar abuse!

5. EXPLORING THE OUTSIDE

The Sunk garden.



Apparently modelled on an Italian garden this was a delightful area . Tennis courts at the centre , bordered by a trellis walk on all sides. At each end was a semicircular "pool". The Palm House end was a goldfish pond and the other, of equal size, a disused swimming pool with a central fountain head. The garden was bordered on two sides by lawns. The sunk garden was the venue of a variety of sports, mainly tennis and swimming, but also for gymnastics and fencing. A great place for leaves to gather in profusion thus providing a suitable task for small misdemeanors "Extra Duties" see the discipline section.

The Main Sports Field. This was in front of the main aspect of the Abbey and was the venue for rugby, hockey, athletics, the start of the college run and cricket. It was, in fact, notable in the past as a cricket field. The 6th Duke describes it so in Men, Women and Things:



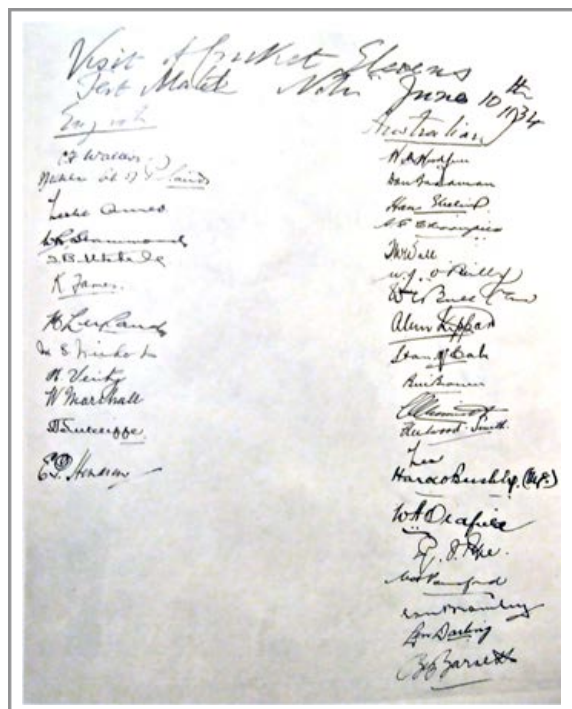
“A Tenants cricket Club was formed in 1884. At first the wickets were poor due to the heaviness of the soil but after careful draining and replacement of the sub soil with ashes and light loam the wickets are as good as can be found anywhere. Amongst some of the best men to have played here are: Shrewsbury, W Barnes, S Barnes, Gunn and many others. Two county matches were played at Welbeck both Notts v Derby. Samuel Malthouse who played for the Welbeck eleven played frequently for Derbyshire, he is pictured left with the Cricket Pavilion in the background. The Duke goes on to say that “When the test matches between Australia and England were played in 1934 I invited both teams to Welbeck and they all signed my visitors book”. (a facsimile of the relevant page is below) with all the signatures of both teams including such famous cricketers as Leslie Aimes, Harold Leyland, H Verity and H Sutcliffe for England and Australians Don

Bradman, W J O’Reilly and Brian Barnes

The Duke also treats us to this mouthwatering anecdote about the great man:

“When Don Bradman was convalescent after his appendix operation he paid us a visit at

Welbeck for a few days. On the day after their arrival I heard a piano being beautifully played for nearly an hour; and when I went into the Gothic Hall there was Don Bradman playing, it seemed to me, almost as well as he batted. When I complimented him on his skill he replied “I enjoy playing the piano better than anything in the world and now I have plenty of time for it” My Wife and I liked Mr and Mrs Bradman very much”

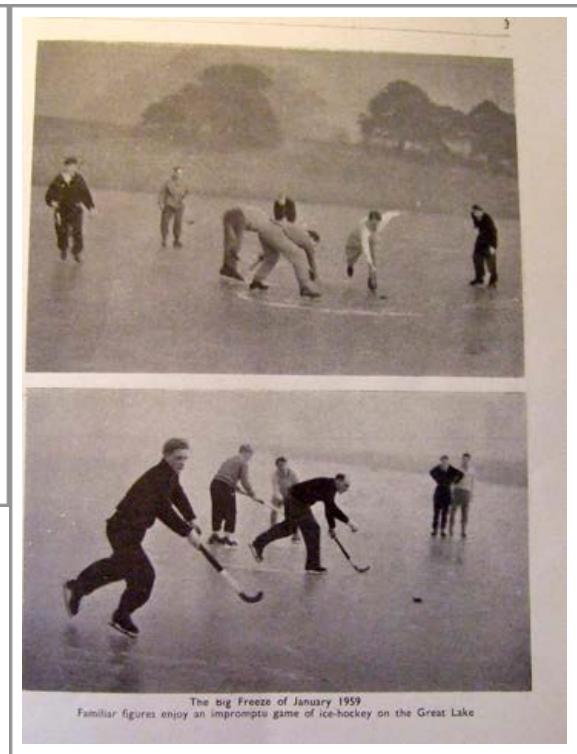


I don’t think any of us knew of this story - no doubt Benny Goodman and his fellow 1st XI would be proud to know they had performed on a pitch where almost certainly Don Bradman himself had walked.

By the side of the cricket field bordering the lake was the College “Hard” where the products of the Workshop were extensively used. To the north, by

shrubbery lake, was a skating pan. The Duke of Portland was very keen and encouraged all of his extensive staff to make use of it in the winter months. DAR was a very keen skater and Leicester Moss tells of him being “ the first to test the ice for safety” and some interesting ice hockey matches took place there - see next page.

DAR can be seen below conducting the Duke of Edinburgh from the college Hard and then lunging for the puck in the top skating picture



Lady Bolsover's Drive

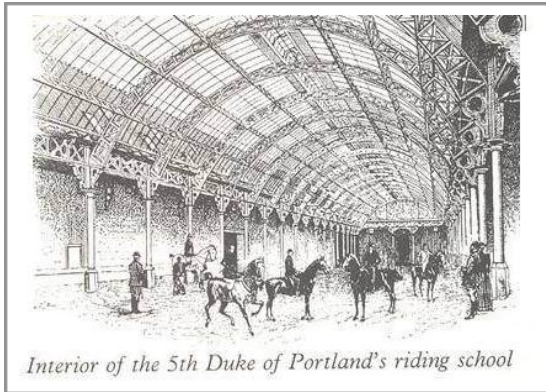
From Chapel Court this drive, lined with mature trees, leads up the hill towards the other major buildings of the Abbey, it is the centre horizontal road in the picture below. We had to walk up there to reach the workshops - always during a mid morning break as I recall. Half way up on either side were two small but imposing lodges. It was here one day on our way to the workshops that we came across the Duke of Portland for the first time. From the back of one of the lodges, emerging from the bushes, came a well dressed gentleman adjusting his dress after plainly peeing in the bushes. He caught sight of us staring and bellowed, in a rich mellow tone, **"Well, I own the bloody place don't I?"** Our introduction to the 7th Duke of Portland.

Abbey Bottom.



This is on the right of the drive and is the now manicured piece shown in the google earth shot on the left, a very large open field which sloped upwards from the vicinity of Chapel Court. It was a major area for sports and the CCF. To prepare it for use we spent many a happy hour "stone picking". It can be seen that in area it is almost twice the size of the main sports field so stone picking was no small task! Two or three rugby pitches for the other XV's were there, it was the place for the "Welbeck Game" and used by the CCF for live firing 2 in mortars. Goodness knows what the safety implications of today would have to say.

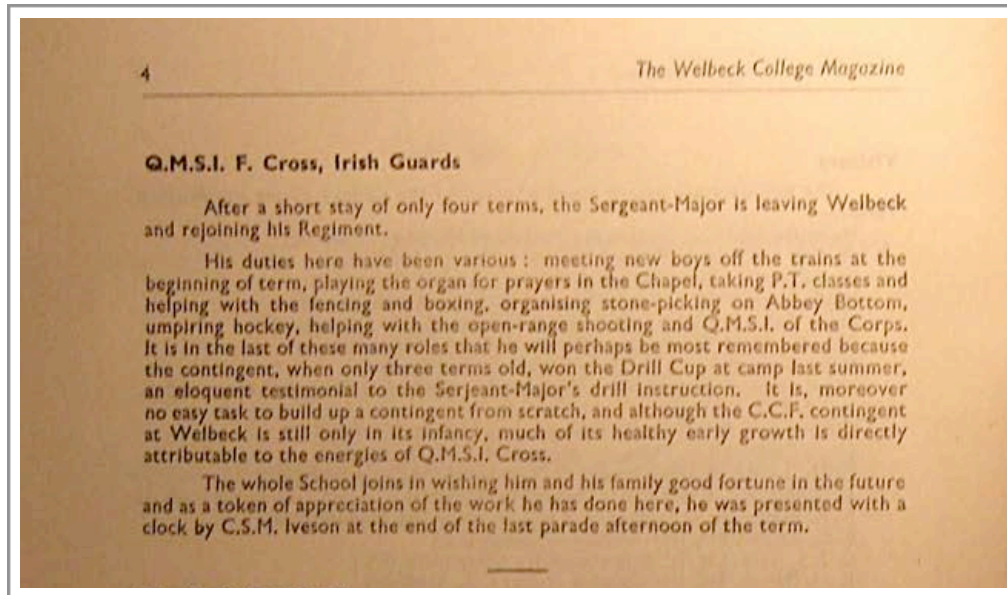
Duke's Riding School



This was at the top of the hill on the right. A magnificent building based on that in Vienna. Many of the Dukes ancestors , notably the 1st Duke of Newcastle, a member of the Cavendish Bentincks (descended from Bess of Hardwick), held the position of "Master of the Queen's Horse" so there would have been momentous events taking place in the building. It is shown on the left in its former glory. When we arrived it was part full with Bird's Eye and Batchelor's Peas goods. At some early stage in the first year the CCF used it as a drill shed and

lecture space. Talking of drill mention must be made of our drill instructor:

Quarter Master Sergeant Instructor (QMSI) F. Cross The Irish Guards



Forever remembered with his direct command:- **"There it is there"** as he demonstrated some drill movement for us to replicate. Jeff Barker remembers: *"At the time, I don't think I quite realised what an opportunity Welbeck provided. Indeed when I did step off that train,*

was met by this chap in army uniform with a red sash and seemingly bundled into the back of an army truck, I did not relish the idea of continuing. Fortunately, I did not have the initiative to do anything about it!" Despite his outwardly fierce manner Fred Cross was at heart a really kind man and we respected his authority and his understanding of men and boys. He left after only 4 terms to join his Regiment and the Welbeck Magazine had this to say (WCM 1/4/4). Who would believe a Guards RSM would play the church organ - he certainly had us organ-ised (sorry) picking stones!

What a real positive contribution he made in forming the life of the College - and a really nice man to boot.

The Drill Shed

This was up at the back of the riding school and was the CCF Headquarters from the start. As I recall it had a curved corrugated iron roof, a parade space and a number of classrooms. The QM stores were located there. What was memorable was a stripped down Hillman Minx. Ted Bateman gives an excellent account in the Magazine (WCM2/2/21). Shown at the Rootes Group Stand at the 1947 Motor Show it was sectioned so that all the parts could easily be viewed and was on loan from RMAS.

Staff Accomodation.

Just beyond the Riding School were the Headmaster House and Stable Court which had been converted into flats occupied by the Masters. If one went straight on instead of turning up to the Riding School the tunnel entrance, then regularly used by Batchelor's Peas, was on the right and further down the road on the right was the Welbeck Estate area (a well run farming enterprise). Turning left towards the Workshops was the College "Hospital. Continuing straight down this road towards the exit to the main Workshop Mansfield road, on the right was a set of picturesque terraced cottages known as "The Winnings", built by the Duke for his staff out of the prize money for winning the Derby.

The Workshops.

Another real focus for our activities and master minded by Jim Steel who had a really progressive and refreshing approach to teaching engineering skills. After a somewhat brief introduction to tools and planing wood square, we were encouraged to design and manufacture items for our own use. All will remember building the GP Dinghies but the workshop went from strength to strength and is described in more detail a later section 9.

6. . DEVELOPING THE SYSTEM

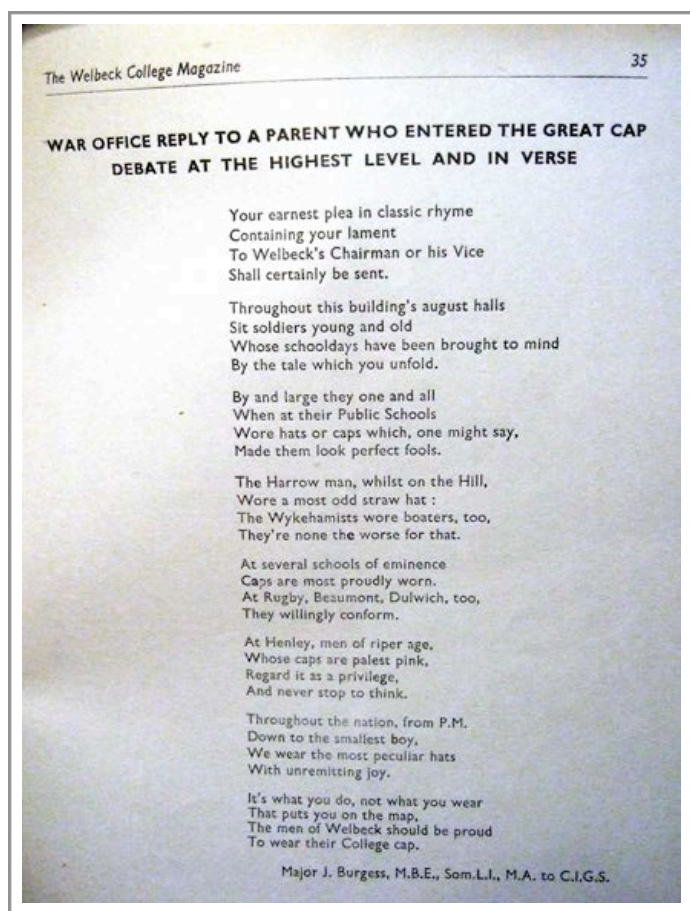
Discipline

DAR's meeting minutes established the disciplinary regime in its various guises and initially, as he said, the strictest regime was to apply. In section 18 I recount how Nig and I in the first week came up against the law in almost all its facets. There was only York House of course and Bull was a strict man. who very early on made it clear that "Six of the best" was his answer to those who strayed from the straight and narrow. This was no more exemplified when the embryonic 1st XV played against Workshop College our neighbours. Bull made it very clear that the entire school were to line the touchline and cheer the team on. He directed Bernie Cornish to call the roll at half time and discovered seven or so boys absent! They all got six of the best! Perhaps it was the same in most schools but 1 Entry lads did not seem at all fazed by this severe (barbaric?) punishment. Indeed it became the practice to display the red stripes across the posterior and they became heroes of the moment.

Prefects

The first Welbeck Magazine reported the appointment of Tony Iveson as Head Prefect and House Captain York House and Bernie Cornish as House Captain of Harland and a College Prefect (WCM1 / 2). As I recall Tony had been the Head of School in the first term but I may be wrong. What I do remember is that Tony seemed to be the perfect choice. He had a natural authoritative and firm manner without being at all bossy. He possessed an easy smiling outgoing personality and got on with everybody, always willing to listen and give a helping hand. He gave out announcements and instructions at various times, mainly after lunch, which were always palatable and carefully listened to. On top of that he excelled in every sport he took part in, notable on the rugger field and in athletics. If this seems somewhat over the top at this distance in time well, I can only say I know that's how I felt then and now. The prefect system was further developed with four college prefects per house, four House Prefects (supported by Dorm Prefects). Their role was generally to enforce the school rules and supervise prep. The prefects study was on the right by the fork in the underground railway along from the tuck shop and consisted of two smallish windowless cells York on the right and Harland on the left. It is interesting to know now that when he left Welbeck Norman York was reported as saying that one thing he would not do again was to appoint prefects from the 1st XV. A view which would probably be cheered by many of the boys around at the time.

The School Cap



We had a curious view of how we were controlled by the staff although there were only 8 of them and one duty master. On

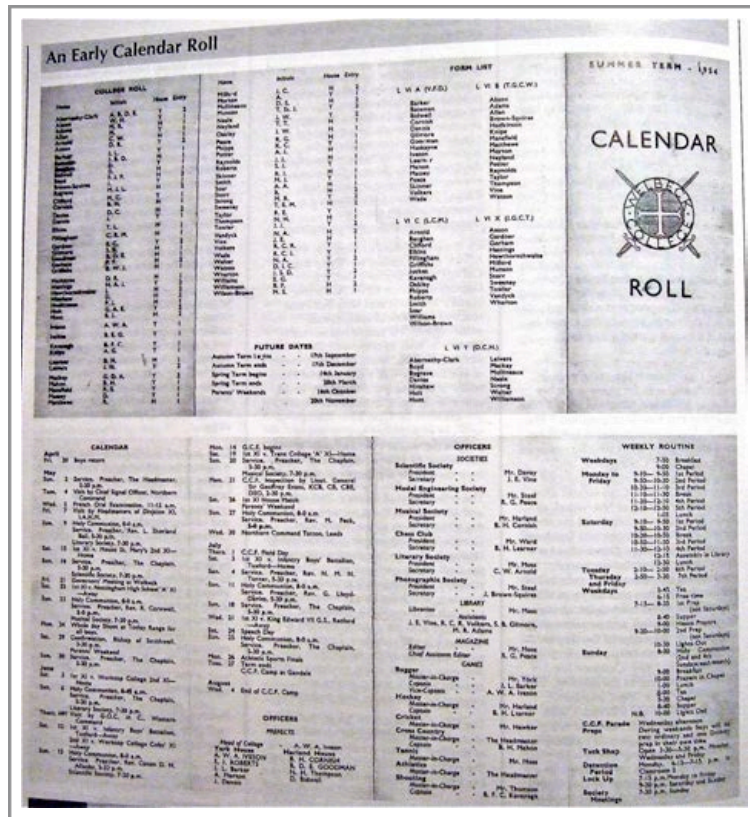


breaking bounds on one occasion, off for a swift half in a local hostelry, we "leopard crawled" though the bushes lining the drive for fear of capture! At the weekend, to ensure we were all present and correct we had an evening "apfell" when the school lined up and the roll was called. A development of this was when we were issued the infamous school cap; at apfell we then marched up to the duty master raised the titter and were marked as present. It was a much talked about topic, was the cap, and gained publicity so much so the the MA to the CIGS penned a poem (see right) "In praise of the Cap". It lasted

but a few years and then was abandoned.

Calendar Roll

Instituted early on this handy pocket sized folding term calendar is shown below. It told you all you need to know, who was who, where you fitted in to the College, when you could get out on an Exeat and what was happening - where and when. Couldn't be bettered.



For whom the bell tolls

Right from the start we all enjoyed our stint at ringing the school bell! A rota was established and the duty bell ringer started with a wake up call and ended with lights out. Lessons were dictated by the bell as were chapel times, prep and up to the dorms. Not too onerous a task and kept everyone in step. It was however a touch scary on the dark nights when the last duty was to clear the classrooms and the library. Walking along these lofty places, switching the lights out and through the underground corridors and one began to believe in the Welbeck Ghost!

House prayers

From the outset this occasion was another “assembly” where we all got to know one another, including the Housemaster. I don’t recall actually saying any prayers and certainly the Roman Catholic boys were present. Initially York House prayers took place in the Print Corridor just down the stairs from Bull’s study; when the second entry arrived we moved up to the York dorms and sat on our beds as Bull took centre stage. It was an occasion for announcements, queries and bollockings, so much so that “prayers” was a complete misnomer.

Derek Baughan has some unfortunate memories of house prayers.

"The great Skid Mark Scandal - Miss Rouse, the matron, complained to Bull York that boys were handing in underpants for laundering that were soiled with what became known as " skid marks ". Norman brought this up, in a most serious manner, at House Prayers, and said this was disgraceful conduct. Any boy who could not clean himself " in the normal manner " was to wash the area, and not soil his underwear again. As a result, a row of boys was to be seen on the evening before laundry day, in the wash room, scrubbing away at their underpants as if their lives depended upon it, to escape the wrath of the housemaster. I remember Bull York saying at House Prayers " I believe we may be trying to make silk purses out of sows ears Purses - Bull had been traveling back to College passing a poor area of some nearby town and he related what he saw at House Prayers. " All the lads of the area were out, as were the girls, behaving badly and generally making a noise. I thought of you at Welbeck, and wondered whether we are not trying to make silk purses out of sows' ears ". I thought this a most unkind, and unnecessary thing to say - I hope the record of Old Welbexians proves him wrong".

Societies.

At one of DARs September meetings some societies suggested were: Science (VFD), Literary and Debating (LCM), Chess (TGCW), Art (Bursar), Music (CCWH) and Photographic (JS). I recall the latter got off to a sound and quick start with John Brown Squires as the lead from the boys. The debating Society, a little slower, was renamed "The WARLORDS (Welbeck Amateur Reading....). As with all the initial action in the early years the Masters and the new boys got on with setting up a range of societies to keep us all busy in any spare time and each one was firmly established. The range of societies is discussed in section 19.

The Welbeck Magazine

The first issue January 1954, came on the scene remarkably quickly became an integral part of College activities recording all for posterity. Leicester Moss was in charge ably assisted by Ray Peace, Robin Volkens, Martin Wilson Brown, Rob Matthews, Peter Hodgkinson and Steve Gilmore. There were some really good articles from the boys showing what hidden talent there was on the literary front - and this continued throughout the life of the magazine until publication ceased in 2005. A section further on deals in more detail.

Nicknames -

Perhaps another old school tradition was that there seemed to be an immediate desire to think up suitable nicknames which continued throughout the first two years. "Bull" York was of course the first and even the Masters sometimes referred to him in this way. Jim Steel quickly acquired the name of Obeche for obvious reasons but mostly was fondly identified as Jimmy Steele. when compiling this memoir I sent some stuff to his daughter and she told me he was cross first because no one referred to him as Jimmy except Gordon Partington. The latter achieved the soubriquet "Bottom" mainly from being a formidable opponent in a Masters v Boys rugger match. The head was often referred to as KS (as you can see from one of Derek Baughan's contribution elsewhere). All will know why - although generally he simply became DAR - with the exaggerated "posh" pronunciation Dee-Ayee-Argghh. Benny Goodman was obvious but less so those accorded to Mark Smith, Rob Matthews and I think

Keith Palmer. Dave Axson had an unenviable nickname. Ted Bateman was so named although it wasn't his christian name, Curly Reynolds was another.

Early Leavers.

"Expulsions." is an ugly word and in this case inappropriate. Greg Dillon did leave quite early on but was not expelled. We never found out why. Certainly he was a great loss being a stylish and excellent rugby player. In addition, in my view, he seemed to be exactly the type the Army was looking for and had he stayed I have no doubt he would have been very successful. He went on to be a great success in the London Metropolitan Police. The other lad of the first entry to "leave" was Dave Watson. The story we learnt was that some tools were disappearing from the workshop and had been found in Dave's locker, so he had to go. All of us thought this was really drastic measure - why not six of the best - but again Dave was a magnificent winger in the 1st XV. When he got the ball he ran very fast with a high knee and leg action which made him very difficult to tackle. I suppose his leaving was a way of "making an example". Both of them were the first players to be awarded 1st XV colours.

Smokers club.

Way back then smoking was a normal habit, although supposedly not for those under 18, and quite a few of us were already confirmed smokers on arrival. Although Bull supposedly had removed our cigarettes and matches they appeared without any problems - probably via the RC mules mentioned in Steve Gilmore's piece. In the first terms smoking was rife and the smokers dens, mostly close to the College, had a small gathering of boys puffing away. Inside the corridor leading to the Rose Corridor was the place for a "quickie" and on the roof outside of the York Dormitories was a pleasant and safe place. Outside there was a little pigeon house not far from the dining room; further on a small grotto tunnel which led to the squash courts. Along the way from there was an enormous and beautiful copper beech which was a favourite. One branch could be caught with a spring and it was all too easy to shin up



and disappear amongst the foliage away from prying eyes. A more dangerous place in terms of capture was the pavilion in the sunk garden. This was beside the goldfish pond which contained an enormous golden carp - Alphonso; it became the practice to flip "fag ends" into the pool which he instantly caught and to the chagrin of the boys, spat them out immediately. He had been a present from the King of Spain (hence the name) during a visit to the 6th Duke. He defied all attempts to

assassinate him and lived to a ripe old age. Why the masters never called us to task I don't know for the tobacco smell must have lingered long on our clothes.

Tribal traits “tarrold” A curious habit, hard to describe, grew amongst us. Initially it was a sort of sarcastic response of disagreement or disbelief, “Oh yeah” was the start of it. This developed into a snort together with a facial and eye opening expression. Another stage was a hand expression accompanying the voice and face which comprised of curling the fingers into a tunnel shape whilst rotating the hand at the same time. These three affectations turned into an instant retort, the verbal element becoming, for some strange reason, “Tarrold” or some such expression. The habit went through several stages until it became a simple pursing of the lips and a twist of the hand. In many ways it was the equivalent of Oliver Hardy grimacing a “Mmm Mmm” at Stan Laurel before the immortal words: “Another fine mess”. Well it was some sort of mess for OWs because it carried onto Sandhurst when it became a secret interchange between OWs not at all accepted by the other cadets. Nick Thompson referred to this as a bit of a drawback for OWs entering RMAS.

The Abbey Kitchens.



These, seen from our back spiral staircase leading up to the dorms, were out of bounds to us. However the overheard giggling which came from the Duchess’s maids led to some early breaking of bounds and Jeff Barker recalls this, possibly with the same naivety as myself as “ *Oh, I just also remembered - the Dowager Duchess’ maids; this time there was a need but again lack of initiative prevailed (not so for some, unnamed but known, individuals)*”