Queen Elizabeth's GS, Barnet
Personal Reflections, Richard Newton 1956 - 64 **January 2019**

My Background and Upbringing

I was born in June 1945. My mother and father met during World War II. They both came from working-class families and had "interesting" wars in which they both saw active service. When the war was over they had high expectations of making a new start together. Like most returning troops this meant a home of their own, a steady job, children, peace and a normal life. Because of their own experiences, and encouraged by the changes to secondary education as a result of the Butler Act, they were both strong advocates of the importance of a good education in order to get ahead in life.

My father had left school at the age of 13. Before the war started he had become a clerk in a solicitors' office. During the war his administrative and clerical skills were used to organise logistics support in the army. Aged 26 he was among the first troops in the BEF sent to France when war was declared, he was part of the D-Day landing force and he was only finally discharged from the army in November 1945. In other words his army service took up more than six years of his life. After the war he resumed his clerical role in a solicitors' office. At first they were called managing clerks, later more grandly legal executives; in particular, he became a conveyancing specialist.

My mother was bright and aged 11 won a scholarship to the new Hemel Hempstead Grammar School. Her mother thought educating girls was a waste of time and didn't want her to take up the place. However, her father gave her support although this petered out by the time of middle school and she reluctantly left after getting school certificate when she was 16. She became a first-class secretary. She was 19 when war was declared and sought every opportunity to become involved. She joined the ATS as soon as she could and eventually became part of General Montgomery's HQ staff, landing in France in August 1944 and moving up to Brussels following the advancing allied troops.

In 1950, having lived in my mother's parents' council house for five years, my mother and father were finally able to rent a maisonette in Borehamwood. Borehamwood was then a small rural town, soon to be heavily developed as a London overspill area. I started at Cowley Hill primary school, where class sizes were routinely around 40. Throughout my time there I was consistently top of the class.

From an early age I remember I was expected to take my education seriously, to aim high, and to think that there was no reason why I should not aspire one day to go to university, this even though no-one from my family had ever got near to a university before. At home I was constantly encouraged to read. I was a member of a children's book club. My parents bought a set of a children's encyclopaedia. I was encouraged to be numerate. To this day I remember a little book they got me when I was about 7 called Approach to Thinking on logic and problem-solving. There was no television to distract me. Like many other families, it was not until Coronation year in 1953 that we first got a TV set. Even then programming was more or less restricted to the evening. As my younger brother did not come along until I was 12 I spent a lot of time amusing myself. My reading, writing, arithmetic and problem-solving skills were well developed and no-one seemed to doubt that I would pass the 11+.

It was while I was at primary school that I also realised I was better than most at sport. I was the fastest runner for my year at school and in the Borehamwood district. I played football for the school in both my last two years and also played for the combined Borehamwood schools in those two years, in the last year of which we got to the final of the county cup. I also represented a combined Barnet and Borehamwood schools football team. I also played cricket for the school and for the Borehamwood district schools.

My parents meanwhile had become friendly with some of the teachers, largely through my father becoming a member of the PTA, where I would guess his legal knowledge and connections came in handy from time to time. By the time it got to the 11+ in my last year,1955/56, there were two main options for those boys and girls who passed. There was a relatively new mixed grammar school in Borehamwood itself and this was where almost everyone who passed

from Cowley Hill went. There were, however, some important connections with Queen Elizabeth's and each year maybe one boy from Cowley Hill was encouraged to put QE as his first choice. The connections were Gwyn Smith, who was the HM of Cowley Hill and whose son, John Smith, was then at QE and doing well academically and on the sports field, eventually becoming a full prefect. The other connection was Denis Nelms, a senior master at Cowley Hill, soon to become a primary HM himself elsewhere. Denis was a notable OE, a scholarship boy who became school captain during the war years and a particular favourite of Ernest Jenkins. Both Gwyn Smith and Denis Nelms encouraged my parents and me to put down QE as my first choice. Looking back on it now I am sure that both Gwyn Smith and Denis Nelms would have given decent references of me to Ernest Jenkins. However, apart from passing the 11+ exam, and having good references, there was still the question of an interview with Ernest Jenkins ("EHJ"), an event which one's parents were also instructed to attend with their son. This event remains clearly in my mind's eye to this day.

The Interview

My parents bought me a tweed suit especially for the interview. I had never previously had anything like this. The trousers were of course short. Wearing long trousers for most boys had to wait until the second form. So, with my tweed suit and of course a collar and tie, I felt like little Lord Fauntleroy. The tweed suit was perhaps worn by me a few more times before I outgrew it. My parents were not poor but money was always short; they had no savings and they lived month to month. The suit no doubt represented a necessary but extravagant expenditure.
Each boy was instructed to bring a book that he had been reading to discuss with the headmaster. I chose a book that I had enjoyed called An Otter's Tale. It was the story of an otter told through the eyes of the otter about the various perils and challenges facing the creature in its everyday life. Occasionally in the book there was a drawing of a particular scene. I thought I could talk about the book and demonstrate my interest in the natural world. EHJ asked me if I always read books with pictures, insinuating that the story may not have been sufficiently challenging! I certainly took it as a black mark. I later discovered from colleagues in the first form, who for whatever reasons had inside knowledge, that the winning way was to bring a book by Arthur Ransome, preferably Swallows and Amazons. EHJ was reported to think this was exactly the sort of book any 11 year old boy should be reading.
At some point during the interview I was asked to leave the room and my parents, who had been sitting silently behind me while I sat in the interview chair directly across the desk from EHJ, were subjected to their own interrogation. Afterwards I remember my father commenting to my mother that the main thrust of the questions was to the effect that EHJ and the school expected total support from parents in how the school dealt with their son while he was at school.

September 1956, starting at Queen Elizabeth's GS

My first day at QE was memorable. I was in form 1C, the master of which was the legendary Eric Shearly. Legendary because of his outstanding athletics achievements while a boy at the school in 1939 shortly before war broke out. His times for the half mile and mile demonstrated an outstanding potential. However, whatever he might have achieved was thwarted by the war, when he was in the Fleet Air Arm. Otherwise he almost certainly would have represented his country at an adult level. As a schoolboy his times for the mile and half mile were comparable to the great Sydney Wooderson when he had been at school. Wooderson went on to hold the world mile record and to win gold at the Olympics.
Eric's legend, though, on my first day at school came about when one of the class, who shall remain nameless, forgot to bring his medical certificate. Eric promptly sent him home and told him not to return until he could produce his certificate. The boy in question, who throughout his time at school was a quiet harmless individual, in some shock and humiliation, trooped out of the room not to be seen again until the afternoon. This struck most of us as incredibly harsh

punishment. It was, of course, a symbolic lesson for all of us that we were no longer at primary school.
There was one class initiation ceremony which brought humiliation if one failed. The school swimming pool then was open air and not heated. In the middle of September it was green from algae and very cold. One PE lesson, instead of going to the gym, we went to the pool. There boys who claimed they could swim had to demonstrate this to Eric by swimming a length. Boys who couldn't were declared non-swimmers and had to wear ghastly red, shiny trunks provided by the school. Until they could swim a length their non-swimmer status was humiliatingly there for all to see whenever we went to the pool. There were a surprisingly large number that could not swim, around 25% out of a class of 30.

General observations of the school in the late 1950s/early 1960s

Looking back now certain aspects of school life stand out.

Academic standards
Everyone had to pass the 11+ to be in the school and yet the academic abilities of boys were very mixed. There were of course a number of extremely bright pupils but so too there were a number who seemed quite ordinary academically. The school at the time had a policy of giving preference to siblings and sons of former pupils. This probably diluted the pool a little academically but overall I would say that, despite all its criticisms, the 11+ exam may not have been such a fiendishly high bar as some would want us to believe today. A noticeable difference from the school today is that most of the boys were local, coming from Barnet (Chipping, East, New and Friern) with a sprinkling of contributions from Totteridge, Potters Bar, Southgate and, of course, Borehamwood. There was, therefore, a strong Barnet identity with the school. It was very much part of the community.

Enjoying or hating school life
To thrive at the school in the 1950s and early 60s a boy needed to demonstrate competence in one or more areas, academic excellence, sporting prowess, musical or drama talent or generally someone of engaging character, the test for which was popularity with fellow pupils and masters. It was probably not the place for a shy retiring flower, particularly if one struggled academically. I have since met several OEs who have admitted to being miserable while they were there, a condition which unempathetically I have difficulty understanding. Basically, you were encouraged to get stuck in and get on with things. To me the place was close to bliss. Sport was encouraged. I couldn't get enough of it, rugby, cricket, athletics, fives, you name it I did it. Regrettably I didn't always work as hard as I should. I was able to pass exams without too much swotting until I got into the sixth form and had to do A levels. Then my somewhat slapdash approach got found out and I realised, probably too late, that getting decent A-level scores really did require plenty of swotting. Of course the economic environment of the time did not necessarily require the highest academic achievements, unlike today. The economy was booming, jobs were plentiful, getting into university required decent A-level results but not necessarily stellar ones, unless Oxbridge was the goal. Another piece of good news for my generation was the abolition of conscription into the armed forces. When we started at QE we all could expect to spend two years on National Service before going on to university. Instead, from 1957 onwards, this was gradually phased out and eventually eliminated well before we got to the 6th form.

Public examination philosophy
The schools philosophy towards public examinations at the end of EHJ's era was broadly as follows.
The expectation was that all boys were there to take A-levels and then go on to university. Of course, many boys did not want to go on to university or did not get good enough grades to do so. However, at the time, in the early 1960s, with a booming economy, there was a large market of jobs for boys with A-levels from a good grammar school. There were many options like

banking, industry, and professions like accounting and the law. Roughly 5% of the country's school leaving population went on to university and QE comfortably exceeded this percentage for its own leavers.
So, from early on in one's school career, one was under the clear expectation that one stayed on until A-levels and then went to university or out into the wide world of work, well-equipped academically.
As a result, O-levels were just a means to an end. One was not at QE to get as many O-levels as possible and then go out to work. Instead, a little while before the O-level examinations, an important decision was taken as to which of three streams each boy would go into for A-levels, Arts, Classics or Sciences. Depending on which stream a boy was due to go into, this determined the O-levels he would take, namely the minimum number he needed for university entrance. In my case I was going into the Arts stream to do languages - German, French and English Literature. As a result I took only four O-levels - English Language, Maths, Geography and Latin. At the time I thought this was an excellent plan. As I would soon drop a number of subjects on which I would not be examined - History, Chemistry, Physics, Biology - I could ease up on the studying. More time to spend on the sports field. I could even ease up on the studying for those O-levels, like Maths, which I would not be taking after the exam; all I needed to do was get a decent pass. Looking back now this is something I regret. The school could have provided a broader O-level palette without jeopardising the A-level objective. Our formal education would have been broader as a result.
The method by which a boy was allocated to either Arts, Classics or Sciences is worth mentioning. There was some element of choice but not entirely. I very much wanted to study German, French and English literature for A-level, so the Arts stream was my stated preference. However, when the allocations were confirmed I had been put into the Classics stream. Why? The prospect of Latin, Ancient Greek and Ancient History was not at all what I wanted. I recall my parents writing to ask for a reconsideration which, mercifully, was granted. My guess is that the Classics classes were not oversubscribed so what was tried on me, and no doubt others, was in the hope of boosting numbers.

Bullying

I hardly remember any physical bullying in the school. I am not referring to verbal abuse by boys; this was part and parcel of growing up although today some of it would qualify as bullying. Senior boys were made sub-prefects and prefects and could issue punishments but I never recall any incidents where this power was abused. To my knowledge, forfeits or "hazing" did not occur at all. By and large the school, with all its different ages of pupils and different backgrounds and competencies, was a friendly well-meaning place. Still today nearly all my closest friends are from QE where bonds were made that have lasted a lifetime.

Multiculturalism and Faith

There was virtually no multiculturalism in the school then. White, English, Christian was the almost exclusive culture. The Aldons brothers from Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, were the only exception I remember. While the school was not a faith school in any sense, all the rituals, such as morning assembly and the Founders Day ceremony, were based firmly on Church of England norms. Each assembly would feature a bible reading, some hymns and prayers. The only other faith among the pupils was Judaism.The number of Jewish boys was relatively small but nevertheless not insignificant. They could choose not to attend morning assembly. When we had scripture lessons the Jewish boys sat in a corner of the class separate from the rest of us. Also, it happened that nearly all the Jewish boys in my year were not in any sense sporty and they tried to avoid gym or games, including the team sports. All of this inevitably fostered a sense of them and us. It was not healthy and certainly not acceptable today. It lead inevitably to some anti-semitic remarks and behaviour. The school was no different from the general zeitgeist of

the time but looking back now it is regrettable that we were not more ostensibly tolerant as an institution.

Uniform

There were some draconian rules on uniform in my early years. For example, we were expected to wear the school uniform including a cap at the weekend. This was not something any young adolescent boy in Borehamwood was likely to do unless he was looking for trouble. This stupid requirement was abolished sometime in the late 1950s but not before I witnessed one extraordinary event one Saturday afternoon in the winter of 1958/9. Barnet football club were playing a big match at their ground, Underhill. Barnet FC were one of the top amateur sides in the country at the time. My father took me to the game; I was obviously not in my uniform. The crowd was large and there were long queues at the turnstiles. Standing near the turnstiles to watch the incoming crowd closely were the school prefects, in their gowns, apparently looking out for pupils going to the game not in their uniforms. Fortunately I, like many others, slipped past unseen. Perhaps the Barnet FC prefectorial surveillance persuaded them that it was a rule "more honoured in the breach than in the observance" because not long afterwards it was dropped.

Soccer or Association Football

Of course, it would not have helped our case going to see the vulgar game of association football. The word "football" at QE meant only rugby football. To be seen kicking a round ball anywhere on school premises was close to a hanging offence. There was a lot of organised soccer off school premises, principally down at Barnet playing fields, particularly in the school holidays. This even included teams of QE boys playing against other schools. This extreme opposition to the round ball game modified somewhat when Eric Shearly became the fitness trainer for Barnet FC, to the extent that Barnet FC even used our school gym for the purpose and their fitness became a key part of their amateur success, culminating in the Amateur Cup Final of 1959 when it seemed like half the school went to Wembley to watch them.

Saturday school

By the time of the 3rd form playing cricket or rugby for the Colts in matches versus other schools had become part of my school life. This included games on Saturday afternoon. There were lessons on Saturday morning followed by games in the afternoon. School, therefore, became a 6 days a week commitment and was to remain so until I finished. This was something I relished with my interest in sport. Queen Elizabeth's school in term time became virtually my entire life and I did not resent this in any way.

Punishments

Punishments came in many forms and sizes. There were lines on blue paper, 25, 50 or 100. There were reports, the worst of which was an A report which almost certainly would lead to a beating. And there were whole-class detentions, although they were mercifully few and far between and certainly the most resented. Punishments certainly worked as a good deterrent for me. Lines and detentions were just a waste of time, time that I could be out on the sports field, whether at school or at home. As for the possibility of getting a report and maybe a beating I knew I would be disappointing my parents and falling way below their expectations. I managed to avoid the cane my whole time at QE.

6th Form and University Entrance

By the time I got into the 6th form I was having the time of my life. I had been playing cricket for the 1st XI since 1960, playing initially when still a Colt. I played for the 1st XI for five years, in the last of which I was the captain. I had also played cricket for the county schoolboys for two

years, in the last of which I was also their captain. In my last year I was also selected to play for the South of England Young Cricketers against the North at Edgbaston. These were teams selected not just from schoolboys but also any young cricketers aged 19 or under. I also played in the school 1st XV for three years, in the last of which I was the captain. I also played rugby for the county schoolboys and in my last year was selected for the Southern England schools trial, representing the South East against the South West at Saracens RFC. As there were no competitive matches against other schools in the Easter term I thought there would be enough time to take a part in the school play, which was always staged at the end of that term. I appeared in five school plays, thoroughly enjoying the experience. I was Secretary of the Dramatic Society in my last year. I also turned out for the school Athletics team, usually running the 400 yards. I had been captain of Harrisons House and in my last year I was extremely proud to be made School Captain.

Because my A-level results were not assured and because my birthdate was towards the end of the academic year I decided to apply for University after taking A-levels in 1963. This was not unusual then because in those days Oxbridge had their own entrance exams in the Michaelmas term, which I duly took. Based on my performance in the entrance exams I got interviews at both Oxford and Cambridge. Clearly, I had to hope that my sporting ability might tip the balance. It didn't but as it happened I quickly received an unconditional offer from my first choice, Nottingham University, to read law. This offer arrived around Christmas 1963. The school at the time had a track record of providing at least one boy from the school to Nottingham to read law. This no doubt helped my application. I could have left school at this point but I decided to stay on and enjoy being captain of the school, not to mention rugby and cricket. I took some non-exam subjects, like British Constitution which was being taught by Mr "BoP" Wakelin. This would help with my law studies. I also earned some extra pocket money by tutoring several boys in the junior school in French; this was thoughtfully arranged by Mr Ken Carter. With all of the sports, the school play, the responsibilities of school captain, and good close friendships with many fellow pupils, they were six blissfully enjoyable months before I went off to university.

I had had a school career which was the making of me, the single biggest transformational event in my life. In short a wonderful time. Can I remember any low times? Not really. Yes, it was not clever to be punished but as I was never beaten I can hardly complain about some lines and the odd detention in the scheme of things. Could I, should I, have worked harder? Yes, and if I had my time over again I would, but given the environment at the time it didn't really matter.

Ernest Jenkins

For the first five years of my time at QE the headmaster was Ernest Jenkins. His character and reputation dominated the school. It was most definitely run as his school and in his vision, which broadly was to be seen as comparable with an independent private school. He was an authoritarian, a disciplinarian, idiosyncratic, eccentric even. No doubt if he did not take to you it must have been difficult but my sense was he was fair and he took an interest in all his pupils. On his last day in the summer term of 1961 he said farewell at the morning assembly and went on to invite any boys in the Upper 6th to come and say goodbye to him personally. He apologised for not being able to extend this invitation to everyone; his time was obviously limited. I was not in the Upper 6th at the time but I had already played in the cricket 1st XI for two years, initially as a Colt. I knew that he knew me quite well and I very much wanted to say my own personal goodbye. I duly joined the queue of 6th formers waiting to go into his study. When it came to my turn I entered with some trepidation in case he would think me impudent. Instead, as soon as I walked in, he grabbed the poker from the fireplace and demonstrated to me how to play the cover drive correctly, saying as he did so "Now Newton when you play a cover drive you must get your head right over the ball, like this." Priceless and memorable.

Tim Edwards

Tim Edwards was the headmaster for my last three years, including my last year when I was school captain. It is hard to imagine a person more diametrically opposed in character and personality to Ernest Jenkins than Tim Edwards. It would be interesting to know what direction the governors wanted to set for the school and the criteria they sought for the appointment of the new head. Thankfully for the first three years under TBE while I was still at school most things seemed to continue on a sort of autopilot based on the old EHJ regime. For me personally the most obvious difference was that Tim Edwards had little knowledge of or interest in sport. This was in such marked contrast to EHJ. As I mentioned previously, having done well enough in the Oxbridge entrance exams to warrant an interview, if I were to get in, I had to hope that I would get a good reference from the HM, particularly with regard to my sport. There were no personal statements in those days. To my surprise at one of the interviews the interviewer referred to the HM's reference and quoted directly "he is a promising full back at rugby". There was no mention at all of my cricket achievements nor any other mention of my rugby ones. Not only that but I had never ever played full back! I realised then I had no chance. I was disappointed and felt let down.
By the time I left school to go to university I was thankful that my school career had largely been at EHJ's school rather than TBE's. First impressions of TBE were of a mild man, liberal minded and seemingly to the left politically. The school I left in 1964 was still a well-respected grammar school under the auspices of Hertfordshire CC. However, by this time, Labour had declared war on grammar schools and stated their intention to establish comprehensive schools in their place. When and why the school was transferred to the left leaning London Borough of Barnet I do not know. Nor do I know how hard the HM fought against this or against the school becoming comprehensive. Maybe either fight was pointless? There were and still are comprehensive schools that thrive. That does not seem to have been the case with QE. Under the dead hand of Barnet Council, Tim Edwards presided over the decline of the school's reputation. I saw plenty of examples in the business world of reputations being quickly lost or damaged. A good reputation takes years to build and yet it can be lost overnight.

Other Notable Masters

In 1956, my first year, there were still a number of teachers who had been at the school for a long time. Some of the teaching was not very energetic or inspiring. Gradually, though, they were joined or replaced by younger colleagues who brought fresher, more dynamic ideas to their teaching. I would single out Colin "Ces" Carter, who took English and was a keen rugby man from the West Country. He organised what might have been the school's first rugby tour when he took the first XV squad to the Bristol area immediately after Christmas 1963, a memorable few days. "Rastus" Dilly was an inspirational geography master, as was "BoP" Wakelin for history. I have already mentioned Eric Shearly, whose presence and influence were everywhere. "Pete" Ambidge (Chemistry) gave good time to 1st XI cricket and Ken Carter (French) was another who made many contributions across the school's daily life, particularly in athletics.
There are, though, three teachers in particular I should like to highlight.
"Bernie" Pinnock was my Harrisons' housemaster. I am afraid I did not learn much maths from him (my fault) but his enthusiasm and support in a general sense was infectious. He was a keen sportsman and particularly adored cricket. Harrisons was a relatively new house when I arrived and by luck we had a cadre of good rugby players and cricketers so for a while we were the house to beat at both the junior and senior levels.
"Klew" Woodland taught German, a subject that we did not start until middle school, and then only around 10 boys each year were in the German class. Klew had to get us up to A-level standard from nothing in three years. He was a wonderful teacher with a dry sense of humour who not only taught us the language but imbued us with a deep interest in Germany, its people

and culture. Unlike in French, for which exchange visits were never a possibility, he organised a yearly exchange in the Easter holidays whereby we went to stay with families in Germany. Initially this was Dortmund but then after the Wall went up in August 1961, from Easter 1963 onwards we went to West Berlin. This was not without risk. In the early years after the Wall went up West Berliners were forbidden from crossing into the East sector to see relatives. I, and others on the exchange, therefore acted as go-betweens. On numerous occasions I would cross into East Berlin and meet relatives of my host family, bringing basic gifts, like fresh fruit, and messages and news. We would usually cross at the Friederichstrasse station where the checks with both East German and Russian guards could be quite intimidating. Without modern communications who we were supposed to meet was also something of an unknown. On one occasion it was arranged I would meet a cousin in Alexander Platz. She would recognise me by my school colours scarf, a pipe in my mouth, and a net bag of fresh fruit I was bringing to her. My last trip to stay with a West Berlin family was at Easter 1964. There were about 10 of us spread around the city. On our return, our train was held up by East German police for hours and when we finally got to Ostend the last ferry back to Harwich had left. We were tired and more or less penniless. One boy was able to call his parents briefly to say not to expect us back for a while. There were of course no mobiles and indeed many homes still did not have telephones. We tried to sleep on the benches in Ostend station but they kicked us out. I had read somewhere that in extreme circumstances a police station might put you up for the night. As the group leader I suggested that we give it a try. We marched down to Ostend police station, explained what had happened and after we had surrendered our passports they let us sleep in the empty cells, which were clean and warm. In the middle of the night a local harmless drunk joined us. First thing in the morning we collected our passports, returned to the ferry terminal, got the next ferry to Harwich and returned to our homes later that day, some 24 hours after our expected return. When I walked in the front door neither of my parents seemed to be particularly concerned and merely asked whether I had had a good time. Today's virtually instantaneous global communications provide assurance but also increase concerns. I had no means of telling my parents I would be 24 hours late and spending the night in a police station. As a result they were not overly concerned about my well being.

The rest of my life, my interest in and love of Germany has been a source of pleasure. I owe it in the beginning to Klew's enlightened teaching.

The other influential master was ***"Jack" Covington***. Jack taught English. He was a kind, gentle man, and a gentleman. His love of the English language and literature, of nature and the English countryside, shone through in all his lessons. Having Jack teach us to appreciate the Romantic poets, particularly Wordsworth, Byron and Keats, and their love of nature, was a perfect match. These lessons were often sidetracked into his musings on life generally. Despite his kindly, gentle manner I never remember anyone "playing up" in his lessons. He also directed the school play, dedicating a huge amount of his time to getting us as good as we could be. I would not have given up my time for five consecutive school plays if I, like everyone else, had not enjoyed it.

Jack was married to an attractive, intelligent, vivacious woman. They were clearly very attached to each other. As he approached retirement he told us how much they were looking forward to spending time together doing things they had planned. Tragically, almost at the point of his retirement, his wife died of cancer. Poor Jack was desolate; one could have wept for him. After I left school I saw Jack a few times in a non-school setting. For example, he treated himself to a trip to the USA when I was working in San Francisco. He and I had lunch together while he was there. He died not long after. As a kind, intelligent, interesting man he taught me a lot about life and how to deal with its "slings and arrows". It goes without saying my love of books and reading became so ingrained by Jack's teaching that it became a lifetime's pleasure. I was very fond of Jack.

The Comprehensive Experiment

My views on the comprehensive experiment are inevitably biased. I came from a home where money was scarce but there was huge support to do the best I could with my education. The

opportunity therefore to take and pass an exam enabling me to go to a grammar school was a golden chance. I have always felt in the many discussions and post-mortems on the 11+, grammar schools, comprehensives etc that not enough attention and resources were given to those who failed the 11+ or for whom vocational education was more appropriate. Much more could have been done to improve secondary education and provide opportunities after the 11+ for pupils to cross over to the grammar school system, as happens elsewhere, like Germany. Vocational education was badly neglected. To kill off the 11+ and grammar schools, the one part of the Butler Act which worked well, seemed particularly perverse.
For me, coming from the other side of the tracks, so to speak, it was a wonderful opportunity which changed my life.

Nottingham University

I was the first person from my family to go to university. What a wonderful three years they were! I read law, a subject in which Nottingham had a high reputation. I continued my profligate sporting life by playing for the rugby 1st XV and the cricket 1st XI right from the beginning of my freshman year. In the summer I was selected to play for the Universities Athletic Union (selected from all universities in England and Wales except Oxbridge and London) in their cricket team in their fixtures against principally county 2nd XIs. I continued to play rugby and cricket in my second year, including for the UAU. I was captain of the University cricket team in my second year. Although there was a danger of playing too much rugby and cricket I was able to do enough to stay in the frame for a decent honours degree.

After University

My ambition after university was to qualify as a solicitor. I had not thought very deeply beyond this. I could see myself as a solicitor in general practice somewhere in the provinces. I spent two years in impecunious articles having previously taken my Law Society finals and passing them all in one go, thus demonstrating that I did know how to cram for exams when I had to. On qualifying as a solicitor I duly joined a classic North London and provincial general practice. After six months of wills, probate, conveyancing and minor litigation, I thought "this is not for me". I came home and declared I was going to take a 12 months break and travel round the world. Gap years were then unknown and I promised I would get a job on my return. My father was horrified that I would give up the 5 1/2 years it had taken me to qualify. A few weeks later he saw an advertisement in the paper by BP, the oil company, saying that they were looking for a young lawyer with knowledge of languages, who was prepared to travel, to work in their exploration and production department. Why not see the world at BP's expense, Dad said? I applied and got the job. How fortuitous that advice turned out in shaping my life.

BP

In 1970, when I joined BP, oil companies were beginning to look for oil beyond the usual sources of the Middle East and other OPEC countries. New provinces such as Alaska and the North Sea, and indeed many other parts of the rest of the world, were beginning to open up and be attractive. While BP had a number of lawyers they had very few specialising in oil exploration. After a few years in London I was posted to the USA with the intention that I should get involved in the negotiations surrounding the development of the recently discovered oilfield at Prudhoe Bay in Alaska and the building of the trans-Alaska pipeline to transport the oil to the lower 48 states. Prudhoe Bay was at the time the biggest oil discovery outside of the Middle East. Commercially, to the companies involved, it was huge. This is where I truly cut my legal teeth.

Over the years I became an experienced oil and gas attorney; I also became qualified to practise law at the California bar, a case of cramming at night school while doing the day job. After a while BP said to me, you know as much about these deals as others, instead of being the lawyer why don't you become the dealmaker, the negotiator? I stepped out of the legal world into the commercial world of oil and gas and from there into general management. In due course I became head of oil and products trading, the head of global gas, and then the head of human resources for the whole of BP worldwide (100,000 people in 100 countries). In this last role I became particularly interested in leadership development, spotting talent and developing it, and the succession planning for the jobs at the very top of BP.

Governors' Board on Becoming Grant Maintained

When the school went grant maintained in the late 1980s it was a condition that the board of governors included two experienced external business people. Those two were George Heard, an OE who became the Chairman, and myself. I was very pleased to be asked to do this. I explained to Eamonn Harris that I was extremely busy at BP with a huge amount of international travelling but I would certainly endeavour to get to all the governors' meetings and give him and George my support. George Heard and Eamonn Harris were a strong team and they worked closely together to ensure that the outcomes of items discussed at governors' meetings were decided how they wanted. They were ruthlessly focussed, a real leadership trait. They did a brilliant job together. Many of the governors sat through meetings hardly saying a word. However, there were times when I felt we should demonstrate due diligence and interrogate why certain issues were being proposed. I always got the sense this was not welcome and the discussion would soon get closed down. I was there to approve, not question. Meanwhile at BP I had become the Head of Global Gas and was on the top executive team of the exploration and production company and then, in 1992, with BP in financial crisis, having fired their CEO and Chairman, the first time a blue chip had done such a thing, and with a very low oil price, I became the Head of Human Resources for the whole of BP worldwide reporting directly to the new CEO and Chairman, David (later Lord) Simon. The pressures on me in this unfamiliar role, plus my workload and travelling, were now immense. I really could not justify the time preparing for and attending governors meetings given that my contribution seemed to be peripheral and not valued. I therefore resigned. This was 3 years into a 5 year term. I do not think Eamonn Harris appreciated my situation; rather I am sure he felt I had let him down.

Competencies and attributes

My lifelong participation and interest in team sports taught me a lot about teamwork and leadership. An important attribute of good leadership is understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses and being perceptive in assessing others. I can trace all this back to my first experiences in leadership and team sports while at QE.
I also have decent analytical skills which enable me usually to get to the heart of a problem. This competency I can trace back to my grounding at school followed by studying law.
Common sense and a sense of humour have come in handy as well!
Overall, and I owe this both to my parents and my days at QE, I was given the confidence to believe that there need be no limit to what I could achieve.

The School's Future

The schools revival under Messrs Harris, Marincowitz and Enright has been inspiring to observe. For those of us who knew what it was like before it became comprehensive I have only gratitude to those who have restored the reputation of a great school. I know from work I have done with a world leading business school that league tables cannot be ignored. Academics may hate them and they may have their flaws but the school has no choice but to play the

league tables game with full commitment. So, first and foremost, academic standards must be kept very high.
Sport though is also important, not just for the pupils but also for the school's reputation. It seems to be doing well in music and the sciences and other intellectual, academic areas but I would question what can it do to improve its sporting profile. Could it be higher?
Clearly providing more access to disadvantaged boys is very much on the current political agenda and the school I am sure is thinking hard what it can do.
I should also like to see a closer connection between the school and Barnet. By Barnet I do not mean the large area of the London Borough of, rather I mean the surrounding areas of Chipping, East, New and Friern Barnet. In my day this was largely accomplished by the fact that most of the pupils came from schools in these districts. That is now more difficult without diluting academic standards. However there may be other ways in which the school can be seen to be involved in its immediate surrounding neighbourhoods. Perhaps it already is, in which case it should publicise it more.

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