

THE HISTORY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN SHEFFIELD 1902-39

by

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## SUMMARY

### THE HISTORY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN SHEFFIELD 1902-39

In 1902 there were only two schools for boys and one for girls which afforded secondary education in Sheffield. On the advice of Michael Sadler the l.e.a. took over and amalgamated the boys' schools to form a first rank grammar school (King Edward's) and converted the Central Higher Elementary School into a secondary school. Despite the continuing glaring paucity of secondary places no further provision was made before 1918 when one new school for boys and one for girls were opened in converted mansions. In 1927 a further boys' school was instituted but all three had to function in highly unfavourable premises until 1939. Extensions and conversions did little to improve matters but in 1933 the Central Secondary Schools (which had become separate boys' and girls' schools before 1914) were re-housed in purpose-built premises in the suburbs, thus permitting the Pupil-Teacher Centre, which had shared their old, cramped city-centre site, to expand and complete its transformation into a secondary school.

During the previous decade, in yet another instance of parsimony, four elementary schools had been converted into Intermediate Schools whose pupils, like their secondary counterparts were required to take the School Certificate in four years. The pressure on pupils and teachers was, thus, extremely great, yet results in public examinations were above the national average, and the records of the Central S.S. and King Edward's in sending boys to university were outstanding.

The Authority's attitude towards the two Catholic secondary schools was niggardly; and generally it failed to press the cause of secondary education with vigour. However, in 1918 it did take a pioneering step and abolished fees in all its secondary schools except King Edward's, though Whitehall insisted on their re-imposition in the 1930s.

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LIST OF BRIEF REFERENCES

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S.D.I.                    Sheffield Daily Independent

later

S.I.                      Sheffield Independent

S.D.T.                    Sheffield Daily Telegraph

later

S.T.                      Sheffield Telegraph



City of Sheffield Education Committee, its Sub-Committees, Sections  
and Governing Bodies

S.E.C.	Sheffield Education Committee
B.S.C.	Buildings Sub-Committee
F.G.P.S.C.	Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee
G.A.S.S.	Governors (Minutes) Abbeydale Secondary School
G.C.S.S.	Governors Central Sec. Schools
G.C.S.S.B.	Governors Central Sec. S. for Boys
G.C.S.S.G.	Governors Central Sec. S. for Girls
G.F.P.S.S.	Governors Firth Park S.S.
G.P.S.S.	Governors Pitsmoor S.S.
G.K.E.S.	Governors King Edward VII S.
G.N.E.S.S.	Governors Nether Edge S.S.
G.P.T.C.	Governors Pupil-Teacher Centre
K.E.S.S.S.C.	King Edward VII S. Sectional Sub-Committee
H.E.S.C.	Higher Education Sub-Committee
P.E.S.C.	Primary Education Sub-Committee
P.S.M.S.C.	Primary Schools Management Sub-Committee
S.E.S.C.	Secondary Education Sub-Committee
S.M.A.S.	Scholarships and Maintenance Allowances Section
S.M.S.C.	School Management Sub-Committee
S.M.S.S.C.	School Management Sectional Sub-Committee
S.S.C.D.E.S.	Special Sub-Committee on the Development of the Educational System
S.S.C.E.B.	Special Sub-Committee on the Education Bill
S.S.S.S.C.	Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee
T.C.S.S.C.	Training College Sectional Sub-Committee
T.T.S.C.	Training of Teachers Sub-Committee

## CHAPTER 1

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

#### IN ENGLAND 1902-39

"The organisation and development of the education given in secondary schools is the most important educational question of the present day ... the pivot which affects the efficiency, intelligence and well being of the whole nation",<sup>(1)</sup> Such was the view which the Board of Education expressed in 1906, but, although secondary education was seen to be of crucial significance, the state of secondary provision at that time gave grave cause for disquiet for, as the Board themselves pointed out, "As soon as we pass beyond the sphere of elementary education proper ... we plunge into chaos."<sup>(2)</sup>

The fact of the matter was that higher education in England had grown up haphazardly, almost of itself without any guidance from the state. By the opening years of the twentieth century there was still great confusion of thought and terminology; principles of pedagogical and administrative practice were emerging only slowly; the new local education authorities were forced to act experimentally and to gain their wisdom by experience; and order at the centre had been introduced only in the final years of the previous century with the establishment of the Board itself, prior to which responsibility for education had lain with three bodies - the Education Department, the Science and Art Department and the Charity Commissioners. In 1868 the Schools Inquiry Commission had made certain recommendations regarding the creation of central and local authorities for secondary education with rating powers for aiding existing schools and founding

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(1) Board of Education, (B.E.), Report of the Board of Education for the Year 1905-6, 1906, p. 44.

(2) Ibid., p. 45.

new ones, but these had been forgotten in the wake of the Forster Act and it was not until the Local Government Act of 1888 that advance on municipal lines became possible.

The Technical Instruction Act (1889) and the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act (1890) had endowed local authorities with specific powers and funds for educational development. Thus, by the time the Bryce Commission began its investigations something had already been done towards providing assistance from public funds in the shape of scholarships for the free secondary education of former public elementary school pupils. To a much smaller extent the local authorities had also recognised the urgent necessity of increasing by grants in aid the efficiency of the endowed schools at which most of the scholarships were tenable. The inadequacy of these efforts and the extent to which they failed to cover the ground may be gauged from the fact that the Commissioners found that 20 out of 48 county councils and 47 out of 61 county boroughs made no grants to secondary schools at all, while in several cases the grants were limited to small sums for equipment.<sup>(3)</sup>

Municipal assistance to secondary education was, therefore, minimal and, whilst certain funds were available from the Department of Science and Art, it must be remembered that schools in order to obtain maximum grants could permit themselves few divergences from the syllabi laid down by the Department in its Directory. The Department was anxious to avoid the accusation that its subjects were linked with trade instruction but even the "Principles" whose study it encouraged could not necessarily

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(3) B.E., Report for 1911-12, p. 7.



be regarded as forming a basis for the study by children of science per se. (4) During Acland's tenure of the Vice-Presidency of the Committee of Council on Education (1892-95) amendments to the Regulations were made so that the limit for instruction in "Department" subjects was reduced to 13 hours a week and provision was made for the co-operation of H.M.I.s in the inspection of literary subjects. (5) However, it is doubtful whether the education offered in Organised Science Schools could validly be deemed "secondary" in the fullest sense of the term, (6) even with these literary additions. The Bryce Commission, for example, condemned the Department for its encouragement of one-sided training "with a concentration on grant-earning subjects to the neglect and virtual ignoring of literary subjects." (7)

Nevertheless, by 1899-1900 the Science and Art Department was responsible for nearly 300,000 students per annum in Schools of Science and Art in England, Wales and Ireland, (8) and, while the secondary establishments it nurtured with its alternative to the older disciplines may have been based upon "instruction rather than education", they did provide a basis for the twentieth century developments which the Department itself did not live to see. (9)

Also involved at the secondary level was the Education Department which, although it had virtually no immediate or statutory association

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(4) H. Butterworth, 'The Department of Science & Art and the Development of Secondary Education', History of Education Society Bulletin, No. 6, Autumn 1970, p. 34.

(5) Rules for Organised Science Schools 1894, pp. 1895, LXXVIII, p. 899.

(6) See below pp. 8-12 for a consideration of the meaning of the term "secondary".

(7) Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, (Bryce Report), 1895, Vol. I, p. 26.

(8) B.E., Report for 1900-01, p. 637.

(9) H. Butterworth, pp. 42-3.

with secondary education as such, did have connections with it which were real and extensive. These connections were exerted both from above, through the training colleges established under the Code of 1890, and from below, through the higher grade elementary schools set up by those School Boards who followed the example of Sheffield, Bradford and Nottingham. (10) It was pointed out to the Bryce Commission that despite the restrictions imposed by Parliament the School Boards were "practically at liberty (subject only to the control of the District Auditor which is not exercised on any uniform principle) to provide and conduct schools scarcely distinguishable from Secondary Schools, and to pay for their provision and maintenance out of the school fund". (11) The Department's statutory connection with secondary education was, however, slight. It stemmed from the working of the Endowed Schools Acts under which the Charity Commissioners had been brought into "a definite though incomplete, relation to the Committee of Council on Education". (12) The schemes which they devised for the better utilisation of endowments required the Department's approval, and, if these schemes were subsequently laid before Parliament, they were considered to be in the charge of the Lord President or the Vice-President. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Department and the Charity Commission (which was at that time the body most nearly approaching a central authority for secondary education) was tenuous and unsatisfactory, not least because the Department possessed no direct influence over the instigation and development of schemes. (13)

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(10) W.H.G. Armytage, 400 Years of English Education, Cambridge, 1964, p. 146.

(11) Memorandum of the Joint Departmental Committee (Education) April 1894, quoted by A.S. Bishop, The Rise of a Central Authority for English Education, Cambridge, 1971, p. 132.

(12) Bryce Report, Vol. 1, p. 26.

(13) A.S. Bishop, p. 26.



Thus, no less than three different government agencies were involved in secondary education in the later part of the nineteenth century, but the overall provision of secondary schools and secondary places remained small. It has been estimated, by R.L. Archer, for example, that the total number of secondary places was, at the outside, no more than 2.5 per thousand. There were, however, considerable regional variations and whereas in Birmingham the provision was 5.2 places per thousand, in Lancashire it was only 1.1 per thousand. <sup>(14)</sup> During the twenty-five years prior to 1895 the population of England and Wales increased by about a half, and the number of grammar school pupils roughly doubled, but, whereas some city grammar schools, such as those in Manchester, Bradford and Birmingham, reached a very high standard, the total number of endowed and proprietary schools (perhaps 800 by 1894) <sup>(15)</sup> remained small and in many the standard of education which was given left much to be desired. Thus, the ancient grammar schools and a handful of higher grade schools provided virtually the sole avenue by which the brilliant child of poor parents could attain a higher education. Certainly the idea of secondary education as a second stage in education following upon a primary one was, at this time, virtually unknown in England, the grammar schools generally being regarded as catering for a different social order from that attending the elementary school. <sup>(16)</sup>

It was apparent by the 1880s and 90s that the provision of

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- (14) R.L. Archer, Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, 1937, p. 310.
- (15) H.C. Dent, Secondary Education for All, 1949, p. 12.
- (16) G.A.N. Lowndes, The Silent Social Revolution, Oxford, 1955, (1st Ed. 1937), pp. 46 & 50.

education above the elementary level was totally inadequate and, in the by then, traditional manner, recourse was made to a Royal Commission of Enquiry. Appointed in March 1894 the Bryce Commission produced its "monumental ... epoch making"<sup>(17)</sup> report in August 1895. Among the Commission's principal recommendations were the establishment of a single central authority presided over by a minister responsible to Parliament and advised on educational and professional matters by a council;<sup>(18)</sup> the establishment of local education authorities responsible for secondary education in every county and county borough;<sup>(19)</sup> the financing of secondary education by Parliamentary grants and local rates;<sup>(20)</sup> and the establishment of a much more comprehensive scholarship system leading from the elementary school to the secondary school and thence to the university.<sup>(21)</sup> The first of these recommendations was given statutory implementation in 1899 with the passing of the Board of Education Act under which the Education Department, the Science and Art Department and the educational functions of the Charity Commissioners were amalgamated under a single central authority which was charged with the superintendence, but, mindful of the apprehension voiced by several witnesses appearing before the Bryce Commission, not the control, of education. The Act itself has been described, by A.S. Bishop, as a statute which opened up possibilities much more than it afforded immediate benefits.<sup>(22)</sup> It was, moreover, a statute which suffered

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(17) H.C. Dent, Sec. Ed. for All, p. 30.

(18) Bryce Report, Vol. I, p. 257.

(19) Ibid., p. 79.

(20) Ibid., p. 307.

(21) Ibid., pp. 64 and 299-300.

(22) A.S. Bishop, p. 267.



from two serious defects. First, it created a Board, rather than a ministry, headed by a President who generally belonged to the second rank of ministers. Second, despite its avowed intention of creating one central authority for educational matters in England and Wales, there remained, even after 1899 no less than seven different Cabinet ministers who had some responsibility for various educational institutions throughout the country. Despite these defects, however, the legislation of 1899 undoubtedly cleared the way for an improvement in the central administration of the service, and facilitated the co-ordination of development after the passing of the Balfour Act.

At secondary level the chief import of the Balfour Act was to require the county councils and county boroughs to "consider the needs of the area and then to supply or aid the supply of education other than elementary and to promote the general co-ordination of all forms of education."<sup>(23)</sup> Thus, the new authorities were given the task not only of taking over elementary education from the school boards, but also of developing schools which would afford local children the benefits of a secondary education. Unfortunately, however, opinions differed as to what was meant by "secondary education". The Act itself certainly did not define the term: indeed, there seems to be doubt as to the precise origins of the words. H.C. Dent, for example, states that the term first appeared in an article by Dr. Thomas Arnold in The Sheffield Courant in 1832 though he was, in fact, using the phrase more in the sense of an Oxford college than a country grammar school.<sup>(24)</sup> The

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(23) 2 Edw. VII. c.42, 52.

(24) H.C. Dent, Sec. Ed. for All, 1949, p. 2.

Board of Education, on the other hand, traced the term back to France in their attempt to secure a satisfactory definition.<sup>(25)</sup> Some authoritative definition was obviously imperative if the new authorities were to discharge their legal responsibilities effectively in the aftermath of the confusion generated by the ill-defined semantics used by Forster, the School Boards and various other parties. Accordingly, Article 5 of the Regulations for Secondary Schools 1904-05 stated that a secondary school would be held to be any day or boarding school which offered to each of its scholars up to and beyond the age of sixteen a general education, physical, mental and moral including a complete graded course of instruction of wider scope and more advanced degree than that given in an elementary school. This in itself could scarcely be described as a completely water-tight definition, but further amplification of what was meant by "general" "complete" and "graded" was given and it was essentially upon this definition that the Board operated its secondary branch until 1944.

This definition of secondary education was in very marked contrast to the direction in which post-elementary education had developed in the final twenty years of the nineteenth century. As has been seen already, the education given in the higher grade schools and under the grants of the Science and Art Department was excessively scientific and technical in character. This was a trend which Morant and his advisers were determined to halt. Thus, the 1904 Regulations placed an increased emphasis on the literary side and on the need for a balanced curriculum, whilst premature specialisation was discouraged. It was laid down that a course should provide for instruction in English language, at least one

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(25) B.E., Regulations for Secondary Schools 1904-5, (R.S.S.), 1905, Prefaratory Memorandum, p.6.



language other than English, geography, history, mathematics, science and drawing with due provision for manual work and physical exercises and also for housewifery in the case of girls. (26) Further, it was also specified that not less than 4½ hours per week must be allotted to English, geography and history, and not less than 3½ hours per week to a foreign language where only one foreign language was taken, or not less than 6 hours where two were taken. (27)

Much has been made of the fact that Morant was a classicist and that key positions in his department were held by classicists, notably Headlam and Mackail. (28) The 1904 Regulations stipulated, thanks probably to Anson (29) though Morant doubtless concurred, that where two languages other than English were taken and Latin was not one of them the Board would need to be satisfied that the omission of Latin was for the advantage of the school. (30) Yet in fairness it must be remembered that the Regulations for 1904-5 also stipulated that not less than 7½ hours a week must be devoted to science and mathematics teaching, of which at least three hours must be devoted to science. It would seem difficult, in the light of this, to accuse Morant of being anti-science. What he, Headlam and Mackail were opposed to was the excessive emphasis upon science and technology which had characterised the development of most post-elementary institutions in England in the later part of the nineteenth century. What Morant was seeking to do was not to attack science per se but rather to restore balance

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(26) Ibid., Art. 4, p. 18.

(27) Ibid., Art. 5, p. 18.

(28) See E.J.R. Eaglesham, 'Implementing the Education Act of 1902,' British Journal of Educational Studies, (B.J.E.S.) Vol. X, 1961-2, pp. 153-160, and J. Duckworth, 'The Board of Education and the Establishment of the Curriculum in the New Secondary Schools of the 20th Century,' History of Education Society Bulletin, No. 16, Autumn 1975, pp. 35-44.

(29) O.L. Banks, 'The Concept and Nature of the Grammar School,' unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1953, pp. 76-7.

(30) B.E. R.S.S. 1904-5, Art. 5, p. 17.



to the curriculum. Yet it must be conceded that Morant conceived of this "balance" largely, almost exclusively, in academic terms. He restored the literary subjects to a significant position in the curriculum but the idea that secondary education is inclusive of technical was utterly rejected. Manual instruction for boys and housewifery for girls were included in the prescribed list of subjects but they were assigned only lowly positions. The whole purpose of the 1904-5 Regulations was that of providing a balanced, humanistic, academic education; an education which was to be based upon the disciplining of those "faculties" which were the favoured conceptual constructs of contemporary psychologists.<sup>(31)</sup> Mackail, for example, considered formal discipline to be not an apologetic or defensive theory. Rather did he see it as lying at the heart of his vision of a sound educational system, a conception valid for all western civilization.<sup>(32)</sup> Morant similarly stressed the purely academic, whether it be scientific or literary, as against the technical or vocational. The Spens Report described as the most salient defect in the 1904 Regulations the fact that they failed to take note of the comparatively rich experiences of school curricula of a practical and quasi-vocational type which had been evolved in the Higher Grade Schools, the Organised Science Schools and the Technical Day Schools. Spens further charged that the concept of a general education which underlay those Regulations was, in fact, not a completely altruistic one but one which was in reality that of a "vocational" education for the "liberal" professions.<sup>(33)</sup> The orientation towards the universities was obvious,

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(31) See C. Burt, 'Historical Note on Faulty Psychology', Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education, (Spens Report), 1938, Appendix IV, pp. 429-38.

(32) H.C. Dent, Sec. Ed. for All, p. 33.

(33) Spens Report, pp. 66-7.

and was most clearly evident in the emphasis which was placed upon the purely academic. Thus, the effect, if not the explicit intention, of the 1904 Regulations was to set the new secondary schools of the twentieth century in pursuit of academic excellence. This was a valid and necessary objective but the facts of the situation were that most of the boys and girls in the new secondary schools were not going to proceed to a university of any kind: indeed, most of them were to leave school at sixteen years of age at the latest.<sup>(34)</sup> For them the pursuit of disinterested academic excellence was not the most relevant objective.

On the other hand, the secondary schools were never concerned solely with the cognitive; character training and attitude formation figured prominently in their aims<sup>(35)</sup> as was the case with the famous public and endowed schools upon which they modelled themselves. It has been suggested that the 1904 Regulations led to the new secondary schools becoming pale imitations of their more prestigious public counter-parts<sup>(36)</sup> and that Morant developed Part II of the Balfour Act to duplicate so far as he could the system he had known himself at Winchester;<sup>(37)</sup> but, whilst it is undoubtedly true that Morant conceived secondary schools as fit only for a selected few, it is not true that he remained steadfastly set against technical and commercial education. In 1907, for example, he sent teams of H.M. Inspectors throughout England and to the Continent to investigate the teaching of commercial subjects and in 1909 a drive for the reform and development of technical education was begun with the reconstruction of the Technical Branch of the Inspectorate and the overhaul of its methods.

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(34) See below, p. 45.

(35) C. Norwood, The English Tradition of Education, 1929.

(36) J. Duckworth, p. 41.

(37) J. Chuter Ede in House of Commons, 8th Feb., 1944, and quoted from Hansard by O. Banks, 'Morant and the Secondary School Regulations of 1904', B.J.E.S., Vol. III, 1954-55, p. 33.



However, further activity in this field seems to have been concerned primarily with Further Education and with the creation of some form of "industrial citizenship" marrying culture and vocation,<sup>(38)</sup> and it is arguable that here again Morant was attempting to further the cause of literary subjects in the face of a heavy preponderance of mechanical and scientific courses.

In the Regulations for Secondary Schools 1907-8, the Board expressed its desire to see more variety and elasticity in the curriculum and to give more scope for local initiatives and experiment,<sup>(39)</sup> but the schools were reluctant to introduce new courses and by 1912 only 30 out of the 382 municipal secondary schools, and 43 out of 503 foundation schools were running specialised courses.<sup>(40)</sup> In part, this lack of experiment may be attributed to the inertia of schools and staffs, and to their satisfaction with the prevailing academic orientation of courses. It is probable, however, that the major factor was the traditionalist attitude of the school examination boards for before World War I the curriculum of English secondary schools was dominated just as much by the requirements of public examinations as by the Regulations of the Board of Education. With the setting up of a more rationalised system of examining after 1917, it has been argued, the pressures of external examination upon the curriculum were far greater than those exercised by the Board of Education.<sup>(41)</sup>

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(38) E.J.R. Eaglesham, The Foundations of Twentieth Century Education in England, 1967, pp. 66-69.

(39) B.E., R.S.S. 1907-8, Pref. Memo, Para. 2. p.V.

(40) B.E., Educational Statistics 1911-12, Table 38.

(41) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', pp. 169-203.

Such was probably not quite the case before World War I. Nevertheless, the need to ensure that its pupils were able to satisfy the external examiners must have figured significantly in the organisation of the curriculum of any school.

During the first decade of the century much dissatisfaction was expressed with the secondary school examinations system and particularly with the conflicting demands made by university and professional bodies which meant that pupils often had to repeat examinations. In 1903 a committee appointed by the British Association reported of complaints of the overlapping and conflicting demands made by various academic and professional bodies and suggested that there should be one examination for boys leaving at 16 or 17 years of age and another for those leaving at 18 or 19, (42) Eight years later the Consultative Committee reported in a similarly critical vein, Some important subjects, it concluded, especially those not easily tested by written papers, were discouraged by the existing system. Experiments in new courses and in teaching methodology were also inhibited, it was suggested, and competitive examinations, like those of the Civil Service, tended to drive schools into becoming mere coaching establishments, whilst the universities seemed to the Committee to be defeating their own objects by making conflicting demands which tended to reduce the time which schools were able to devote to methodical instruction. (43)

These defects, the Committee concluded, were incapable of being rectified within the framework of the existing examinations system.

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(42) J.P.C. Roach, Examinations and the Secondary Schools 1900-1945, History of Education, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 47.

(43) B.E., Report of the Consultative Committee on Examinations in Secondary Schools, 1911, pp. 74, 77, 90 and 92.



What was needed was a completely new system run by an Examinations Council representative of the universities, professions, local education authorities, teachers in differing types of schools, the Board of Education, industry and commerce.<sup>(44)</sup> Examinations were to be set at two ages: the First (or School) Certificate Examination at sixteen, and the Higher School Certificate at eighteen.

In December 1912 the Board invited the universities to confer on this proposed scheme, and in July 1914 they issued Circular 849 (Examinations in Secondary Schools; proposals of the Board of Education for the Examinations) upon which the opinions of local education authorities and other interested bodies were invited. From this and other circulars<sup>(45)</sup> it would appear that the Board had four main objectives in formulating their proposals: to limit the number of examinations which might be taken by children in secondary schools; to secure a proper co-ordination of these examinations; to give practising teachers some consultative role in the public examinations system; and to state the main principles and aims of the new system.

The key change was the recognition of only two external examinations: the First or School Certificate Examination, and the Second or Higher Certificate Examination. Pupils were precluded - by the 1918 Regulations for Secondary Schools<sup>(46)</sup> - from being entered for any external examination below the stage of an approved First Examination. The underlying principle of this examination, as set out in Circular 849,<sup>(47)</sup> was that

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(44) Ibid., p. 132.

(45) Nos. 933 (Dec. 1915), 996 (May 1917), 1002 (June 1917) and 1034 (Mar 1918).

(46) B.E., R.S.S. 1918-9, Art. 35 and 44.

(47) B.E., Circ. 849, July 1914, (Examinations in Secondary Schools) paras. ii and iv.



it should be suitable for forms in which the average age was 16:0 to 16:8, and should test the results of the course of general education before specialised courses were begun. Morant had left the Board of Education in 1911, but the guiding principles of secondary education which he had laid down in 1904 clearly lived on.

It was stated as a cardinal principle that the examination should follow the curriculum and not determine it.<sup>(48)</sup> Subjects were ranged in groups and in order to gain a School Certificate a candidate had to secure passes in five subjects including at least one from each of the first three groups; English subjects, foreign languages, and science and mathematics. A fourth group comprised music, drawing, manual work and housecraft, and was not compulsory but examining boards could include those subjects if they wished. The Higher Certificate Examination was designed to test a course extending over about two years beyond the First Certificate stage and was to be set out in groups of main and subsidiary subjects, the groups consisting of classics and ancient history, modern or humanistic studies, and science and mathematics. Co-ordination was to be achieved through a central advisory committee representing the universities, the examining boards, local authorities and teachers.

This system remained in force throughout the inter-war period but important modifications were introduced which gave greater importance to practical subjects and allowed candidates a larger degree of freedom in choosing their Certificate subjects.<sup>(49)</sup> Another principal target

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(48) Ibid., para, iii,

(49) After 1929, it was possible for two of the five subjects to be offered from Group IV. This provision was introduced experimentally in 1929 and made a permanent feature of the examination as from 1931. B.E., Report for 1929-30, p. 21.

of the reformers was the requirement that candidates secure a pass in each of the first three groups. This requirement meant that weakness in just one subject could deprive an otherwise worthy candidate of his certificate. Investigation revealed that the greatest single source of failure was in Group II - foreign languages - which accounted for rather more than 12% of all failures in 1931.<sup>(50)</sup> On the other hand, this statistic accounts for only one eighth of candidates who failed and Banks is probably correct in concluding that the complaints against Group II were exaggerated.<sup>(51)</sup> Nevertheless, the investigators whom the Secondary Schools Examination Council appointed to examine the working of the School Certificate Examination recommended, and the Examinations Council accepted, the idea that there should be a system of lower alternatives; in Group II a translation paper and in Group III a paper in arithmetic. Candidates could avail themselves of one of these alternatives provided they passed at least five full subjects, including a pass in Group I and either Group II or III according to which option they had chosen, and obtained a credit in three out of the five subjects. Such candidates could offer three subjects out of Group IV. Other candidates would be required to pass in Groups I, II and III but would need only one credit.<sup>(52)</sup>

The local authorities successfully pressed for Elementary Mathematics to be substituted for Arithmetic but, although by 1935 arrangements had been made by most of the examining bodies to accept a modified pass in Group II, little use seems to have been made of this concession.<sup>(53)</sup>

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(50) B.E., The School Certificate Examination (Report of the Panel of Investigators appointed by the Secondary School Examination Council to Enquire into the 8 Approved School Certificate Examinations held in the Summer of 1931.), 1932, p. 29.

(51) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', p. 187.

(52) B.E., School Cert. 1931. pp. 66-67.

(53) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', p. 189.

Nor does it seem that schools were particularly eager to avail themselves of the greater opportunities for Group IV work which progressive relaxations of the regulations made possible,<sup>(54)</sup> The lack of suitably trained and experienced teachers as well as the cost of specialist equipment may in part account for the failure of Group IV to burgeon, but it seems probable that the most significant factor was the attitude of the secondary school teachers themselves, many of whom subscribed to Morant's academic view of the ends of secondary education and thus saw Group IV in cultural rather than vocational terms, Indicative of this is the fact that art was the only subject in Group IV which attracted a large number of candidates,<sup>(55)</sup>

A further factor here was the use of the School Certificate examination for Matriculation purposes, Different universities had different matriculation requirements but, as the Board's Panel of Investigators pointed out, non-matriculation subjects, (pre-eminently those in Group IV) were at an obvious disadvantage since matriculation requirements dominated the situation,<sup>(56)</sup> The Investigators questioned the validity of relying upon an examination taken at sixteen years of age when students did not normally enter the university till eighteen. No more than a quarter of those who matriculated proceeded to university,<sup>(57)</sup> but matriculation had come to be regarded as a higher qualification in itself, demanded by many employers and used for purposes quite unrelated to university entry.<sup>(58)</sup>

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(54) Ibid., p. 194,  
(55) In 1937 23,739 candidates (44.3%) offered Art, Spens Report, p. 158.  
(56) B.E., School Cert. 1931, p. 50. (See also Spens Report, p. 259.)  
(57) Ibid., p. 48.  
(58) J.P.C. Roach, p. 53.



This use of the School Certificate for matriculation purposes the Investigators found unacceptable. They recommended that the practice cease and that a combination of School and Higher Certificate passes be used instead.<sup>(59)</sup> The Board declined to take up this suggestion, but during the 1930's there was a developing critique of examinations and in 1938 Spens re-iterated the conclusion that the disappearance of matriculation by means of the School Certificate was "imperatively necessary".<sup>(60)</sup>

Although the Higher Certificate examination was designed originally as a test of school work, it had from the very outset strong links with the universities. These links were strengthened still further by the decision of the Board of Education, in 1920-1, that State Scholarship awards should be made in accordance with Higher Certificate results and recommendations made by the Examining Boards. At the same time, there was a growing tendency for local education authorities to use the Higher Certificate examination for selecting their own scholarship winners. Thus, the Higher Examination came to serve two possibly divergent purposes, those of acting as a test for admission to university, and of testing two years of post-School Certificate work.

The Panel whom the Board of Education appointed to investigate the 1937 Higher Certificate Examinations concluded that it was unreasonable to expect the one examination to perform both functions with complete efficiency. They found that, gauged by subsequent degree successes, the selection of university entrants had "not been injudicious" but that as a test of two years advanced work the examination had been accused of

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(59) See, for example, the work of C.W. Valentine and F. Sandon. See also below pp. 344-5.

(60) Spens Report, p. 260.

encouraging too much specialisation and memorisation and of being too rigid and narrow in its group requirements.<sup>(61)</sup> By 1937, however, the group system had for all practical purposes disappeared and the Joint Matriculation Board had secured the Secondary School Examinations Council's approval for requiring its candidates for state and local authority scholarships to take special additional papers in two principal subjects. In 1938 the J.M.B. also decided that the standard of difficulty of its other papers should be lowered slightly in favour of those candidates who were not competing for State Scholarships.<sup>(62)</sup> Three other boards were proposing to adopt a similar policy but the Panel of Investigators had some reservations about the wisdom of such changes.

The problem concerning the award of State Scholarships was one which dated only from 1920 when the Board decided to make two hundred awards per annum from lists of nominees submitted by the various examining boards. Economic constraints led to the suspension of new awards in 1922 and 1923, but in 1930 the total of annual awards was raised to 300. In 1936 it was increased by a further 60 and the awards were opened to pupils in all secondary schools whether grant-aided or not.<sup>(63)</sup>

When the system of State Scholarships had first been introduced the Higher School Certificate examinations, upon which the awards were based, had been running for only three years. During that brief period the number of candidates had risen from 550 to 2,032 and the number of

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(61) B.E., The Higher School Certificate Examination 1937, 1938, pp. 8-10.

(62) J.A. Petch, Fifty Years of Examining, 1953, p. 114.

(63) B.E., Education in 1936, 1937, p. 44.

recognised Advanced Courses had increased from 120 to 311.<sup>(64)</sup> In 1917 the bulk of Advanced work was done in science and mathematics: only 20 of the recognised courses were in classics and 25 in modern studies - the remainder being in mathematics and science.<sup>(65)</sup> By 1934, however, modern studies had burgeoned into the most popular area of advanced study<sup>(66)</sup> with 6,258 Higher Certificate entries, compared with the 5,167 for maths, and science and 870 for classics.

The First World War heightened anxiety over the quality of the secondary education which the nation was providing but even before then the lack of any commonly accepted definition of 6th Form Work outside particular scholarship requirements and the excessive specialisation which resulted from competition for those scholarships had prompted the Board to issue a circular dealing with the whole question of the curriculum in general and the 6th Form in particular.<sup>(67)</sup> This circular laid down the principle that there should be specialisation, though not to the excessive degree often practised, and suggested that pupils should follow a course in a group of allied subjects - in classics, or in mathematics and science, or in modern languages, literature and history. In 1917 smaller secondary schools were facing great difficulties in financing Advanced Courses and the Board, therefore, decided to make a grant of up to £400 for each recognised two-year Advanced Course for pupils of 16-18 years of age.<sup>(68)</sup>

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(64) B.E., Report for 1919-20, p. 28.

(65) J. Graves, Policy and Progress in Secondary Education 1902-42, 1943, p. 104.

(66) B.E., Ed. in 1934, p. 25.

(67) B.E., Circ. 826, Sept. 1913 (Teaching and organisation in secondary schools: curricula of secondary schools).

(68) B.E., R.S.S. 1917-18, p.6.



Rapid expansion followed and by 1925-6 there were an estimated 20,500 pupils in 6th Forms, compared with an estimated 9,500 in 1911-12.<sup>(69)</sup> By 1935, when the Board discontinued the practice of formally recognising Advanced Courses in grant-aided secondary schools there were 481 such courses - 227 in mathematics and science, 166 in modern studies and 36 in classics;<sup>(70)</sup> and by 1937 there were just under 40,000 pupils doing 6th Form work.

Advanced work in the secondary schools throughout this period was clearly and naturally orientated towards the universities, yet as Spens pointed out, even in 1938 only 5.7% of those leaving school after reaching the age of 16 proceeded directly to university. Many children not intending to go to university were electing to spend a sixth year at school and they constituted a new and significant element in the Sixth Form. For them the rigours of high academic discipline did not seem to be appropriate and there was a further danger of the over-production of intellectuals and of unrest consequent upon their inability to find a niche in the economic world for which they regarded themselves as fitted and prepared.<sup>(71)</sup>

Through the School Certificate Examination and matriculation requirements, through the Higher Certificate Examination and the scholarship systems the universities exercised a compelling influence during the inter-war period upon the curricula of English secondary schools. The criticism most frequently levelled at the 1904 Regulations for Secondary Schools

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(69) B.E., The Organisation and Curriculum of Sixth Forms in Secondary Schools, 1938, p.5.

(70) B.E., Ed. in 1935, p. 47.

(71) Spens Report, pp. 165 and 144.

has been that they imposed upon the schools an ethos which was overly concerned with academic excellence. The same pre-occupation may also be said to typify the schools in the inter-war period. They were concerned with good examination results and with intellectual excellence, for those were the criteria by which the universities judged their pupils. Those were also the criteria used by many other bodies - by professional organisations and employers - with whom their pupils sought to find employment. There was a uniformity in the curriculum, as Spens alleged;<sup>(72)</sup> there was a general paucity of vocational and practical instruction; and there was an inertia and lack of experimentation. But the responsibility for this does not rest with the universities whose rightful concern is with the intellectual, still less with the Regulations for Secondary Schools - which were progressively relaxed over the years. Rather does it seem that the schools and the teachers themselves were genuinely convinced of the value of such a general education - at least until the age of sixteen. Not until 1926 did a majority of the Assistant Masters' Association agree to a vocational bias of even a limited nature in the curriculum after the age of fourteen, and the National Union of Teachers also had doubts.<sup>(73)</sup> Moreover, it is interesting that the first Group IV subjects which were allowed to count towards a School Certificate were music and art - the cultural and not the practical or vocational subjects.

The ideal of a complete, general education continued to dominate the secondary education of both boys and girls at least until 1939.

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(72) Spens Report, p. 81.

(73) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', p. 166.

At the beginning of the century, however, the Board of Education had taken the view that the circumstances and requirements of girls' schools, by their very nature, differed materially from those of boys' schools: greater elasticity was, therefore, given in the time which was prescribed for particular branches of the curriculum,<sup>(74)</sup> By 1913, however, the only special encouragement which the Board had given to girls' schools was the inclusion in the Regulations for Secondary Schools of an Article (Article 9) which allowed Headmistresses to organise special courses for girls over fifteen years of age who either did not desire to sit the School Certificate Examination or had passed that examination but did not wish to undertake an ordinary Advanced Course. Content with this, the Board did not deem it necessary to elaborate any special conditions affecting the curriculum of girls' schools.<sup>(75)</sup>

In 1923, however, the Consultative Committee on the Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and for Girls recommended that the Board should encourage school authorities to provide for non-academic girls over 15 or 16 years of age special courses of English literature and language and the Arts, including music.<sup>(76)</sup> Evidence presented to the Committee indicated that for girls aged twelve to sixteen the curriculum was too academic, too rigid, lacking in initiative and freshness, and altogether too closely modelled on that of boys' schools. Similar criticisms were levelled at the upper parts of schools and it was argued that a heavy strain was placed upon girls who began advanced work at the age of sixteen. Indeed, 16½

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(74) B.E., R.S.S. 1904-5, Pref. Memo. Para. 14.

(75) B.E., Circular 826, Sept. 1913, (Training and Organisation in Secondary Schools), Para. 25.

(76) B.E., Report of the Consultative Committee on Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls Respectively in Secondary Schools, 1923, p. 59.



or 17 years was suggested as the optimum age for girls to take their First Examination. It was also urged that Group IV should be given full parity with Groups II and III; that there should be a wider field of choice for Advanced Work (in particular that unusual combinations such as music and art should be approved); and that pupils should be given more free time in which to develop their own individual interests. (77)

The Consultative Committee thus added its weight to the criticism of the rigidity and uniformity which seemed to typify the secondary curriculum. The Board were urged to relax their Regulations but, as has been seen, the principal factor in determining curricula during the inter-war period was not so much the Board of Education as the Examining Boards and, more intangibly but no less significantly, the values and predilections of schools, parents and employers. To this extent the Board reflected rather than formed educational opinion and must, therefore, "be acquitted of any charge of dominating the schools". (78) Moreover, the Board's powers in this regard were far from unlimited. The Board of Education Act had studiously entrusted the Board with the superintendence but not the control of matters relating to education in England and Wales. (79) From the outset, therefore, the Board had found themselves restrained by statute from imposing their will upon schools by central dictat. Their position was further complicated by the fact that they were dealing not only with schools but also with representative local education authorities to whom Bryce had wished to reserve a large freedom of action. It was to these local authorities that Bryce had proposed to leave the initiative for

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(77) Ibid., pp. 75-78, and p. 138.

(78) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', p. 203.

(79) 62 and 63 Vict. C. 33, (Board of Education Act, 1899) Section 1, Sub-Section 1.

action, the central authority's role being that not of over-riding or superseding local action but of bringing about among the various agencies providing secondary education a harmony and co-operation which were then lacking. (80)

The Balfour Act required local authorities, after consultation with the Board, to supply or aid the supply of education other than elementary, and to promote the general co-ordination of all forms of education. (81) From this, Graves has argued that the Board could not in the sphere of higher education even be said to "superintend" since, apart from the obligatory application of whisky money, no specific duty to provide secondary education was imposed upon local authorities. The Board was legally, therefore, in the position of a consultant. (82) It could not dissolve or replace inefficient local education authorities; it could not prescribe or proscribe textbooks; it had no right to engage, pay, promote or dismiss teachers; it did not provide or manage schools. On the other hand, the central authority was of great importance in giving advice, stimulus and caution to the new local education authorities. Its accumulated knowledge and experience needed to be placed, especially through its inspectors, at the disposal of the comparatively inexperienced local authorities. (83)

The Board were aware of both the needs and the delicacy of the situation. They were aware that, in the early years, one of the most

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(80) Bryce Report, p. 257.

(81) 2 Edw. VII, C. 42, 52.

(82) J. Graves, Policy and Progress in Secondary Education 1902-42, 1943, p. 37.

(83) J. Leese, Personalities and Power in English Education, Leeds, 1950, p. 231.

serious difficulties of the municipal secondary schools was the indefinite nature of the powers and responsibilities of the governing bodies for the daily work of a school and the tendency to centralise the details of management in the hands of an Education Authority far removed from the school. They were aware that friction often arose over the respective powers and duties of the education officials and the Headteachers.<sup>(84)</sup> They were aware also of the danger of imposed uniformity and of the need to balance the claims of inspection and external examinations. They were aware, in other words, of the fundamental question of the limits within which state control and interference were for the advantage of education.<sup>(85)</sup>

Practice varied from one area to another regarding the nature of the powers and responsibilities which were granted to governing bodies for the daily work of secondary schools. Often these were imprecisely specified and the Board of Education soon complained of the difficulties to which this gave rise, particularly the tendency to centralise the details of management in the hands of an education authority far removed from the schools.<sup>(86)</sup> Some of the new authorities sought to run all their secondary schools through a single sub-committee of governors, and generally Headmasters of municipal secondary schools were given far more restricted powers than was the case with public school Headmasters. The former were subject to a Director of Education and his officers; hence, far greater power was given to local bureaucrats and far less to the new secondary school Headmasters and governors than Morant and Balfour had expected.<sup>(87)</sup>

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(84) B.E., Report for 1905-6, p. 56.

(85) B.E., Report for 1908-9, pp. 45-6.

(86) B.E., Report for 1905-6, p. 56. For the ramifications of this in the leading Sheffield school see below pp.183-9. See also B.E., Report for 1905-6, pp. 44 and 57.

(87) E.J.R., Eaglesham, Foundations, p. 57.



This problem was highlighted in Leeds where in 1905 H.M. Inspectors' Reports were critical of the education committee's administration of its secondary schools. The chief criticism was that the Heads were not in close enough contact with the activities of the civic Higher Education Sub-Committee, and the Authority was urged to set up for each secondary school a body of managers to work in close contact with the Head and have delegated to it the details of management.<sup>(88)</sup> This led to a seven-year controversy during which the Board attempted to insist that Leeds should give each school its own board of governors or that if government was to be by the Higher Education Sub Committee detailed articles of government should be laid down. The outcome, which had national import, was a victory for the local authority: the Board ceased to insist upon a rigid scheme of government and the authority was left free to administer secondary education in the manner it thought best.<sup>(89)</sup>

The enthusiasm with which the new authorities took up their educational responsibilities naturally varied widely, as did the amount of ratepayers' money which they were prepared to expend on their new charge.<sup>(90)</sup> J.G. Legge has lauded the "enthusiasm, sound judgement and public spirit of the great unpaid, the members of Education Committees throughout the country",<sup>(91)</sup> but Fisher was disappointed by the small use which they made

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(88) L. Connell, 'A Study of the Development of Secondary Education in Leeds from 1895 to 1921', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1960, pp. 118-123.

(89) L. Connell, 'Administration of Secondary Schools: Leeds v. Board of Education 1905-11,' Journal of Educational Administration & History, Vol. V, No. 2, July 1973, pp. 25-32.

(90) Expenditure per child (elementary and secondary) ranged in 1911 from 52/- to 150/-, L.A. Selby-Bigge, The Board of Education, 1927, p. 93.

(91) J.G. Legge, The Rising Tide, Oxford, 1929, p.5.

of their permissive powers. He had wanted to rely on their public spirit and initiative to carry through the proposals of the 1918 Education Act in the way that he had intended and their failure to rise to his challenge has been taken by some as proof that unless some great inducement was offered local authorities tended to be lukewarm in their attitude towards the use of permissive powers. (92)

The Board's Inspectorate had no powers of compulsion and the Leeds case had shown that an obdurate authority which was prepared to wage battle could withstand the pressure not only of H.M. Inspectors but also of their Whitehall masters, always provided, of course, that they were on secure legal ground. Nonetheless, the influence of the Inspectorate upon the development of secondary education between 1902 and 1939 was far from inconsiderable. In the Regulations for Secondary Schools 1904-5 inspection was made a condition of grant, and, therefore, free, and in 1906 free inspection was extended to schools which wished to be classed as efficient, even though they were independent of Board grants. Thus began the system of Full Inspection which, despite the inception of shortened inspections in 1911, (93) remained "the outstanding feature of secondary school inspection" (94) until the outbreak of World War II, though after 1922 their normal incidence was lengthened from five to ten years. It was through these 2-4 day examinations of the academic, administrative, architectural and corporate facets of a school's life that the Inspectorate was able to achieve one of its main tasks, that of bringing schools, particularly the municipal ones, up to standard. (95)

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(92) H.C. Dent, 1870-1970 Century of Growth in English Education, 1970, p. 86.

(93) B.E., Report for 1911-2, p. 69.

(94) L.A. Selby-Bigge, p. 144.

(95) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', p. 128. Archer makes a similar point p. 331.

The improvement and maintenance of standards was one of the Board's principal tasks but they had to allay the fear that they were merely seeking to impose blanket ideas which took no cognisance of local conditions and initiatives. Thus, it was stated in the Regulations for Secondary Schools 1904-5, that, whilst the new rules had been formed so as to ensure that the education given should be general in its nature, more freedom than hitherto would be given for schools to plan such curricula as might be required or facilitated by local conditions.<sup>(96)</sup> Subsequently a specific grant was given for educational experiments, and although they were not numerous the experience gained through these experiments usually received wider dissemination through the publication of an official Educational Pamphlet. The first of these experiments was that of the teaching of classics by the direct method, (i.e. based on the spoken word) at Perse School, Cambridge, which began in 1908. In 1912 specific grants were made for experimental courses in the teaching of practical botany and of farming. In 1917 a course in domestic subjects and in 1919 one in advanced music were similarly funded. All of these courses were still being supported by the Board in 1923.<sup>(97)</sup>

Educational Pamphlets were one means whereby the Board could disseminate information and ideas but clearly there could be no guarantee that they were even read let alone acted upon. The Regulations for Secondary Schools were a different matter. They prescribed the conditions upon which the Board would give grant aid: the conditions which all schools

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(96) B.E., R.S.S. 1904-5, Pref. Memo, Para, 7.

(97) B.E., Report for 1922-3, 1924, pp, 76-9.



had to meet if they were to receive from the central government monies which would ease the rate burden and without which, indeed, their very continuance would have been impossible. As the Board themselves put it, "The authority of the Board is largely derived from its responsibility for framing and administering the conditions under which are distributed any sums voted by Parliament in aid of secondary education. For this reason the history of the Board's action is to a large extent incorporated in the various editions of these Regulations." (98)

In casting the first set of Regulations, those for 1904-5, the Board did not have a completely free hand, being limited by the vested interests created by the Science and Art Department and by the limited funds at their disposal. Following the precedent set by the Science and Art Department and, in accordance with the needs of the period, minimum time allocations for the different subjects of the curriculum were specified and grants were based on the number of pupils taking the prescribed four-year course. (99) It was apparent, however, that, greater financial assistance from the state was required and that the method of assessment needed to be simplified. Prior to 1907 schools making special provision for science received grant at double the rate received by the others; the grant was assessed at different rates on pupils in different years of the course and on the amount of time devoted to particular subjects. All this was swept away and grant was assessed at a uniform rate of £5 for all pupils between twelve and eighteen. (100) A grant of £2 was paid for

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(98) B.E., Recent Development of Secondary Schools in England and Wales, Educ. Pamphlet No. 50, 1927, p.8.

(99) B.E., R.S.S. 1904-5, Art. 32.

(100) B.E., R.S.S. 1907-8, Art. 36.

each pupil aged ten to twelve, and small schools, whose financial difficulties were often acute, were provided with a minimum of £350. Time allocations for specific subjects were abolished.

Perhaps the most significant change introduced by the Regulations of 1907, however, and one which highlights the manner in which changes in the Regulations were used to effect changes in policy, was the requirement that a percentage of free places - normally 25% - be allocated to scholars from public elementary schools,<sup>(101)</sup> Many schools were alarmed at the prospect of incursions by ex-public elementary school pupils, but it soon became evident that these scholarship winners were able pupils, often more gifted than the fee payers and as such to be welcomed. The more pressing problem which the free place requirement posed was the responsibility which it placed upon schools to meet the cost of these free places. Considerable, if not insuperable, difficulties would have resulted for many schools, particularly those which received no increase in grant because they had been on the higher rate before, had the Board not alleviated their problems by permitting the rates to be adjusted downwards as low as 10%. In 1909, some 117 out of 865 secondary schools were permitted to offer less than the 25% norm.<sup>(102)</sup>

As was the intention, the changes in the 1907 Regulations produced a great increase in the numbers of children who were able to enjoy a secondary education either partly or wholly free of charge. It was estimated that in 1900 about 5,500 pupils from public elementary

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(101) Ibid., Art. 20.

(102) B.E., Report for 1909-10, p. 69.

schools were receiving assistance from local public funds (other than endowments) at a total annual expense of not more than £80,000. By 1911-12 the number of pupils with local education authority scholarships had risen to 38,009, (90% of whom were former public elementary school pupils) and the expenditure involved exceeded £400,000. (103)

By May 1907, immediately prior to the introduction of the new regulations, just under 30,000 secondary pupils (out of a total of 105,000) were paying no fees, and of those, 25,000, or 24.8% of the total, were former public elementary school pupils. (104) After the introduction of the new free place regulations expansion was rapid, as Table 1.1 shows.

Table 1.1 - Number and Percentages of Free Place Pupils; England and Wales: 1908-15 (105)

	<u>Total Number of F.P. Pupils</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Numbers</u>	<u>Number of F.P. admissions</u>	<u>Percentage of previous years admissions</u>
1908-09	47,200	31.2	15,558	31.8
1909-10	50,146	31.8	15,311	29.6
1914-15	65,799	33.1	17,111	28.5

By 1908-9, the number of free-place pupils had risen to 47,000 and by the first year of war to almost 66,000. It is noticeable, however,

(103) B.E., Report for 1911-12, p.4.

(104) Ibid., p. 13.

(105) B.E., Recent Devel., p. 12.



that the percentage which free-place holders constituted of the total secondary school population did not increase anything like so dramatically, rising over the period 1908-15 only by 1.9%, from 31.2% to 33.1%. The increase in the number of free places available was thus a consequence of the increase in the total amount of secondary school provision and of the Board's earlier insistence that the level of free places should be fixed in percentage terms, rather than of any significant increase in the generosity of the local authorities.

However, most education authorities, including those which had reservations about the need to provide secondary schools, felt acutely the need for teachers in their elementary schools - and the new scheme pointed to secondary schools as an important step in their production. Hence they provided "scholarships for intending teachers" and by degrees were drawn into a real interest in the schools in which their intending teachers were educated. At the same time, many of the old Pupil-Teacher Centres became converted into, or merged with secondary schools - a process upon which the Board said they could "only look with satisfaction". The selection and training of elementary school teachers, they suggested, must be regarded as part of the national problem of providing secondary education widely available for all children from the public elementary schools who were capable of profiting from it. (106) The local authorities thus found themselves with a vested interest in secondary education as a source of their own future elementary school teachers.

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(106) B.E., Report for 1906-7, p. 52.

On the whole, this was clearly a beneficial interest but the 1903 Pupil-Teacher system did have its drawbacks as far as the secondary schools were concerned. It did bring pupils but it brought them at a later stage; they did a low grade of work and at sixteen (fifteen in rural areas) they became half-timers. In addition, the need for securing teachers tended to divert a large proportion of the money available for scholarships to this particular purpose and to that extent hindered more general development. In 1907, however, the introduction of the bursar system whereby the general education of intending teachers might continue uninterrupted in the secondary school till the age of seventeen or eighteen, did much to alleviate the situation.

The period 1907-14 was overall a period of quiet, steady growth in which the Liberal victory in 1906<sup>(107)</sup> and the policies and demands of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress<sup>(108)</sup> have all been seen as important forces. It is probable, however, that the most significant factor was the growing appreciation among parents that in secondary education lay the key to their children's economic and social advancement. This was particularly so in the case of professional, administrative and clerical workers, whose numbers increased considerably in the first decade of the century. During the period 1901-1911, for example, the number of clerks increased by 37.5%<sup>(109)</sup> and it was groups such as they who saw in secondary education the path to higher and better things for their sons and daughters. There were, however, no striking changes in the

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(107) J. Graves, p. 59.

(108) B. Simon, Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1918, 1965, pp. 252-5.

(109) G. Bernbaum, Social Change and the Schools 1918-1944, 1967, p.4.

overall pattern of secondary provision in the period 1907-14, during which time these factors seem to have been powerful undercurrents rather than obvious surface manifestations.

With the onset of war the strength of the demand for secondary places became apparent. Education had an obvious relevance to the concern for "national efficiency", and high wages made the payment of fees at that time a comparatively easy matter. Accusations of over-building ceased and even those authorities who had provided for far more than their existing needs before 1914 found that even that was inadequate. In 1914-15 there were 180,507 pupils in 929 grant-aided secondary schools; by 1919-20 there were 307,759 pupils in 1140 schools. Thus, the number of pupils increased by approximately 127,000 but the number of schools by only 211. (110)

Schools were thus over-crowded, classes increased far beyond their normal size and severe restrictions had to be placed upon Preparatory Departments.

All this had certain advantages as far as the Board were concerned. "Competition for places", they argued, "made it possible for the first time to insist upon proper conditions of entry; the entrance examination became a reality, a proper age of entry could be enforced and school life agreements could be introduced and stiffened". (111) Others saw matters differently.

R.H. Tawney maintained that the secondary schools were starved of able pupils, not only because of the lack of schools but also because there was no vital and systematic relation between primary and secondary education, no conception of education as a unitary whole. (112)

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(110) B.E., Report for 1919-20, pp. 30 and 36.

(111) B.E., Recent Devel., p. 17.

(112) R.H. Tawney, Secondary Education For All (A Policy for Labour), 1922, pp. 16 and 19.



The Fisher Act imposed upon local education authorities for the first time the duty of organising secondary education so that no child capable of profiting by it should be prevented by inability to pay fees from obtaining that education.<sup>(113)</sup> Two years after the passing of Fisher's Act, it was estimated that roughly one-third of boys and girls were exempt fees. It was also estimated that about 75% of pupils in primary schools were capable of profiting from full-time education up to the age of sixteen<sup>(114)</sup> though clearly this did not mean that the secondary school was the ideal place for all of those children. In fact, the Report of the Departmental Committee on Scholarships and Free Places which appeared in 1920, recommended a minimum secondary school provision of 10 per 1000 of the population. This would have given a total secondary provision of around 360,000 places, a total not greatly in excess of the number of pupils in grant-aided secondary schools at that moment.<sup>(115)</sup> This was the minimum recommended, but the Committee was realistic enough to recognise that the optimum it had proposed, 20 per thousand yielding 720,000 places, was not then capable of realisation.<sup>(116)</sup> In fact, admission to secondary schools rose in the immediate post-war years, but for the next three years they decreased: by 1,716 in September 1920, by 7,978 in the following year and by a further 7,653 in 1922.

It was in the last of those years, 1922, that Tawney's treatise

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(113) 8 and 9 Geo. 5 C, 39, 51.

(114) B.E., Report of the Departmental Committee on Scholarships & Free Places, 1920, pp. 2 and 9.

(115) On 1st Oct, 1920 there were 311,758 pupils in grant aided sec. schools. B.E., Report for 1922-3, 1924, p. 73.

(116) Dept. Committee S. & F.P., pp. 9-10.

Secondary Education For All was adopted by the Labour Party which thereby committed itself not only to increasing the secondary school population but also to abolishing fees and improving both the number and the values of maintenance allowances. The other political parties did not embrace this view and under them the Board's more cautious policy was to work through the free place scholarship system. It was the Board's contention that Article 20 of the 1907-8 Regulations for Secondary Schools, which required that grant-aided secondary schools should offer 25% free places, was designed not just to enable the poorer classes to "rise" but rather to be open to children of all classes as nearly as possible on equal terms. (117) Entrance tests for fee payers and free place holders were to be the same, but the fact remained that the "scholarship examination" for those free places came to be not merely a test of the ability to profit from a secondary education but a fierce competition for a limited number of places. In fixing the free place requirement as a percentage, the Board thus made the amount of free secondary education a function of the total provision of secondary places, though variations were allowed both above and below the 25% level.

It has been estimated that in 1900 5,000-5,500 and by 1906 some 12,000 children were being assisted to proceed from elementary to secondary schools. (118) The Regulations for 1907 brought about a radical

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(117) B.E. Report for 1909-10, p. 70.

(118) B.E., Dept. Committee, S. & F.P., p.2.

Table 1.2 - Numbers and Percentage of Free Place Pupils, 1915-26 <sup>(119)</sup>

	<u>Total No. F.P. Pupils</u>	<u>% of Total Numbers</u>	<u>No. of F.P. Admissions</u>	<u>% of Previous Years Admissions</u>
1914-15	65,799	33.1	17,111	28.5
1919-20	93,461	30.4	23,344	28.6
1924-25	128,758	35.8	28,891	36.5
1925-26	134,177	36.5	30,796	37.1

improvement in that situation and by the outbreak of war in 1914 almost one-third of all pupils in secondary schools were exempt tuition fees. By the end of the war that proportion had fallen marginally but the total numbers in receipt of exemption had risen to 93,000. A few years later, in 1923, the Board relaxed Article 20(b) of the Regulations which limited the percentage of free places to that which had been awarded in 1921-2; local authorities were compelled to raise the percentage to forty; and the Board indicated their willingness to consider applications for the abolition of fees.

These alterations in the free place requirements were part of the general easing of the restrictions on expenditure which had been imposed during the post-war depression as part of the Geddes economies. The Geddes Committee had been appointed in August 1921 to examine Governmental provisional estimates for the following year and to recommend further economies. Its first two reports were not published until February 1922 but it was already clear in 1920-1 that Government spending

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(119) B.E., Recent Devel., p. 12.



would have to be reduced, (120)

On 7th December, 1920 the postponement of the raising of the school leaving age was announced and on 11th January, 1921 the Board virtually called a halt to education development, (121) This reversed previous Board policy which had asked not only for immediate proposals from local authorities but also for programmes of development for the next ten years. The Board announced that they would consider only projects of special urgency, and that no proposals for the building of nursery schools or new applications for continuation schools would be entertained. Full scale economy cuts were thus in operation before the Geddes Report appeared.

The Geddes Committee was asked to reduce government spending by about 30% (£100 million) and the cuts it proposed in education (£18 million) were third in severity only to those which were recommended for the navy (£21 million) and the army (£20 million). Subsequently, the Cabinet's Finance Committee reduced these cuts by approximately two-thirds overall, that for education being reduced from £18 million to only £5.7 million, (122) The percentage grant system, which the Fisher Act had introduced and whose encouragement of spending Geddes had denounced, was not abolished but a committee was set up to enquire into it, and if possible to recommend an alternative system. The Board held to the view that percentage grants were "a powerful engine for restricting expenditure" since they were paid in arrear of the expenditure to which they related. Government policy thus adhered to that of grants being

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(120) C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1955, pp. 129-30.

(121) B.E., Circular 1190, 11th Jan., 1929. (Administration under the present financial conditions)

(122) B. Simon, The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940, 1974, pp. 31-47.

proportional to expenditure, particularly on teachers' salaries. (123)

As prices fell so expenditure fell and the education estimates, in fact, proved excessive, but later, alarmed by the tendency of services to expand and grants to increase, the Board revived the old idea of fixed grants subject to periodic review.

Fortunately, the cut-backs in education compelled by the post-war recession were not excessively protracted. In December 1922, Selby-Bigge indicated his desire to see a "considerable development of secondary schools" since the years after 1918 "evidenced a very remarkable change in the attitude of all classes to secondary education". (124) He would seem at that moment in time to have been thinking perhaps more in general than in immediate terms, but in 1924 Circular 1190 was withdrawn, the award of State Scholarships (which had been discontinued in 1922 and 1923) was resumed and in 1925 all the other retrenchment restrictions were dropped. Moreover, although total expenditure on education had obviously fallen as a result of the cut-backs, the number of grant-earning secondary schools did rise, even though only marginally. In 1921-2 there were 1115 such schools with a total of 330,472 pupils. The following year those numbers rose respectively to 1129 and 331,820. (125) Thereafter, development proceeded sedately but steadily, the number of secondary school pupils per thousand of population rising from 9.5 in 1924-5 to 9.7 in 1925-6, (126) and by 1929 there were 401,505 pupils in grant-earning secondary schools. (127)

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(123) L.A. Selby-Bigge, p. 109.

(124) L.A. Selby-Bigge, Dept. Minute, quoted by B. Simon, Pol. Ed. Reform, p. 67.

(125) B.E., Report for 1922-3, p. 72.

(126) B.E., Recent Devel., p. 18.

(127) B.E., Education in 1929, 1930, p. 18.

1929 was also the year of the Wall Street Crash which precipitated the Great Depression, but economists and economic historians have more recently come to regard the inter-war period as a whole as one of significant economic progress which compares favourably with the half century or so before 1914.<sup>(128)</sup> The development of new consumer industries on the one hand and long term building trends on the other, have been deemed significant by different writers but there seems to be some concensus of agreement that on the basis of Gross Domestic Product the growth rate for the inter-war years was at least as good as for 1870-1913. Nevertheless, throughout the whole of the inter-war period, there were never fewer than one million people out of work and early in 1933 that figure rose to around three million. Two years earlier the acute financial crisis had persuaded the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Snowden, to accept a liberal proposal for the appointment of an economy committee on Geddes lines.<sup>(129)</sup> This Committee, led by Sir George May, anticipated a government deficit of £120 millions by April 1932 and to meet that new taxation totalling £24 millions and economies amounting to £96 millions were proposed.<sup>(130)</sup> The Geddes Axe was thus being swung even more fiercely than before.

£66½ millions of the proposed saving were to be made through a 20% reduction in unemployment expenditure, but education did not escape. The May Committee recommended that just under £12 millions be saved through abolishing free places in secondary schools and raising fees by 25%, through removing the 50% minimum for Exchequer grants, and through cutting teachers

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(128) See B.W.E. Alford, Depression & Recovery? British Economic Growth 1918-1939, 1972, for an assessment of recent work in this field.

(129) A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, Oxford, 1965, pp. 286-7.

(130) C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-40, 1955, pp. 381-2.





salaries by 20%. Fortunately, as was the case with Geddes, the Cabinet declined to implement all these recommendations but a total education saving of £3½ million was implemented.<sup>(131)</sup> Teachers' salaries were the chief target and the 50% Exchequer grant for buildings was also withdrawn. This did not mean the end of all building schemes,<sup>(132)</sup> for new schools were often needed to serve the new housing estates, but it did mean that all schemes were severely scrutinised.<sup>(133)</sup>

Perhaps the most serious of all the cuts, however, was the decision that fees must be charged in all grant-aided secondary schools according to the parents' ability to pay.<sup>(134)</sup> The Board accepted the view that it was "needlessly wasteful" of public funds that pupils should be admitted to secondary schools either free of charge or at fees well below the actual cost regardless of the parents' income. They also sought to rectify the situation in which the fees charged often bore but little relation to the total cost of educating the pupil - then around £35 p.a.<sup>(135)</sup> Accordingly, in Circular 1421 the Board announced that they would in future hesitate to approve a fee of less than 9 guineas. They also indicated an income of from £3 to £4 a week for a family with one child, with 10/- for each additional child, as a suitable limit for complete exemption from fees in the case of Special Place holders. Thus, free places were replaced by special places and above that minimum limit for complete exemption, illustrative scales were given upon which local education authorities were asked, as far as possible, to model their

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(131) B. Simon, Pol. Ed. Reform, pp. 173-4.

(132) For example the new premises for the Central Sec. Schools, Sheffield, were built during 1932-3. See below p. 205.

(133) S.J. Curtis, Education in Britain Since 1900, 1952, p. 96.

(134) B.E., Circular 1421, 15th Sept., 1932. (Secondary Schools & Fees & Draft Regulations).

(135) B.E., Ed. in 1932, p. 16.

fees in order to facilitate comparison and review. Normally, the percentage of special places proposed did not exceed the existing percentage of free places but the Board confessed a willingness to give full allowance for varying local circumstances and in some cases 100% special places were allowed. (136)

The re-imposition of fees in those schools which had abolished them was manifestly a setback for those who hoped to see secondary education free of all charges but even so by 1938 46.9% of all secondary pupils were totally exempt fees and 9.7% were partially exempt, leaving 43.4% who received no exemption. These percentages were in relation to a total secondary school population of 470,003 pupils who were being educated in 1,398 grant aided schools. (137) In 1904-5, there had been only 575 recognised schools. (138) Over the same period the provision of secondary school places per thousand of population increased from 2.9 to 11.4.

Over the whole of the period at present under review, therefore, the provision of secondary school places increased by about 394% (from 95,000 in 1905 to 470,000 in 1938) whilst the population of England and Wales increased by about 27%. This was a substantial increase, but a situation in which almost a half of all secondary pupils paid fees was clearly not satisfactory to the proponents of free secondary education for all. Moreover, even the abolition of fees did not always produce a situation in which all the winners of scholarships availed themselves of the education which they had won for themselves. The cost of keeping

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(136) For an instance of this, Sheffield, see below pp. 333-6.

(137) B.E., Ed. in 1938, pp. 13-15.

(138) B.E., Recent Devel., p. 18.

a boy or girl at school until the age of 16 and foregoing the wages with which he or she could supplement the family income was often considerable, particularly in times of economic recession, and it was not unknown for pupils who had passed their scholarship examination to decline to take it up. (139)

Maintenance allowances were especially crucial in ensuring that pupils completed the full four-year course, wastage being particularly severe after the age of fourteen was reached. (140) The magnitude of the problem which the Board faced in this respect in the decade before World War I may be gauged from the fact that even for the year 1905-6 the numbers of pupils in the different years of recognised secondary schools showed a decrease from 30,000 in the First Year, to 24,000 in the Second, 14,000 in the Third and only 7,000 in the Fourth. (141) The schools themselves were not to blame for this fall-off. They had every incentive to maintain the numbers in the Third and Fourth Forms: higher grants in the later years and the dread of being struck off the Grant List if they failed to create the required four year course. But they were unable to pass on the pressure to parents. There was then no established tradition of staying on for the full course and whilst in 1911-12 7,200 of the 11,900 scholarships awarded by local authorities carried extra allowances of some kind, the bulk of free places awarded by the Governing Bodies of grammar and other endowed schools were limited to exemption from tuition fees. (142)

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(139) See below pp. 337-40.

(140) R.H. Tawney, p. 51.

(141) B.E. Recent Devel., p. 14.

(142) B.E., Report for 1911-12, p. 17.



The increased appreciation of, and demand for, secondary education which occurred during and after World War I, however, brought about a considerable improvement,

Table 1.3, (143)

(A) Average School Life Over the Age of Twelve: 1908-25

	<u>1908-9</u>	<u>1912-3</u>	<u>1920-1</u>	<u>1921-2</u>	<u>1922-3</u>	<u>1923-4</u>	<u>1924-5</u>
Boys:	2:7	2:9	3:1	3:3	3:5	3:7	3:8
Girls:	2:7	3:0	3:2	3:4	3:6	3:8	3:9

(B) Average Leaving Age

	<u>1908-9</u>	<u>1912-3</u>	<u>1920-1</u>	<u>1921-2</u>	<u>1922-3</u>	<u>1923-4</u>	<u>1924-5</u>
Boys:	15:5	15:7	15:8	15:10	15:11	16:0	16:1
Girls:	15:11	16:0	15:11	16:1	16:2	16:3	16:3

By 1921-2 the average leaving age for girls was just over and that for boys was just below sixteen years, and it is interesting that even during the years of post-war recession the average school life and the leaving ages of both boys and girls increased. The difficulty of finding employment might conduce to staying on at school longer, but against this the economic burden of keeping a son or daughter at school in times of depression was obviously considerable.

Maintenance allowances and parental undertakings obviously helped to increase the length of school life by improving the staying-on

rates in the upper forms of the main school. A complementary method before World War I was obviously to lower the age of entrance for as late as 1910-11 21% of those entering secondary schools were aged 13-14 and no less than 15% were over the age of fourteen. Pressure from the Board to standardise the age of entry around 11-12 years slowly effected an improvement and by 1924 only 9% of new admissions were aged 13-14 and only 5% were aged fourteen or over, <sup>(144)</sup> The battle to reduce and standardise the age of transfer from the elementary to the secondary school was won without too much difficulty; that to extend school life in the upper forms was not easy, but by the time Spens reported the average leaving age for boys had been raised to 16 years 7 months and that for girls to 16 years 6 months, whilst the average length of school life for both boys and girls had reached 4 years 11 months. <sup>(145)</sup>

During the quarter of a century preceding the Spens Report the secondary school population of England and Wales had increased three-fold to 470,003. During that period there had been enormous changes particularly in science and technology, and, as Spens observed, "the world in which the modern child is born and in which he grows up is very different from the world of the Victorian child". <sup>(146)</sup> Spens questioned whether the secondary schools had changed to meet these new circumstances and suggested that the secondary curriculum was still rooted in the academic tradition with which Morant and others had invested it. It was also suggested that there was a danger, common throughout Europe, of looking upon secondary education as only, or chiefly, a preparation for university studies,

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(144) Ibid., p. 15.

(145) B.E., Ed, in 1938, p. 140.

(146) Spens Report, p. 142.

thus giving rise to an over-production of intellectuals.<sup>(147)</sup> By the 1930s the old faculty psychology which had been in vogue at the beginning of the century had been over-thrown and the belief in the transfer of training which had at one time seemed to lend some scientific validity to the dominance of the classics had been abandoned.

Initially, the Regulations for Secondary Schools and the requirements of the School Certificate Examination had fostered the pursuit of academic excellence but even when the early rigidity of their respective requirements had been relaxed comparatively little expansion and liberalisation of the curriculum occurred,<sup>(148)</sup> The schools, which as the century progressed were staffed increasingly by graduates, were content with the established furrow,<sup>(149)</sup> Reared in the traditions of the public and endowed schools and their early twentieth century municipal imitators, these teachers, and large, influential sections of society at large accepted also the ethos and mores of the older institutions of higher education which Norwood subsequently elaborated,<sup>(150)</sup> Such an education was doubtless admirable for the 5.7% of the school population who proceeded to the university;<sup>(151)</sup> but, whilst the moral and character training which the secondary schools gave had relevance for all their pupils, it is questionable whether the academic content of their curricula was ideal for those proceeding to careers in industry and commerce. Yet probably more significant than any of these factors was the effect of the social and occupational

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(147) Ibid., pp. 142 and 144.

(148) See above p. 16.

(149) In 1908-9 52.6% of the teachers in secondary schools were graduates: by 1925-6 the figure had risen to 71.4% Recent Devel., p. 26.

(150) C. Norwood, The English Tradition of Education, 1929.

(151) Spens Report, p. 165.



structure and the demands which it made upon the educational system. The higher prestige of the black-coated occupations, the rules of entry regarding apprenticeship and the attitude of industrialists to higher education all conspired to deflect the secondary school leaver from manual or technical towards professional or clerical employment, and the schools from a technical to an academic curriculum, (152)

In 1926, the Hadow Report in insisting upon the unity of education had asserted that all normal children should go on to some sort of post-primary education, (153) but, whilst one would accept the validity of this, the question then arises as to whether the kind of post-primary education which was suitable for these less intellectual children could properly be termed "secondary". This, in turn, clearly depends upon the definition of the term which one accepts, as Morant's concept of a complete, graded, general education became in practice a highly academic model in which practical and vocational subjects were given little or no significance, and much of what is subsumed under this definition would seem to have only a limited relevance for those pupils - the vast majority - who did not proceed to institutions of higher education. Spens stressed the importance of the school in fostering the growth of individuality and potential in each pupil, and in preparing him for work and citizenship in a democratic society, (154) It would seem that the greatest weakness of English secondary education as it developed between 1902 and 1939 was its failure to take adequate cognisance of the need to prepare its pupils for the world of work and it could be argued that even if more secondary

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(152) O.L. Banks, 'Morant and the Secondary School Regulations of 1904', B.J.E.S., Vol. III, 1954-5, pp. 40-41.

(153) B.E., Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent, (Hadow Report), 1926, p. 77.

(154) Spens Report, pp. 146 and 151-2.

schools had been provided during the inter-war years they would not have satisfied the criteria which Spens laid down if they had remained in the traditional mode of English secondary schools. New types of schools were needed for that.

It is the purpose of this study to examine secondary education as it developed in one of England's largest industrial cities - Sheffield - between 1902 and 1939. It has not been possible to deal with the independent High School for Girls since permission to examine its records was not granted. Neither has any attempt been made to consider the development of technical education in the city since this has been researched already. (155)

The approach adopted has been that of a series of micro-studies of individual schools, complemented by an attempt to assess the achievement of the Sheffield Education Authority 1903-39.

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(155) See R. Underdown, 'The History of Ashleigh School', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1972.

CHAPTER 2

THE SADLER REPORTS: SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN SHEFFIELD 1902-14

At its first meeting on 6th April, 1903 the Sheffield Education Committee passed a resolution proposed by the Rev. A.B. Haslam and Councillor John Derry "That it be an instruction to the Higher Education Sub-Committee to at once take steps to report on the present state of secondary education in Sheffield in accordance with Clause 2 of the Act."<sup>(1)</sup> The Higher Education Sub-Committee at its meeting on 20th April, therefore, appointed a four man ad hoc Section to report on "existing institutions affording higher (i.e. secondary) education in the city". In due course this Section secured the services of Michael Sadler who had recently taken up the Chair of the History and Administration of Education in the Victoria University of Manchester. Thus, Sadler embarked on the first of his nine reports on secondary and higher education in various boroughs and administrative counties in England, reports which were widely read outside the areas they covered and which "did more than any other agency to stimulate local interest in higher education."<sup>(2)</sup>

Sadler began his enquiry on 9th June and in the course of it visited all the schools and institutions, both public and private, which, so far as could be judged from the returns which they had made to the Education Committee, were giving or were prepared to give secondary or higher education. Sadler, in the report which he presented to the Education

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(1) Sheffield Education Committee (S.E.C.) meeting 6th April, 1903 in Sheffield Education Committee Minutes (S.E.C.M.) 1903-4, p.7.

(2) J. Graves, p, 53.



Committee on 22nd July 1903, distinguished three main types of secondary schools, according to the curricula which they offered.<sup>(3)</sup> The first of these broad types was that in which mathematics and physical science predominated; the second was that in which linguistic disciplines predominated, living languages being the chief though not the only vehicle of instruction; whilst the third was that in which the Classical languages predominated but with due regard being paid to modern languages as well as to other subjects such as mathematics. Sadler also pointed out that, largely due to historical reasons, in the case of boys these types of curricula were generally found in courses of different duration. Thus, the first type usually provided a four year course from twelve to sixteen years of age, whilst the second tended to begin at ten years of age or even earlier and extend to about seventeen. The third type, in its most complete form, occupied an even longer period beginning at ten years of age or even earlier and running on to eighteen or nineteen.

With girls the forms of secondary school curricula were more fluid and varied, but, nevertheless, the types of their curricula did approximate to those provided for boys. The first type, "less severely but still markedly mathematical and scientific," tended to be a four year course; the second began at ten years of age or earlier and lasted until the age of seventeen or later. The third, or fully classical type, Sadler found to be very rare in the case of girls and, indeed, hardly had a separate existence but was rather to be found as a small sub-division of a larger school.<sup>(4)</sup> It carried on its work until the girls were eighteen

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(3) M.E. Sadler, Report on Secondary and Higher Education in Sheffield, (Sheffield Report) Sheffield, 1903, 'pp. 8-9.

(4) M.E. Sadler, Sheffield Report, p.9.

or nineteen years of age,

There were, of course, many variations on these broad types and the girls' classical type of education was not alone in being blended or combined under the roof of a single school and under the care of a single headmaster. In many cases the outlines of courses were blurred and indistinct but already in the later decades of the nineteenth century the great public schools had begun to widen their curricula by adding modern subjects to their traditional classical studies.

In Sheffield, at the time of Sadler's enquiry, only three schools had any pretensions to offering a secondary school curriculum of the highest quality. Of the two schools which catered for boys the Royal Grammar School was the more ancient foundation. Originally founded by Thomas Smith of Crowland, Lincolnshire, in 1603, it had been conferred with a Charter by James I in 1604. From premises first in Townhead Street and later in St. George's Square, the school had moved to its existing site in Collegiate Crescent in 1887. These premises could provide accommodation for some two hundred day pupils and fifteen boarders but, at the time of Sadler's enquiry, there were only one hundred and seventy, including three boarders, on the rolls. Thirty-one of the pupils were under the age of twelve whilst only fourteen were over the age of sixteen, the average age for leaving being fifteen.

The Collegiate Crescent buildings had been erected in 1835 for a private proprietary Collegiate School and contained seven classrooms, one of which was used for manual training. Laboratory accommodation did exist and had been approved by the Board of Education but improvements

were urgently required particularly in order to accommodate physics. Owing to the lack of funds there was no gymnasium. The ten acre playing field some two and a half miles away was "inefficiently equipped" and the bat fives court was "out of repair", again because of the shortage of money. (5) The school was, in fact, financed by an endowment of £509 per annum which was supplemented by grants of £600 per annum from the Technical Instruction Committee and £120 from the Board of Education. The fees ranged from £10 10s. in the Beginners Class and £12 in the Preparatory School to £13 10s. in the Upper School, boarders being charged £45. The trustees of the endowment provided nine scholarships each of them of the value of £6 15s. (i.e. half fees) and a further nine of £13 10s., whilst the Technical Instruction Committee provided six Continuation Scholarships out of its grant of £600, the remainder being applied to the salaries of science, modern language and woodwork masters. The West Riding County Council provided a maximum of ten scholarships, six of which were being held in 1903. (6)

Above the middle forms the school was divided into two sides, classical and modern, the one preparing pupils for the universities and the professions, the other for university science courses and commercial life, this last vocation being that which attracted the majority of the boys. (7) At the Grammar School, as at Wesley College, languages formed the backbone of the curriculum though at each some science was taught throughout the greater part of the school (more so at the Grammar School

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(5) City of Sheffield Education Committee, 'Return as to Existing Institutions Affording Education Other than Elementary,' p.15, printed as an Appendix to Sadler's Sheffield Report. All educational institutions except the public elementary schools were asked for details of courses, pupils, accommodation, etc.

(6) Ibid., p. 17.

(7) There were at the time of the Return six former pupils of the school in residence at Oxford and Cambridge, whilst in the period 1898-1903 eight scholarships and exhibitions at those Universities had been won by pupils of the school.



than at the College), along with a good deal of mathematics. (8)

Wesley College had been established in 1838 in order to give a good advanced education to those excluded from the older universities by their Non-conformity. It was principally a boarding school in its early years and in 1844 it affiliated with London University. Membership of the Wesleyan Church was required of the Headmaster and the members of the Governing Council which had full financial control over the school. The endowment of the school amounted to some £140 which was available for the provision of scholarships. Not all of this seems to have been used for this purpose, at least in 1903, for the Return which the College made to the Education Committee stated that only seven scholarships were then being held, including those held by former pupils of the elementary schools. There were, however, three others - the Lycett, Waddy and Spooner Scholarships which provided £36 a year for boarders and £12 for day boys. (9) Thus, the number of scholarships available at the College was extremely small and the vast majority of its 173 day pupils and 32 boarders must have been fee-payers. The fees were, in fact, roughly comparable with those charged at the Grammar School, being three guineas a term for day pupils under ten years of age, four guineas for those under twelve and five guineas for those over twelve. For boarders the fees ranged from fourteen to sixteen guineas a term, though, as with day pupils, special reductions were made for the sons of Methodist Ministers.

Income from fees was the principal source of revenue for, although recognition by the Board of Education for the purpose of the Teachers'

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(8) M.E. Sadler, Sheffield Report, p. 10.

(9) 'Return', p. 21.

Registration Order (Column B) had recently been applied for, the reply had not been received at the time of the Return. Moreover, income from grants had declined, being only £25. 18s. 9d. for Art and £16. 9s. 4d. for Science.<sup>(10)</sup> The Board of Education syllabus in science was being followed but by a smaller number of pupils than before and the grant had fallen from its previous level of £40-£50. Science was taught for one hour and twenty minutes a week in Years I and II as compared to the eight hours forty minutes devoted to mathematics and the seven hours fifty minutes to English. Even more significantly three hours a week were devoted to Latin and two hours forty-five minutes to French.<sup>(11)</sup> In the Upper School there were more pupils than in the higher forms of the Grammar School and the main choices were between Latin and Practical Chemistry, and between Greek and German. The majority of the older pupils were intent on careers in the professions but although the College had claimed five open scholarships at Sheffield University College in the period 1898-1903, its three open scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge did not quite match the successes of the Grammar School at those universities.

Between them the Royal Grammar School and Wesley College were, in 1903, affording secondary education of a high standard to some 375 boys, a figure almost matched by the High School for Girls, which had 331 pupils on its rolls, though 138 of these were under 12 years of age. The High School's total accommodation amounted to something in the region of four hundred with provision for thirty boarders, but in 1903 there were only 307 day pupils and 24 boarders. However, the High School was

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(10) Ibid., p. 19.

(11) Ibid., p. 21.

significantly more successful than the boys' schools in retaining a substantial proportion of its older pupils.

Table 2.1. (12) - Numbers of Higher Secondary Pupils in Sheffield, 1903.

	Numbers on Roll		
	Grammar School	Wesley College	High School for Girls
15-16 years	24	20	27
16-17 years	6	15	24
17-18 years	7	3	11
18 years upwards	1	2	27

The majority (54%) of girls who left the High School tended to remain at home, but 17% entered the professions, chiefly teaching, and 6.5% took up a university course. Five Sheffield Town Trust Scholarships had been won by pupils of the school in the period 1898-1903, along with one Firth Scholarship, a Firth Exhibition and an Earnshaw Scholarship as well as several minor awards. During the twenty-five years the school had been open, twenty-five girls had passed directly to Newnham or Girton Colleges, seven to Oxford and twenty had taken other university examinations. The total number of external scholarships and prizes won by its pupils during that period was fifty-five.

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(12) Ibid., pp, 15-23,



Some success had, therefore, been achieved in the attempt to provide for girls an education of the highest quality comparable to that offered to boys by the great public schools. Founded by the Girls' Public Day School Company in March 1878, the school relied entirely on fees and grants, there being no endowments. These fees ranged from two guineas a term for girls under seven years of age, to £5 10s. 0d, a term for those entering the school after the age of thirteen. The Scheme fixed four as the minimum age for entry and 24% of the girls did enter the school before they were six, though the average age at entrance was ten. Income from Board of Education grants amounted in the year 1901-2 to £29, 16s, 1d. for Art, and £60 17s. 0d. for Science, the numbers of pupils earning these grants being 99 and 121 respectively. General Science, chemistry and botany were the principal areas of scientific instruction but as with the boys' schools it is very noticeable that the time allocated to the sciences was much less than that devoted to languages. In the IVth Forms, for example, over 2½ hours per week was given to French and 2 hours to German or Latin, but only 1½ hours to General Science. In the VIth Form a similar pattern prevailed although facilities were given for special studies involving divergences from the regular curriculum. (13)

Thus, in the whole of Sheffield, a city of 426,686 inhabitants in 1903, there were, discounting pupils under the age of twelve, only 475 boys and girls receiving secondary education of a high standard - 139 at the Royal Grammar School, 143 at Wesley College and 193 at the High School for Girls. Of these only 42 were scholarship holders.

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(13) Ibid., pp. 23-7.

Table 2.2. (14a) - Numbers of Pupils in the Lesser Private Schools in Sheffield Offering Some Secondary Education: 1903

<u>School</u>	<u>Total No. of Pupils</u>	<u>Under 12</u>	<u>12-13</u>	<u>13-14</u>	<u>14-15</u>	<u>15-16</u>	<u>16-17</u>	<u>17-18</u>	<u>18+</u>
Sharrow High School	55	32	5	7	4	4	2	1	-
Miss Millard's Girls School	20	9	4	4	3	-	-	-	-
Eton House School	96	40	10	7	16	8	12	2	1
Westbourne School for Girls	46	13	8	9	7	3	4	2	-
Sadbrook House School	33	29	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Preparatory Secondary School for Boys	36	33	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kenwood Preparatory Secondary School	44	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abbeyfield Mount Girls' School	65	36	7	9	5	4	3	-	-
Mr. Newell's Middle-Class School	150	13	22	35	40	29	9	2	-
Endcliffe College	54	26	8	10	8	2	-	-	-
Notre Dame Convent	90	44	9	15	12	3	4	1	2
<u>TOTAL</u>	689	316	75	100	95	53	34	8	3

Table 2.3. (14b) Board of Education Recognition of the Lesser Private Schools in Sheffield 1903

<u>School</u>	<u>Recognition by Board of Education</u>
Sharrow High School	Recognised for Teacher's Registration under Column (B) but not as a secondary school.
Miss Millard's Girls' School	Application made - reply awaited.
Eton House School	Recognised for Teachers Registration under Column (B).
Westbourne School for Girls	Was intending to apply for recognition.
Sadbroke House School	No application made.
Preparatory Secondary School for Boys	Recognition applied for.
Kenwood Preparatory Secondary School	Recognition applied for.
Abbeyfield Mount Girls' School	No application made.
Mr, Newell's Middle-Class School	No application made.
Endcliffe College	Recognition as secondary school applied for.
Notre Dame Convent	Recognition for Teachers Registration Order Column (B) and as a secondary School under Division B 3(3)4.



Other secondary schools did exist and were investigated by Sadler but the quality of the education which they offered in no way approached that of the three first-rank schools. Sharrow High School, for example, was a private school which had been established in Kenwood Park Road in 1892. It was recognised by the Board of Education for the purposes of the Teachers' Register, but not as a secondary school. Indeed, of the 55 scholars attending in 1903 thirty-two were under twelve years of age. The other private schools in the city similarly catered preponderantly for younger pupils and certainly none of them aspired to preparing candidates for university entrance. For the most part, they were small establishments run by spinsters. They provided for the children of the upper middle-classes a basic education in English, mathematics and the elements of science, to which were added French, and sometimes German and Latin, along with music, drawing and needlework. As their names suggest, many of the schools were exclusively for girls and, although the "Return" gives no data by sexes of the composition of the others, an examination of their curricula leads one to believe that they were catering primarily for girls. Mr. Newell's Middle-Class School would seem to be an exception to this, however, and it was also somewhat unusual in that the average age of its pupils at entrance was over thirteen.<sup>(15)</sup> French was taught generally throughout the school and German and Latin were offered to special pupils, but the principal objective was to afford a sound preparation for a career in commerce or the Civil Service. The education which was provided, however, was of a general nature, and the orientation of the school was

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(15) Ibid., p. 51.

by no means narrowly vocational. For those who were desirous of training in specific business skills there was Mr. Whiteley's College on Surrey Street where instruction was given to both day and evening pupils in shorthand and typing.

At the time of Sadler's enquiry, then, the eleven smaller private schools in Sheffield were not providing secondary education of any high quality. They had very few pupils over the age of fifteen and still fewer over the age of sixteen. They were not able to offer advanced secondary education and were clearly unable to prepare their pupils for university entrance. Indeed, they had no pretensions to this. Thus, for those scholars who were unable to gain entrance to the Royal Grammar School, Wesley College or the High School for Girls the only avenues to a more advanced and open-ended education than the public elementary schools could provide lay in the Central Higher School and the Pupil Teacher Centre.

The Central School had been opened by the Sheffield School Board on 18th March, 1880, and had been converted first into an organised science school and subsequently into a Higher Elementary School. It had been recognised by the Board of Education for the purposes of the Teachers' Registration Order (Column B) and application had already been made for recognition as a secondary school, Division A and Division B. Its curriculum was modern, preparing pupils for commercial life, industry and the teaching profession. It was by far the largest single educational establishment in the city, having 894 day pupils on roll at the time of the Return. Of these, 97% of the boys and 98.5% of the girls had come from the public elementary schools, on average at the age of eleven, though the minimum age for entry was ten. <sup>(16)</sup>

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(16) Ibid., p. 42.

Under the Board of Education Regulations for Higher Elementary Schools then prevailing, fifteen was the age for leaving.

From the Central Higher School, or, indeed direct from the ordinary public elementary schools, pupils would proceed to the Pupil-Teacher Centre. This institution was recognised for the purposes of the Teachers' Registration Order but it had not received recognition as a secondary school. Some five hundred day pupils were attending the Centre on a half-time basis in 1903, 245 of them being over eighteen years of age.<sup>(17)</sup> The majority of these were, of course, simply intending to become teachers in the public elementary schools but the Centre did aim to facilitate the progress of its more able students to a training college or even to prepare them for a university course. For example, a Firth Scholarship, one Corporation Scholarship and one Cambridge Minor Scholarship were among the Centre's university successes in the years 1901-3, during which period it also secured an average of eighty King's Scholarships per annum.

The Centre, then, did provide a route to the universities but the numbers of students who actually proceeded from the public elementary schools through the Pupil-Teacher Centre to the highest level of academic study were extremely small. Thus, apart from the Royal Grammar School, Wesley College and the High School for Girls, there was virtually no other provision for secondary education in Sheffield at the beginning of this century and, whilst Sadler did pay tribute to the work done in the Grammar School and at Wesley College,<sup>(18)</sup> he nevertheless concluded that "The

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(17) Ibid., p. 45.

(18) M.E. Sadler, Sheffield Report, p. 14.



weakest spot in the educational arrangements of the City is in the secondary education provided for boys,"<sup>(19)</sup> The Grammar School, Sadler conceded, had distinguished itself by gaining several scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge, and the educational influence of the Headmaster of Wesley College was "warmly appreciated throughout the City", but a parent "who wishes to give his son the best kind of higher secondary education cannot find it in the City ... for there is no secondary school for boys ... quite on the same plane as the High School for Girls,"<sup>(20)</sup>

The Sheffield Report was the first of the nine which Sadler undertook between 1903 and 1906 and in it he did not quote any precise figures as to the numbers of secondary school places available in relation to the total population of the city. In all his later studies detailed statistical data were given not only for secondary education as a whole but also individually by sex for boys and girls. It is not possible to determine the precise numbers of boys and girls in the mixed private secondary schools in Sheffield but an overall figure can be determined. If one adds to the 1373 pupils in the smaller private secondary schools the 706 at the Royal Grammar School, Wesley College and the High School for Girls one obtains a total of 2079 pupils being educated in the schools which Sadler examined. Sadler quoted the estimated population of Sheffield as being 426,686<sup>(21)</sup> in 1903 and so the number of boys and girls in all secondary schools per 1,000 of population at that time would work out at about 4.69. This figure, of course, includes a substantial number of pupils under the age of ten but so too did the figures which Sadler gave in his later reports

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(19) Ibid., p. 18.

(20) Ibid., p. 19.

(21) Ibid., footnote, p. 12.

on other cities and counties. In those reports he also illustrated in graph form the age distribution of the pupils in the schools which he investigated and in several instances these reveal a fairly similar pattern to that prevailing in Sheffield. Thus comparison of the statistic of 4.69 with those presented in Table 2.4. would seem to be justified.

Table 2.4. (22) Provision of Secondary School Places in the Areas

Investigated by Sadler, 1903-6

	Pupils in all Secondary Schools Public and Private			% Girls in No. Receiving Secondary Education
	Boys per 1,000 of Population	Girls per 1,000 of Population	Boys & Girls per 1,000 of Population	
Essex	6.11	5.76	11.87	48.5
Hampshire	6.85	3.88	10.73	36.1
Derbyshire	3.53	1.54	5.07	30.3
Exeter	11.14	13.73	24.8	55.19
Birkenhead	6.59	8.72	15.3	56.94
Newcastle	6.79	5.88	12.97	46.4
Liverpool	4.14	3.70	7.84	47.1
Huddersfield	3.99	3.46	7.45	46.4
Sheffield			c. 4.69	

From such a comparison it is clear that the provision of secondary education in Sheffield lagged well behind that of the other cities

(22) Compiled from the various Sadler Reports,

and counties which Sadler examined. Rural areas are, of course, not closely comparable with a large industrial city such as Sheffield, nor indeed is a borough like Exeter; but Birkenhead, Huddersfield, Liverpool, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne were all substantial industrial cities, directly comparable with Sheffield, whose provision for secondary education far exceeded that of Sheffield. In Liverpool and Huddersfield there were over seven boys and girls per thousand of population in secondary schools, whilst in Newcastle and Birkenhead the figures were 12.67 and 15.3 respectively.

Both Derbyshire and Sheffield were deficient in old endowed grammar schools. Some, such as the Henry Fanshawe School at Dronfield, Derbyshire and the Royal Grammar School in Sheffield, did exist but they were extremely few in number and had not been supplemented by any substantial number of recent foundations. These shortcomings could not have been made good by the School Boards whose function it was to provide elementary and not secondary education and, thus, when the new authorities took over in 1903 they were faced with a situation in which large amounts of money needed to be spent in order to provide the children in their areas with anything like an acceptable number of secondary school places. Sheffield was not alone in this respect, however, for in his Report on Secondary Education in Liverpool (1904) Sadler stated that "Few, if any, of the great cities in England lack so signally as Liverpool the aid of large endowments for the support of secondary education." (23)

Sadler observed that the comparatively recently industrialised areas of England were also imperfectly supplied with secondary education

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(23) M.E. Sadler, Report on Secondary Education in Liverpool, Liverpool, 1904, p. 62.



and quoted, as an example, Staffordshire, where a survey conducted by the Director of Education in 1903 had revealed that there were only 2.23 boys and girls in secondary schools for every thousand of population.<sup>(24)</sup> In Newcastle, on the other hand, the problem was not so much the small number of secondary school places available as what Sadler called "the lack of linkages in the system ... and at times a half contempt for subjects which at first sight look unpractical or detached from the workaday duties of life",<sup>(25)</sup> This latter factor was perhaps responsible for the rapid falling away in the size of the school population after the age of fifteen was reached, though it must be added that such a feature was typical of secondary education in most other parts of Britain at that time.<sup>(26)</sup> This seeming disdain for those subjects which did not have obvious, direct practical applications was something against which Sadler argued repeatedly in his secondary reports.

The Sheffield enquiry was the first and the briefest of these reports and there is little comment in it upon the esteem in which education was held by the people of Sheffield in particular or by the people of England in general, The Report on Secondary and Higher Education in Essex, however, is much fuller,<sup>(27)</sup> and the presentation of the case for a liberal secondary education much more detailed. Earlier, in his Newcastle Report,

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- (24) M.E. Sadler, Report on Secondary and Higher Education in Derbyshire, Derby, 1905, p.9.
- (25) M.E. Sadler, Report on Secondary and Higher Education in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Newcastle, 1905, p.4.
- (26) M.E. Sadler, Newcastle Report, p.8. See also the graphs in Sadler's Derbyshire Report, pp. 5-6, his Newcastle Report, pp. 10-11, the Liverpool Report, p. 75 and the Essex Report, pp. 18-19.
- (27) 418 pages as compared to the 45 pages of the Sheffield Report.

Sadler had spoken of the need in the middle secondary schools for a specialised course of study beginning at twelve years of age and ending at sixteen at the earliest,<sup>(28)</sup> but he was not "anti-science" and in the Essex Report he gave detailed examples of the impact which science had had upon educational thought in demanding a quick perception of the relation between cause and effect; in opening up new tracts of knowledge with which the pupil must acquaint himself; in changing our concept of historical development; and in modifying the way in which we think about the conditions of human life. But the quintessence of his argument was that science had not removed the necessity for the training in linguistic accuracy in which the older education excelled, rather had it "deepened the need for those studies of the thoughts and ideals of mankind, which, under the name of the Humanities, have borne a great part in the best tradition of secondary education since the Revival of Learning".<sup>(29)</sup>

This, briefly, was the philosophy upon which Sadler based his reports and which determined the nature of the recommendations which he made. In the case of Sheffield it was clear that the prime need was to enlarge at once the provision of secondary education within the city, particularly for boys,<sup>(30)</sup> There was a need for "a secondary school which should give the highest instruction in English, in classics, in mathematics and in foreign languages, together with instruction in science." It should train boys intending for professional careers, for the higher posts in business and for courses at the universities. It should be able to give the best possible education in small classes, to boys of high

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(28) M.E. Sadler, Newcastle Report, p. 41.

(29) M.E. Sadler, Report on Secondary and Higher Education in Essex, Chelmsford, 1906, p. 25.

(30) M.E. Sadler, Sheffield Report, p. 23.

mathematical and linguistic ability. Its courses should be long, extending from 10 or 12 to 17- 18 or 19 years of age and it should be "on the highest plane of intellectual efficiency; thoroughly well staffed; accommodated in a good building; well-equipped with a library and apparatus; and carefully organised from the point of view of school games, and other forms of school activity which develop esprit de corps, give a good tone and teach the virtues of corporate life." (31)

The establishment of such a secondary school of the highest quality Sadler saw as the pre-eminent need of the city. He recognised that Wesley College, which was about to be re-organised on a public basis, had great claims on the consideration of the city but thought that the Grammar School, being a more ancient foundation and already a public trust, should have first claim to being the institution selected for improvement. He appreciated that the Education Committee could not afford the expenditure needed to bring both establishments up to the required standard and, therefore, suggested that there would be considerable advantage and ultimate (though not immediate) economy in amalgamating the two. The title of the Grammar School should be retained but the best buildings for the new school were those then occupied by Wesley College. These premises required extensive and expensive alterations but such a union of the two schools would provide the city with its one conspicuous Higher Secondary School for Boys which could do for Sheffield what Bradford Grammar School, Manchester Grammar School and King Edward's High School, Birmingham, had done for their respective cities.

Sadler was aware that legal or financial considerations might prevent the Committee from implementing this suggestion for the union of

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(31) Ibid., p. 24.



the Grammar School and the College and he, therefore, proceeded to detail alternative plans for strengthening each of the two schools separately. This was not necessary, however, for the Committee accepted his original recommendation, (32)

Sadler then turned his attention to the need for another secondary school in the city to feed the Technical School with a steady stream of well-educated sixteen year old boys, and the Pupil-Teacher Centre with a number of well-educated sixteen year old girls. Such a school, he believed, would most advantageously be sited in the centre of the town within convenient access by tramcar from all parts of the borough. Thus, the Central Higher School was an obvious choice for development as this "middle" secondary school. It should be a thoroughly good school of a purely modern type with a well-planned curriculum of studies extending over the years twelve to sixteen. It should be a school with only low fees - around a shilling a week - and a full and well-trained staff. It should be in two divisions, one for boys and one for girls, with a different curriculum in each division though, should the Headmaster so desire, boys and girls might well work together in some of the classes. The curriculum which Sadler deemed desirable for the boys' school was based upon English, mathematics, French, the physical sciences, drawing and manual training, whilst that for the girls had English, mathematics, French (or German), botany and hygiene as its core. For the girls there should also be vocal music, drawing and the "arts of home life" though Sadler believed that care

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(32) See below pp. 72-4.

should be taken not to over-load the girls who, he believed, were generally more assiduous in their school work than the boys. Finally, in keeping with his deep concern that the best of English secondary education should be preserved and not sacrificed to the purely cognitive objectives of say, the German system, he advocated that care and energy should be devoted to developing in the school a strong corporate life. There should also be a large number of free tuition scholarships tenable at the school and they should be supplemented by another fund out of which further remission of fees could privately be made in deserving cases. This fund could also be used to give further assistance to scholarship winners whose parents experienced particular difficulty in keeping their children at school. (33)

This last exhortation concerning the Central Higher School was linked to a further recommendation that the Education Committee institute a well-planned scholarship scheme to supplement the existing awards. These included Town Trust, Corporation, Firth, Royal Grammar School, Lancasterian, School of Art and Grimesthorpe Endowment Scholarships, but a much fuller and more systematic provision was urgently needed. To this end, Sadler recommended that each July there should be held an examination in elementary subjects (with a paper to test general knowledge and intelligence of observation) open to all children under twelve in the public elementary schools and in those preparatory schools which were regularly inspected and found efficient. The standard required for scholarships at the Grammar School, Wesley College and the High School for Girls should, in view of the longer course, be higher than that for election to a scholarship

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(33) M.E. Sadler, Sheffield Report, pp. 29-30.

tenable at the Central Secondary School. In all cases successful candidates in the written examination should undergo an oral examination by the Head of the school at which they desired to hold their scholarship in order to ascertain that the pupil was really suited for the work of the secondary school in question.<sup>(34)</sup> The scheme of major and minor scholarships which Sadler outlined would cost, he estimated, £784, £1,443 and £2,082 over the first three years respectively.<sup>(35)</sup> The scheme which the authority actually implemented in 1906 bore but little resemblance to Sadler's and its overall cost was almost three times as great.<sup>(36)</sup>

Sadler's plans for the Central Secondary School fitted in well with the policy of the Board of Education that after 1st August, 1904, pupil-teachers in urban areas would not be admitted under sixteen years of age and that after 1st August, 1905 they would not be permitted to serve in a public elementary school more than half the time the school was open. They would also be required to receive half-time instruction in an approved pupil-teacher centre, throughout their engagement, which might extend over two years. Thus, after leaving the Central Secondary School at sixteen, boys and girls intending to become teachers would be admitted as pupil-teachers and would then spend two years at the Pupil-Teacher Centre. The Sheffield Centre Sadler believed was "already doing excellent work" and under the new conditions it would increase still further its usefulness to the city.<sup>(37)</sup>

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(34) Ibid., pp. 38-41.

(35) Ibid., p. 45.

(36) See below p. 327.

(37) M.E. Sadler, Sheffield Report, p. 35.



Other recommendations of the Sadler Report were that the Day Training College should have its own Head and Committee; that the evening classes should be co-ordinated; that there should be the regular inspection of private schools in the city; and that the Education Committee should issue an Annual Directory describing the entire educational resources of the city and also organise conferences on educational methods for teachers in all the city's schools. He also advocated that when financial exigencies permitted the Committee should provide hostels for students at the University College, develop the School of Cookery into a School of Domestic Arts and Science, and provide a good reference library for the city.

The probable additional net annual cost of carrying out the immediate recommendations Sadler estimated at £8,520 per annum, in which the largest single items were for expenditure on the scholarship system (£2,670), on the Central Secondary School (£1,800), and on the improvement of higher secondary education for boys (£1,500). The total outlay of £8,520 was equivalent to a rate of 1½d. (38)

Sadler's report was completed on 22nd July 1903 and received by the Higher Education Sub-Committee at its meeting on 10th August, but in view of the importance of the Sadler document it was agreed to hold a special meeting of the Sub-Committee on 20th August. At this meeting a formal vote of thanks to Sadler was carried and the ad hoc Section which had been appointed on 20th April, 1903 to report on the existing institutions affording higher education was enlarged so that its full membership then consisted of the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman of the Education Committee,

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(38) Ibid., 44.

the Chairmen of the Higher Education, School Management, School Attendance and Evening Schools Sub-Committees, along with Rev. J.W. Merryweather, Rev. G.W. Turner and Councillor Shaw,<sup>(39)</sup> The Section was then given the task of framing recommendations on Sadler's Report for the Higher Education Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee also recommended that the Governing bodies and the Heads of the institutions dealt with in Sadler's Report be invited to express their views on those sections of the Report which affected them particularly.

Thus, the first organisational machinery necessary to consider and act upon the Report was set up. On 9th December 1904 Sections for the School of Cookery and Domestic Training and for the Pupil-Teacher Centre were established, and on 7th April 1905 a Special Section to consider a Scholarships Scheme was set up.<sup>(40)</sup>

The Higher Education Sub-Committee readily agreed with Sadler that there was an urgent need for improving secondary education, and accepted that the best procedure was to seek the amalgamation of the Grammar School and Wesley College. The first step towards securing this was taken when the Chairman of the Higher Education Sub-Committee, Alderman Hughes, approached representatives of the Wesleyan Twentieth Century Fund at a meeting in London on 13th October, 1903, with a view to securing the sale of the College premises to the Education Committee. The Wesleyan Fund looked favourably on the idea of establishing a secondary school of

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(39) Higher Education Sub-Committee (H.E.S.C.), 20th August 1903, S.E.C.M., 1903-4, p. 235.

(40) H.E.S.C., 9th December, 1904 and 7th April, 1905, S.E.C.M., 1903-4, p. 463 and p. 675.

the highest quality in Sheffield and indicated that they would be prepared to sell the College buildings to the Education Committee provided that the new school were run on strictly undenominational lines. (41)

The Fund appointed three representatives to meet with the Chairman of the Higher Education Sub-Committee and at a subsequent meeting "after considerable discussion in a most friendly manner" the price of £18,000 was agreed upon for the sale of the land, buildings and apparatus. (42)

This meeting took place on 23rd October 1903. On the same date the Chairman of the Higher Education Sub-Committee and the Secretary to the Committee, J.F. Moss, met Hon. W.N. Bruce and Mr. Leach of the Board of Education, who gave their advice as to the best procedures to follow and also gave an assurance that the Board would be prepared to consider the proposals of the Education Committee with reference to higher education either in sections or in a complete form. Subsequently the Board indicated that the most convenient method of securing the amalgamation of the Royal Grammar School and Wesley College would be by making an amendment to the existing scheme for the Grammar School so as to give a clear majority on the Governing Body to the City Council acting through its Education Committee and empowering the

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(41) H.E.S.C., 21st December, 1903, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, p. 572.

(42) Some portraits of certain Wesleyan ministers and a stained glass window in the chapel were not included in this and were to be removed and retained by the Wesleyans.



Governing Body to carry out the transaction.

The results of these negotiations were reported to the Higher Education Sub-Committee which after certain discussion passed a resolution, "That with a view to the amalgamation of the Royal Grammar School and Wesley College into one secondary school as suggested in the report of Mr. Sadler, the Special Report Section be appointed to confer with the Governors of the Grammar School to ascertain if they are willing to purchase the Wesley College and that the Governors be requested to agree to a joint management of the school by them and the Education Committee".<sup>(43)</sup>

In November the Governors communicated to the Section their willingness to acquiesce in the scheme which had been outlined to them, but at the meeting of the full Education Committee in January 1904 an amendment to the report of the Higher Education Sub-Committee was carried to the effect that the matter be referred back to that Sub-Committee and that it be requested to consider the question of the two schools being merged into one under the direct control of the Education Committee. The voting was close; 19 for the amendment and 18 against, with the Rev. A.B. Haslam, the Headmaster of the Grammar School, abstaining.<sup>(44)</sup>

After further negotiations, the Governors, in February 1904, informed the Chairman of the Higher Education Sub-Committee that they were

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(43) H.E.S.C., 21st December, 1903, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, p. 573.

(44) S.E.C., 25th January, 1904, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, p. 626.

prepared to join with representatives of the Education Committee in settling details of a scheme proposing the acquisition of the school by the Education Committee. This scheme provided for the Committee to buy the Grammar School buildings and premises at a price fixed by two arbitrators, or their umpire, as between a willing seller and a willing buyer. Having bought the College the Committee was then to let the Grammar School move into Wesley College and the two schools were to be run on undenominational lines under a committee of managers, two thirds of whom were to be nominated by the Education Committee and one third by the Governors from among their own numbers.<sup>(45)</sup> The Grammar School governors were to retain all the endowments together with the proceeds of the sale of the Grammar School buildings and premises to the Education Committee. This money was to be invested and the annual yield (estimated at around £750) used to pay the Committee £200 p.a. in lieu of the scholarships provided for by the existing Grammar School scheme: four leaving scholarships to any university of £50 p.a. for four years for boys educated at the Grammar School.

The final draft Scheme as drawn up by the Higher Education Sub-Committee was considered by the full Committee on 28th November, 1904.<sup>(46)</sup> A few minor amendments were made and it was also agreed that the King be asked to permit the use of the style the "King Edward the Seventh School at Sheffield". This permission was received in the following month and in January 1905 the draft scheme for King Edward VII School was submitted to the Board of Education.

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(45) H.E.S.C., 18th February, 1904, S.E.C.M., 1903-4, p. 683.

(46) S.E.C., 28th November, 1903 and School Management Sub-Committee (S.M.S.C.) 7th October, 1903, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, pp. 460-1 and 419.

The King Edward Governors first met on 6th March, 1905 and immediately addressed themselves to the appointment of a Headmaster. Fifty-four applications were received and from a short list of three, James Harvey Hitchens, M.A., then Headmaster of Wolverhampton Grammar School, was appointed at a salary of £800, plus a residence at the school including fuel, light, rates and house taxes. He was given free access to the Governors and the right to express his views on any matter relating to the government of the school before any decision was arrived at. He was also authorised to select and recommend the appointment of all assistant teachers and to give notice of dismissal to them, upon sufficient grounds, provided he reported the matter at once to the Governors. (47)

The question of the appointment of staff for the new school was, of course, crucial for if the objective of establishing a high grade secondary school able to be ranked with Bradford Grammar School or Manchester Grammar School were to be realised then it was essential that a staff of the highest calibre be recruited. Such a staff could be attracted only by the inducement of salaries commensurate with their qualifications and talents. Thus, the Governors decided to appoint five members of staff at salaries rising by increments from £220 or £250 to £300. One of these was selected as Senior Master at an extra £50 per year. (48) These salaries compared very favourably with the £160 which was the typical salary of an assistant in the former Royal Grammar School and

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(47) 'Regulations for King Edward VII School at Sheffield', V and VI, H.E.S.C., 8th January, 1905, S.E.C.M. 1905-6, p. 542.

(48) Governors' Minutes King Edward VII School (G.K.E.S.), 19th May, 1905, S.E.C.M. 1905-6, pp. 765-6.



of course with the £110-£120 which was a typical salary of a trained Sheffield elementary teacher at the time. Even an experienced Headmaster of a public elementary school was at that time receiving only £200.<sup>(49)</sup> Subsequently five more assistants were appointed at salaries of £180 or £200 per annum rising to £250, and a further five at salaries rising from £150 to £200.<sup>(50)</sup> The Headmaster's recommendations for appointments to the first of these posts were approved by the Governors in July 1905. He was able to secure some extremely well-qualified and experienced teachers (including five who had served at the Royal Grammar School) whose work over the succeeding years was to produce a distinguished list of Oxford and Cambridge successes and a set of Higher Certificate results which stood favourable comparison with those of the great secondary and public schools in the country.

Whilst extensive modifications to the Wesley College buildings were being carried out, the school was conducted in the old University College premises in St. James's and it was not until the beginning of the 1906-7 academic year that it was able to occupy the Clarkehouse Road site.<sup>(51)</sup> His Majesty's Inspectors visited the school three times in 1907 and reported that, "the organisation is that of a First Grade School and provision is made for separate Classical, Modern and Science sides in the top classes, each side aiming for scholarship standards."<sup>(52)</sup> However, they thought that the school was not reaping the full benefit from its "experienced and

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(49) S.M.S.C., 1st March, 1905, S.E.C.M. 1904-5, p. 645.

(50) G.K.E.S., 29th May, 1905, S.E.C.M. 1905-6, p. 647.

(51) The school was formally opened by Augustine Birrell on 5 November, 1906.

(52) B.E. to S.E.C., 17th August, 1907, reprinted in S.E.C.M. 1907-8, p. 313.

well qualified staff" as the senior members of staff were being called upon to do too much teaching and consequently did not have enough time to supervise the work of their less experienced colleagues. They were, apparently, fully occupied with classes at the top end of the school which were at that time still small. In terms of old teacher-pupil ratios this was a costly use of staff, but there can be no disputing the high standard of instruction which was being given.

Boys were entered for the examinations of the Oxford and Cambridge Board since that was the most academically prestigious examining body, and it is interesting to trace the increasingly elevated comparisons which the Headmaster made in his reports to the Governors on the successes which the school obtained in those examinations. In 1906, the first year in which the school submitted candidates, the Higher Certificate was gained by nine boys, one of whom obtained a distinction in German. Eleven candidates passed the Lower Certificate examination, gaining one first class pass in German, six in arithmetic, four in additional mathematics, one in English, four in history, one in geography and one in physics and chemistry. (53)

In the following year eleven boys passed the Higher Certificate Examination securing seven distinctions in five different subjects, whilst at Lower Certificate level twelve pupils passed, gaining twenty distinctions. One candidate from the school, H. Glauert, gave clear indications of the high distinctions he was to achieve later at Cambridge, by gaining seven

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(53) G.K.E.S., 14th September, 1906, S.E.C.M. 1906-7, p. 345.

First Class passes in the Lower Certificate, an achievement surpassed by only one other candidate in the country. (54)

These results prompted the Head to point out that amongst the important schools in what he termed "the Neighbourhood", King Edward's had obtained more Higher Certificates than Leeds Grammar School, Giggleswick and Sedbergh. By 1911, however, he was making comparisons with Eton, Marlborough, Rugby and Bradford Grammar School for in that year the school secured a total number of Certificates surpassed by only seven schools in the whole country. It also obtained distinctions in seven different subjects, only Rugby and Oundle gaining distinctions in a greater number. (55)

During the period up to the outbreak of the Great War the number of scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge and the honours which Old Edwardians won whilst at those universities also rose steadily. Among its early successes the school was able to list an Open Classical Scholarship of £80 p.a. for five years at Queens College, Oxford, and an Open Modern History Exhibition of £40 p.a. at Trinity College, Cambridge. (56) By 1911, the Headmaster was stating in his Report to the Governors that he "wanted recording permanently in the Minutes the following list of brilliant successes won by old boys of the school.

2 First Class Final Honours in Modern Languages at Oxford.

1 First Class Honours, Part I, Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge.

1 First Class Honours, Part I, Classical Moderations at Oxford.

1 First Class Honours, Part I, Mathematical Moderations at Oxford.

1 Mappin Medal and Honours Degree in Metallurgy at Sheffield." (57)

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(54) G.K.E.S., 16th September, 1907, S.E.C.M. 1907-8, p. 312.

(55) G.K.E.S., 15th September, 1911, S.E.C.M. 1911-2, pp. 314-5.

(56) G.K.E.S., 15th April, 1906, S.E.C.M. 1905-6, p. 717.

(57) G.K.E.S., 17th July, 1911, S.E.C.M. 1911-2, p. 216.



To these successes was added, in 1913, the achievement of another Old Edwardian, S.W. Rawson, who whilst at Queen's College, Oxford, not only won a First in Greats but was also placed first in the Order in the whole examination and was thus the best Classic of the year in his university,<sup>(58)</sup> Whilst at King Edward's Rawson had won a Classical Scholarship of the Sheffield Royal Grammar School Foundation, the Founders Exhibition and the Ackroyd Scholarship,<sup>(59)</sup> as well as an Open Scholarship at Oxford. Earlier the Head had informed the Governors that H. Glauert had been placed amongst the Wranglers in Part II of the Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge and had also obtained the Star of Distinction in the extra subjects, together with the Tyson Medal for Astronomy.<sup>(60)</sup> Thus, in the eighth year of its existence the school had produced the best Classic of the year at Oxford and almost, if not quite, the best Mathematician of the year at Cambridge.

These, of course, were academic distinctions of the highest order but they were not just the isolated achievements of two exceptionally gifted Old Boys. The university successes of former pupils increased steadily in the years before the outbreak of the First World War and they were backed up by an equally outstanding rise in the number of Certificate passes and distinctions which the school obtained. In the same year, 1913, that Rawson and Glauert secured their outstanding degrees at University, pupils of King Edward's obtained a larger number of both Higher Certificates and Distinctions than any other school save only Rugby, Oundle, Bradford and Marlborough.<sup>(61)</sup>

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(58) K.E.S.G., 3 October, 1913, S.E.C.M. 1913-4, p. 312.

(59) The Ackroyd Scholarship was won in competition with boys in the best secondary schools in the North of England.

(60) G.K.E.S., 11 July 1913, S.E.C.M. 1913-4, p. 215.

(61) G.K.E.S., 12th September, 1913, S.E.C.M. 1913-4, p. 306.

Open Scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge were, of course, the highest mark of academic achievement to which any school could aspire and the general impression which one obtains from a perusal of the Headmaster's Reports and the records of the Governors' meetings is that their prime concern was with this kind of success and that the school was generally orientated towards those universities. This was clearly the feeling of certain members of the Education Committee who alleged that the school, whilst being extremely well-disposed towards the ancient universities, was not at all well-inclined towards Sheffield University.<sup>(62)</sup> The Headmaster felt impelled to reply to what he considered to be an attack upon the school and stated before the Governors that the figures quoted at the Committee meeting were inaccurate and thus failed to support the argument based upon them. He claimed that King Edward VII School had been thoroughly loyal to Sheffield University as was witnessed by the fact that of the 27 boys who had left the Fifth and Sixth Forms that July, twelve had become full day students of that University. Moreover, he added, "the very best of our boys with ability in scientific directions have gone forward to the Applied Science Department of Sheffield University and not to Oxford or Cambridge, though they could easily have won first rate Open Scholarships at the latter had they so desired."<sup>(63)</sup>

Whilst there was undoubted validity in the final figures which Hichens quoted, his manipulation of some of the statistics seems somewhat tortuous and gives the impression that he was rather straining to make a

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(62) See Sheffield Daily Independent, 24th October, 1911.

(63) G.K.E.S., 1st December, 1911, S.E.C.M. 1911-12, p. 452.



point - and a defensive point at that. King Edward's had sent a fair proportion of its boys to Sheffield University and they had achieved considerable success there, particularly in metallurgy, engineering and other applied sciences, but there can be little doubt that the general ethos which Hichens and his staff strove to create was that of the great public and secondary schools of the country.<sup>(64)</sup> The highest priority was given to intellectual excellence and whilst Sheffield University had great merits in the applied sciences, it was towards Oxford and Cambridge that the school primarily directed itself, certainly in classics, arts and pure sciences.

So great was its concern to bring the finest young brains in the city into its care that in 1910 an attempt, which was only temporarily successful, was made to secure the transfer of the most talented boys from the Central Secondary school to King Edward's.<sup>(65)</sup> The Committee resolution authorising this remained in force for only one year<sup>(66)</sup> but the episode is indicative of the zeal with which intellectual excellence was pursued by the school, and there can be little disputing the fact that in the establishment and development of King Edward VII School the Education Committee did secure for the boys of the city that high quality of secondary education to which Sadler had given the highest priority. In its academic life the school determined to produce results comparable with those of the greatest public and secondary schools in the country,

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(64) For its manifestations in the corporate life of the school see below p. 84.

(65) H.E.S.C., 18 March, 1910, S.E.C.M. 1910-11, p.2.

(66) S.E.C., 25th October, 1911, S.E.C.M. 1911-2, p. 363.



whilst in its corporate life it aimed to imitate their traditions and ethos. A prefect system was introduced; <sup>(67)</sup> debating, literary, orchestral, photographic and science societies were set up; <sup>(68)</sup> and a Cadet Corps founded. <sup>(69)</sup> The sporting activities of the school were inhibited at first by the lack of adequate playing fields, but the purchase of fields at Whiteley Woods some two miles from the school, though not ideal, did much to rectify this.

Thus, insofar as the first of Sadler's objectives was concerned, that of the setting up of a first-rate grammar school for boys, there was little that could be criticised at any rate regarding the academic achievements and corporate development of the new King Edward VII School in the years before the outbreak of the First World War, though its financial provisions, particularly relating to fees and the scholarship places, were something of which the Board of Education was critical. <sup>(70)</sup>

Sadler's second principal recommendation was that the Central Higher School be developed as a "middle" secondary school catering for boys and girls aged 12-16 years. Before then, however, the 'Managers' of the Central Higher School had considered a request from the Principal of the Central Higher School together with a recommendation from the Sheffield School Board that consideration be given to the question of the school being recognised as a secondary school. The Managers recommended that the Board of Education be asked to recognise the school as from

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(67) G.K.E.S., 6th July, 1906, S.E.C.M. 1906-7, p. 195.

(68) G.K.E.S., 3rd November, 1905; S.E.C.M. 1905-6, p. 1076.

(69) G.K.E.S., 1st November, 1906, S.E.C.M. 1906-7, p. 718.

(70) B.E. to S.E.C. 3rd December, 1903, P.R.O. Ed. 53/451 and H.M.I., Report on First Inspection of King Edward VII School, Sheffield, 22-25 February, 1910, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7482.

1st August, 1903 under Divisions A and B for Secondary Day Schools, <sup>(71)</sup> but the Board replied that the conversion of the Higher Elementary School into a Secondary School was a matter requiring not only the careful examination of the needs of the town and of the nature of the school regarding its curriculum, age limits and fees, but also the proper co-ordination of the new school with existing secondary schools on the one hand and places of Higher and technical education on the other.

These demands of the Board led directly to Michael Sadler being asked to carry out his survey of higher and secondary education in Sheffield and on hearing of this South Kensington informed the Education Committee that in these special circumstances they would allow any scholars who had passed Standards V or VI and who were 12 years of age to sit the next Central Higher School entrance examination and, if successful, enter the third year's course there. <sup>(72)</sup> This was granted as a temporary concession only, but after a succession of meetings and a stream of correspondence the Board finally gave their approval to the idea of turning the Central Higher School into a Secondary School. <sup>(73)</sup>

The Education Committee had intended to follow Sadler's advice and fix the fees at £2 but in view of the large number of free places the Board preferred them to be £3. The Committee had proposed that there be two hundred free exhibitions held in the first and second years and that at the end of this period they be extended for another two years if the work and progress of the pupils were satisfactory, and provided also that they

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(71) Governors Central Higher School, 21st April, 1903, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, p. 28. The Head's letter was dated 17th January, 1903. Division A related to grants in respect of scholars of 12 years and over and Division B to the average age of each form above 12.

(72) B.E. to S.E.C, 24th June, 1903, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, p. 275.

(73) The correspondence extended over Dec. 1903 and Jan. 1904, P.R.O. 53/451.



did not win a bursary. These bursaries were to be regarded as necessary maintenance allowances to pledged candidates for Pupil-Teachership and were not to be reckoned with the amounts chargeable for ordinary exhibitions and scholarships but added to the cost of training teachers.

The Board eventually agreed to a plan of the Education Committee's whereby parents were asked to sign an undertaking that they would keep their children at the Central Secondary School for four years. If they withdrew their child from the school before then and could not show good reason for so doing they could be fined £2. This undertaking was sufficient for the Board to withdraw its opposition to the £2 tuition fee though it still objected to the rather large number of free places.<sup>(74)</sup> However, in May 1905, the Managers were prevailed upon to reduce the number of free places in the school and a new scheme was devised under which the money saved was to be used to benefit exhibitioners who received a good report at the end of the second year but who did not win a bursary.

The greatest problem which confronted the school in the period before the First World War, however, was that of the separation of the institution into two distinct and eventually separate divisions - one for boys and one for girls. This presented problems first of all in terms of personnel and secondly in terms of the very structure of the buildings themselves. The suggestion that there should be separate boys' and girls' departments came initially from the Board of Education which inclined to the view that 800 was too large a number to have within one secondary

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(74) Even this low fee did not satisfy everyone. On 15th April, 1905 the Sheffield Federated Trades Council informed the Education Committee that "such a fee was entirely opposed to the interests of the working class of the city". J.F. Moss (Sec. to S.E.C.) and Ald, Franklin also pressed this point when they visited the Board, B.E. Dept. Min. 3.5.04. P.R.O. Ed. 53/451.



school. (75) Instead, they suggested the girls should be separated from the boys, and have their own particular section of the building and their own Headmistress.

The Governors requested that the matter of a Headmistress be deferred until they had considered the question of the re-organisation which would be necessary if the adjoining building were appropriated for the use of the girls. In the meantime a firm of architects - Gibbs and Flockton - was instructed to prepare plans and a report on the adaptation of the Firth College buildings to provide extensions for extra accommodations for the girls. (76)

The great problem in separating the girls 'division from the boys' was that the Central Secondary School buildings occupied a cramped and tightly limited site in the very centre of the city and were, in fact, part of a quadrangle of buildings which housed the Pupil-Teacher Centre, the Education Committee Offices, the old elementary school and also the University College buildings which in 1906 were being used temporarily by King Edward VII School. The main block in the Central Secondary part of the complex consisted of a four storey building which contained, in addition to the usual classrooms, an Assembly Hall, running the full length of the building, the Head's room, the staff room and the kitchens, dining room and store-rooms. One room was devoted to Art and another was divided up, one part being used as a normal classroom, the other as a biology laboratory. To

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(75) B.E. to S.E.C., 20th December, 1905, S.E.C.M., 1905-6, p. 1191.

(76) Governors' Minutes Central Sec. Schools (G.C.S.S.) 19th February, 1906, S.E.C.M., 1905-6, p. 1240.

this main building (which had been erected in 1880) a new science wing had been added, in 1896, at right angles to the main building. In its basement were large workshops for woodwork and metal work; on the first floor there was a large machine drawing room, and above that large chemistry laboratories. Physics was accommodated beyond the main block. (77)

Altogether there were 22 classrooms which, on the basis of 30 per class, would permit of a total school population of 660 pupils. It was possible to build three extra classrooms and thus raise the maximum accommodation to 750. At the time of the first inspection by His Majesty's Inspectors in May 1906 there were, in fact, 879 pupils in 27 classes. Of these, six classes contained more than 30 pupils, thirteen had 35, and one had 36. This, the H.M.I.s believed, constituted very serious overcrowding and had led to two classes being taken together on the boys' side and on the girls' side for English Literature, Scripture, History and Geography. Thus, some classes contained as many as 60 or 70 pupils. One class had no fixed abode and wandered from one room to another. Provision for art was inadequate. There was no room for a library, the Headmaster's room being used to store reference books. There was no gymnasium, and the Assembly Hall was too small to accommodate all the boys and girls at the same time.

To remedy these deficiencies the Governors planned to utilise the old Firth College buildings adjoining the Education Offices. These proposed alterations would bring the accommodation up to 950, and would

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(77) H.M.I., Report on Inspection of Central Sec. School, Sheffield, May 1906, in S.E.C.M. 1906-7, pp. 269-70.



provide a Girl's Assembly Hall, a gymnasium, extra laboratories for botany and general science, and a library but not extra rooms for art.

Even so, the Inspectors recommended that, whilst tact and compromise were immediate palliatives to the problems of buildings being used partly by boys and partly by girls, the Committee should try to develop two independent girls' schools of the second grade type - one central and the other in less crowded and less smoky surroundings - so that the boys could have exclusive use of the existing Central Secondary School buildings. (78)

The Inspectors visited the school in May 1906. By August separate divisions had been set up for the boys and for the girls. Miss G.M. Couzens, B.A. the Superintending Mistress of the girls was appointed Headmistress of the Girls' Division with the right of free access to the Governors, though on matters concerning the curriculum and the general arrangement of classes she was to consult with the Headmaster, Mr. J.A. Iliffe. (79) The staffing of the schools, however, still presented problems. H.M. Inspectors reported that in the period since the school had become a secondary school the Head had "done as much ... as could be done". Games had been started, many school societies initiated and a school magazine produced. The assistants were hardworking and painstaking and the science side was particularly strong and experienced, but there were weaknesses due to a shortage of staff and to some teachers being required to teach subjects with which they were not familiar.

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(78) Ibid., p. 272.

(79) G.C.S.S., 20th August, 1906, S.E.C.M., 1906-7, p. 266.



It was recommended that at least 6 or 7 extra teachers be appointed in order to reduce the size of the teaching groups. The bulk of these teachers were to be women and the Governors were asked to bear in mind the fact "that in English subjects, in Geography, in Mathematics and in French the staff needs strengthening",<sup>(80)</sup> In strengthening the staff, salaries were clearly a crucial factor for, whilst the Head's salary was deemed to be adequate and indeed would be rather generous when the boys' and girls' schools were fully separated, the salaries of the assistant masters were not adequate, and those of the mistresses were decidedly low, too low to attract people of quality. Little was done to rectify this situation but the validity of the Inspectors criticisms was well illustrated in September 1908 when the Headmaster reported to the Governors that no suitable applications had been received for two posts of science master and form mistresses which had recently been vacated. The Governors, therefore, agreed to re-advertise and to offer the science post at £175 p.a. instead of £150 in order to attract a suitable teacher.<sup>(81)</sup>

The discipline and organisation were, in 1906, described as "good" and the children attentive and well-behaved. Corporal punishment was given by the Head on occasions but the most common form of discipline seems to have been that of lines which, apparently, were given with rather too great a frequency by the assistant teachers. There was an "excellent monitorial system" and the Inspectors hoped that when this made itself fully felt it would be possible to allow the children greater freedom in

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(80) H.M.I., C.S.S. Report 1906, p. 273.

(81) G.C.S.S., 21st September, 1908, S.E.C.M., 1908-9, p. 280

their movements between classrooms. It was apparently then the custom for them to proceed silently along the corridors in pairs led by their teachers - a clear relic of the elementary school days. (82)

The Inspectors visited the schools again in November 1906 and in March and July 1907, by which time they were able to report that "substantial progress" had been made. The transfer of six classes of girls to the Firth College building had eased the over-crowding and the boys' staff had been strengthened by the appointment of a highly qualified mathematics master. On the boys' side all first year classes had been reduced to 30 and no class in the school exceeded 35. The syllabuses in science, mathematics, history and geography had been revised and improved and the laboratories were no longer used by Pupil-Teachers. Better accommodation for art was still required, however, and there was as yet no proper gymnasium; nor was it possible to provide either of these in the existing building. (83)

On the girls' side, the top six classes had been accommodated in the Firth College building, the whole of which was then reserved exclusively for the Girls' School. The alterations which had been effected so far had been in the Inspectors' view, "a conspicuous success" and when finished the buildings would be able to accommodate nine classes and thus substantially ease, if not entirely remove, the overcrowding which still existed.

The academic record of the Central Secondary Schools in the period before the outbreak of the First World War could not hope to match

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(82) H.M.I., C.S.S. Report 1906, p. 284.

(83) H.M.I., C.S.S. Report 1907, in S.E.C.M. 1907-8, p. 260.



that of King Edward VII School; its basic raw material was not nearly so able nor so highly selected. Nevertheless, good progress was made in this crucial aspect of the school's work. In February 1906, the School was recognised as a centre for the Oxford Local Examinations,<sup>(84)</sup> and in June 1907 the Governors, having received a letter from the Sheffield University authorities, agreed to recommend that it be a condition of the award of scholarships at that University in the faculties of Arts, Pure Science and Medicine that the holders have passed the examinations of the Northern Joint Board,<sup>(85)</sup>

The results which the school obtained in the 1907 Oxford Locals were very creditable. Nineteen of the twenty Senior candidates satisfied the examiners, five with Third Class Honours, and one with Second Class Honours including a distinction in mathematics. At Junior level, ninety-seven out of the hundred candidates were successful and 20 Third Class, 7 Second Class and one First Class Honours Certificates were obtained.<sup>(86)</sup>

By 1912 the school was also entering candidates for the Higher Certificate of the Oxford and Cambridge Board. It gained nine distinctions and all eight boys entered for Additional Mathematics did sufficiently well in trigonometry, statics and dynamics to deserve mention. By that time the school was also securing far more high level passes in the Oxford Local Examinations and in the same year it gained seven First Class Honours, nine Second Class Honours and ten Third Class Honours Certificates, along with thirty-six passes at Higher Certificate level. The Junior

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(84) G.C.S.S., 19th February, 1906, S.E.C.M. 1905-6, p. 1240.

(85) G.C.S.S., 17th June, 1907, S.E.C.M. 1907-8, p. 97.

(86) G.C.S.S., 16th September, 1907, S.E.C.M. 1907-8, p. 307-8.



candidates gained eleven First Class, twelve Second Class and thirty-five Third Class Certificates in addition to thirty-five passes.<sup>(87)</sup> After 1911 a small number of candidates were also entered for the Civil Service Examination.<sup>(88)</sup>

At University level the school's record was also one of increasing success. A number of local scholarships, chiefly to Sheffield University, were won by pupils of the school and a few gained awards at Oxford and Cambridge. In 1907, for example, Arnold L. Atkin won a Senior Town Trustees' Scholarship, the Earnshaw Scholarship to St. John's College, Oxford and was also awarded an Exhibition by the University authorities. Atkins was a former pupil of Carbrook Council School and had entered the Central Higher School in 1900.<sup>(89)</sup> By 1914 the Headmaster was submitting to the Governors a two and a half page list of university successes. Most of these had been at Sheffield University and an analysis which he made of that University's lists showed that 44% of the total successes there had been gained by former pupils of the Central Secondary School.<sup>(90)</sup>

Thus, by 1914 the Governors, Heads, and staffs of the Central Secondary Schools had just cause for satisfaction with the progress and results which had been achieved since 1903. Similar pride could be taken in the development of King Edward's. But, these two cases apart, the Sheffield authority could take little pride in its achievement at secondary level before 1914. Its overall provision was woefully inadequate. The High School for Girls and the school of the Convent of Notre Dame were not

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(87) G.C.S.S., 13th September, 1912, S.E.C.M., 1912-3, pp. 269-70.

(88) G.C.S.S., 8th December, 1913, S.E.C.M. 1913-4, p. 437.

(89) G.C.S.S., 14th October, 1907, S.E.C.M. 1907-8, p. 559.

(90) G.C.S.S., 13th July, 1914, S.E.C.M. 1914-5, p. 189.

maintained by the Authority, but, even if one includes them and the 143 scholars at the Pupil-Teacher Centre, Sheffield was still, in 1913, affording secondary education to only 1786 boys and girls.<sup>(91)</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the Board should have informed the Sheffield Authority in June 1913 that the facilities for secondary education in its area were much less than the provision made in comparable boroughs (or, indeed, with the average provision over the whole of England and Wales). Sheffield had 39 pupils receiving secondary education per 10,000 of population. This compared unfavourably with the average for England as a whole, which was 52, and even more unfavourably with the average for the 26 largest boroughs, which was 63. In Leeds, the only other university town in Yorkshire at the time, the figure was 74.

The Board was also critical of the structural provisions at the Central Secondary Schools and drew the Authority's attention to the 1909 Full Inspection Reports which detailed several criticisms concerning, on the boys' side, the lack of adequate provision for art and the absence of a gymnasium, and, on the girls' side, the noise from outside traffic and the lack of adequate facilities for art and physical training which exacerbated the Headmistress's problems of having half her pupils in one building and half in another.<sup>(92)</sup> The Board invited the Authority to submit detailed plans for rectifying this and the general shortage of secondary school places in the city.

The Committee, as it had done over a decade before, had recourse

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(91) B.E. to S.E.C., 19th June, 1913, P.R.O. Ed. 53/452.

(92) Ibid.,



to Professor Sadler and he was asked to prepare a second report on the provision of further secondary education in the city. This report he presented on 17th August 1914. In it he took a more optimistic view than the Board had done and concluded rather lavishly that "there is no city in England in which secondary and higher education has been organised more successfully or with wiser adaptation to the needs of a great and growing community".<sup>(93)</sup> But he did recognise that further provision was needed and he recommended that a ring of secondary schools be created in the outskirts of the city in the Abbey Lane, Pitsmoor and Lower Crookes districts and that the Girls' Central Secondary School also be re-accommodated in the suburbs. His intention was to provide 550 secondary school places for girls and to permit the Boys' Central Secondary School to take over the whole of the premises in the centre of the town and thereby be enabled to take extra pupils.

By the time Sadler submitted this report, of course, the First World War had already begun and he appreciated that nothing could be done before the cessation of hostilities. Nevertheless, the fact that a second report was required is, in itself, an indication of the limited success which the Education Authority had had in implementing the recommendation of Sadler's first report. They had established a first rate boys' secondary school by merging the old Grammar School and Wesley College. The academic standards and successes which had been achieved by the King Edward VII School were all that Sadler could have hoped for and the academic records of the Central Secondary Schools were also creditable. A scholarship system had

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(93) M.E. Sadler, 'Secondary Education in Sheffield: the Need for Further Provision', (2nd Sheffield Report), S.E.C.M. 1914-5, p. 373.



been established<sup>(94)</sup> which provided liberally for the Central Secondary Schools, if not for King Edward VII School, and a fairly small number of scholarships had been offered at the universities. But the great failing in the period 1903-1914 was simply that of not providing enough secondary school places for the children of the city. The Central Secondary Schools and King Edward VII School on their own were just not able to educate all the pupils who were capable of benefitting from a secondary education. Those schools were functioning well but they needed to be supplemented by at least two or three others. It was this that constituted the great failure of the Education Committee in the period before 1914.

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(94) See below pp. 327-9.

CHAPTER 3

ABBEYDALE SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

The outbreak of World War I necessitated the postponement of even the detailed consideration of the proposals of Sadler's Second Report, but in August 1917 a Special Sub-Committee was appointed to consider and report on the proposed Education Bill.<sup>(1)</sup> This sub-committee was also charged with the responsibility of making such recommendations as it thought necessary for the development of the educational system in Sheffield. Its fourteen members included the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman of the Education Committee, the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University and the Professor of Education there, Professor J.A. Green.

They recommended that the education which was to be provided should not be narrowly vocational and the Section stated clearly that it was essential to secure in each type of school a curriculum which did not subordinate human and social interests to industrial and commercial demands. It was also intended to keep the higher parts of the education system open to all who had been deprived of earlier opportunities and to this end it was subsequently recommended that all the new secondary school places which were established should be free.<sup>(2)</sup> In this Sheffield was one of the pioneers in the country for the Central Secondary Schools for Boys and for Girls were also included in this scheme. Thus, King Edward

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(1) S.E.C., 27th August, 1917, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 235.

(2) Special Sub-Committee on Development of Educational System (S.S.C.D.E.S.), 14th February, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 512. See also below pp. 329-30.

VII School was the only secondary school in which fees were to be charged, and even there the number of free places was increased to that point where it constituted 15% of the total places available. There was no thought of producing a scheme so radical as the Bradford one which called also for a great extension of medical services to children and expectant mothers, for gymnasia, swimming pools, the extension of the school meals service and reductions in the size of classes,<sup>(3)</sup> but it was a scheme which aimed both to improve significantly the quantity of secondary education available within the city - which was woefully inadequate - and to place that education within the reach of all, or almost all, those pupils who showed themselves intellectually capable of benefitting from it. In fact, although some bursaries and maintenance allowances were made available there were still some pupils whose parents found themselves financially unable to guarantee their children's continued attendance at school until the age of 15 or 16 and who could not in all honesty sign the undertaking which the Education Committee required of them.<sup>(4)</sup> Even so, Sheffield was one of the first authorities to make education in the bulk of its secondary schools free, and this (pace Professor Simon) was at a time when the Council was still firmly under the control of the Conservatives.

Free secondary education was, of course, a crucial issue but it was little use making that education free if it was to be limited to the few boys and girls who could be accommodated within the existing secondary schools. King Edward's and the Central Secondary Schools provided secondary education for only some two thousand pupils and it was clear that new

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(3) B. Simon, Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1918, 1965, p. 348.

(4) Oral evidence, Mrs. N. McKenzie. 11.6.75. and Mrs. V. Robinson 16.6.75. (Both were pupils at Abbeydale during this period.) See also below p.341.



schools for both sexes were the immediate priority. It was estimated by the Sub-Committee that there was a need for secondary places for at least four hundred boys each year and the courses in the new schools were to be a minimum of four years in length.

The Sub-Committee believed that an analysis of the occupations of Sheffield people suggested the need for some departure from the existing conception of secondary education and it suggested that whilst each secondary school should present an avenue of approach to the university not more than one should provide courses long and specialised enough for scholarships to the older universities. Some provision of transfer, was, therefore, necessary where boys of what was termed "highly specialised capacity" were discovered in the other three schools. Those schools were to concentrate on the production of boys for industrial and commercial careers and so there was a need for a double bias, one section relating to industrial careers and concentrating on mathematics, science (including mechanics) and English, and other relating to commerce and concentrating on English, modern languages, geography and the rudiments of commerce. But, if four year courses were to be provided for four hundred boys each year, it was evident that a minimum of 1,600 places was required, and that as Advanced Courses were developed this number would need to rise to around 1,800.<sup>(5)</sup> Six hundred places were already provided at King Edward's and four hundred at the Central Secondary School for Boys. Two other secondary schools were thus required and, since it had been evident for many years that the Central Schools' premises in the centre of the city were not only overcrowded

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(5) S.S.C.D.E.S., 14th February, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 511.

but also singularly unsuitable for use for secondary education, it was necessary to find three new sites. These, it was suggested, should be sought in the Pitsmoor, Millhouses and Malin Bridge areas - that is in the suburban areas, as Sadler had suggested before the War.

The Sub-Committee did not endorse the view that since the Authority was then providing only one secondary school for girls - the Central - there was a more urgent need to provide further places for girls than for boys. There were, after all, the Girls' High School and the Notre Dame school which together, it was argued, could be taken as fulfilling the same place in the girls' system as King Edward's in the boys', particularly if the number of entrance scholarships were increased. However, since it was believed that "a well-educated motherhood" was important, it was recommended that the provision for girls should be equal to that for boys. Accordingly, the Sub-Committee recommended that there should be three secondary schools for girls, including the one already in existence. Each was to be capable of accommodating four hundred pupils and was to be situated in a suitable suburban district, whilst the curriculum was to take into account the chief careers towards which the girls would be looking, that is, teaching, commercial, social and domestic work.

Clearly, it was not possible to set about building the new schools at that moment in time; the war was not yet over and neither the city nor the central government was in a position to provide the considerable financial expenditure which such a programme would entail. To provide two new schools, one for boys and one for girls, in suitable temporary premises, was the only satisfactory way of meeting the immediate demand.



The Sub-Committee recommended, therefore, that, subject to the approval of the Board of Education, the premises known as "Holtwood", Pitsmoor, be rented from the Sheffield Land and Mortgage Corporation for a period of five years (at a rental of £100 p.a.) in order to provide temporary accommodation for about 150 boys,<sup>(6)</sup> whilst for the girls, a freehold residence known as "Abbeydale Grange" was to be purchased from Mr. James Fieldsend for the sum of £3,500.

Abbeydale Grange, once described as "an older residence of gentry",<sup>(7)</sup> was a "substantial stone-built freehold residence, with the well-planted garden, grounds, greenhouses and outbuildings, "affording the following accommodation;<sup>(8)</sup>

"Ground Floor large square entrance hall with fireplace and radiator, double doors and glass covered portico, cloakroom, drawing room, with bay and side windows 26' 8" x 21' 2"; dining room with large bay window about 26' x 16', morning room about 16' x 14', a fine lofty billiard or ballroom with large bay window and polished pitchpine floor, lavatory, water closet and lobby (with garden exit) fitted with warming apparatus, butler's pantry, servants' hall, kitchen scullery and new cooking range, larder.

First Floor: spacious landing, seven bedrooms (one fitted with bath), drawing room, bathroom, linen closet, housemaid's pantry, separate water closet and box room,

Second Floor: three servants' bedrooms, servants' staircase from back hall.

Basement: excellent cellars and heating cellar.

Outbuildings: a capital range of stabling for five horses, large harness room with pitchpine cupboards, saddle room and corn room, large carriage or motor house, coal house, large flagged yard.

Excellent range of glass houses in good order and worked from one boiler, consisting of conservatory, vineries, tomato house, stove and greenhouse, also fernery, melon house, cucumber and melon house, potting sheds."

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(6) When the proposals were considered by the Education Committee on 18th March, 1918, it was objected that these premises were too dilapidated and Abbeyfield House was suggested as an alternative. See below p. 126.

(7) J. Eastwood, The History of the Parish of Ecclesfield, 1862, p. 362.

(8) 'Notice of Sale of Abbeydale Grange', Tuesday, 5th March 1912. Sheffield Local Archives (S.L.A.) Bush Collection, S119.



These, then, were the buildings in which the new girls' secondary school was to be housed. It was set in some three acres of "pleasure grounds tastefully laid out and planted with well grown shrubs, sloping and tennis lawns and vegetable garden." The Committee also agreed to purchase an adjoining plot of thirteen acres belonging to Messrs. Marple and Gillott, and another four-acre area belonging to Mr. Mark Firth. The former was to be used for the purpose of erecting a new secondary school for boys<sup>(9)</sup> and the latter for playing fields for the girls and the boys.<sup>(10)</sup> The school was in an extremely attractive, almost rural setting, which was subsequently greatly appreciated by the pupils.

The Grange was undoubtedly a gracious residence, but although it afforded commodious accommodation for a private family it is clear from the agent's description that it was in no way large enough to provide the spacious kind of rooms which are essential in any school. Some modifications were undertaken during the summer of 1918 but, as one of the original members of staff has revealed, "We were to have opened in September but nothing was ready, and when we did open on 4th November, 1918, everything was in turmoil with many workmen still busy. We had no gymnasium, no labs; not even enough desks - and one form sat on the floor for a week!"<sup>(11)</sup>

There was, however, adjoining the Abbeydale site, the Holt House Estate. This belonged to the local steel magnates, the Firths, and comprised a substantial private house and some thirty-three acres of land, but it was decided that for the time being any addition to the school should be of a semi-permanent character. The Board of Education later

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(9) This was not built until after World War II.

(10) S.S.C.E.D.S., 5th March, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 576.

(11) D.B. Glover, 'In Retrospect, Abbeydale in Infancy', Abbeydale Girls G.S. 1918-68, Sheffield, 1968, p. 14.

approved the erection of an Army Hut accommodating 48 girls and also approved plans for science laboratory provision for 24 pupils, but the additional places thus created clearly did not in any way come close to solving the accommodation problems which would become more acute every year. This pressure eventually forced the Committee to reconsider the question of Holt House and eventually the house and grounds were bought for the sum of £14,000.<sup>(12)</sup> It was intended that Holt should accommodate about 170 girls but the Board approved it for only one hundred and twenty. The school's difficulties over accommodation, therefore, were not solved and in the Spring of 1921 the Governors were still wrestling with the problem of how to accommodate the 120 girls who were due to constitute the school's fourth intake in the coming September. The City Architect was asked to draw up plans for the further modification and adaptation of both Holt House and the Grange, so adding another 162 places.<sup>(13)</sup> Even this was not enough to meet more than the most immediate of the school's needs, but by this time the post-war recession was biting deeper and when in the Autumn of 1921 the Director of Education, Percival Sharp, compiled a report on the general problems of secondary school accommodation throughout the city the conclusion which he reached was that Abbeydale, by using two of the attics for small classes, should be able to get by without any further extensions to its existing premises until the economic situation was easier.<sup>(14)</sup> In fact, later in the twenties the stables were converted into science laboratories and other minor modifications were made but it was not until the close of the inter-war period that the school obtained its long-promised new buildings.<sup>(15)</sup>

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(12) H.E.S.C., 5th Dec., 1919, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 421.

(13) Governors' Minutes Abbeydale Secondary School for Girls, (G.A.S.S.), 4th March, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 601.

(14) H.E.S.C., 14th October, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 323

(15) See below p. 123.



For the Committee and for the staff and pupils accommodation was a continuing and thorny problem throughout the whole of the inter-war period; but once the Committee had decided to go ahead with the provision of a new secondary school for girls the next task was obviously the appointment of a suitable headmistress and staff. Accordingly, on 14th June, 1918 the Higher Education Sub-Committee agreed to invite applications for the post of Headmistress of the new Abbeydale Grange School and Miss B.A. Tonkin, B.A. was subsequently appointed at a salary of £350 p.a.<sup>(16)</sup> At the same meeting a Board of Governors for the new school was appointed and among its eleven members were the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Education Committee and the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University.<sup>(17)</sup> To these was later added Professor J.A. Green,<sup>(18)</sup>

The scheme of Government under Article 22 of the Board Regulations stipulated that the school should be provided and maintained by the local education authority under the management of a Body of Governors.<sup>(19)</sup> The Governors were to be 12 in number and had to include four women and one person specially representing the interests of higher education. The Headmistress was given free access to the Governors with the right to express her views to them on any matter relating to the government of the school. She was to select and recommend for appointment all assistant teachers and she was also authorised to suspend an assistant, on sufficient grounds, provided she immediately reported the matter to the Governors who would then decide what further action should be taken.

To begin with the curriculum was typical of that of most girls secondary schools in England at the time - as one would have expected. The dominant positions on the timetable were occupied by English

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- (16) Miss Tonkin had taken a First in Medieval and Modern Languages at Cambridge and was Senior Modern Languages Mistress at Fulham County Secondary School.
- (17) H.E.S.C., 14th June, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-9, p. 89.
- (18) S.E.C., 24th June, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-9, p. 91.
- (19) H.E.S.C., 17th Sept., 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-9, pp. 208-9.



and mathematics, followed by a leaven of French, history, geography, general science, scripture, music, needlework and games.<sup>(20)</sup> Initially, there was only one foreign language taught and that was French. Some attempt was made in its teaching to employ the latest educational aids, in this case a dictaphone, and Miss Tonkin reported to her Governors that it was proving valuable in helping to make the girls conscious of their defects in pronunciation and was particularly useful for the phonetic drill which was undertaken in the first term's study.<sup>(21)</sup> Later, Latin and German were added in the third year for the more able pupils and by 1928 the second language taken was the basis of the organisation into forms in the third year, the Upper III being divided into separate Latin and German forms and the Lower III simply into A and B.<sup>(22)</sup> The original placing into forms when the girls entered the school was usually done on the basis of the results of the scholarship entrance examination.<sup>(23)</sup> Internal examinations were held each term initially, but later only twice a year. However, there was generally not a great deal of movement between forms in the first two years.<sup>(24)</sup>

In the majority of cases the School Certificate was taken after four years though there was provision for those who were not quite so able to take it after five years. This provision was something of which the Education Committee was somewhat suspicious and in 1929 it called upon the Headmasters and Headmistresses of all its secondary schools to give account individually of all the pupils in their schools whom they did not intend to submit for the examination after the normal four years of secondary instruction.<sup>(25)</sup> Thereafter, Heads were required to inform all parents

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(20) Letter 6,7,75, Miss Shaw and Miss Morris to author. Oral evidence Miss Tomlinson. All these ladies taught at the school during this period. Also oral evidence, Mrs. Robinson a former pupil.

(21) G.A.S.S. 5th March, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 570.

(22) 'Form Notes' in The Dimbula, (Abbeydale School Magazine) No. 8, 1928, pp.22-3

(23) Oral evidence Miss Lucas (member of staff) 25.6.75.

(24) Letter Miss Shaw, 6,7.75.

(25) Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee (S.S.S.S.C.) 7th June and 6th December, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30 pp. 137 and 493. In 1922 all the secondary schools (except King Edward's) lost their individual Boards of Governors whose functions were taken over by this single Sub-Committee.

in advance of the intention not to submit their child for the examination at the usual time and to obtain from them their consent to their boy or girl taking the examination after a further year's schooling.

Thus the original intention at Abbeydale was to provide "a four year course for girls who did not want to go to University". In some ways, it was a sort of forerunner of a Girls' Secondary Modern School, aiming at a fairly wide curriculum not tied down to examination syllabuses."<sup>(26)</sup> But this intention was rapidly forgotten and the school, in fact, began to develop a Sixth Form as soon as it had pupils of sufficient age and ability. Numbers, to begin with, were naturally very small. In 1923, for example, there were only nine girls doing Higher Certificate work and two of these left before the Examination was taken in 1924.<sup>(27)</sup> In 1924-5 the Sixth was even smaller, containing only three girls,<sup>(28)</sup> but thereafter numbers began to rise.

In the Summer of 1921 the school, which then consisted of some 430 pupils, submitted its first candidates for public examinations. Eleven girls were examined by the Joint Matriculation Board and certificates were obtained by six girls, one gaining a distinction in English and another a distinction in botany. Miss Tonkin candidly told the Governors that no-one was more fully aware than she "that from many points of view there is nothing remarkable in these results, but when one remembers that these girls have had a short three years at a secondary school, I think it is clear that the results reflect much credit on the teaching staff and on the girls."<sup>(29)</sup> By 1923 forty-three girls were being entered. Twenty-two gained their Certificates and six obtained matriculation. Four took the Higher Certificate at subsidiary standard in three subjects, and

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(26) D.B. Glover, 'In Retrospect' Abbeydale Girls G.S. 1918-1968, p.14.  
(27) Form Notes, The Dimbula, No. 4, 1924, p.2.  
(28) From Notes, The Dimbula, No. 4, 1925, p.3.  
(29) G.A.S.S., 15th September, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 241.



of these one girl passed in all three subjects, two in two subjects and one in a single subject. (30) A year later two girls gained their full Higher Certificates and in 1925 the school was able to claim its first university successes when two girls secured places at Sheffield University.

This was perhaps not an unreasonable rate of progress for a new secondary school, particularly when one remembers that Abbeydale was perhaps third in the "pecking order" for those who passed the scholarship and entrance examination. Certainly, the most brilliant girls opted, financial circumstances and bursaries etc. permitting, for the Girls High School as their first choice, with the Central Secondary School for Girls probably as their second option. Indeed, it was Miss Tonkin's opinion that only a small percentage of the girls entering the school were really fit to take the Certificate examination at the end of four years. This view she expressed in 1924 and she later quoted the 1925 examination results as substantiating that belief.

Table 3.1 - School Certificate Results, Abbeydale S.S. for Girls, 1925 (31)

<u>Form</u>	<u>Entered</u>	<u>Certificate</u>	<u>Matriculated</u>	<u>Distinctions</u>
V Matric.	16	8	8	4
Lower V A	21	9	-	-
Lower V B	16	5	-	-
IV A	17	9	1	-
IV B	19	3	-	-

Practically the whole of the fourth year pupils had been entered, but the girls in IV B and even VB really needed a longer period of preparation, Miss Tonkin asserted. The average age of the pupils in IV B was 15 years 9 months, whilst the examination, she insisted, was "definitely intended

(30) S.S.S.S.C., 7th Sept., 1923, S.E.C.M. 1923-4, p. 224.

(31) S.S.S.S.C., 2nd October, 1925, S.E.C.M. 1925-6, p. 263.



for candidates between the ages of sixteen and seventeen." (32)

The majority of the Abbeydale girls who proceeded to the university perhaps naturally went to Sheffield, but when the first state scholarships were won in 1930 and 1931 they were taken up at London University. (33) However, it was extremely rare for an Abbeydale girl to secure admission to either of the two older universities. It was not until 1934, in fact, that the school sent its first scholar to Oxford, a girl by the name of Kathleen Cameron who, having gone on a state scholarship to Somerville College, then proceeded to gain a First in French. (34)

Normally the J.M.B. examinations were taken but in 1928 some girls were entered for the physics papers of the London Board. Initially the experiment was not a success; of the five girls who were entered, none passed. (35) In 1930, however, all the three girls who sat the examinations passed and one of them, Muriel Barraclough, taking mathematics, geography and botany, gained a distinction in botany and was awarded a state scholarship which she held at Westfield College. (36) In the following year another girl, who was apparently still too young to go to any of the London or Cambridge residential colleges for women, took four, instead of the normal three subjects; gained distinctions in mathematics and physics; was awarded a state scholarship and also secured exemption from the London Intermediate B.Sc. (37)

Having persuaded the Committee to allow her girls to take what she considered more suitable Higher Certificate examination syllabuses, Miss Bamber, who had succeeded Miss Tonkin in 1926, turned her attention to other aspects of science teaching within the school. She was concerned

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(32) Ibid., p. 264.  
(33) The Dimbula, No. 11, 1931, p. 14.  
(34) S.S.S.C., 8th June, 1934, S.E.C.M. 1934-5, p. 568 and 13th Sept. 1937; S.E.C.M. 1937-8, p. 281.  
(35) S.S.S.S.C., 5th Oct., 1928, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 367.  
(36) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 409.  
(37) S.S.S.S.C., 21st September, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 328 and The Dimbula, No. 11, 1931, p.2.

that the science teaching was then so organised that botany, or chemistry, or physics with chemistry could be taken at School Certificate level. Of those, botany was the first science,<sup>(38)</sup> Her proposal was to substitute biology for the two subjects chemistry, and physics with chemistry, on the grounds that it fitted better than chemistry into the science scheme. Also, she suggested, there was a growing demand for biology from universities for students taking botany and from training colleges who wanted to supply properly trained teachers of Nature Study for the elementary schools.

These changes in the nature and organisation of science teaching within the school are interesting as illustrations of the ways in which the curriculum within a school could evolve yet still remain within the constraints imposed by the School Certificate examination. In the case of the girls on the Advanced Course, London rather than J.M.B. papers were taken because of their more suitable physics content; whilst at First Certificate level one of the reasons given for dropping physics with chemistry was that the papers set were unreasonable. These developments in the curriculum at Abbeydale are but one local example of the thesis advanced by Dr. Banks that in the inter-war period the dominating influence on the curriculum was the School Certificate Examination.<sup>(39)</sup> The curriculum at Abbeydale was not static, it did evolve but such was the stress placed upon the School Certificate by both employers and parents that that evolution was forced to be confined within the limits formed by the system of public examinations. This is not to suggest, however, that Miss Bamber and her staff were crusading revolutionaries - far from it. For the most part they seem to have been quite content with the traditional academic curriculum prescribed by the Certificate group system.

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(38) S.S.S.S.C., 30th Oct., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 462.

(39) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', Ch. 7.

There is evidence, however, that for those girls who were not intent on pursuing their academic studies beyond first Certificate level, the school was anxious to provide a practical, indeed a directly vocational, education - namely, a Commercial Course. Such a course was first suggested by Miss Tonkin in 1920. At that time there was in the city Mr. Whiteley's Commercial College but this was a private institution and parents wishing to send their daughters there had to pay fees. Miss Tonkin's proposal was that girls who so desired should be able to stay at Abbeydale after they had passed their public examinations and receive a commercial training at the expense of the local authority. Such a training, of course, would be essentially vocational and as such was likely to raise all sorts of objections from those who insisted, as Morant had done, that a secondary school should offer a liberal and not a vocational education.

In fact, when Miss Tonkin first placed her proposal before the Governors in September 1920, the Director of Education strongly advised against the inclusion of shorthand and typing in the curriculum because it would defeat the purpose for which the school had been established, namely the provision of secondary education.<sup>(40)</sup> After some discussion and after hearing the observations of Miss Tonkin, the Governors decided that those subjects should not be included in the curriculum. It is evident, however, that the proposal for a Commercial course was not purely and simply the idea of the Headmistress but rather that a number of parents had expressed a desire for their daughters to be given some such vocational training for the Governors then proceeded to press the Director to advise them as to the best means which could be adopted "to meet the desires of the parents of a number of children who wanted instruction in shorthand and typing."

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(40) G.A.S.S., 16th September, 1920; S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 274.



The Director accordingly submitted to the October meeting of the Governors a scheme whereby the girls should do their normal curriculum in the Autumn and Spring terms of their last year at school but in the Summer attend the Committee's Day Commercial School on three days a week, for intensive training in shorthand and typing, and on the other two days attend Abbeydale for general education.<sup>(41)</sup> This scheme came into operation in the Summer term 1921 and at the end of it Miss Tonkin informed the Governors that the Headmaster of the Commercial School had reported that "without exception the girls were very earnest and I might say enthusiastic in their work. Each one applied herself with the determination of making the most of the one term's opportunity and the results obtained were highly satisfactory."<sup>(42)</sup> A further 30 girls were due to take the course the following year but the experiment was, apparently, shortlived for Miss Tonkin observed at that same meeting that she was "sure that it would be a great disappointment to very many parents when they realised that that was the last year of the course."

These matters languished until 1926 when Miss Tonkin moved to Bedford. In November 1927 her successor, Miss Bamber, put before the governing body a suggestion for a fifth year course with a commercial bias. This scheme was basically that which Miss Tonkin had proposed earlier in 1920. It was for a one year course with a commercial bias and was intended for those girls who had completed a four or five year course for the School Certificate. Miss Bamber argued that such a course was desirable because girls who had left school often took a three or six month commercial course before seeking employment and those girls who did not fulfil their agreement until the age of 16;6 or even 16:10 and then took such a course were at a decided disadvantage. Further, those girls who left before the end

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(41) G.A.S.S., 1st October, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 346.

(42) G.A.S.S., 15th September, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 241.

of their contract frequently attended the Committee's Commercial College or evening classes and then took up commercial work whether or not that reason was given on the form of application for their release. The proposed commercial course, she suggested, would encourage the parents of such girls to keep them at school until the expiration of their contract,<sup>(43)</sup> and the arrangement which she suggested was as follows:-

Fifth Year Curricula at Abbeydale S.S. for Girls<sup>(44)</sup>

<u>Normal Course</u>	<u>Course with Commercial Bias</u>	<u>Periods Per Week</u>
<u>ENGLISH</u> <u>HISTORY</u> or <u>GEOGRAPHY</u> or both.	As per the normal course, Social and Economic History as on the normal course but with more stress on the economic side.	4
<u>LANGUAGES</u> (French or German or both)	As for the normal course except for the introduction of terms and phrases of a commercial character and the writing of some straight-forward business letters.	4 or 8
<u>MATHEMATICS</u> Arithmetic Geometry Trigonometry	Arithmetic and algebra ) Bookkeeping and Accounts ) Business methods including office routine Shorthand Typewriting	4 3 5 5
<u>SCIENCE</u> Botany	Outline study of industrial processes	1 or 2
<u>MUSIC</u>	None	
<u>ART</u>	None	
<u>GYM AND GAMES</u>	Gym and Games	2

Thus, the vocational subjects were to be incorporated in the commercial course at the expense of geometry, trigonometry, music and art. Perhaps few girls intent on an office career would bemoan the disappearance of geometry and trigonometry from their timetables and for those with musical

(43) S.S.S.S.C., 4th November, 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 399.

(44) Ibid., p. 400.

or artistic talents there was always the Art Craft<sup>(45)</sup> and the School Choir. For the rest the normal curriculum was followed but it is noticeable that in that curriculum science played an extremely small part. The normal fifth year course was designed basically for those girls who took their School Certificate examination after five rather than four years and one would perhaps expect the curriculum in a girls school to be biased more towards the Arts side than the Sciences and for the science which was taught to be biology or botany rather than physics or chemistry. Even so, the allocation of only one or two periods per week to botany does seem exceedingly small.

For those girls in the Commercial class the one or two periods devoted to science were given over to a study of science as applied to industrial processes. The area of study was different from that of the girls on the normal course but the time allocation was the same. Their curriculum, therefore, was not particularly well-balanced either, but in their case the criticism is perhaps not so severe for they had already taken their School Certificate Examination and the course was specifically intended as a vocational course, anyway. Staffing and accommodation could have presented problems but room was made in the attic of Holt House<sup>(46)</sup> and about a dozen girls took the course in the first year of its operation.<sup>(47)</sup>

The Board of Education approved this scheme but pointed out that this must not be taken to indicate its approval of any further scheme of general provision of commercial instruction in secondary schools such as that contemplated by the authority.<sup>(48)</sup> The Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee had suggested that in the interests of economy and of more efficient organisation a central commercial school should be set up by the Sheffield authority to provide a vocational, commercial training for all those girls in the authority's secondary schools who desired it. Such

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(45) See below p. 118

(46) 'They Were There When it Happened', Abbeydale Girls G.S. 1918-1968, p.7.

(47) S.S.S.S.C., 27th April, 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 401.

(48) B.E. to S.E.C., 13th April, 1928, in S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 194.



a proposal clearly ran counter to existing requirements that a secondary school should provide a general liberal education of a non-vocational nature, and as such was disapproved by the Board.

The Sub-Committee's prime concern, however, was whether the Board would recognise for grant purposes the girls who took the London School Commercial Examination. To this the Board replied that expenditure for 1928 on the Commercial Course would be taken into consideration in determining the total grant, but this did not cover the full three-year period for which the Committee had approved the experiment and on pressing the Board further, the Director of Education, Sharp, was able to extract recognition of the payment of examination fees for the full three years.

In the summer of 1929 14 girls on the course sat for the London School Commercial Certificate. All save one passed and in addition to "many credits there were a large number of 'good' credits and seven distinctions," (49) It seems that two other girls actually took the course and either left before the examination or were not considered good enough to be put in for it, for in October 1930, when reporting on the number of girls who had obtained positions, Miss Bamber stated that 16 girls had taken the course. Be that as it may, the significant point is that 13 of those 16 had already obtained positions in which they would be using some or all of the subjects they had learnt during their Commercial course. Indeed, employers were, in October, still asking the Headmistress to recommend pupils to them and she was of the opinion that all would obtain suitable positions in business or commerce. "It is pleasant," she reported, "to know that the teaching given in this course is satisfying demand." (50)

By 1930 some girls who, even though they had not taken their School Certificate in the fourth year were nevertheless quite able pupils,

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(49) S.S.S.S.C., 6th September, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 304.

(50) S.S.S.S.C., 4th October, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 366.

were taking this course and, indeed, this was the major reason which the Headmistress advanced in October 1931 to explain the school's rather small number of matriculants. In that year 92 girls had been entered for either the London or the J.M.B. examinations and of these 92 only 16 had matriculated - all of course, on the J.M.B. papers since the London Commercial papers were not then recognised for matriculation purposes. It was also the practice to enter the girls on the Commercial Course for the Pitman's shorthand and the Royal Society of Arts book-keeping, shorthand and type-writing examinations,<sup>(51)</sup> but by 1935 the Education Committee was already making plans for the establishment of a single Day College of Commerce which would serve all the secondary schools in the city as well as the Pupil-Teacher Centre. The College was to be housed in the Kenwood Annexe in Psalter Lane which had been vacated by the Central Girls Secondary School in July 1933 and which was capable of accommodating some 100 pupils. The curriculum for the one year course of training was to include business economics, English, commercial French or German, commercial arithmetic, commercial geography, and secretarial work with shorthand and typing. The parents of pupils admitted to the College were to be required to sign an agreement for their children to remain for the full year's course, and in the event of the course not being completed the parents were to be liable to pay £10 as liquidated damages, as in the case of the secondary schools,<sup>(52)</sup>

The opening of this college clearly presaged the end, in July 1935, of the Commercial Course which had flourished at Abbeydale. The twenty periods of commerce a week were dispensed with and a new mistress was appointed to cover the teaching of the intake of an extra twenty girls which the freeing of the attic for ordinary teaching purposes permitted.

The commercial course was undoubtedly the single most distinctive curriculum innovation at Abbeydale during the inter-war period. It was designed specifically for the post-Certificate year and was, therefore, to some extent outside the mainstream of the general curriculum which remained essentially that of any typical girls grammar school. The

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(51) S.S.S.S.C., 14th Oct., 1935, S.E.C.M. 1935-6, p. 356.

(52) H.E.S.C., 2nd April, 1935, S.E.C.M. 1935-6, pp. 8-10.

requirements of the School Certificate were the basic determinants of that curriculum although, as has been seen with science, there was scope within the group structure for the teaching of some individual preferences.

Generally speaking, however, variations between schools in Sheffield do not seem to have been very great. At Firth Park languages proliferated<sup>(53)</sup> and Abbeydale had its commercial course but for the rest curriculum innovations were not great. Indeed, the authority was at some pains, if not actually to discourage innovation, then at least to ensure that there was some uniformity of practice within its schools. Thus, in 1929 the Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee that all pupils in the city's secondary schools should, as a general rule, follow the same curriculum for the first two years of their secondary school careers.<sup>(54)</sup> This decision arose out of a general concern regarding pupils whom Headteachers did not enter for the School Certificate examination until their fifth year of secondary education. The Chairman of the Sectional Sub-Committee, his deputy, and the Director of Education interviewed the Heads of Firth Park, Abbeydale and Nether Edge concerning this matter and it was agreed that all pupils should follow the same curriculum though no specific reasons were detailed for that regulation.

In 1927 Latin and German had become the basis of form organisation in the third year at Abbeydale,<sup>(55)</sup> being offered to the more able girls in addition to French. But by 1935 Miss Bamber was anxious that these languages should be commenced in the second year. This meant persuading the Committee either to rescind the relevant Minutes which it had passed in 1929 or to amend them so as to permit their being waived in the case of individual schools. The latter was done<sup>(56)</sup> and thereafter girls were able to devote three instead of two years study to the second language which they were to

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(53) See below p, 133-6.

(54) S,S,S,S,C., 7th June, 1929 and 6th Dec., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p, 137 and p, 493,

(55) The Dimbula, No. 8, 1928, pp. 22-23.

(56) S,S,S,S,C. 13th Feb., 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 632.



offer for the School Certificate.

The methods used in the teaching of foreign languages at Abbeydale were the standard ones of perusal and exposition of a textbook, conversation and written exercises, <sup>(57)</sup> with some emphasis on songs, drama and plays. A dictaphone had been purchased in the early days of the school and Miss Tonkin had reported that it had proved valuable in helping the girls in the phonetic drill which was part of the first term's work in French, <sup>(58)</sup> but little use seems to have been made of it in the late 1920s or the 1930s. Lectures on France by visiting speakers were arranged. <sup>(59)</sup> These were not common but during the 1930s regular "French holidays" were arranged in Derbyshire for the girls during the Easter holidays. On these holidays, which usually lasted a week, the girls were given language lessons by three French women for two hours every morning, spoke French as often as possible and rehearsed and gave French plays in the evening. <sup>(60)</sup> Subsequently the girls from Abbeydale joined girls from other secondary schools on a "French holiday" at Pannal Ash College, Harrogate. <sup>(61)</sup> Holidays in Paris were also organised and when a German assistant was appointed inter-school exchange holidays were arranged with a school in Meiningen. <sup>(62)</sup>

In common with the other new secondary schools in the city, Abbeydale found that the development of extra-curricular activities presented great practical difficulties. The new schools were all located in the suburbs and took pupils from all over the city. This presented considerable travelling problems for the pupils even for ordinary school lessons and it also meant that any pupils who stayed behind after school hours for extra-curricular activities would be very late home in the evening. Apart

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- (57) H.M.I., Report on the Inspection of Abbeydale S.S. for Girls, 12-19th June 1923, pp. 7-9. P.R.O. Ed. 109/7452.
- (58) G.A.S.S. 5th March, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 570.
- (59) For example by the Comtesse de Croze in April 1929.
- (60) The Dimbula, No. 11, 1931, p. 8. Also oral evidence Miss Lucas.
- (61) The Dimbula, No. 13, 1934, pp. 16-17.
- (62) Secondary Education Sub-Committee, (S.E.S.C.), 11th May, 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p. 81. (In November 1935 the S.S.S.C. was re-named the S.E.S.C. Its functions remained the same.)

from the obvious dangers to which this situation gave rise, particularly in the winter, it also meant that comparatively few pupils were prepared to give of their spare time in order to attend extra-curricular societies which were, therefore, likely to languish. In an attempt to overcome these difficulties Miss Tonkin decided in the very early days of the school that Friday afternoons should be given over to what were termed "Crafts". Members of staff undertook to organise various activities of a practical nature. In some cases these activities were an extension of work done in the classroom. Miss Wells, for example, the botany teacher, not only used the garden and grounds regularly for practical work in her subject and for building a shingle beach, a marsh, a moor and a peat bog,<sup>(63)</sup> but also organised a Gardening Craft on Friday afternoons. This club raised produce for the school kitchen<sup>(64)</sup> and did much to improve the already considerable attractions of the grounds themselves. Thus, a rock garden was made to cover the scars left by the erection of the Hut and the demolition of the derelict greenhouses, and an old rubbish heap was converted into a fern garden.<sup>(65)</sup>

Other crafts afforded opportunities to engage in geographical and historical work whilst other non-academically inspired activities included basketry, needlework, art and astronomy, the last of which attained early fame within the school when it produced for Open Day an "astronomical umbrella" on which were stuck passe-partout representations of the stars and planets.<sup>(66)</sup> Art and music also featured in Friday afternoon activities and again links with the main curriculum were obvious though since the girls were able to choose a different craft each term there could be no systematic use of that time to compensate for the meagre time which was allotted to them on the timetable. This had been criticised by His Majesty's Inspectors in June 1923. At that time both subjects were being taught by part-time

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(63) S.S.S.S.C., 1st October, 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 301.  
(64) Oral evidence Mrs. Robinson, 16.6.75.  
(65) The Dimbula, No. 7, 1927, p. 15.  
(66) The Dimbula, No. 1, 1921, p. 9.

visiting mistresses: art by Miss Belk and music by Miss Napier. It was decided, therefore, that Miss Belk should be appointed on a full time basis and that the number of music periods should be increased from nine to eighteen per week. (67) From this it can be seen that before 1924 the amount of art and music which was done in the school was exceedingly small and that even after that music, in particular, was still not given even an adequate allowance of periods on the timetable.

There was, of course, no specialist, purpose-built music room or art troom. Such luxuries had to wait upon the erection of completely new premises but these two subjects were not the only ones which laboured under serious difficulties. Physical training, in particular, suffered from the fact that it was taught throughout the 1920s and 30s in an Army Hut which served not only as a gymnasium but also as an Assembly Hall and dining room. (68) There was, moreover, no asphalt space large enough for a full-sized netball court, nor even a playground which could be used. There were extensive grassed areas but very few of these were flat and the former bowling green (a crown green) was used only once a year - on Open Day. Games and physical training, therefore, were at a considerable disadvantage and improvisation, ingenuity and enthusiasm were of the essence if these facets of education were to flourish.

The Army Hut was poorly equipped and the box, buck and vaulting horse which were provided were pieces of apparatus which most girls had not used or even seen in their elementary schools. (69) There were drill competitions organised on a form basis with each Form Captain being responsible for training her form for five minutes at the end of morning school. Reports in the school magazine seem to suggest that these competitions were popular with the girls and enthusiasm in the first year was doubtless increased

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(67) S.S.S.S.C., 6th June, 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 87.

(68) H.M.I., Abbeydale Report 1923, p. 12.

(69) Oral evidence Mrs. Robinson.



when a parent gave a silver cup for the winners of the first year competition.

Whilst Miss Tonkin was Headmistress the form was the basis not only of general school organisation but also of the organisation of school games. It was not until Miss Bamber became Headmistress in 1926 that a house system was inaugurated in order that "the school could benefit by a vertical division,"<sup>(70)</sup> This innovation was a reflection of the basic differences in outlook and philosophy between the first two headmistresses, for whilst Miss Tonkin eschewed rivalry between individuals, her successor laid considerable stress on competition. Under Miss Tonkin the emphasis was on the individual striving to improve her performance not so much in relation to that of others but in relation to what she herself had achieved before, a policy which H.M. Inspectors believed resulted in the girls under-achieving through not working hard enough.<sup>(71)</sup> Miss Tonkin's emphasis was on personal responsibility and self-discipline though there were group efforts and rewards and incentives were offered.<sup>(72)</sup> Thus in the hiatus between one member of staff leaving a classroom and another arriving for the next lesson - which could amount to several minutes because of the distance between the two main buildings - each member of a form was on her honour to remain silent and to work quietly. The form captains, who were elected by the girls themselves, were responsible for reporting to the incoming teacher whether the silence had been properly observed. Stars were given each week to those forms who had conducted themselves well during the silences and were displayed on a central board. The system was clearly open to some cheating and false reporting by the Form Captains, but the oral evidence of former teachers and pupils suggests that on the whole it worked well and abuses were not common.

Under Miss Bamber the house system was introduced and the whole

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- (70) Miss Bamber to S.S.S.S.C. 1st Oct., 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 302.  
(71) Report of Meeting of H.M.I. and Abbeydale Govs. 22nd June, 1923, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7452.  
(72) Oral evidence, Miss Lucas, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. McKenzie and Miss Tomlinson.

ethos of the school became much more competitive. Inter-form competition within years was encouraged and stars were given for good academic work. These were awarded on the basis of the number of "excellents" and "very goods" which a form gained each week and at the end of each term Progress Prizes were awarded. Miss Bamber's style of organisation and administration was also different from that of her predecessor and far more emphasis was placed on formal procedures and the strict adherence to rules. She seems, on the whole, to have been more inflexible than Miss Tonkin and although she possessed a genuine concern for the welfare of her pupils and treated them kindly she was capable of an obstinancy which on occasions led to somewhat strained relations with some of her staff.<sup>(73)</sup> To some extent she may have suffered from the fact that many of the staff had begun their careers under Miss Tonkin; indeed, many had been with her at Abbeydale since the opening in 1918, and there had been between them an easy and empathetic understanding. Miss Bamber, on the other hand, does seem to have been a more dynamic Headmistress, possessed of greater drive and energy and capable of achieving more dramatic practical results.

Many of the problems facing the school, however, remained the same throughout the whole of the inter-war period - the principal one being that of buildings and accommodation. The Grange and Holt House in the 1930s were still, basically, private residences set in rather idyllic surroundings, surroundings which were greatly appreciated by the girls. To some extent it was not like a school at all and the pages of The Dimbula are full of affectionate references to the charm of the rooms and buildings themselves and to the delights of the gardens and grounds.

The buildings, however, were clearly not suitable for use as a school. The rooms were small; the specialist provision for subjects

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(73) Oral evidence, Miss Lucas and Miss Tomlinson.

like science, art and music was improvised; there was no proper gymnasium, assembly hall or dining room; and above all the school was split into two. Several schemes were mooted during the inter-war period to provide the girls with a purpose-built school but successive financial and economic crises delayed any really serious plans being formulated until 1933. In July of that year the City Architect submitted drawings for a new gymnasium (with changing rooms and showers) and for new specialist rooms for music, art and geography. It was also proposed to create a new botany laboratory out of the existing music room and to extend the Grange School House science laboratories by modifying and incorporating in them the coal store which, with the laboratories, had originally formed part of the outbuildings at The Grange.<sup>(74)</sup> These extensions, the Headmistress informed the Committee, would permit the intake of a further 60 girls and would also allow those girls who should be taking chemistry but who were precluded from so doing by the lack of laboratory space, to follow their proper course. She also put in a plea for a playground and for an asphalted area large enough for two full-sized netball courts.

Nothing came of these plans and other schools had rival claims to building improvements but there was concern that there were in the mid-1930s 2,478 boys in the authority's secondary schools and only 1,517 girls. Moreover, in the Final Examination for Entrance to Secondary Schools which had been held in 1934, 1,077 boys and 983 girls had obtained at least 50% of marks and were, therefore, regarded as qualified for admission to secondary and intermediate schools.<sup>(75)</sup> It was decided, therefore, that instead of proceeding with extensions at Abbeydale - at a cost of just over £7,000 - an entirely new secondary school should be erected for girls on the Abbeydale site and that advantage should be taken of that opportunity to build a school capable of accommodating 600 girls, i.e. 166 more than

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(74) S.S.S.C., 9th Oct., 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 382.

(75) See below p. 345.



were then being taught at the school. Actually, the sketch plans which were eventually sent to the Board of Education in May 1936 were for a school capable of housing 660 pupils and it was also intended to build a swimming bath which would be made available also to the boys of the Nether Edge Secondary School.

In the late 1930s the Sheffield authority was planning major additions to the provision of secondary school places in the city.<sup>(76)</sup> New schools were planned for boys on the northern side of the city and for girls on the south-eastern side, whilst Nether Edge Boys School was scheduled to be accommodated in completely new, purpose-built premises on the Abbeydale Road-Hastings Road site. The recession of 1937-8 put paid to the first and third of those plans but though work was begun on the second it was still not complete when war broke out. The Board's Circular 1477 (26th September, 1939) detailed restrictions on capital expenditure on school buildings necessitated by the war but the Secondary Education Sub-Committee successfully pressed for the new buildings to be completed since they were in such an advanced state. In September 1939, however, Holt House was taken over by the Army and Grange House by the Civil Defence. Group teaching in pupils' homes, supplemented by large doses of homework, was used as a stop-gap expedient until the beginning of the Summer term 1940 when the first-year girls were allowed to occupy the new building with the remainder crammed into Holt House.<sup>(77)</sup> The "Blitz" delayed full occupation of the new premises and it was not until 1941 that the school was able to take full possession of purpose-built premises - some twenty-three years after they had initially been promised.

Thus was solved, at least for the time being,<sup>(78)</sup> the problems of

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(76) See below p. 362.

(77) Abbeydale Girls G.S. 1918-1968, p.8.

(78) In 1969 the Abbeydale Girls, Abbeydale Boys and Hurlfield Girls Grammar Schools were merged into one comprehensive unit. The school is again wrestling with the problems of commuting between split sites.

accommodation which had dogged the school since its opening in 1918. Throughout the entire inter-war period the staff and pupils had had to make the best of what were basically unsuitable premises: commuting between buildings had been unavoidable; conversions and alterations to rooms, to vineries, to stables and to coach-houses had been but temporary palliatives which left untouched the school's basic problems - two commodious private residences just could not provide an ideal educational environment for a secondary school of some 450 girls. At bottom, it was essentially a matter of finance. The Committee, in common with every other education authority in the country, was beset by a series of economic crises which, allied to a suspiciously innate penchant for retrenchment and a more laudable concern for the ratepayers' purse, effectively limited capital expenditure on secondary education between the wars to the High Storrs buildings for the Central Secondary Schools<sup>(79)</sup> and the new premises for the Abbeydale Girls. It is to the credit of the Headmistresses and teachers at Abbeydale that premises and surroundings which were in some respects so inspiring, yet in others so inhibiting, should have been put to such good and effective use. Their school effectively came third in the pecking order of those girls who passed the Committees' Entrance Examination but as soon as it had pupils of a sufficient age the school began to develop its own Advanced Courses. Numbers were understandably low to begin with, but during the late twenties and the thirties the school was sending a small but steady stream of girls to the university, mostly to that in Sheffield. A few State Scholarships were won and one or two girls did gain entrance to Oxford or Cambridge. Given the intake, the school's academic record could not be expected to be outstanding, but it was solid and respectable. There was a real concern for all aspects of the welfare of the pupils and

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(79) See below p. 205.

relationships between the staff and the girls were at once respectful and friendly. The bricks (or rather, stone) and mortar of the establishment might not have constituted ideal educational facilities for a secondary school but there can be little doubt that the best was made of them in the circumstances. Above all, perhaps, the evidence, both written and oral, of past pupils and teachers bears testimony to the fact that this was a happy school.



CHAPTER 4

FIRTH PARK SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

The setting up of a secondary school for boys on the north-eastern perimeter of the city was part of the implementation of the second Sadler Report, <sup>(1)</sup> but as with the establishment of a school for girls at Abbeydale the crucial problem was that of finding suitable premises. In 1918 the building of a completely new school was clearly unthinkable and so the matter resolved itself into one of trying to find an existing building which could be converted at little expense into a reasonably acceptable school. Such a building, which would satisfy the needs of a school which it was intended should accommodate some 500 pupils, was not then on the market, but in 1917 the Buildings Sub-Committee had begun to use Abbeyfield House for the children who had been displaced from Firs Hill Infants' School during the military occupation of that school, <sup>(2)</sup> The House, which had been built originally as a fairly commodious family residence, was then in the possession of the Parks Committee of the City Council and the premises were rented from them for £50 p.a. beginning in April 1917.

Initially, the school was called the Abbeyfield House Secondary School, though later its name was changed first to the Pitsmoor Secondary School and then to the Firth Park Secondary School. Eleven Governors, including the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Education Committee and Professor J.A. Green of the University Department of Education were appointed, and, as with the Abbeydale Governors, they were to report to the Education Committee through its Higher Education Sub-Committee. <sup>(3)</sup> Advertisements were issued for the post of Headmaster and Lloyd Storr-Best, M.A. D. Litt. (London), then Headmaster of the Coalville Grammar School, was

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(1) See above pp. 94-5.

(2) Buildings Sub-Committee (B.S.C.) 16th April, 1917, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p.

(3) H.E.S.C., 14th June, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-9, p. 89.

appointed at the by no means princely salary of £500 p.a.<sup>(4)</sup> It was intended that the school should open in September 1918 and five full-time members of staff were appointed to teach the 120 first-year boys who were to constitute the first intake. They were:-

Mr. A.W. Richards	Physics and Geography	- £180 p.a.
Miss L. Klein, M.A.	French	- £180 p.a.
Miss D.D. Sanderson, B.A.	History	- £160 p.a.
Miss I.C. Smith	Mathematics	- £170 p.a.
Mr. C.H. Hopkins, M.A.	English	- £250 p.a.

It is noticeable that only two of those appointed were men and whilst the prime explanation of this is obviously the fact that World War I was then still not over, it is worth noting that the Headmaster was a convinced advocate of co-education.<sup>(5)</sup> The number of women on the staff later rose to seven and Storr-Best was apparently much saddened when they left. He recognised, however, that the Committee was not prepared to countenance the establishment of a co-educational secondary school and, therefore, pressed it most fervently to adopt what he considered to be the next best policy, the building of a girls' secondary school on the same site as the boys' school. He was greatly disappointed when nothing came of this scheme.

By September 1919 the school comprised 140 second-year boys in Abbeyfield House and 120 first-year pupils housed in rooms leased from the Burngreave Wesleyan Church. In the following month a large 17th century mansion and some 69 acres of land known as The Brushes Estate was bought by the City Council. It consisted of:-

<u>BRUSH HOUSE</u>	with gardens, orchard, pleasure grounds, plantations, field, stables, cottage and outbuildings, plus twenty-one acres of land.
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(4) Govs. Min. Pitsmoor Sec. S. (G.P.S.S.) 4th July, 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-9, p, 117, (Miss Tonkin was appointed to Abbeydale at the even lower salary of £350 p.a.).

(5) Oral evidence Mrs. F.T. Wood and Mr. T.F. Johnson, 18.7.75. (Mrs. Wood was the first school secretary at Firth Park and married the Senior English master there. Mr. Johnson was Assistant Master and then Senior History Master at the school.)

GROUND FLOOR

Entrance hall, large dining room, drawing room, library and three other sitting rooms, house-keepers' room, butler's pantry, two large kitchens, scullery, glass, china and other closets and extensive and excellent cellarage.

FIRST FLOOR

Two large bedrooms with dressing rooms attached; one bedroom with fitted bath; one smaller bedroom with dressing room attached; one boudoir or morning room, three single bedrooms, linen room, etc.

SECOND FLOOR

Six excellent bedrooms. (6)

A residence, however, is not a school and the original plans which the City Architect submitted for the alteration of the buildings entailed a capital expenditure of £27,000. (7) Further extensions and additions, particularly to the laboratory accommodation, were contemplated but the extra £8,500 which they would have cost was deemed to be prohibitive.

It was intended that eventually The Brushes should accommodate the whole school which was due to increase in numbers at the rate of 120 each year until a total of 500 was reached. Thus at the beginning of the 1921-22 academic year it was hoped to admit the usual number of pupils and to accommodate them by retaining Abbeyfield House for yet another year and by bringing into use two extra laboratories and a new art room in The Brushes. This also entailed increasing the size of forms and utilising rooms vacated by the boys using the laboratory, which in turn meant that there would be no library and that the Sixth Form would not have a Prep. room. (8)

The financial stringency of the times meant not only that completion of the alterations to The Brushes was hampered but also that the desired expansion of staff to cope with the increases in pupil numbers could not take place. Reporting on staffing to his Governors in April 1921, the Headmaster stated that there were in the fourteen forms an average of

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(6) Sheffield Local Archives, Bush Collection, No. 5401.

(7) B.S.C., 8th Dec., 1919, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 438.

(8) G.P.S.S., 4th March, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 605.



twenty-six boys per class but that after the leakage of three years some contained only twenty-three boys. <sup>(9)</sup> He stressed that in what were then the higher forms it was impossible to increase the size of forms without serious dislocation of work and in the case of one very very small form (IIIB), which consisted of only fourteen boys who needed Latin with a view to a professional career, it was, he suggested, "unconditionally impossible". For those fourteen classes there were fourteen teachers, excluding the Headmaster, and normally he would have asked for four extra staff for the influx of 120 extra pupils, but, he observed, "realising the present need of the most rigid economy I would recommend the appointment of only two full-time additional teachers - one to be especially qualified in English, the other in Music - and that the Art Master, who now teaches three days a week, be appointed for the next school year as a full-time teacher of Art." <sup>(10)</sup>

Thus, in September 1921 there were 260 boys in The Brushes and 140 in Abbeyfield House. This was very close to the maximum capacity (410) of the two buildings but was still well short of the 500 which it was hoped eventually to accommodate. Further extensions of the classrooms involving an expenditure of £10,000 would have solved the problem for the next two or three years but the school would still be short of many of the amenities which would be called for in normal times. However, the Higher Education Sub-Committee was rightly of the opinion that it was "of much greater importance to provide bare housing room and teachers than to provide a full scheme of provision including changing rooms, teachers' rooms, dining rooms and the like," <sup>(11)</sup> and accordingly it sanctioned the expenditure of a further £10,000

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(9) One of the persons who supplied oral evidence for this chapter, Mr. S. Skelton, left the school after 2 years, in 1920, in order to take up a career in an office. His father could not afford to do without a wage from his son even though premature leaving meant the payment of a £2 indemnity to the Committee.

(10) G.P.S.S., 8th April, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p.7.

(11) H.E.S.C., 14th October, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2. p. 323.

on expanding accommodation at The Brushes, (12)

Other economies were attempted by increasing the number of pupils in some forms so as to reduce the total number of forms and permit a reduction in the numbers of staff. This was considered at the request of the full Education Committee which looked rather unfavourably on the number of public elementary school classes in the city which had more than fifty pupils in them and those in the secondary sector which had less than thirty. Again the basic exigencies of space were the determining factor for there were very few classrooms at Abbeyfield which could hold more than twenty desks, but some conflation of forms was effected at The Brushes and sixty boys were transferred there from Abbeyfield. Thus, the total number of forms in the school was reduced by two and the services of two supply teachers were dispensed with, (13)

This re-arrangement, necessitated by the rigours of the Geddes Axe, did have some compensatory benefits, however, for it meant that more boys were in the main Brushes building and more immediate contact with the Headmaster. Also, there was slightly less need for staff to spend time travelling between the two buildings since more lessons were taught at The Brushes, but neither building had a room large enough to permit the whole school meeting together. Storr-Best complained bitterly of this great handicap since it meant that they could not hold prayers together, (14) or have school lectures or concerts or entertain parents - all of which he believed were important to the corporate life and moral development of the school. "As it is", he observed, "the form spirit is strong, the school spirit relatively weak", (15). Matters were made even worse by the fact that the school was

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(12) H.E.S.C., 7th Nov., 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 363.

(13) Govs. Min. Firth Park S.S. (G.F.P.S.S.) 10th Feb., 1922, S.E.C.M. 1921-22, p. 529. The Name of the school had been changed to "The Firth Park Secondary School" in July 1921.

(14) Storr-Best was himself an atheist but he always took Assembly and believed strongly in its importance in the life of the school and the education of its pupils. Oral evidence Mrs. F.T. Wood, 18, 7, 75.

(15) G.F.P.S.S., 7th July, 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 126.

still without its own playing fields and the main interest of the boys tended to be not school but local club matches. Games were played, of course, but it was difficult for Firth Park School, as it was now called, to act as host to visiting teams in such circumstances. However, work was underway, indeed almost complete, on three pitches at Shiregreen and at the end of the Autumn term 1922 the school was able to begin using them every afternoon and each Saturday morning. The pitches did not belong to the school, they were merely rented, but at least it had something more appropriate to its needs.

The problem of an Assembly Hall and of extra classrooms remained, however, and in December 1922 an extra ten classrooms, each capable of seating thirty pupils, were planned increasing The Brushes accommodation from 216 to 516, and there were also to be large science laboratories, a lecture room and new cloakroom and toilet facilities.<sup>(16)</sup> Finally, the whole block which had formerly been stables and part of which had already been adapted into a temporary dining room, was to be converted into two large dining halls each capable of seating 96 pupils. The total cost of this was estimated at just under £30,000, though subsequently the tender which was accepted was for £31,890.<sup>(17)</sup>

The Assembly Hall, which was also to serve as a gymnasium, was handed over to the school in 1926.<sup>(18)</sup> The other additions to The Brushes building were handed over in stages and the tenancy of Abbeyfield House was terminated on 25th December, 1926. Thus when the new Spring Term began it was possible for the first time since 1918 for the whole school to assemble together in one building. The difficulties which the split site had presented regarding commuting, timetabling and administration had been considerable, and science teaching in particular had suffered from the

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(16) S.S.S.S.C., 1st December, 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 360.

(17) B.S.C., 10th Dec., 1923, S.E.C.M. 1923-4, p. 399.

(18) S.S.S.S.C., 4th Feb., 1927, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 538.



paucity of specialist accommodation, but the conversion of the old stables into a new science block comprising laboratories for chemistry and physics, a lecture room and a dark room meant that those constraints upon effective teaching had been removed.

The teachers and pupils had long laboured under difficulties in what were far from ideal circumstances. Now those circumstances had been radically improved and the effect of that upon the whole ethos and dynamic of the school became apparent. Storr-Best, who was, of course, far from a disinterested party, claimed at once that there had been a notable change in the atmosphere; there was "a spirit of great keenness amongst the boys and all kinds of new activities were springing up spontaneously," he said. He was not the most reticent or self-effacing of men and Headmasters generally have a vested interest in impressing Governors and Councillors with the vitality of their schools but there seems to be little doubt that the housing of all the pupils and staff on one site for the first time cannot but have had a very beneficial effect upon the whole tenor and life of the school, particularly in helping to foster that sense of corporate identity which has been so much a part of the English grammar school and which Storr-Best was himself so anxious to develop at Firth Park.

No further additions were made to the buildings until September 1936 when a two-storey block was completed at the end of the science wing. It consisted of an art room, a library and six classrooms and it made it possible for the school to enlarge its intake so that it rose to a peak of 683 in that Autumn term.<sup>(19)</sup> Thus, by 1927 the school was in possession of the bulk of the accommodation which was to serve it not only throughout the rest of the inter-war period, but also right down to the present day. It was accommodation which despite its initial imperfections was adapted,

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(19) S.E.S.C., 12th Oct., 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p. 372.

improved and extended over a period of seven years so that by 1927 those imperfections needed no longer exercise an inhibiting influence on either the nature of the teaching or the range of subjects which that teaching embraced.

As with the Abbeydale Girls Secondary School and most other grammar schools of the time, the single most pervasive influence on the curriculum was the requirements of the School Certificate Examination, but within those group requirements Storr-Best did his utmost to ensure that Firth Park earned for itself an almost unique reputation as a school of outstanding linguistic range and achievement. He himself was a brilliant linguist. Trained originally in the classics, he was fluent not only in Hebrew, Ancient and Modern Greek, and in Latin, but also in French, German, Russian and Serbo-Croat. <sup>(20)</sup> French was the first language at Firth Park and was taught from the opening of the school in Abbeyfield House, but Storr-Best was determined that the school should reflect and serve not only the industrial but also the business and commercial interests of the city. Throughout his Headmastership he was at pains to establish and preserve the closest possible links with the great business houses of Sheffield and to ascertain from them the subjects whose teaching would not only benefit the firms themselves but also assist his pupils in gaining employment. This was the key factor, for example, in the introduction of Italian into the curriculum in 1929, <sup>(21)</sup> and it was also the basis of form organisation in the early days of the school when those boys aiming for a professional career took Latin in addition to French, whilst those intent on a career in industry or business took Russian. <sup>(22)</sup> The introduction of the latter language was perhaps the most unusual innovation of the Headmaster and was

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(20) Oral evidence Mrs. F.T. Wood and Mr. T.F. Johnson. Storr-Best lectured in French and German to various societies and visited Russia, Germany and Yugoslavia.

(21) S.S.S.S.C., 7th June, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 141.

(22) G.P.S.S., 8th Sept., 1919, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 233.

obviously directly related to his own fluency in the language, which arose from the time he spent in Russia during the First World War, and to the fact that he married a Russian, (23)

Storr-Best subsequently reported to his Governors that, "The Russian venture is I believe, an unqualified success; both classes are now (in their twelfth week) reading continuous Russian prose and are attempting free composition in Russian." But as the numbers taking Russian increased, as they were bound to do at the beginning of the following academic year, it became impossible for the Headmaster to undertake all the teaching himself and Mrs. Natasha Birkett, the wife of the Professor of Russian at Sheffield University, was appointed to teach on two days a week.

The teaching of Russian flourished at Firth Park throughout the nineteen twenties though as the number of foreign languages proliferated within the school the number of boys studying Russian naturally fell - so much so that when Storr-Best retired in 1932 and was succeeded by Mr. Walter Padfield, Russian was the first target which he attacked. Padfield was himself a linguist - a French specialist - but he did not have the range of languages at his command which Storr-Best had. He came to Firth Park from the Central Secondary Boys School where he held the dual role of Senior Master and Senior Modern Languages Master and his appointment had caused a certain stir within the teaching profession for the post had not been advertised outside Sheffield and the professional unions and associations, particularly the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, had objected most strongly to this unusual practice. There could be little doubt, however, that the case which he presented for the ending of the Russian course was persuasive in the strained economic circumstances of 1932, as the following figures show,

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(23) Oral evidence Mr. S. Skelton, (former pupil) 14.8.75.



Table 4.1 - School Certificate Results in Russian, Firth Park S.S. 1928-31 <sup>(24)</sup>

	<u>Distinction</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Credit</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>	<u>Total</u>
1928	-	1	2	3	3	9
1929	-	1	1	6	5	13
1930	-	-	2	2	4	8
1931	1	-	2	3	4	10

Accordingly, from September 1932 the number of periods of Russian taught each week was reduced from 21 to 16, and in the following year it was reduced still further to six. At the same time the amount of manual instruction was increased from three half-days to five half-days a week. <sup>(25)</sup>

Shortly before this time the number of languages, including English, taught in the school had risen to eight. As early as January 1923 German and Greek had been introduced; the former for those who wanted to specialise in science and the latter for those who would be taking Latin as a principal subject in the Higher Certificate. Much of the teaching of these three languages was done after four o'clock, <sup>(26)</sup> but that was not the case with Spanish, which was also introduced in the early twenties. In 1924 the department of foreign languages was re-organised "in order to meet the requirements of the city", Storr-Best claimed, not altogether without an eye on creating a still more favourable impression with the city fathers. <sup>(27)</sup> All that happened, in fact, was that the practice was formalised whereby boys who showed promise during the first year were able to choose at the end of that year a second foreign language - Latin, Russian, German, or Spanish. Greek was still done by about ten boys after school hours, and in 1929 Italian was introduced "on the advice of several Sheffield businessmen", <sup>(28)</sup> Twenty-seven boys began the course in that Autumn term.

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(24) S,S,S,S,C., 20th June 1932, S.E.C.M. 1932-3, p. 125.  
 (25) S,S,S,S,C., 31st March, 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 29.  
 (26) G,P,S,S., 1st Dec., 1922, and 2nd Feb., 1923, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 359.  
 (27) S,S,S,S,C., 3rd Oct., 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 276.  
 (28) S,S,S,S,C., 7th June, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 141.

All those languages were taken by the boys for their School Certificate but, although there was a certain element of image-building in some of Storr-Best's statements, he did pay more than mere lip-service to the idea of developing a curriculum which, particularly in its scientific and linguistic content, reflected and served the demands of the city.

It would be wrong to attribute Firth Park's reputation for the number of foreign languages which it offered simply to the Head's desire to serve the training interests of the city or even to the fact that he himself was an extremely distinguished linguist. The proliferation of languages arose more from his passionate belief that the school should be international in its whole ethos and outlook,<sup>(29)</sup> Doubtless this was not unconnected with the multiplicity of languages which he spoke, but it was much more than just a linguistic predilection; it was a profound and dynamic conviction that only by nurturing a cosmopolitan awareness of the diversity and richness of the human experience could boys be brought to an appreciation and an understanding of the world in which they were living. Such sentiments were, of course, widely held in the inter-war years. They achieved some practical expression in the work of the League of Nations Union and in the efforts of various bodies to use the schools, and the teaching of citizenship and history and to a lesser extent geography and languages, as a means of fostering or even securing international peace.<sup>(30)</sup>

Storr-Best was not a pacifist: far from it. Indeed, he found it difficult to understand, let alone sympathise with one of the Firth Park staff, Dr. F.T. Wood, who had been a conscientious objector,<sup>(31)</sup> but he was determined that the boys in his school should not grow up ignorant of the peoples of foreign lands and of their achievements. Thus, not only

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(29) Oral evidence Mrs. F.T. Wood and Mr. T.F. Johnson. See also the reference below to international schools holidays, school exchanges and the travels of the school choir.

(30) See R. Longden 'The History and Validity of the Teaching of World History', Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1972.

(31) Oral evidence Mrs. F.T. Wood and Mr. T.F. Johnson.



was a wide range of languages taught but extra-curricular societies were established in order to foster a deeper, more informed and more sympathetic understanding of the peoples and problems of the contemporary world. The Spanish Circle was the strongest and most active of these, and the school had its League <sup>of</sup> Nations Society, but the idea of internationalism was also evidence in other, many and varied ways. It was evident not just in the school holidays which were organised, for example, in Paris in 1928 or Belgium in 1929, <sup>(32)</sup> but also in the enthusiasm with which every opportunity to establish links with schools on the Continent and in America was seized. Thus, in 1931 links were established with the Ginnasio-Liceo Dante in Florence <sup>(33)</sup> and a year later correspondence was begun with the Institute Iguela, which Storr-Best described as "the most famous school in Spain where most of the great Spanish statesmen were educated." <sup>(34)</sup> And when, in July, 1926, a party of twenty-five Yugoslavian students from the University of Ljubljana visited Sheffield, Storr-Best made sure that they visited Firth Park. <sup>(35)</sup> In 1924 the Board of Education announced that they had made arrangements for the employment of French assistant teachers in England. That was in June; in September Firth Park had its French assistant, M. Loujaret. <sup>(36)</sup>

The most ambitious of Storr-Best's schemes, however, was the establishment of what were termed Co-National Holiday Schools. In February 1930, he persuaded the Education Committee to permit a group of boys from Marburg, Germany, who would be holidaying in England during the summer, to attend classes at Firth Park during their visit to Sheffield, <sup>(37)</sup> and later in the month

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(32) S.S.S.S.C., 4th May, 1928, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 49 and 5th April, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 25.

(33) S.S.S.S.C., 21st Sept., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 330.

(34) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 402.

(35) S.S.S.S.C., 1st Oct., 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 306.

(36) S.S.S.S.C., 3rd Oct., 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 276.

(37) S.S.S.S.C., 7th Feb., 1930, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 611.



Dr. Schwarz, representing the Berlin City Council came to Sheffield in order to arrange for "collective class intercourse between Sheffield and Berlin secondary schools in which German and English are studied". It was he, in fact, who made the original suggestion for the inter-change each year of secondary school boys during the summer, but the proposition was eagerly taken up by Storr-Best and in March, he and the Chairman of the Education Committee, Alderman Rowlinson, went to Berlin to arrange the details with the Prussian Minister for Science, Art and Education, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Schwarz and Herr Nydahl of the Berlin civic authority. (38)

The principal difficulty in concluding the negotiations concerned the discrepancy in the incidence of the school holidays, for whereas the German holidays began on 2nd July, the Sheffield schools did not break up until 25th July. Many compromises were suggested by the Germans, but Storr-Best and Rowlinson, <sup>were</sup> bound by the fact that the Higher Certificate Examinations continued right up to the twenty-fifth. In the end the Germans gave way and it was arranged that on that date twenty Sheffield boys and three teachers (at least one of whom would have a working knowledge of German), would travel to Berlin. They were to be the guests of the Magistrat of the city which would house, feed, teach and entertain them for at least one month and pay all their expenses till they returned to the German border. The English boys and staff were to be accommodated, along with a similar number of Germans, in a large hostel in the pine forest fifteen miles outside Berlin. It was by a river and had an open-air swimming pool. The programme of activities which was planned covered linguistic and cultural work in the morning, whilst the rest of the day was to be devoted to English and German sports and music and gymnastics or expeditions into the country or to Berlin to gain an insight into German political, social and municipal life. Similar arrangements were made for the German boys visiting Sheffield.

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(38) S.S.S.S.C., 4th April, 1930; S.E.C.M. 1930-1, pp. 40-43.

Subsequently an equal number of boys from Firth Park, the Central Secondary Boys Schools and King Edwards were selected to go to Germany along with one master from each school, whilst the Sheffield Summer School was organised in the Training College's Collegiate Hall by three Firth Park masters with Dr. and Mrs. Storr-Best in charge. The morning sessions were divided into four periods, the first of which was devoted to the two languages, the second to the study of English political and social life, history and literature, the third to P.T., and the fourth to music. The afternoons were taken up with sports, walks, drives and visits, and the evenings were given over to amusements and social and civic functions. The total cost to the city was estimated at £590.

The Board of Education "noted with interest" the project and asked for a report on the experiment. Storr-Best submitted his report in October, but it is worth noticing that in the meantime he had deemed the holiday school to be worthy of a mention in the school's log book. This was, indeed, something exceptional for after half-a-dozen conscientious but inconsequential entries referring to school lunches and medical inspections when the school first opened in 1918, there is only one entry in the log before 1945 and that is the one referring to the Anglo-German holiday. Even that is extremely brief and simply gives the dates (July 25th to August 22nd, 1930), but in his report to the Education Committee Storr-Best said that both the school in Sheffield and that in Berlin had been "abundantly successful", and had given much happiness and increased knowledge to the 90-100 people who had taken part in them. (39)

Nothing came of an ambitious scheme for similar French and Spanish schools but the local authority did agree to another Anglo-German school being held in 1931. Again the venture was a success though some difficulties

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(39) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, pp. 405-7.



did arise from the fact that the German boys tended to be rather older than the English boys and spoke English more fluently than the Sheffield boys spoke German.

A few discipline problems arose with the German boys but that apart, the Sheffield summer school was a great success, as was that at Hohenlychen. There the boys were apparently better matched for age and linguistic fluency, and mixed better together. They also encountered some French boys and Walter Padfield, the Second Master at the Central Secondary School, who was shortly to take over from Storr-Best at Firth Park, reported that it was "a most inspiring sight to see how well they mixed and how friendly they all were ... the school was a great contribution to international friendship," (40)

Storr-Best retired at Easter 1932 and there is no record of any other summer schools being held in Sheffield, though in 1935 twenty Berlin boys did come to the city for the final three weeks of the summer term. They lodged with the parents of boys at Firth Park and Nether Edge and they also attended lessons at The Brushes. This apart, however, there seems to have been very little follow-up of the experiment.

Storr-Best was undoubtedly the key figure behind Sheffield's involvement in the co-national schools and it was also through him that Firth Park became involved in a cross-cultural survey of educational attainment which the University of Pennsylvania undertook in 1931. This survey involved a comparative test programme arranged by the university covering English, Algebra, German and Latin. (41) Storr-Best had undertaken a lecture tour of the United States in 1926, and although Pennsylvania was not one of the universities which he had visited then, he had become known

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(40) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, pp. 398-99.

(41) S.S.S.S.C., 21st Sept., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 330.



in higher education circles there. The American tour had itself arisen out of other international trips which Storr-Best had made earlier. In the summer of 1924 he had been appointed by the British Government to an educational mission to Russia,<sup>(42)</sup> and in August 1925 he had attended the International Congress for Higher Education in Belgrade as a representative of the Board of Education.<sup>(43)</sup> At that Congress he had met a Dr. Russell, who was the Associate Director of the Institute of International Education. This Institute existed for the purpose of promoting international friendship by acting as an intermediary between universities and distinguished foreigners. H.A.L. Fisher and Carl Brinkmann were among many famous men who had lectured for the Institute. Russell had invited Storr-Best to visit the United States in order to study American education and had suggested that his expenses for the tour could be covered by fees for lectures which he could give at American universities and colleges,

Storr-Best secured leave of absence from the Sheffield authority in order to undertake the trip between Easter and Whitsuntide 1926 and on his return to Sheffield<sup>(44)</sup> submitted a report on "American Education in the Middle West" in which he described his visit as "very successful indeed". This lecture tour was but another example of that internationalism which was present in Storr-Best's own life and which he sought to impart to the school. It was evident also in the journeying of the School Choir which achieved some modest fame both at home and abroad. The direct inspiration and driving force behind the Choir was, of course, the music master - Mr. MacMahon - but it is doubtful whether the Choir would have travelled so far afield and gained such a wide reputation had it not been for Storr-Best. MacMahon had come to Firth Park in 1923 but had not obtained a degree until

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(42) S.S.S.S.C., 4th July, 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 142.

(43) S.S.S.S.C., 4th June, 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 121.

(44) He was four days late owing to the General Strike.

1926 when he was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Music by the University of Durham, <sup>(45)</sup> He continued his studies further and in 1933 he gained his Doctorate at Trinity, Dublin, subsequently becoming a local inspector in Lancashire, <sup>(46)</sup> It was he who built up Firth Park's considerable reputation for music in the late twenties and thirties.

In the Summer of 1929 the Choir began its foreign travels in response to an invitation from the German Board of Education and Firth Park reciprocated by acting as hosts for a party of German boys who were giving plays in England, <sup>(47)</sup> The choir sang and performed plays in Berlin, Köln and the Rhineland towns, and in one town a torchlight procession was held in their honour. The tour was obviously a success and in his report to the Committee Storr-Best enthused that the boys and the German children "fraternised and sorrowed-for the German schoolgirls took a hand - almost at first sight." The choir was quite young, with an average age of only 12;8 and consequently, could speak little German but this, Storr-Best claimed rather sweepingly, had not prevented mutual understanding and the whole experiment had been a striking success to which he intended to draw the attention of the Board of Education.

In 1931 the Choir sang in Lausanne before members of an Anglo-American Educational Congress and was also invited to undertake a tour of the Harz Mountains, <sup>(48)</sup> At home it was invited by the Novello Company to launch its latest book of school songs at a concert in London, <sup>(49)</sup> and it made several broadcasts for the BBC, on both its regional and its national networks, <sup>(50)</sup> Perhaps the event which caused the greatest excitement in the school, however, was when, after the Choir had already appeared before the cine-cameras following a concert in London, the Pathé Sound Unit

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- (45) S.S.S.S.C., 1st October 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 307.  
(46) S.S.S.S.C., 11th Sept., 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 311.  
(47) S.S.S.S.C., 7th June 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 141.  
(48) S.S.S.S.C., 5th June, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 147.  
(49) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 142.  
(50) In 1931, 1934 and 1937.



visited the school in February 1931. It filmed the choir singing and also made a sound film of the film van being snowballed - much to the delight of the boys concerned.<sup>(51)</sup> The Choir's final success in the inter-war period came in 1937 when it was chosen to represent the North of England in a programme of school music which the BBC broadcast to celebrate the Coronation.<sup>(52)</sup>

Through the achievements and travels of the Choir; through the proliferation of languages within the school; through foreign visits; through the organisation of the Co-National Summer Schools; and through his own multifarious linguistic, educational and scholastic activities, Storr-Best inspired and practised an internationalism which was itself a reflection of at least one significant trend in English educational thought between the wars, a strand which was also manifest both locally and nationally in the activities of the League of Nations Union. Storr-Best was himself well-known in scholastic circles far beyond Sheffield. Russia, Yugoslavia and America were among the places which he visited,<sup>(53)</sup> whilst nearer home he was active in occasional work for the Board of Education, in examining for the Joint Matriculation Board, in the Classical Association, the Institute of Linguists and the Polyglot Society (to which he lectured in French).<sup>(54)</sup> Perhaps above all he was an enthusiast; an enthusiast who attempted to impart to Firth Park School something of his zeal for learning, his cosmopolitanism and his passion for the Greek view of the complete man.

The best summary of the ideals for which he was striving at Firth Park is contained in the address which he gave at the school's first (and his only) Speech Day which was held on 23rd March, 1932, only a few days before he retired. In that address he expressly set out to inform the parents about the general aims of the school and its ultimate objectives and in so doing he effectively summarised his own philosophy of education.

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(51) The Firparnian, (School Magazine) March, 1931, pp. 2-3.

(52) The Firparnian, July 1937, p.3.

(53) See above p. 141.

(54) S.S.S.C., 1st Feb., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 610.



It was clearly the business of the school, he began, to secure good examination results, scholarships and satisfactory situations for the boys when they left school but none of those was the prime purpose of the school. The main object of school activity, he believed, was rather the full development of life. "Our main objective at Firth Park", he said, "is, and always has been, how to turn growing boys ultimately into full-sized men; to furnish a soil in which all their faculties may flower, in which no faculty will be starved and wither; to give an education in which nothing essential is omitted and by which body, mind and spirit may alike thrive in freedom."<sup>(55)</sup>

This was, in short, the Greek and Renaissance ideal of the complete man, fit and alert in body and mind, interested and accomplished in all the multifarious facets of human experience. As a classical scholar Storr-Best was, of course, well acquainted with the Greek ideal of physical fitness and was anxious that the boys should engage in as much physical activity as possible. On one occasion in the early days of the school he had even gone so far as to enquire of the school secretary how she thought people in the neighbourhood would react if the boys were to perform their exercises as the Greeks had done, naked.<sup>(56)</sup> Having been enlightened on that point, he settled for the shorts and shoes to which he alluded in his Speech Day address when he observed that the scanty costume which the boys wore for gymnastics "made the mothers very angry with us at first, but they have since grown completely reconciled, realising how good for the health of their sons is the air bath thus induced." The boys also wore that attire for cricket and that too apparently caused a scandal at first but, he observed dryly, "Sheffield has since become more civilised."

Having described the physical objectives of the school he launched into an attack upon those who had "frequently criticised" the school for

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(55) Verbatim report of Storr-Best's address, The Firparnian, July 1932, p.5.

(56) Oral evidence Mrs. F.T. Wood.

the emphasis it gave to pictorial art and music. These he believed were not mere luxuries but were universal and a part of our common human nature. Such interests, however, are quite sophisticated and Storr-Best was right in insisting that they could not be understood or fully enjoyed without specific education which, given the socio-economic and cultural background of the boys at Firth Park, could be given effectively only by the school. He valued art and music above all for their socialising, civilising and humanising power, and whilst he was justifiably proud when the school choir won honours in London, Lausanne, Belgium or Berlin he believed it a far greater thing that music and art should be part of the very life breath of the whole school and that the boys should leave with "an appreciation of beauty in sound and form built into their souls".

Like all secondary school Headmasters, Storr-Best was deeply concerned with academic attainment and in his Speech Day address he commented on the fact that the school had just won its first scholarship to Cambridge and the year before had won one to Oxford. Several Old Boys were by then engaged in post-graduate research, many local scholarships and places at Sheffield University had been won and a satisfactory percentage of passes at First and Higher Certificate levels was being recorded. This had not always been the case, however, for in the early years of the school's life its record of successes in public examinations was not all that impressive, though it must be remembered that, like Abbeydale Girls School, Firth Park tended to come third in the pecking order of secondary schools and received only those pupils who could not be placed at King Edward's or the Central Secondary Schools.

With examinations, as with most other things, Storr-Best was ambitious and in 1921 some boys were entered for the J.M.B. examinations a year earlier than they should have been. He claimed that none of those who were obviously unfit had been eliminated from the form which sat



the examination and that the curriculum had not been specially constructed for examination purposes in that both French and Russian were worked at continuously and finally presented by the whole form despite the fact that Russian had been taught for only one year and two terms. (57) In the report on the examination results which he presented to the Governors, Storr-Best devoted most of his comments to Russian, "There can be no doubt if one may judge by results that Russian as taught at this school is worthwhile. Of our candidates who sat, twelve passed satisfactorily; four with credit in Oral Russian", he reported. The usual class size at that time was around or just under thirty per form and so the total pass rate was not all that high, but, as Storr-Best pointed out, the boys had taken the examination after only  $\frac{2}{3}$  years instead of the three which was usual for the second language.

In English the pass rate was 82%, in science 64%; and in mathematics 65% (with 9 credits). No details were given then of the successes in other subjects, but when in 1924 he was attempting to demonstrate the improvement which had been wrought in the school's examination results, he did state that in 1921 only 20% of those who had been entered had passed. (58)

Storr-Best's reports on the early examination results are illuminating in that they show how, whilst not concealing the basic facts of the situation, a Headmaster can so present his report to his Governors as to gloss over a rather poor overall showing and concentrate on those aspects which give cause for congratulation and put the school in a good light. Thus, the only mention he gave in his 1922 report of the very low overall percentage pass rate was to say right at the very end that there "was a low percentage of passes", and even that observation was qualified by the rider that "in view of the dislocation and difficulties of the school the marks are

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(57) S.S.S.S.C., 15th Sept., 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 251.

(58) S.S.S.S.C., 3rd October, 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 276.



most encouraging." (59) In fact, the overall percentage pass rate was 49%. (60) All the boys in the two upper forms had sat the examination. Twenty-two had gained leaving certificates and four had matriculated. Eleven distinctions had been obtained; five in mathematics, two in chemistry, one in physics, two in French and one in geography. Two other boys had gained more than the number of credits necessary for matriculation but had failed to secure the credit mark in the obligatory subject. Storr-Best also highlighted one boy, G.H. Billiald, who had gained credits in all his eight subjects, including distinctions in two of them, and another pupil, R.C. Bennett, who had gained six credits, including two distinctions and two good passes.

The 1922 examination results were an improvement on those of the previous year, as they should have been with candidates who had had four full years preparation, but in 1923 the results showed a significant upswing. Then there was a 67% pass rate with ten matriculants, and in 1924 the percentage rose again slightly to 69% with twenty-two boys matriculating. (61) These figures were clearly very much better and were, in fact, about 5% above the average for the whole country.

Fortified by this improvement, particularly in subjects like English, chemistry, physics, French, mathematics, geography and drawing where the pass rates were all above eighty, and in three cases above ninety percent, Storr-Best felt free to touch upon those disciplines which had not done so well. The Latin, Russian and scripture results were, he confessed, remarkably bad with 36%, 18% and 14% pass rates respectively. There were, however, certain extenuating circumstances in that scripture had not (for undisclosed reasons) been taught on examination lines, whilst the two groups, each of eleven boys, who had taken Latin and Russian had been studying those languages for only two instead of three years.

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(59) G.F.P.S.S., 6th Oct., 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 264.  
(60) S.S.S.S.C., 3rd Oct., 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 276.  
(61) S.S.S.S.C., 3rd Oct., 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 276.

In 1922 the school entered its first candidates for the local Lancasterian Scholarship examinations and the Head announced his intention of submitting twenty fifth-year boys for the Higher School Certificate examination at the end of the 1922-23 academic year. Strangely enough, Storr-Best did not include any details of Higher Certificate results in his reports until as late as 1927 though obviously Firth Park boys must have been entered for the examination well before that date. In July, 1927, for example, he reported that a Douglas Hall who had been at Firth Park until 1923 had been awarded a First and the Mappin Medal for Metallurgy at Sheffield University. (62)

In July 1927 fourteen boys took their Higher Certificate Examinations. Only a half of them passed but again it had apparently been the practice to enter some boys (six in all) for the examination after only one year's advanced work. (63) In the following year eight out of eleven candidates passed and two boys each gained two distinctions and the mark 'Good' in their principal subjects; whilst at Sheffield University the school claimed another First Class Honours, this time in mathematics. Other university successes accrued but there were each year considerable numbers of boys who left after only one year of advanced work. By 1929, when only twenty-seven were engaged in post-matriculation work, Storr-Best was expressing concern at the small numbers commencing the course and at the high level of wastage during it. (64) He was contemplating introducing a civil service class but the indications were that there would be a much greater number of boys doing post-matriculation work the following year and, in fact, forty-nine boys began advanced courses in September 1930.

It is interesting that, despite the fact that the school had built up for itself a reputation for its languages, thirty-seven of the advanced students were scientists and only twelve arts students. (65) That dozen moreover,

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(62) S.S.S.S.C., 1st July, 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 170.

(63) S.S.S.S.C., 7th October, 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 367.

(64) S.S.S.S.C., 6th Sept., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 368.

(65) S.S.S.S.C., 8th October, 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 412.



would obviously include boys who were following non-linguistic arts courses, but the fact that thirty-seven boys were engaged in advanced science work obviously vindicated Storr-Best's other claim that the school was anxious to serve the scientific and technical needs of the city and its industry. The school's reputation for its languages clearly rested on the number and range of languages which it offered to its pupils rather than upon the total number of boys actually studying each language. Indeed, the smallness of the language groups was one of the "special features of the school" which the Authority's Senior Inspector of Schools commented on when reviewing secondary school staffing in 1931,<sup>(66)</sup> and Russian was the first target of Padfield's economies when he became Headmaster in the summer of 1932. Failures in Russian were the highest of any of the languages but the standards achieved in the others were very creditable, particularly in the oral work. In 1932, for example, credits in the oral tests were gained by 23 out of the 25 boys studying German; by 69 out of 95 studying French; by 9 out of the 15 studying Italian; and by all 20 Spanish candidates. The school was also successful in entering its pupils for competitions organised by the Italian Chamber of Commerce and by the Anglo-Italian Society, and it is interesting that its first Open Scholarship at Cambridge was gained in Modern Languages.<sup>(67)</sup> K.J. Simpson, the winner of that scholarship, subsequently gained a First in both German and French.<sup>(68)</sup>

The great majority of boys who went to university, however, went to that in their own city. In the academic year 1929-30, for example, there were thirty-one Old Firparnians at Sheffield University and in 1930-31 more than forty,<sup>(69)</sup> Several outstanding successes were recorded including the winning of Mappin Medals in Metallurgy, Holroyd Gold Medals in Anaesthetics, various post-graduate research scholarships and two or three Ph.Ds.<sup>(70)</sup>

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(66) S.S.S.S.C., 4th Dec., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 538.

(67) The Firparnian, April 1935, p.2 and July 1938, p.1.

(68) S.S.S.S.C., 23rd June, 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 224.

(69) S.S.S.S.C., 3rd July, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 234.

(70) Notable amongst these was Dr. (later Sir) Lincoln Ralphs who subsequently became Director of Education for Norfolk and Chairman of the Schools Council.



There is no definitive evidence available as to the predictive validity of Sheffield's Secondary School Entrance Examination but the fact remains that the boys who did best in that examination were given their first choice of school and most tended to select King Edward's. Parents of boys further down the order of merit list tended to opt for the Central Secondary School and then came Firth Park. Later, when the Nether Edge Boys Secondary School was set up it tended to come last on the list of parental preferences and suffered accordingly.<sup>(71)</sup> Regardless of the psychometric validity of the Entrance Examination the system, once established, tended to be self-perpetuating in that King Edward's, at the very outset in 1905, was accepted by parents as being academically the best boys school in the city. It would be difficult to prove that it was not, but having once attained that pre-eminence it naturally attracted the most gifted and able pupils who continued to add to the impressive academic honours won by the school. It is also possible that King Edward's may have had the most gifted and able staff but this is something which it would be impossible to prove and upon which it would be dangerous to speculate. The fact remains, however, that Firth Park did not have the first choice of the best brains in Sheffield and in view of that its academic record was not unimpressive.

Storr-Best and Padfield, his successor, had very differing views upon the role and value of examinations. In October 1928, Storr-Best informed his Governors (one suspects with some pride) that all the subjects in the curriculum except P.T. were examined by an external authority. "It is felt", he said, "that P.T. will not receive its due consideration in school curricula until it has the same examinational status as other subjects".<sup>(72)</sup> He intimated that he would make an attempt to induce the J.M.B. to add P.T. to the list of subjects which could be taken for the School Certificate

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(71) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, (former Headmaster Nether Edge S.S.), 19.8.75,  
(72) S.S.S.S.C., 5th Oct., 1928; S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 373.

Examination but nothing ever came of that proposal.<sup>(73)</sup> Padfield, on the other hand, whilst being naturally anxious to enhance the academic reputation of his school, did speculate that "in the ideal future of which teachers sometimes dream there would perhaps be no external examinations."<sup>(74)</sup> In support of this vision he cited the fact that in the previous year the School Certificate results differed by only 7% from the estimates made by the respective subject teachers before the boys sat their papers. He was clearly suggesting something very much like a Mode III form of internal assessment but this innovation, of course, had to wait upon the recommendations of the Beloe Committee in 1960.

The first two Headmasters also had slightly differing approaches to the curriculum or at least towards certain elements in it, for although Storr-Best was in some respects (such as his advocacy of internationalism) a forward looking Headmaster, he was above all "a scholar and a gentleman",<sup>(75)</sup> and as a scholar, he took a view of the curriculum which tended in certain respects to be perhaps rather narrowly academic. Padfield, on the other hand, took a wider more practical view and almost immediately upon taking office he introduced manual instruction at the expense of Russian - which was something Storr-Best would never have contemplated.

In this, Padfield was implementing some of the more progressive ideas then prevalent in secondary education for it was not until somewhat later, around 1938, that vocational subjects could claim to have found any real measure of acceptance in the secondary school curriculum. By that date four out of the five subjects needed for the School Certificate could be taken from Group IV and thus there was no examination barrier to the development of practical and vocational courses in secondary schools. Even so,

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(73) More recently one or two schools have submitted Mode 3 P.E. Schemes for the Certificate of Secondary Education, but in the West Yorkshire and Lindsey Region, at least, they have not been encouraged.

(74) The Headmaster's Report for 1934-5, Speech Day, Mar. 1936, The Firparnian, Mar, 1936, p.4.

(75) C.H. Hipkins, (Senior Master at Firth Park S.S. on Storr-Best's retirement), The Firparnian, July 1923, p.3.



very few schools took advantage of these changes in the regulations, and whilst the national percentage of candidates offering handicraft in 1932 was 1.9%, it had risen by 1938 only to 4.9%,<sup>(76)</sup>

Padfield's avowed aim was to lay an educational foundation that would "provide broad-minded and well informed citizens as well as good examination students",<sup>(77)</sup> To this end he believed it important that education should be concerned not just with passing examinations but also with extra-curricular activities. The Choir and Orchestra, the Chess, Historical, Geographical, Scientific, Dramatic and Debating Societies were already in existence and generally flourishing during the Storr-Best era. Whilst Padfield was Headmaster the Geographical and Science Societies merged into a Natural Philosophical Society and a Scout troop and Photographic and Peace Societies were established. Most of these new societies sprang up during 1934-35 and in September 1936, Padfield followed the precedent of Abbeydale Girls School and, as an experiment, began to devote Thursday afternoons to meetings of these societies. The reason for this innovation was the same as that which had prompted Miss Tonkin to devote Friday afternoons at Abbeydale to the "Crafts", namely that travelling made it difficult for many pupils to remain at school after 4 o'clock. Padfield reported to his Governors in October that the experiment had been a great success and had led to the formation of many new societies embracing such diverse interests as boxing, First Aid, Peace, Italian and swimming.<sup>(78)</sup> What he did not report to them was that any great upsurge of interest which had occurred was to a large extent purely artificial since participation in the societies was compulsory for the boys. It was also compulsory for the staff who were, according to their individual attitudes at the outset, either persuaded, cajoled or coerced into devising activities in which the boys could participate.

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(76) O.L. Banks, 'Grammar School', p. 194.

(77) Padfield's Report for 1934-5, The Firparnian, May 1936, p.5.

(78) S.E.S.C., 12th Oct., 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p.372.



There was, in fact, much opposition from the staff and the scheme was abandoned after a year. The opposition sprang from a complex blend of valid educational criticism and subjective prejudice. The former arose from the fact that the final forty minutes for extra-curricular activities was purchased at the cost of compressing the normal eight lessons into the time usually devoted to the first seven. Thus teaching suffered, and then at the end of that rather hectic day the staff were further required to throw themselves with enthusiasm into a variety of somewhat articially inspired activities. Many of the staff, then, were perhaps rather understandably lukewarm in their attitude to Padfield's scheme. Others, however, were positively hostile. They constituted what has been described by someone who was then a junior member of the Firth Park staff, as the "anti-Padfield clique,"<sup>(79)</sup> They were led by the four senior Heads of Department (Mathematics, English, Science and Modern Languages) who on Padfield's assumption of office became something of a law unto themselves, often refusing to do supervisory duties and objecting more or less as a matter of general principle to anything which the new Headmaster introduced. They had developed an understandable affection and loyalty to Storr-Best but it would appear that after his retirement those sentiments were pointedly not extended to his successor and Padfield laboured under this grave handicap until he himself retired in 1948.

The whole of the inter-war period, then, saw just two Headmasters at Firth Park: the one, Storr-Best, extrovert and effervescent but a scholar and a gentleman; the other, Padfield, less academic and more practical in his outlook. Between them, they saw the school through the most difficult and testing time in its history. The basic problems with which they had to deal were essentially the same as those which confronted all the secondary schools which were established in Sheffield in the period 1902-1939. The most important of those problems was that of buildings. In the case of

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(79) Oral evidence Mr. T.F. Johnson, 6.9.75.

King Edward's that problem was speedily resolved by the expenditure of £18,000 on the conversion of the Wesley College buildings but the Central Secondary School had to work in very cramped and largely unsatisfactory surroundings in the centre of the city until as late as 1933.<sup>(80)</sup> At Abbeydale the difficulties of having a school housed in two separate buildings some two hundred yards apart was on the point of being solved when World War II broke out, though comprehensive re-organisation has since re-created the very same problem. At Firth Park, although a temporary dining room erected in 1921 is still a temporary dining room, the last major building programme was completed in 1937 when six new classrooms, a library and an art room were brought into use. Thus, both the girls and the boys secondary schools which the Sheffield Authority set up in 1918 had to exist through virtually the whole of the inter-war period in premises that were in varying degrees unsatisfactory.

In the case of Firth Park it was not until 1927 that the school was housed under one roof and even then the provision of certain desirable specialist facilities was not complete. For the first nine years of the school's life its staff and pupils had to devise and function within a series of make-shift expedients which only became progressively less unsatisfactory as more ample accommodation was added to Brush House. Granted that at that time most of the teaching, at least on the Arts side, involved little more than "chalk and talk", effective teaching could begin once a reasonably sound and well-lit and heated room was provided; but it would be idle to pretend that the problems of disparate accommodation did not exercise an inhibiting and deleterious influence on certain aspects of the development of the school. Storr-Best, for example, observed most cuttingly in 1922 that the absence of an Assembly Hall was having a seriously adverse effect upon the development of a genuine school spirit and a sense of

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(80) See below Ch. 7.



loyalty to and identification with the school as a whole. It says much for the energy, enthusiasm and efficiency of Storr-Best in particular that these difficulties were handled and not allowed to destroy the academic progress of the school,

As the first Headmaster of a new school Storr-Best was in a position to mould and determine its shape and future for a number of years which far exceeded that of his own tenure of the headship. Although his successor soon despatched Russian from the curriculum the reputation for languages which the school built-up under Storr-Best and which owed so much to his direct inspiration lasted throughout the inter-war period and beyond.<sup>(81)</sup> The standards of scholarship and behaviour which he established and the philosophy of secondary education which he advocated were imbibed and pro-created by those members of staff who began their careers at Firth Park during his reign and who continued to teach there long after his retirement. Walter Padfield found this more than something of a mixed blessing but there can be little doubt that Storr-Best had a greater influence upon the shaping and development of Firth Park than any other single individual. He was a man with a distinctive style and not a little charisma, and he ensured that the school's linguistic range and musical expertise did not go unnoticed in circles and lands far distant from Sheffield. In those spheres the school, built up an outstanding, even unique, reputation.

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(81) The teaching of the Russian was revived in 1945 and from then until 1974 Firth Park was one of the very few schools offering that language,



CHAPTER 5

NETHER EDGE SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

As the post-war recession began to abate and the need for financial re-trenchment became less acute, the Board of Education in Circular 1358 requested local education authorities to formulate development programmes which would cover the needs of their areas for at least the three years commencing April 1927,<sup>(1)</sup> Those programmes were to be submitted to the Board by 31st December, 1925 or Easter 1926 at the latest. By this programme procedure the Board hoped to agree upon and lay down clearly the general lines of educational advance in each area. It was intended that programmes should be based on a comprehensive view of the requirements of each authority and should relate not only to the provision of new buildings, and alterations and modifications of existing buildings, but also to the staffing and general organisation in all branches of education - elementary, secondary, technical and adult.

In time honoured fashion, Sheffield decided to appoint a special sub-committee to deal with this matter and, since finance was clearly going to have an important bearing on the whole question of educational development, it was a special Sub-Committee of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.<sup>(2)</sup> At a meeting on 8th March, 1926, this Special Sub-Committee recommended that a Report prepared by the Director of Education be sent to the Board together with an intimation that the execution of the scheme would depend very largely on local financial conditions and the extent to which the Government would be able to help with adequate grants.

The bulk of the report was concerned with elementary education, the aggregate cost of which at that time was approximately six times the corresponding figure for higher education,<sup>(3)</sup> but in the few paragraphs

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(1) Circular 1358. Mar. 1925 (l.e.a.'s Programmes of Ed. Development).

(2) Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee (F.G.P.S.C.), 14th September, 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 304.

(3) City of Sheffield Education Committee Programme of Educational Development for the Three Years Commencing 1st April 1927, Sheffield, 1926, p. 3

which he devoted to secondary education the Director recommended the provision of 1,000 places during the period 1927-30. That would involve a capital expenditure of £100,000 since the Board's officials had estimated that the cost per place was around £100.

In fact, the Sheffield submission listed only £100,000 under the secondary heading and this was to be used for two new schools - one for boys and one for girls. However, the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee felt that particularly with regard to girls it was necessary to bear in mind that the development of intermediate schools<sup>(4)</sup> in the city would probably reduce the demand for secondary school places. In fact, all the girl candidates who had reached the prescribed standard in the General Examination for Entrance to Secondary Schools, the Pupil-Teacher Centre and Intermediate Schools had that year been accommodated in those schools. In those circumstances the Finance Sub-Committee was not prepared to give its assent to a detailed statement of proposed expenditure for a new girls secondary school until the question had been explored further.<sup>(5)</sup>

The other half of the £100,000 was ear-marked for a technical secondary school, approval for which had already been given by the Heads of the Technology and Secondary Schools branches of the Board of Education, as well as by the former Minister, Trevelyan. It had also been agreed that a technical secondary school should be established and it was further suggested that the provision of such a school should be included in the three-year programme of educational development.<sup>(6)</sup>

No specific plans for a new secondary school for boys were mentioned, which is perhaps rather surprising since the authority was already well aware of the need for further provision to be made for boys. Indeed,

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(4) See below Ch. 9.

(5) F.G.P.S.C. 14th Sept., 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 304.

(6) See R. Underdown, "The History of Ashleigh School", unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1972.



between the initial consideration of Circular 1358 by the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee in May 1925 and the Director submitting his proposals in February 1926, the Education Committee had considered a motion proposing

"That it be an instruction to the Higher Education Sub-Committee to proceed at once to make provision for further school accommodation for children to receive Secondary Education and with that end in view to arrange for the immediate opening of temporary premises to take some of the boys who qualified at the recent entrance examination but did not obtain admission".

The motion was defeated but despite that the Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee recommended in the following month that the necessary steps be taken to acquire 'The Edge', which had formerly served as the offices of the Ecclesall Bierlow Board of Guardians, for use as a secondary school for boys.<sup>(8)</sup> Subsequently, the Clerk to the Sheffield Board of Guardians, which had assumed the responsibilities of the Ecclesall Union in 1926, intimated that they were prepared to sell the Offices along with certain premises on the other side of the road, (Union Road) which were then being used as receiving wards, and a store for the inmate's own clothing. The purchase price was to be fixed by the District Valuer of the Ministry of Health<sup>(9)</sup> but in the meantime the City Architect reported that an initial estimate of the cost of converting the premises for use as a school was in the region of £5,500. The Secondary Schools Sub-Committee then visited Union Road and suggested certain amendments to the original plans so that the final scheme envisaged the conversion of the ground floor of the stables into a manual instruction room for twenty boys, thus releasing the two rooms in the buildings on the opposite side of the road, which it had been proposed to adapt as manual instruction rooms, for use as additional classrooms. Another classroom was to be provided by combining the east Strong Room with the room adjoining, and cloakroom accommodation was to

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(7) S.E.C., 24th Aug., 1925, S.E.C.M. 1925-6, p. 219.

(8) S.S.S.C., 4th Sept., 1925, S.E.C.M. 1925-6, p. 225.

(9) The authority made attempts to arrange for renting but the Guardians insisted on outright purchase.



be rearranged utilising the spare room on the opposite side of Union Road. These modifications increased the total accommodation from 366 to 432, including the laboratory but excluding the manual instruction room. (10)

These premises, for what it was decided should be called the Nether Edge Secondary School for Boys, were perhaps the most bizarre of all those which the Committee found for its secondary pupils in this period. 'The Brushes', 'The Grange' and 'Holt House' were far from ideal places in which to accommodate a school but they were certainly more appropriate than the offices, wards and storerooms in which the youngest of the city's secondary schools was housed. Even those large rooms which could conceivably have been partitioned so as to provide extra rooms and a more congenial teaching environment were not always adapted and the Sub-Committee refused to divide the old Board Room, insisting instead that half of it could be used as a normal classroom and other other as an art room. The Office building afforded six classrooms whilst the casual block across Union Road contained two large upper-storey rooms, which were converted into laboratories, and two smaller rooms on the ground floor which were used as lecture rooms. Generally, the classrooms were far too small and as a result the boys were cramped for space and tended to become restive. There was, of course, no proper gymnasium or Assembly Hall. Instead the vestibule, which was the largest area (48ft. x 17½ft.), was used for Assemblies with the staff, when the school was up to its full complement, having to stand in the corridors and entrances leading to it. (11) The dining room (30ft. x 25ft.) later also served as a gymnasium which had to be cleared half-way through the morning in order to bring in the dining tables. Initially, the only piece of apparatus was a vaulting box and the rest of the P.T. lessons consisted simply of Swedish Drill.

The Board of Education finally approved the school for 375 pupils, but they noted that the premises, even when fully adapted, would still fall

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(10) S.S.S.S.C., 4th Dec., 1925, S.E.C.M. 1925-6, p. 377.

(11) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, (Senior Master and then Headmaster of Nether Edge S.S. 1927-52) 19.8.75.

short in some respects of the provision normally expected in a new school building. (12)

It was intended that the school should open in September 1926 with just three classes but administrative and building delays prevented that. However, in December 1926 the Secondary Schools Sub-Committee recommended that Dr. Moore, the Headmaster of the Central Secondary School for Boys, be appointed temporary Headmaster of Nether Edge until such time as the number of boys in attendance warranted the appointment of a full-time Head. This arrangement met with the approval of the Board of Education though they did express the view that when, in September 1927, a further ninety boys were admitted bringing the total number up to 180, a full-time Headmaster should be appointed.

Further building delays necessitated the postponement of the opening from January until April 1927, when three masters and four part-time assistants welcomed the first intake of eighty-nine boys. Harry E. Cooke B.A. (London) had been appointed as assistant master to teach history, geography and English; and Fred Potts B.Sc. (London) to teach mathematics and physics. In charge of them and responsible for the general running of the school until a full-time Headmaster was appointed, was Harold Smith M.A. (Sheffield) who taught English and French. He received a special allowance of £48 for his additional responsibilities. Part-time assistants were appointed to teach six periods of art a week, whilst singing was taught one half-day a week, and physical training on two half-days. (13)

Three more form masters were appointed for the beginning of the new academic year. Two of them had gained Firsts at London, one in Mathematics and the other in French, whilst the third was to teach Art and Handicraft. Advertisements were also issued for the post of Headmaster which carried a salary of £600 p.a. Fifty-three applications were received and Luther Smith M.A. (Oxon) was appointed. (14) Smith had been a pupil at the Central

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(12) B.E. to S.E.C., 31st Dec., 1926, in S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 417.

(13) S.S.S.C., 3rd Mar., 1927, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 577.

(14) S.S.S.C., 27th April, 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, pp. 66-67.



Secondary School in Sheffield and had won a mathematical scholarship from there to Sheffield University before completing his education at Oxford. He was a Socialist and a Quaker and during World War I his pacificism had compelled him to take up teaching in Ireland. After the war he had taught in Reigate, Surrey, before becoming Senior Mathematics Master at the Thomas Strutt Secondary School, Belper. From there he came to Nether Edge but he stayed only four terms before becoming Headmaster of his old school, the Central Secondary. Subsequently, he left there to become Principal of Redlands Training College, Bristol. (15)

On 6th September, 1927, the school began its first full academic year with 180 boys on the roll and the builders still on the premises. Neither of the laboratories was yet ready, though the physics laboratory was promised for 3rd October and the chemistry laboratory for a fortnight later; and the playground had still not been asphalted. These minor works were duly completed but the school was still not in a position to house all the pupils it was intended to accommodate. Consequently, when the final intake of ninety boys arrived in the school in September 1929 it was necessary to utilise the room which had hitherto been used as a gymnasium as an ordinary classroom. (16) Thus, the Dining Room was used before morning break (11 am - 11.15 am) for gymnastics and drill, but after break this was precluded by the necessity of setting out the dining tables and chairs. This expedient was sufficient to meet the immediate situation but as Advanced Courses developed and more pupils stayed beyond the age of fifteen, so pressure on rooms once more became acute. The Headmaster, therefore, suggested that an art room be provided in the outbuilding over the room which was then being used for manual instruction; that an ordinary classroom

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(15) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, 19.8.75.

(16) S.S.S.S.C., 18th March, 1929; S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 651.



be converted into a science lecture room; that the old Board Room be partitioned; and that another room, be enlarged by removing the fireplace and the sink and then partitioned so as to make an extra room.<sup>(17)</sup> This again was but a palliative measure and two years later it was found necessary to acquire the old Registrar's office and house adjoining the school in order to provide an advanced physics laboratory and a library.<sup>(18)</sup>

The school had a Full Inspection in 1932 and His Majesty's Inspectors, not surprisingly, recommended that more satisfactory accommodation be provided for the school. The first, and obvious, reaction of the Committee was to begin afresh and provide the school with completely new premises at an estimated cost of £60,000, but in January 1935 the Chief Education Officer reported that the Finance Consultative Committee of the City Council had modified the Capital Estimates which the Education Committee had approved the previous November so as to delete the provision of new school buildings.<sup>(19)</sup>

Nevertheless, an Assembly Hall, which could also be used for music, a gymnasium with changing rooms and showers, a library, three additional classrooms and an extra chemistry laboratory were all urgently needed, but the Sub-Committee which examined the problem was of the opinion that the Union Road site was not large enough to permit the existing buildings being extended. Instead, it recommended that a new school to accommodate six hundred boys be erected on the higher ground of the Hastings Road playing field facing south towards Abbeydale Road.<sup>(20)</sup> Walter Ritchings, who had succeeded Luther Smith as Headmaster at Easter 1929, contributed much valuable advice concerning the drawing up of the plans for the new school, particularly in so far as science was concerned,<sup>(21)</sup> but he was not able to see them come to fruition for he died suddenly during the summer holidays, 1935.

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- (17) S.S.S.S.C., 4th December, 1931; S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 467.  
(18) S.S.S.S.C., 30th October, 1933; S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 447.  
(19) F.G.P.S.C., 22nd Jan., 1935; S.E.C.M. 1934-5, p. 524.  
(20) S.S.S.S.C., 8th April, 1935; S.E.C.M. 1935-6, pp. 38-9.  
(21) H. Smith, 'A Brief History of the School since the Last Full Inspection (Dec., 1932)', unpublished T.S. 1952.

The plans provided accommodation and the usual amenities for a school of about 600 boys with a swimming bath for use by both the Nether Edge Boys and the Abbeydale Girls. (22) The capital expenditure involved was of the order of £75,000 plus £3,600 for furniture and fittings. These plans were approved by the Secondary Education Sub-Committee in 1936 and also by the Board of Education which made a few small amendments in order to reduce the cost marginally. Work was then due to begin on construction, but the authority gave priority to a similar scheme which had been approved for the Abbeydale Girls School and this got under way in 1938 but was still incomplete when war broke out. (23) The onset of hostilities obviously necessitated the abandonment of the scheme for erecting a new school for Nether Edge and, indeed, the boys were still using the Union Road premises as late as 1955.

Throughout the whole of the inter-war period the inadequacies of the buildings placed substantial constraints upon the actual teaching which took place within the school. The problems which physical education faced have been outlined already and when J.J. Phipps, the itinerant P.T. instructor, retired in 1931 it was necessary to seek as his replacement a man who could not only use the existing facilities effectively but also develop games and athletics so as to exploit to the full the playing field which the school had acquired at Bents Green, some three miles distant from Union Road. The field itself was not at that time in a very satisfactory state for games. The football pitches were still ridged from earlier ploughing and it was not until 1930 and by dint of extremely laborious work that the groundsman was able to level off something which resembled an acceptable cricket square. (24) Sports facilities, then, were poor and the field distant from Union Road, whilst the school itself still young and

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(22) S.S.S.S.C., 9th Dec., 1935, S.E.C.M. 1935-6, p. 497.  
(23) See above p. 123.  
(24) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, 19.8.75.



lacking in tradition. Small wonder, then, that the second edition of The Torch, the school magazine, should carry a report on sport which proclaimed

"So far the season has not been an unqualified success. We do not refer to the scores obtained in games but to the attitude of the school towards its football. On several occasions we have been compelled to turn out short in numbers; a deplorable state of affairs no matter what the cause of default." (25)

When Ritchings took over as Headmaster (on 1st February, 1929) his first recommendations were that a suitable square be levelled off and that an earlier decision by the Governors to dispense with the services of the P.T. Instructor be rescinded. (26) That decision had been taken in light of the fact that the intake of 90 boys in the coming September would bring the school up to a complement of twelve forms. There were in the school only twelve rooms including that which had hitherto been used for gymnastics. The Governors' initial reaction was to drop gymnastics from the curriculum. What Ritchings proposed was the expedient which has been outlined already, namely the use of the dining hall.

This was all part of a more ambitious scheme which embraced athletics, boxing, swimming and gymnastics as well as football and cricket, and which was itself but a part of a still larger plan for an extended House system which he intended to introduce in September 1929. (27) A system with four houses had been in operation since the very early days of the school but what Ritchings proposed was to divide the 360 boys into eight or ten divisions. They were to compete against each other in school work, cricket, football, athletics, boxing and swimming and he hoped to persuade friends of the school to donate cups and trophies as an added incentive. The work competition was so devised that a good effort by a moderate boy counted as much as a similar effort by a clever boy, though the standards

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(25) The Torch (School Magazine), Vol. 1, No. 2, Dec. 1930, p. 22.

(26) S.S.S.S.C., 18th March, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 650.

(27) S.S.S.S.C., 18th Mar., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 652.



reached would not be the same. Any boy who was late for school or who was in detention received de-merit marks and in that way Ritchings hoped to utilise public opinion and odium within the House to persuade the boy to mend his ways. On three mornings each week House Prayers were to replace School Prayers and this way he hoped not only to overcome some of the problems of overcrowding which full assemblies presented, but also to develop a strong community spirit in the Houses and through them in the school as a whole.

Ritchings clearly had a deep concern that those members of the school who were not academically outstanding should not be overlooked but should be encouraged in every way possible. Thus, the boys who was average and below average in scholastic attainment and who could never earn any prizes for academic distinction was, nevertheless, afforded the opportunity of making a valuable contribution to the success of his House simply by trying to the best of his ability. In swimming, for example, points were awarded for swimming a breadth and more for a length, and thus it was theoretically possible for a House which did not win a single event in the gala, nevertheless, to win the swimming trophy by virtue of the stock of points it had built up before the competitive swimming began.

Ritchings was also concerned that homework should be done in school in circumstances which precluded copying or cribbing. He had mentioned this when interviewed for the Headship and after his appointment the Director of Education asked him to submit a scheme. The system which was then in operation entailed first-year pupils doing two subjects each evening and the other years three. Ritchings' scheme entailed the same quantity of work but the amount done in a boy's home was far less. First-year boys were to have work at home only on Fridays and the day on which they went to the games field. That meant that they would do only four subjects at home each week instead of ten. The other years were to do one subject at home on three nights, two on games day and three at the weekend. All the other homework was to be done in school under supervision.

Under his new scheme five periods of homework - one per day - were to be taken in school hours and four - one on each day except Friday - were to be done after school and under supervision. Games were to be on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for the first four years, leaving Mondays and Fridays for the future senior forms. On Mondays, therefore, there would be 360 boys present for supervised homework and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 300, with two forms at the field.

The implementation of the scheme necessitated the alteration of the times for afternoon lessons so that they ran

1,30 - 2,10	-	First lesson	-	(as before)
2,10 - 2,50	-	Second lesson	-	(as before)
2,50 - 3,30	-	Homework in the form room		
3,30 - 3,50	-	Break (rest for the boys and supervision rooms being prepared)		
3.50 - 4.30	-	Out of school homework		

This involved the extension of the school day from 3.45 pm to 4.30 pm and, since not all staff were prepared to stay the extra forty-five minutes every day, it was necessary to alter the rooms in which the homework was done after 3.45 pm, in order to permit as few staff as possible to supervise as many boys as possible. Thus, after the afternoon break the boys moved from their form rooms to do their work in larger rooms like the Dining Room, the Hall (where 80-110 boys could be seated), and the Art Room as well as a few of the larger form-rooms. The total staffing required was six on Mondays and four on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, giving a total of eighteen additional supervisory periods per week.

Ritchings gave the Governors the following example of the private study timetable of the first-year boys, <sup>(28)</sup>

	<u>IN SCHOOL</u>			
	2,50-3,30	3,30-3.50	3,50-4.30	HOME
MONDAY	English	Break	Mathematics	None
TUESDAY		Field		2 subjects (History, writing up experiments etc.)
WEDNESDAY	Mathematics	Break	French	None
THURSDAY	French	Break	English	None
FRIDAY	Physics	Break	-	2 subjects



Ritchings hoped that several benefits would accrue from the adoption of his scheme, particularly for first-year boys. He suggested that it would help ease the transition from the public elementary school by providing that seven out of eleven first-year homework sessions were done under supervision. This, he believed, would obviate the failure of boys to utilise private study time properly which caused many of them to fall behind in the first year. He also hoped that it would help those boys who suffered because their home surroundings were not conducive to study and reveal the true value of the school's teaching in that work which was done without outside help.

The Headmaster's proposals were something completely new in the city's experience and it was not until the Board of Education had been consulted and Ritchings had substituted a request for an honorarium instead of his original scheme of payment for the teachers, that the plan was approved.

At the end of that school year Ritchings submitted to the Governors a full Report on the "First Year of Private Study in Lieu of Homework". In it he stated that it was the unanimous opinion of the staff that the work done in school was of better quality and of distinctly greater quantity than that which had formerly been done at home. He suggested that the scheme had had a particularly beneficial effect on the "average boy" whom he estimated constituted approximately two-thirds of the school's population. The majority of the remaining third he classed as those who did a vast quantity of work at home but only on their favourite subjects to the neglect of other less congenial work. There was "very positive evidence", he said, "that this extra work is still being done in practically all subjects" and he expressed the hope that the cumulative effect would be to lead to more of this extra "work for work's sake". (29)

The extra leisure time had led to a burgeoning of extra curricular

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(29) S.S.S.S.C., 10th July, 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 235.



activities and up to one hundred and fifty boys had stayed after school to participate in sport, despite the fact that the fields were some distance away at Bents Green, or in the activities of societies such as the Art and Craft Guild, the Natural History Society, the Photographic Society and the Stamp Club. The scheme had also led to very happy relations being fostered between the boys and the staff; had militated against scimped work, and had led to private study being accepted as part of the general routine.

A year later Ritchings reported that the second year of the working of the private study scheme had confirmed the opinions of the first, but he added a rider that the distance of the playing fields from the school meant that many of the boys, particularly those from the poorer parts of the city, were unable to benefit fully because they could afford neither the time nor the money to participate in the games part of the House system, and he asked the Committee to find playing fields nearer the school. (30)

This was not the only weakness of the scheme, however, and in his report for 1932 Ritchings attempted to deal with some of the criticisms which had been levelled at the plan. First of all, the school day was clearly rather long, stretching as it did from 8.45 am in the morning to 4.30 pm in the afternoon. To this Ritchings replied that that was all that the boys did, whereas those in other schools had work to do at home and so their day was, in effect, even longer. Moreover, the boys at Nether Edge usually had art, games or music in the afternoon rather than mathematics or English and were, therefore, fresh for their private study. Also, boys who had had experience of both systems had told him that they preferred the new system. A further criticism had been made that the scheme shielded

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(30) S.S.S.C., 3rd July, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 237.

the boys and prevented them working without supervision or under adverse circumstances. This argument clearly hinted at the idea that a little adversity was good for the soul or at least for academic development. Ritchings did not take up that particular point but instead dismissed the criticism on the grounds that boys in the first year did 25% of their work at home, in the second year 30%, in the third year 40%; and in the fourth 50%. Thus, although the young boy was to some extent protected against the rigours of individual private study, he was not entirely shielded, and the reins were slackened by degrees so that he gradually became accustomed to working on his own, (31)

The scheme continued with little alteration to its structure and running until a year after Ritchings' death in 1935. The only change which did occur was in December 1932 when the Committee resolved, in the interests of economy, to discontinue the honorariums, totalling £120, which had been paid to the staff for the additional supervisory duties which the private study scheme necessitated. (32) Ritchings decided to continue the scheme despite the fact that most of the staff were disinclined to perform the extra duties totally without remuneration but his only recourse was to the extensive use of Prefects, an expedient which his successor did not find at all satisfactory and which he discontinued after one year in office. (33)

The supervised private scheme thus came to an end after six years. It had been prompted by Ritchings' concern both for academic standards and for helping the many boys in his school who came from homes in which private study was difficult. It clearly owed something of its inspiration to the "Prep" system in the public schools and it entailed a long working day, but it did provide a means whereby young boys could be introduced to the

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(31) S.S.S.S.C., 1st July, 1932, S.E.C.M. 1932-3, p.202.  
(32) S.E.C. 19th Dec., 1932, S.E.C.M. 1932-3, p. 548.  
(33) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, 19.8.75.



habits of private study and gradually weaned away from working under supervision to working largely on their own. These were laudable objectives and it would appear that some degree of success was obtained in achieving them, but, equally, when the scheme ended in 1936 there seems to have been little or no falling off in either the standard or the quantity of work done.

Ritchings claimed that one of the benefits which accrued from the scheme was an increase in interest and participation in extra-curricular activities. These were obviously essential in developing a corporate spirit, and in the earliest years of the school they had been rather slow in developing. Since music was a part of the curriculum and has for long been an accepted, indeed expected, part of school functions such as Speech Days, it was natural that choral and musical activities should be among the first to develop. In April 1928, only a year after the school had opened, a Concert attended by 350 parents and friends was given.<sup>(34)</sup> This could not have been easy to present for the teaching of music was still in the hands of Mr. Biltcliffe, the part-time instructor who as late as 1931-32 was still teaching only seven half-days per week.<sup>(35)</sup> In the early years the musical side of the school seems to have developed not from any extra-curricular society but around the classroom and the ordinary curriculum - though doubtless extra practices and rehearsals were needed for public performances. It was not until 1930 that a Choral Society was founded, chiefly so that the boys might "indulge in the enjoyment of singing together a host of interesting things which cannot be brought within the scope of their daily work", as well as perform on festive occasions and perhaps present a School Concert.<sup>(36)</sup> Rehearsals were held every Friday after school and were well attended (by about 40 boys) despite the attractions of the newly formed Art Guild. That Society, which had been set up "to encourage and help" those boys who wanted to make

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(34) S.S.S.S.C., 13th April, 1928, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 17.

(35) S.S.S.S.C., 1st May, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 81.

(36) The Torch, Vol. 1, No. 2, Dec. 1930, p. 14.



art-work their hobby, met once a fortnight and its activities included not only painting, modelling and drawing but also demonstrations of stencilling, pottery decoration, basket work and excursions into the country.

Earlier a Chess Club had been formed and a Cinematograph Society. Their fortunes fluctuated as did those of the League of Nations Union whose popularity was somewhat ephemeral and by December 1933 its faithful few were reporting that all but one of their meetings had been badly attended, (37) Events in the outside world later in the thirties produced a revival of interest in contemporary issues and a Debating Society, formed in 1938, devoted much of its time to matters such as pacificism and defence, as well as to more general topics like the material and moral progress of the world. (38)

A poetry reading society was formed in 1938, and the staff also organised occasional holidays and excursions (39) but whilst the extra-curricular side of the school did develop during the 1930s it would be difficult to describe it as flourishing. Travel was an inhibiting factor but it was not a difficulty unique to Nether Edge. Firth Park and Abbeydale faced the same problem and seem to have overcome it rather better. It is difficult to determine precisely what fires the interest of adolescents in extra-curricular activities, particularly in situations where it is deliberate and legitimate policy to allow the pupils to bear the major responsibility for the running of such societies. At Nether Edge the number of boys who took a keen interest in school societies was not large. (40) Transport, perhaps a slightly poorer socio-economic home background and perhaps also a slightly lower level of cognitive excellence amongst the Nether Edge boys might be some of the factors which contributed to this, but it does seem that generally the staff did not play so active and so inspiring a

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(37) The Torch, Vol. 1, No. 9, Dec. 1933, p.4.

(38) The Torch, Vol. 1. No. 7, Dec. 1938, p. 15.

(39) S.S.S.C., 5th July, 1928, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 228.

(40) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, 19.8.75.

role in developing the extra-curricular life of Nether Edge as did the staff at Firth Park, for example, and this was possibly the most significant factor of all.

It was on the academic side, however, that Nether Edge, in common with nearly all secondary schools, was most anxious to prove itself. In <sup>when</sup> 1930, it had been in existence for only three years and one term, the school submitted its first candidates for external examinations. Forty-seven boys were entered for the School Certificate. Thirty-three passed and eight of those matriculated. Ten distinctions - one in French, two in history, two in geography, one in mathematics and four in physics - were obtained, along with seventeen "Very Goods",<sup>(41)</sup> The overall pass rate was 70.2%, which was slightly above the average for the country as a whole, 68.6%. The results in French, geography and physics were particularly good. Only two out of the forty-seven failed French and of twenty-seven boys who took the special oral examination, twenty-four obtained credits - a performance which prompted the examiner to comment on the "obvious benefit" which had accrued from the Easter visit to Paris.

Seventeen of those who had taken the School Certificate in the Summer of 1930 returned in the Autumn to form the first group of boys on Advanced Courses at Nether Edge. Twelve of them studied science and mathematics and five Modern Studies. One of the boys left during the course of the year but in September 1931 thirty more boys entered the Fifth Form, thirteen on the Arts side and seventeen on the science. That year eighty-three boys had been entered for the School Certificate and fifty-three had passed, with twenty-three matriculating. This was a pass rate of almost 70% and Ritchings expressed the view that this was very satisfactory when all the conditions of the past four years were taken into account.<sup>(42)</sup>

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(41) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, pp. 419-20.

(42) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 407.



The Nether Edge staff escaped the axe of the Authority's staffing review in 1931 and the Advanced Courses were able to continue undisturbed. In the following year, 1932, the school won its first local scholarship when R.V. Spathaky, a linguist, won a Corporation Scholarship to Sheffield University,<sup>(43)</sup> At the same time, another boy, J. Miller, gained a place in the Honours School of Economics, and in 1933 even greater distinction was achieved with the winning of a State Scholarship and another Corporation Scholarship, both of which were held at Sheffield University.<sup>(44)</sup> Other local scholarships were won in the following year when the school had to its credit one State Scholarship, one Edgar Allen Scholarship, one Town Trustees Scholarship, one Technical Scholarship, and eleven Education Committee Scholarships, Altogether fifteen scholarships were won by twelve boys, and a further five boys were also admitted to the Day Training Department of Sheffield University. Thus, seventeen boys progressed that year from the school to the University, bringing the total number of Nether Edge boys there to twenty-four.<sup>(45)</sup> Practically every faculty in the University contained representation from Nether Edge and it was with some justifiable pride that Ritchings was able to describe these results as "an excellent record for a school only seven years old". They fully justified the creation of the Advanced Course three years before and also reflected great credit on the teaching staff.

Before the outbreak of war only one undergraduate award was won directly to the older universities. That was in 1939 when E.R. Baker won an Open Exhibition in English to Downing College, Cambridge,<sup>(46)</sup> but a year earlier K.A. Geary had won a Postgraduate Scholarship to Oxford.<sup>(47)</sup> Two awards were won to other universities - to Nottingham in 1936 and London

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(43) S.S.S.S.C., 1st July, 1932, S.E.C.M. 1932-3, p. 201.

(44) S.S.S.S.C., 23rd June, 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, pp. 226-227.

(45) S.S.S.S.C., 8th Oct., 1934, S.E.C.M. 1934-5, p. 374.

(46) S.E.S.C., 13th March, 1939, S.E.C.M. 1939-40, p. 566.

(47) The Torch, Vol. 2, No. 7, Dec. 1938, p.3.



in 1938 - but the vast majority of Nether Edge boys tended to pursue their university education in their own city. By 1937 old boys of the school had gained at Sheffield University seven B.A.s, six B.Sc.s, one M.Eng., one B.Met., one M.B.Ch.B., one Certificate in Architecture, one Diploma in Education and two Associateships in Ferrous Metallurgy.<sup>(48)</sup> This was not an unimpressive record for a school which did not secure the finest brains thrown up by the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination; which was much smaller than the other secondary schools in the city; and which had been in existence only ten years.

That such a sound record of university successes should have been achieved by 1937 is a tribute both to the staff who were responsible for the actual instruction and to the Headmasters who were responsible for the organisation and development of the school. Chief of those in this period was Walter Ritchings, for Luther Smith stayed but four terms, whilst his namesake, Harold was then only at the beginning of the long career at Nether Edge which ended with his retirement in 1955. Ritchings was a short, stocky man; a good organiser whose mind was dominated by scientific thinking and practical matters but whose lack of knowledge of the Arts side did not prevent him from being fair to it.<sup>(49)</sup> He believed firmly that English, Mathematics and Languages constituted the "bones of the curriculum" and so when it came to a matter of promoting or demoting boys from one form to another two merit lists were compiled; one on the basis of the whole examination and the other on the basis of those three prime subjects. The two lists, which generally yielded similar rank orders, were then discussed at a full staff meeting and any promotions or demotions settled in the light of the consensus of opinion then reached.<sup>(50)</sup> When the boys first entered the school they were placed in forms according to their results in the

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(48) The Torch, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1937, p.2.

(49) Oral evidence Mr. H. Smith, 19.8.75.

(50) These occasions were virtually the only ones on which staff meetings were held.

Entrance Examination, but this information was not divulged to them, instead they were told that they were all equal to begin with.

The general pattern of the curriculum had by 1932, the time of the first Full Inspection, assumed a fairly settled pattern. The school had only just reached its normal dimensions of around 450 pupils - which was small compared to other secondary schools in the city - but it did have its first Sixth Form. The general pattern of the curriculum, therefore, was not likely to change substantially for some time since it was subject to limitations imposed by restricted space, the size of the entry, the existing staffing arrangements and the necessity of including the usual "standard" subjects, as well as by the desire to relate the science subjects to the local industries. Thus, owing to the lack of accommodation, biology, for example, could not be introduced to enable the non-specialist boy to take General Science. Constraints upon other subjects, particularly physical education, were also consequences of the poor facilities with which the school had been provided, (51)

Up to his death in 1935 Ritchings was concerned above all with strengthening the actual structure which he had planned and developed and with preparing for better things whenever H.M.I.'s recommendations regarding new premises could be implemented. The school gained in strength and confidence under his firm, practical rule and its institutions began to have a look of permanence and a sense of tradition. (52) Harold Smith, who succeeded Ritchings, had been a founder member of the school and was thus well acquainted with the ethos, standards and traditions which had been established there, indeed, he must as Senior Master have played no small part in their development. A man of great sympathy, modesty and generosity, (53) Smith records that it was with much diffidence that he

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(51) See above p, 159.

(52) H, Smith, 'Brief History of the School since the Last Full Inspection', p.1,

(53) Oral evidence Mr. N. Jepson, a former Head of History at Nether Edge, 20,9,75.



took up his appointment, feeling that Ritchings' "organising powers and wordly experience" were much greater than his. (54) He made few notable changes believing that the limitations of the premises and his predecessor's ability made ambitious alterations hard to contemplate. In any case, his view was that it suited him better "to try to work from within - making less of the particular framework in which the School's life is cast than of the way in which boys are encouraged to live within it, to work and to form their outlook," (55)

During the inter-war period, Nether Edge, like Abbeydale and Firth Park, had to contend with accommodation which was almost entirely unsuitable for use as a secondary school. These difficulties were solved only by the erection of completely new premises and they were not completed until well after the end of the Second World War. During the whole of the period from 1927 until then the school had to make do with what, for Sheffield, was an all too familiar range of expedients. That it was able not only to devise, and adapt to, those expedients but also to send to the local university a creditable number of undergraduates is a tribute both to the calibre of the staff and to the soundness of the educational philosophy which they practised. That philosophy was best summarised by Harold Smith when he wrote:-

... we have tried to deal with our boys as much as possible without too many rules - and to develop a balance between forbearance and firmness, so that, if possible, each boy may realise how much depends on him in the effort to produce a happy but sufficiently disciplined School. Fortunately, I have always had a Staff capable of being, in almost every case, friendly but firm, and while such a policy has a tendency to leave minor untidiness, it has helped, I think, towards producing people who want to be decent. (56)

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(54) H. Smith, p.2.  
(55) Ibid., p.2.  
(56) Ibid., p.2.



CHAPTER 6

KING EDWARD VII SCHOOL, 1918 - 1939

His Majesty's Inspectors concluded their report on the Inspection of King Edward VII School in 1915 with the observation that the school had by capable organisation and efficient teaching reached a high position among the day schools of the country, <sup>(1)</sup> That such a position had been achieved at all, let alone in so short a time, was largely attributable to the direction, inspiration and drive which James Hichens had imparted to the school. Hichens had been appointed Headmaster when the school opened in 1905 and he remained in charge until his retirement twenty-one years later. A perfect gentleman who habitually dressed in frock-coat and top-hat, Hichens was a very strict disciplinarian, <sup>(2)</sup> He began each term by reading out the school rules <sup>(3)</sup> and his control over the boys was not limited either to the school premises or to school hours; in July 1924 the Governors resolved that "All boys in attendance at the school shall be responsible to the Headmaster for their conduct within the limits of the City, whether in or out of the school premises except when they are in the company of their parents or guardians". <sup>(4)</sup> The Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee then approved a regulation authorising Hichens to forbid the boys when outside school premises from riding pillion on motor cycles or two at a time on an ordinary bicycle, and to forbid them from "riding furiously in the streets and on public thoroughfares"!

Though corporal punishment was not unknown, the pressure which was exerted on the boys was essentially moral in character. <sup>(5)</sup> Hichens's

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- (1) H.M.I., Report on the Second Full Inspection of King Edward VII School, Sheffield, 2-5 March 1915, p. 12, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7483.  
(2) Oral evidence Mr. R.G. Beard (former pupil) 29.6.76 and Mr. G.J. Cumming (pupil and teacher at the school) 15.6.76.  
(3) Oral evidence Mr. G.J. Cumming.  
(4) G.K.E.S., 4th July, 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p. 135.  
(5) Oral evidence Mr. R.G. Beard.

avowed aim in moulding and directing King Edward's was to create in Sheffield a school in which the teaching and standard of work was of the highest order and in which there was much of the atmosphere of the great public boarding schools; a strong corporate life and great loyalty to the school and to one's fellow pupils,<sup>(6)</sup> Games, school societies and the O.T.C. all loomed large in the life of the school which he largely created,<sup>(7)</sup> but above all else it was in the academic sphere that Hichens strove to establish for King Edward's a record which would stand comparison with that of any school in the land, be it boarding or day, public or municipal.

In numerous reports to his governors and on many a Speech Day<sup>(8)</sup> Hichens recounted at length the mounting academic triumphs of his pupils. By the outbreak of World War I the school had succeeded, in the remarkably brief period of only nine years, in establishing for itself an enviable record of successes in public examinations and in winning scholarships and exhibitions to Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>(9)</sup> This record had been maintained during the war years, but when the new system of examining came into force and the eleven boys taking the Higher Certificate gained "only" nine distinctions, Hichens observed to his Governors that "Distinctions are evidently much harder to get than in the past",<sup>(10)</sup> Even so, of only four distinctions which the Oxford and Cambridge Board awarded in German in 1918, two were won by King Edward boys, whilst three of the six awarded in chemistry went to Hichens's pupils, for he it was who taught the Sixth Form chemistry.<sup>(11)</sup>

In 1925, shortly before his retirement, Hichens had the satisfaction of reporting that the school had won the Ackroyd Scholarship - "the most coveted of all the scholarships open to the boys of the North" - for the tenth time in the past seventeen years, that is, more frequently than all

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(6) J.A. Hichens, speech at the opening of the new buildings 1906 quoted in King Edward VII School Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 3, Dec. 1906, p. 53.

(7) See above pp. 79 and 84.

(8) See the Reports in the School Magazine.

(9) See above p. 80.

(10) G.K.E.S., 11th Oct., 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-19, p. 286.

(11) Oral evidence, Mr. R.G. Beard.



the other schools put together.<sup>(12)</sup> In that same year the school had also won four Town Trust Scholarships, one Edgar Allen Scholarship, one Ezra Hounsfield Linley Scholarship, one Corporation Scholarship and one Robert Styring Scholarship. These last awards were all tenable at Sheffield University and were strictly local awards, competition being limited to scholars in the Sheffield secondary schools. Even more impressive, therefore, was the school's achievement in the Higher Certificate that year. Hichens himself described it, with some justification, as "brilliant". In the number of distinctions gained the school was at the head of the list. Eighteen boys between them obtained twenty-seven distinctions including eight State Scholarships, whilst a ninth boy who was, in fact, at the top of the King Edward's list, was denied a State Scholarship only by virtue of his having won one the previous year.

That there were only 200 state scholarships awarded per annum at this time makes the school's achievement in this regard all the more impressive, but the practice of entering boys two or even three times for the Higher Certificate was one of which Hichens's successor was highly critical,<sup>(13)</sup> and it does detract somewhat from the excellent impression which the bare statistics at first sight convey. On the other hand, Hichens could doubtless point to the substantial number of extremely young boys - only sixteen or even fifteen years old - who also gained their certificates and distinctions. This too was a practice of which the next Headmaster heartily disapproved and there can be little doubt that such precocious results were often achieved only at the expense of intense "cramming". In their report on the Full Inspection which was carried out in February 1923 for example, His Majesty's Inspectors questioned whether it was desirable that the Higher Certificate should be taken by so many boys within one year of their School Certificate. As they pointed out,

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(12) K.E.S. Sectional Sub-Committee, (K.E.S.S.S.C.), 3rd July, 1925, S.E.C.M. 1925-6, p. 120. This was the Governing Body of K.E.S. from 1922 until 1926.

(13) See below p. 189.



the Higher Certificate was intended to be a two year course and, whilst there were apparently no signs of overstrain, it was doubtful whether in such circumstances the boys had sufficient time for independent study and private reading. (14)

At the time of that Inspection three Advanced Courses were being run. That in Science and Mathematics had thirty-five boys in the first year and seventeen in the second; that in Classics five in the first year and five in the second. Of the twenty-three boys then in their second year of Advanced work, sixteen had taken the Higher Certificate at the end of the first year, but twenty-three of the forty-six who had embarked on the Advanced Course had left at the end of the first year. Thus, only one half of those boys who had started on the Advanced Course had stayed for the second year.

A little lower down the school the needs of the rather slower boys had been recognised when a special form, the Remove, had been established for those boys requiring five years for the School Certificate course. (15) The general principle on which the Main School was organised was that of a four-year course leading up to the First Certificate, and, whilst this was not a policy which met with the approval of H.M. Inspectorate, (16) it was standard practice in all the secondary schools of the city. Indeed, the authority specifically required that Headteachers submit to it the names of those pupils who were believed to be incapable of taking the examination after only four years. (17)

In 1926 failing eyesight compelled Hichens' resignation. His success in creating a new school and in elevating it to the front rank of

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(14) H.M.I., Report on Inspection of K.E.S., 1923, p. 7, P.R.O.  
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(15) Ibid., p. 5.

(16) See the Reports on the other secondary schools in the inter-war years.

(17) H.E.S.C., 14th April, 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 21.

the nation's secondary schools had been crowned in 1922 when he was elected to the Headmasters' Conference.<sup>(18)</sup> The school's standing as a public school in the sense of one whose Headmaster was a member of the Conference was shortlived,<sup>(19)</sup> but there can be little doubt that the attainment of such status in so brief a period of time was a considerable achievement for which Hichens himself was largely responsible. Both the Governors and the members of the school were aware of the magnitude of the debt which they owed him. The former presented him with a vellum inscription recording their appreciation of "the brilliant services" which he had rendered,<sup>(20)</sup> and the editors of the school magazine published a fullsome tribute in which it was stated that the success of the school was "the sole, wholehearted aim of his life. To this one aim all else was sacrificed. To it all private distractions, all hobbies, all other amenities of social life were subordinated, indeed, became all but non-existent."<sup>(21)</sup>

Ronald Gurner, M.C., M.A. (Oxon.), then Headmaster of the Strand School, Brixton, was appointed Hichens' successor at a commencing salary of £1,000 p.a. and took up his duties in September 1926. Two months later the Labour Party secured, for the first time, that control of the city's affairs which it has maintained with but two brief interruptions ever since.<sup>(22)</sup> The stage was thus set for what was undoubtedly the stormiest period in the history of the school.

Stanley Ronald Kershaw Gurner was one of three children. His mother had been widowed when he was thirteen and she had kept the family solvent by running a commercial hotel,<sup>(23)</sup> All her children had gone to Oxford, Ronald to St. John's, where he took a First in Classical Moderations and was Prox, Access, for the University Latin Verse Prize.<sup>(24)</sup> After

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(18) G.K.E.S., 13th Jan., 1922, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 484.

(19) See below p. 186.

(20) K.E.S.S.S.C., 5th March., 1926, S.E.C.M. 1925-6, p. 523.

(21) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. IV, No. 35, July 1926, p. 1194.

(22) The Conservatives regained control in 1931 but lost it to Labour in the following year. A similar instance occurred in 1967.

(23) S.R.K. Gurner, I Chose Teaching, 1937, Ch. 1.

(24) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. IV, No. 35, July 1926, p. 1183.



brief periods at Haileybury and Clifton (which did not claim his allegiance) he had proceeded to Marlborough where he really threw himself into his work. He taught history and geography as well as classics and took a commission in the Officers' Training Corps. After some 12-18 months there he had left, at the end of 1914, to join the Rifle Brigade in which he served for two years before being wounded at Ypres. A six month stay in hospital was followed by nine months in the Intelligence Branch at the War Office. Gurner believed that his "whole outlook on education and on life itself (was) dominated by that Himalayan of experience".<sup>(25)</sup> In his autobiography he does not elaborate on that statement but his ordeal at Ypres in 1915 and 1916 certainly prompted his first venture into print,<sup>(26)</sup> and inspired his most convincing novel, Pass Guard at Ypres.<sup>(27)</sup>

After the war he resumed teaching and was asked by Norwood to take a House at Marlborough. This he found not entirely to his liking. He believed that whilst the world had moved on Marlborough, for all that Norwood was trying to do, had not, and from there he moved to Strand School, whose ethos he attempted to mould into that of a public school.

Gurner's account of his brief stay in Sheffield is obviously and naturally coloured by the unpleasant nature of his relations with its L.E.A. and its officials, but his distaste for the North in general and for Sheffield in particular seems not to have been limited to solely educational matters. The Headmaster's house, a Victorian mansion secluded on Melbourne Avenue and adjacent to the school, he subsequently described as a "derelict, gaunt mausoleum". This he regarded as his trenches for the ensuing battles<sup>(28)</sup> over the Governing Body, the O.T.C. and the right of access to his chairman.

His views of the calibre of the councillors and administrators with whom he was dealing fluctuated or, perhaps, merely became more honest and openly stated as time and distance from the city reduced the need for diplomacy. In September 1927, for example, at the height of the controversy

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(25) S.R.K. Gurner, Teaching, p. 28.

(26) S.R.K. Gurner, War's Echo, 1917, a book of short poems.

(27) S.R.K. Gurner, Pass Guard at Ypres, 1930.

(28) S.R.K. Gurner, Teaching, p. 75.



which attended his resignation of the Headship of King Edward's after so brief a stay at the school, he was quoted in the local press as having said that he had "had the honour of dealing in Sheffield with large-hearted, generous and sincere men".<sup>(29)</sup> Ten years later, in his autobiography, he was highly critical of the parochialism of the Sheffield councillors whose aim, he believed, was to "keep the foreigner out".<sup>(30)</sup> Much of his autobiography's criticism of the powers and calibre of local administrators would seem, in view of his favourable account of his time in London, to be directed at Sheffield.<sup>(31)</sup> In it he was particularly scathing in his attack on Directors of Education whom he described as "this little band of educational supermen who magnify their titles and their office and little by little sap the vitality and freedom of the schools". Gurner's encounters with Percival Sharp,<sup>(32)</sup> the Director of Education for Sheffield at the time, were not particularly happy; indeed, it was a circular letter which Sharp sent, albeit on instructions from the Chairman of the Committee, to all secondary Heads on 16th July, 1927, which provoked the third and final rift between Gurner and the Authority.

The first bone of contention was the matter of the abolition of the school's separate Board of Governors, the possession of which distinguished King Edward's from the city's other secondary schools. Until November 1922 King Edward's, Firth Park, Abbeydale and the Central Secondary schools each had its own Governing Body but it was held that this led to the unnecessary multiplication of meetings and to the difficulty of adjusting the policy and practice of one committee to the policy and practice of another. This was recognised by the Progressives (Conservatives) who were in control of the Council at the time and a scheme for the consolidation of committees

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(29) Sheffield Independent, 22nd Sept., 1927, p. 5.

(30) S.R.K. Gurner, Teaching, p. 82.

(31) Ibid., p. 146.

(32) For a consideration of Sharp's work in Sheffield see below pp. 384-6.

was adopted in October 1922. Under this scheme the number of committees governing the city's secondary schools was reduced from four to two; one of these was responsible solely for King Edward's, whilst the other dealt with the administration of all the remainder, (33)

This clearly set King Edward's apart from the other secondary schools in the city and constituted a distinction which the Labour Party was not prepared to perpetuate. Accordingly, in November 1926 King Edward's lost its special status and was brought under the same Sectional Sub-Committee of the Higher Education Sub-Committee as all the other secondary schools in Sheffield, (34) Gurner maintained that it was understood, indeed, laid down in the original scheme that the school should possess inter alia its own governing body answerable to the corporation as a whole, and that it should be set apart from the new secondary schools that were then being built or taken over.

In fact, the special position which the school occupied had for some time been a matter of political rather than purely educational significance but Gurner regarded the abolition of the separate Board of Governors as a "Senseless and provocative act" and, (35) whether one agrees with this assessment or not, it is difficult to deny that it left him largely defenceless in the battles which were to follow.

The first of these was over the abolition of the Officers' Training Corps. The corps had begun in a very small way in June 1907 and by 1925-6, its total strength was between eighty and ninety. When he assumed office Gurner was of the opinion that it was in a pretty poor state but that to restore it to normal efficiency would not have been a particularly difficult matter, (36) As a former officer of the O.T.C. at Marlborough, as a man

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(33) S.E.C., 23rd Oct., 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 478.

(34) S.E.C. (Special) 15th Nov., 1926, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 377.

(35) S.R.K. Gurner, Teaching, p. 77.

(36) Ibid., p. 78.

who had won the M.C. at Arras , as a man who had already published a book of war poems, (37) and as a novelist in whose works things military play a not insignificant part, (38) it is perhaps a little surprising that Gurner should have seemingly taken so placid a view of the attack on the Corps which the Labour Party mounted once it gained a majority on the city council. There had for some time been great hostility among socialist groups in the city to the idea of military training in schools. Numerous memorials and petitions condemning it had been submitted to the Education Committee over a period of years going back to the end of World War I. In August 1919, for example, the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council and the Sheffield Branch of the Independent Labour Party had presented resolutions protesting against the introduction of any form of military training or drill into secondary or elementary schools. (39)

The Central Secondary Boys was denied a corps and the final coup de grace at King Edward's was delivered on 4th February, 1927 when the Secondary Schools' Sectional Sub-Committee resolved that the O.T.C. be disbanded and that consideration be given to alternative forms of training which, in the Headmaster's opinion, had potentialities equal to those of the Officers' Training Corps. (40)

Gurner dismissed as useless the idea of appealing to the Board of Education - "that spineless body", as he called it - and although the matter was raised in Parliament that seemed to do more harm than good. (41)

Gurner, therefore, felt himself left with no alternative but to resign his seat on the Headmasters' Conference which then passed a resolution to the effect that, whilst Gurner himself was to be allowed to remain a private member, the new situation at the school disqualified it from representation.

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(37) S.R.K. Gurner, War's Echo, 1917.

(38) See particularly S.R.K. Gurner, Reconstruction, 1931, in which the central character is a teacher with a distinguished war record who, finding it impossible to reconcile his patriotic ideals with the pacifist principles of his young headmaster, fails to adjust to the changed ethos of the post-war world. There had for some time been great hostility among Socialist groups in the city to the idea of military training in schools.

(39) S.E.C., 25th Aug., 1919, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 217.

(40) S.S.S.S.C., 4th Feb., 1927, S.E.C.M. 1926-7, p. 537.

(41) S.R.K. Gurner, Teaching, p. 79.



Subsequently, Gurner in summarising the events which culminated in his resignation from King Edward's, stated that he had advised against the abolition of the O.T.C. and had warned the Committee that "if that step were taken (he) would be forced to offer (his) resignation from the Headmasters' Conference". However, "the existence or otherwise of an O.T.C. contingent in a school would not be likely to affect a Headmaster's membership of the H.M.C. But the manner in which King Edward's O.T.C. appears to have been disbanded no doubt would, as would the abolition of the Board of Governors,<sup>(42)</sup> for it is still the case that "in considering applications for election to membership the (H.M.C.) Committee has regard to the degree of independence enjoyed by the Headmaster and his school."<sup>(43)</sup> A situation had been created in which the school was being administered through a Sub-Committee equally responsible for the administration of other municipal schools and such a "situation would not at any time be well received by H.M.C."<sup>(44)</sup> The unilateral disbandment of the O.T.C. was seen to be rubbing salt into a fresh wound by asserting the power of the local authority to effect a change in a school's affairs contrary to the advice of the Headmaster. Thus, so far as the H.M.C. was concerned, the real issue was the independence of the school rather than the abolition of the O.T.C., and Gurner would seem to have been in error in giving the latter as the cause for resignation from the Conference.

The Director of Education was informed that the school was no longer represented on the H.M.C. in February 1927 but his refusal to transmit that information to the Chairman of the Committee<sup>(45)</sup> convinced Gurner of the wisdom of applying for a post elsewhere and towards the end of that Easter term he applied for the Headship of Whitgift School. He subsequently withdrew this application as a new spirit seemed to be engendered around

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(42) R.F. Glover, Dep. Sec, H.M.C., to author 13.10.78.

(43) Public Schools' Yearbook, 1978, p. xix.

(44) R.F. Glover, 13.10.78.

(45) S.R.K. Gurner, statement to Sheffield Independent, 22nd Sept., 1927.

the time of the annual prize-giving, This was short-lived and lasted only some three weeks, but Gurner later stated that between the time when he was invited for interview and his final appointment, he put all thoughts of leaving Sheffield out of his mind. (46) On 16th July, however, the Director of Education sent a letter to all secondary Heads, Gurner included, forbidding them to communicate directly with the Chairman of the Committee. Gurner held that free and unhampered access to his Chairman was an absolutely fundamental right of any Headmaster and, having been deprived of that right, he, therefore, felt himself free to accept the post at Whitgift should it be offered to him.

It was around this letter of 16th July, 1927 that the bulk of the rancour surrounding Gurner's resignation centred, though it was not until September that a campaign was begun in the local press, particularly in the Conservative Sheffield Daily Telegraph, to bring the matter into the open. (47) The Liberal Sheffield Independent joined in and Rowlinson and Minshall, the leaders of the Education Committee, were finally compelled to make a public statement on the matter. They published Gurner's letter of resignation in which he summarised the origins of the rift which had culminated in the letter of 16th July, issued by Sharp on Minshall's orders, precluding access to the Chairman save through the Director. (48) They also published their own statement in which they argued that the abolition of the separate Board of Governors was justified on the grounds of administrative efficiency; that the loss of H.M.C. status affected only the personal kudos of the Head and not the character of the school; that the matter of the O.T.C. was not a fundamental issue; and that Gurner had misconstrued the import of the letter from Sharp. (49)

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- (46) Gurner statement to Sheffield Independent, 22nd Sept., 1927.  
(47) Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 3rd Sept., 1927.  
(48) Sharp to all secondary Heads 16th July, 1927 reprinted in S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 298.  
(49) Joint Memorandum of Rowlinson (Chairman S.E.C.) and Minshall (Chm. S.S.S.S.C.) in S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 300.



This did not still the controversy. The H.M.C. announced that unless the ruling regarding access to the Chairman was withdrawn the school would be blacklisted,<sup>(50)</sup> the local press fuelled the fire for as long as they could, the Education Committee refused to withdraw the controversial letter,<sup>(51)</sup> The Times<sup>(52)</sup> and its Educational Supplement carried accounts, correspondence and leaders on the matter, public meetings were held; and both the school and the authority received substantial amounts of the kind of publicity they could well have done without. There had been, as The Times Educational Supplement<sup>(53)</sup> noted in a second leader, much misunderstanding on both sides. The Sharp-Minshall letter was ambiguous and Gurner had placed the worst possible interpretation upon it, but his departure to the Southern climes he so obviously preferred<sup>(54)</sup> and the lifting of the H.M.C. black-listing enabled the authority to proceed with the search for a more amenable replacement. Much rancour and ill-feeling had been generated but, as The Times observed, if the controversy had stimulated thought and cleared the air of some misunderstandings as to the meaning of the term "public school" then it had not been entirely without value.<sup>(55)</sup>

At the beginning of November 1927 the Education Committee formally approved the appointment of Richard B. Graham as Headmaster of King Edward's as from the beginning of the Easter term 1928,<sup>(56)</sup> Graham had read classics at Magdalen College, Oxford and came to Sheffield from Leighton Park School, Reading, where he had been a housemaster. His appointment gave the school the opportunity to recover its composure and to continue unhampered by extraneous distractions its pursuit of academic excellence. Gurner's policy regarding external examinations had not been diametrically opposed to that of his predecessor, but whereas Hichens had given undisputed pre-eminence to the winning of the highest possible number of scholarships and

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(50) Sheffield Indep., 22 Sept., 1927.

(51) S.E.C., 26th Sept., 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, p. 320.

(52) The Times, 24th and 27th Sept., and 15th Oct., 1927.

(53) The Times Educational Supplement, 1st Oct., 1927.

(54) For his treatment of the South see particularly The Day Boy, 1924, For Sons of Gentlemen, 1926, Reconstruction, 1931 and I Chose Teaching, 1937, Chs. III, VII and XI. For the North see I Chose Teaching, Ch. X.

(55) 'What is a Public School?' The Times, 15 Oct., 1927.

(56) S.E.C., 4th Nov., 1927, S.E.C.M. 1927-8, pp. 396-7.



Certificates Gurner took a wider and more humane view of the ends of secondary education.

Hichens had entered many boys for the Higher Certificate after only one year of advanced study and these boys had often been entered again a year later and even again the year after that. H.M. Inspectors had concluded that there were no real signs of strain in the advanced forms but Gurner was totally against such a practice being pursued as the normal policy of any secondary school.

He acknowledged that a change in policy on the lines he was suggesting would lead to a fall in the number of Certificates which the school won, but argued that it would not entail any diminution in the success which King Edward's had enjoyed in carrying off Oxford and Cambridge scholarships. He convinced the Governors on the matter and they gave him permission to adopt as general school policy as from September 1927 the practice of entering the vast majority of boys for the Higher Certificate only after two years of Advanced work, though it would still be possible for the Head to enter a few exceptional boys after only one year.

By the time the new policy was due to be implemented Gurner had resigned and his successor, Graham, was a man of an altogether different persuasion. Graham was far more of an academic than Gurner.<sup>(57)</sup> A Quaker with a keen sensitivity but with a more orthodox outlook on education than the crusading Gurner and a man who certainly handled his Governors/much greater subtely, Graham sought to orientate the school much more directly towards examination success. That is not to say that external examinations became the be all and end all of the school's existence. They had not been in Hichens's day and they certainly were not under Graham's rule, but they did occupy a more prominent place in his thinking than they had in Gurner's.

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(57) Oral evidence Mr. G.J. Cumming.

The Higher Certificate results under Gurner had not been bad. In 1926, forty-seven boys gained the Higher Certificate and in 1927 the number rose to sixty-three.

In 1931, under Graham, forty-three out of forty-nine candidates secured their Higher Certificate and in the process were awarded seventeen distinctions. (58) This was not as excellent a performance as that of the previous year when twenty-four distinctions had been gained, and forty out of the forty-four who had been entered had passed. Nevertheless, it was sufficient to place King Edward's second in the number of distinctions and third in the number of certificates which were won by schools examined by the Oxford and Cambridge Board. The results of that year also gave some support to Gurner's contention that it was inadvisable to enter boys for the Higher Certificate after only one year of Advanced work: four were so entered in 1931 and only two passed.

In 1933 the First Certificate results overall were better than in the previous year and the 90% pass rate which the school achieved at Higher Certificate level compared very favourably with the national average of 60%. (59) In fact, the number gaining certificates was higher than it had been since 1927 when the custom of taking various subjects after only one year had been abandoned - indeed, only in 1924 had the school achieved a higher level of examination success.

In 1933 H.M. Inspectors visited the school and they observed that its academic record was indeed one of which it could well be proud. Eight State Scholarships had been won and of 264 boys who had left in the previous three years 62 (23%) had gone to university - 16 to Oxford, 4 to Cambridge, 41 to Sheffield and 1 to London. In the same three years 29 Old Boys of the school had obtained First Class Honours degrees, whilst other distinctions

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(58) S.S.S.S.C., 2nd Oct., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 406.

(59) S.S.S.S.C., 31st Oct., 1933, S.E.C.M. 1933-4, p. 387.



included three elections to university chairs and two elections to Fellowships of the Royal Society.<sup>(60)</sup> This impressive standard was at least maintained during most of the remainder of the inter-war period. In the year 1936-37, for example, 4 scholarships and 1 exhibition were won at the older universities and the school also won the Ackroyd Scholarship, the Earnshaw Scholarship, two Edgar Allen Scholarships, four State Scholarships, three Town Trustee Scholarships and a Kitchener Scholarship.<sup>(61)</sup> In 1937-38 the Ackroyd Scholarship, the premier scholarship in the north of England, was won for the third year running and the school also had the runner-up and two other boys in the first ten. That year boys at King Edward's also won eight open awards at Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>(62)</sup>

However, Graham's view of education was not so narrowly academic as to subordinate all other considerations to the winning of scholarships and certificates, though it must be stated that this objective featured very prominently in his thinking. He was a good sportsman, a man who played for the staff against the boys at soccer, who swam with them in the pool, who played fives, and who had an international reputation as a climber.<sup>(63)</sup> He was a man of sensitivity, a practising Quaker and a Headmaster who at a Speech Day once prefaced his recitation of the school's honours and scholarships with the remark that, though those things had their importance, it was not for them that the school existed; rather was it to aid the boy in the difficult and sometimes painful task of growing up.<sup>(64)</sup> He stated that the task of education was to develop the bodies, the minds and the spirits of the young, and that the success of a school should be gauged by how well it discharged that task. He was aware of the dangers of examinations and of the pressures from outside as well as inside the school leading to a cramming which would improve the statistics but not the boy. Yet, for all

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(60) H.M.I., K.E.S. Report 1933, pp. 2-3. P.R.O. Ed. 109/7485.

(61) S.E.S.C., 12th July, 1937, S.E.C.M. 1937-8, p. 194.

(62) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. IX, No. 13, July 1938, p. 509.

(63) Oral evidence Mr. J.H. Allen (former pupil) and Mr. G.J. Cumming.

(64) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. VI, No. 7, July 1930, p. 292.



this genuine concern for the welfare of the individual boy he still seems to have given pride of place to intellectual excellence.

The question of emphases and priorities in education, of course, is a matter of philosophy, and one could make out a defence of Graham's ideas and policies; but equally it is manifest that his emphases were different from those of Gurner. In a book which he wrote some three years after leaving King Edward's, Gurner elaborated upon Norwood's view that in order to justify its existence a school should aim to inculcate religion, discipline, culture, team spirit and service, and of these he believed religion was the most important.<sup>(65)</sup> As a Quaker and as the Headmaster responsible for introducing the practice of holding a chapel service each term Graham might perhaps have agreed with this. Indeed, at the 1934 Speech Day he declared that the unity of a school should have in the widest sense a spiritual basis. By this he meant essentially that a school should be the place where a boy individually, yet in the company of his fellows, worked out the elements of his philosophy of life; and he went on to add that he felt that the time was ripe for the institution of a chapel service since theirs was an age which was "almost consciously awaiting a rediscovery of faith".<sup>(66)</sup>

Nevertheless, Graham carried on the Hichens tradition at King Edward's and the reputation which he built up for the school and for himself was such that in September 1938 he was appointed to the Headship of Bradford Grammar School. He was succeeded by Dr. Arthur W. Barton, M.A. (Cantab,) B.Sc. (London),<sup>(67)</sup> a physicist who was to maintain and enhance the academic traditions for which Hichens and Graham had made King Edward's famous.

These traditions were essentially those of a school concerned with academic excellence and, just as Hichens had been open to criticism

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(65) S.R.K. Gurner, Day Schools of England, 1930, Ch. V.

(66) R.B. Graham, Speech Day address 1934 in K.E.S. Mag., Vol. VIII, No. 6, July 1934, p. 194.

(67) S.E.S.C., 6th Dec., 1938; S.E.C.M. 1938-9, p. 455.

on the matter of the education of those boys who were not obvious university material, so too was Graham. Indeed, almost the identical question which the Full Inspection of 1923 had raised was also thrown up by the inspection of 1933. In 1923 the matter had been discussed only at the request of the Governors at the conference which the Inspectorate had held with them after the completion of the Inspection.<sup>(68)</sup> In 1933 the Inspectors raised the issues themselves in their Report.

After outlining their objections to the entrance of boys for the Oxford and Cambridge First Certificate examination at too early an age,<sup>(69)</sup> they noted that it was the practice not to promote certain boys at the beginning of the school year. In the Fifth form, which was the School Certificate year as the First Form was for those in the Junior School, there were a large number of such boys. The Inspectors were against the practice of making a boy repeat a year, and instead, they recommended that he should be promoted but do a different sort of work in a higher form.<sup>(70)</sup> They were also critical of the organisation of the timetable which was weighted on the side of languages and hardly allowed enough for the varying abilities of the pupils.

There were, apparently, many boys who should have been doing one instead of two foreign languages and others who were doing three languages who would have been better doing only two. Latin, in particular, caused problems. The number of boys who had obtained a credit in Latin in the three years before the Inspection was meagre - only 25% of those offering it. The part assigned in the curriculum to Latin was an ambitious one but it was evident that the boys in IIB were already hopelessly out of their depth after only one year of the subject, yet the course prescribed for them was the same as that prescribed for the ablest boys. Mathematics

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(68) Report of Conference of H.M.I. and K.E.S. Governors, 10th Feb., 1923, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7484.

(69) H.M.I. K.E.S. Report 1933, p.4.

(70) Ibid., p.8.



was similarly geared to the needs of the most able, <sup>(71)</sup> whilst art and wood-work were given only the meagrest of time allocations and were dropped by all boys before the School Certificate year.

There were clear instances of the intense academic bias and pressure which stimulated the brilliant scholar and produced so many university awards but which rather ignored the best interests of the not-so-able. In the period 1929-32 some 23% of the boys proceeded to University; the other 77% went into professions, industry or commerce; <sup>(72)</sup> and, whilst it is obvious that the latter group must have gained much from the intellectual discipline and training which they received at King Edward's, it is equally clear that the basic organisation of the school was directed essentially towards serving the interests of the former. The Inspectors themselves made this point in reviewing the work which was done on the Advanced Courses and they suggested that whilst the Higher Certificate course was admirable for those who were going to do a University honours degree, the Headmaster ought to consider whether for boys who were going into business a different course might be provided. They were also critical of the fact that many of the boys had been promoted from the Fifth form when well under the age of sixteen and some thirty of them were in their third or even later years of advanced work. This was a reminder of the Hichens era and an indication that Graham for all his undoubtedly sincere belief in the importance of religion and character training, nevertheless, gave priority to the attainment of academic success. It would seem also, particularly from criticism which was made of the paucity of private study periods, that great emphasis was placed upon learning in a tightly structured situation and not enough upon the independent pursuit of knowledge.

In its academic attainments, however, King Edward's could claim during the inter-war period to have achieved the ideals which Sadler had

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(71) Ibid., p. 16.  
(72) Ibid., p. 2.



set at the beginning of the century. The same was also true of the corporate aspect of the school's life. A Literary and Debating Society had been instituted in the very earliest days of the school's history and it continued to flourish during the inter-war period. A branch of the Schoolboys' Scripture Union was established and in 1919-20 it had a membership of more than 230.<sup>(73)</sup> In that same year a society euphemistically known as the Explorers Club was also set up. It was, in fact, more of a historical than a geographical society and visits to places of historical interest formed the core of its activities. Some practical work was undertaken and in 1929 boys from the school were engaged in an attempt to uncover the plan of the domestic buildings of Beauchief Abbey, an activity which gained them a brief mention in The Times.

One of the most interesting of the school's extra-curricular ventures was the Mock Parliament which was set up at the beginning of 1931 and which consisted of M.P.s, from the Transitus and Sixth. The first debate was, understandably, on the economic crisis and other sessions were devoted to fascism and to the political crises at home and abroad. The toss of a coin decided a tied vote on proportional representation, and a motion calling for the rationalisation of the beer industry in order to alleviate the unemployment situation was defeated when the Government realised that it was, in fact, a Left-Wing plan for nationalisation rather than rationalisation.<sup>(74)</sup>

The Education Committee's decision to disband the Officers' Training Corps led to the founding of a Scout troop at the school in June 1927. The troop was based originally on the existing House system, the idea being that each House should have at least two patrols. There were soon over one hundred boys in the troop and there was even talk of having to restrict admissions so great was the demand for places.<sup>(75)</sup>

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(73) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. IV, Nos. 17-18, Dec. 1919 and April 1920, p. 440.

(74) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. VII No. 3, July 1931, pp. 107-8.

(75) S.S.S.S.C., 4th April, 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 38.

The Scouts flourished, then, as did an Art Club, but the School could in no way match the dramatic tradition which had been built up by the Central Secondary Schools. Choral and Orchestral societies had been founded in the very earliest days of King Edward's but performances were limited in scope, being confined mainly to concerts such as those given at Christmas. Little mention is made in the records of the activities of the orchestra during the 1920s but in 1931 a performance of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony was given - along with Colonel Bogey!<sup>(76)</sup> In 1936 the orchestra played at the Queen's Hall and its performance in the Schools' Orchestra Festival in 1938 was adjudged "An admirably controlled and balanced performance with real classical pose about it."<sup>(77)</sup> It would seem, therefore, that during the later phase of the inter-war period the music of the school was benefitting from being in the hands of an enthusiastic and energetic teacher, Mr. Bayliss. He was also a man of some originality for it was he who composed the music for "Quid Pro Quo", an operetta with words by Mr. Watling, the classics master, which was first performed at the School Concert in 1936 and which was later (in November 1937) televised by the BBC.<sup>(78)</sup>

Sport naturally continued to play an important part in the life of the school throughout the inter-war period. All teams had their ups and downs but the really conspicuous event in the sporting life of the school in this period was the building of a new swimming bath at the lower end of the Close. An open-air pool, cold, unheated and totally unsuited to the vagaries of the Yorkshire weather had been in existence since the old Wesley College days. The need for a more suitable bath had been obvious for years but it was not until 1936 that money became available. This was largely through the generosity of one of the local steel families - the Osborns. In 1933 and 1934 there had been proposals to build a new Junior

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(76) K.E.S. Mag., Vol. VII, No. 2, Mar. 1931, p. 76.

(77) Graham quoting an un-named source to the S.E.S.C., 11th July, 1938, S.E.C.M. 1938-9, p. 207.

(78) S.E.S.C., 13th Dec., 1937; S.E.C.M. 1937-8, p. 462.



school in the grounds of King Edward's but in November 1934 the Osborns gave "Clarke House" to the Committee, thus saving the city and the Government an estimated £9,000. The Board of Education was, therefore, requested to sanction the expenditure of £8,900 on the building of a bath measuring 100' x 30'. The pool was formally opened by Sir Stanley Jackson on 15th October, 1936 and until the University pool was built in 1961 it was without question the finest swimming bath in the city. Its use was not limited to King Edward's and the City Secondary School, the Training College, the Junior Technical School and the College of Arts and Crafts also availed themselves of its facilities. (79)

During the inter-war period, then, the corporate life of the school developed in an unspectacular but essentially sound manner. It contributed much to the enrichment of the education of the most able boys in the city and provided them with ample opportunities to take responsibility, to exercise their initiative and to develop more fully their cultural, intellectual, social and physical capacities. Academically the school enhanced still further during the inter-war period that reputation for scholarship and learning which Hichens had built up so rapidly at the beginning of the century. Gurner regarded himself <sup>as</sup> more of an educationalist than his academically orientated predecessor and he was not prepared to make the winning of the largest possible number of scholarships and certificates the prime object of the school's existence. His brief stay at King Edward's was undoubtedly the stormiest period in the inter-war history of the school and the coincidence of his becoming Headmaster with the Labour Party gaining control of the city council precipitated a series of conflicts in which political and educational ideologies became bitterly inter-twined. For a short time the school was the centre of a controversy which had more than purely local ramifications. At the national level the need for a more meaningful definition

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(79) S.E.S.C., 14th Sept., 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, pp. 291-2.



of the term "public school" was highlighted, whilst at the local level strongly held party principles were met with equally strongly held individual principles. Gurner was probably right in his later verdict that having been deprived of his separate Board of Governors he was largely defenceless in the other battles which followed. The Labour Party had been democratically elected and it duly put into practice those educational policies which had formed part of its election programme. Those policies demanded the abolition of the separate Board of Governors and of the Officers' Training Corps. These were issues on which Gurner disagreed violently with the Committee, and over which it was always possible that he would resign. The asperity of his relations with the Committee's secretariat made that a probability - a probability which materialised into fact with the letter of 16th July and the offer of the post at Whitgift.

It says much for the staff and for R.B. Graham, as well as for the boys, that the school was able to recover so quickly from the traumas of 1926-27. Its academic achievements were pushed to yet higher levels; its corporate life flourished, and the only significant doubt which attends its development during the years 1919-1939 is that which attaches to the cognisance which it took or perhaps failed to take - of the needs of those boys who were not going to proceed to the university or into the higher professions. It does seem, particularly from the evidence of H.M. Inspectors, that those boys were given a highly academic education which was by no means that which was best suited to their particular needs. Academic excellence was pursued with enormous zeal and conspicuous success, but in the process it is probable that the curriculum was not sufficiently differentiated to cater for the needs of the substantial number of boys who were not potential university graduates,

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CHAPTER 7

THE CENTRAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS 1918-1939

Even before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 Sheffield had been made aware of the glaring deficiencies in the provision which it was making for the secondary education of its children.<sup>(1)</sup> In the period 1909-13 the Board of Education had repeatedly chided the Education Committee over the paucity of secondary schools in the city and the Committee had finally been stirred into calling in Michael Sadler. The First World War effectively prevented the implementation of any of his recommendations, and it was not until the 5th March, 1918 that the Special Sub-Committee appointed to consider the development of the education system in Sheffield was able to advance any specific recommendations relating to the provision of additional secondary schools after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>(2)</sup> The deplorable nature of the situation, however, can be gauged from the fact that in 1912-13 there were in Sheffield only thirteen secondary school places per thousand public elementary school pupils. This compared very unfavourably with the figures of 54 in Bradford, 39 in Bristol, 34 in Leeds, 25 in Liverpool, 24 in London, 21 in Manchester and 20 in Birmingham.<sup>(3)</sup>

Even granted that there were obviously secondary schools and secondary schools, that situation could not be regarded with anything other than alarm. Moreover, even after new schools had been opened at Abbeydale and Firth Park the provision still reached the level of only 33 per thousand, whilst that of Bradford had risen to 125, that of Bristol to 64 and those of Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester to 63, 47, 40 and 44 respectively. Only Birmingham, with 35 secondary places for

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(1) See above p. 94.

(2) S.E.C.M. 1917-8, pp. 510-517. See also above pp. 97-101.

(3) Table I, Number of Pupils of 12 and over in Secondary Schools on the Grant List, in The Sheffield Secondary Schools Inspections, 1923, (1923 Inspections), unpub. dup. T.S., High Storrs Archives, (H.S.A.).



every thousand children in its public elementary schools, in any way approached the dismal level of Sheffield.

Sheffield did set an example to the rest of the country, in providing free secondary education<sup>(4)</sup> but there can be little doubt that in providing only 2,740 secondary places it was failing to supply its population with the quantity of higher education which it deserved and which the more vocal elements in it demanded.<sup>(5)</sup> Of those 2,740 places, 608 were, in 1922-23, at the Central Secondary Boys School and 514 at the Central Secondary Girls School.<sup>(6)</sup> This represented an increase on the 1912-13 levels of 178 in the case of the boys and of 163 in that of the girls.

The bulk of these extra admissions occurred after the war as part of the city's response to the Fisher Bill. Indeed, some of the proposals relating directly to the Central School originated in the school itself. A document, which unfortunately is undated and unsigned but which was probably composed by Iliffe, the Principal of the Boys' school in conjunction with Miss Couzens, the Girls' Headmistress, expresses agreement with the general ideas of the Plan since they emanated from those schools.<sup>(7)</sup> However, it would appear that many variations upon the original Central Secondary Schools' suggestions were incorporated in the Plan which the Development Sub-Committee drafted, and the Heads of the Central Schools objected strongly to most of them. In the Plan the Sub-Committee postulated a distinction between King Edward VII School, the Girls' High School and the Notre Dame School on the one hand and the remaining secondary schools, including the proposed new establishments at Firth Park and Abbeydale as well as the Central Secondary Schools, on the other.<sup>(8)</sup> Iliffe and Miss Couzens objected that the prescribed aims and purposes of the latter group were pitched far too low; that their curriculum would be altogether too limited

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- (4) S.S.C.D.E.S., 14th Feb., 1918, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 507. See also below p. 329.
- (5) E.g. local trades unions; S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 473.
- (6) '1923 Inspections', Table II.
- (7) J.W. Iliffe and F.M. Couzens, 'Comments on the Recommendations to the Education Committee with Respect to the Central Secondary Schools', unpub. dup. T.S., n.d. (prob. 1918), p.1. H.S.A.
- (8) S.S.C.D.E.S., 14th Feb., 1918, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 513.



and their orientation so materialistic as to be almost indistinguishable from that of the proposed Junior Technical Schools, even though they were expected to carry the pupils 1½ to 2 years further.

As for the postulated transfer of the ablest pupils to King Edward's or the Girls' High School, it was argued that "no influential person with actual experience of secondary schools would defend transfer from one school to another." The loss of time and the dangers of lack of assimilation were too great, (9) Moreover, although there had been a desire (by persons not named in the document) to find boys so good at classics as to warrant transfer to King Edward's, there was no instance in the fourteen year history of the boys' school of a pupil either being fit or wanting to be so transferred, Latin had, in fact, been available at the school since 1905 but the ethos of the boys school was not classical and it was, therefore, not surprising that the classical work did not reach a high standard. (10)

Although confirmed at the February 1918 meeting of the Education Committee, the idea of an age limit beyond which the Central Secondary Schools could not keep their pupils was never implemented. They continued to prepare pupils for university entrance and, indeed, throughout the inter-war period they improved substantially upon the foundation which had been laid before 1914, but these successes were almost exclusively in either mathematics and science or modern subjects. (11)

By 1922-23 the Central Secondary School had between 40% and 50% more boys on its rolls than it had before the war. This, coupled with a similar increase on the girls' side, placed obvious strains upon the existing accommodation. The Development Plan had foreseen this problem and had sought Board of Education approval for the Friends' School, a quarter of a mile away at Hartshead, being rented from the Society of Friends and used to accommodate some one hundred and eighty of the boys. (12) This

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(9) Iliffe and Couzens, 'Comments on Recommendations', p.3.

(10) See the observations of H.M.I. below p. 212.

(11) See below p. 218.

(12) S.S.C.D.E.S., 14th Feb., 1918, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 514.

caused certain problems, particularly concerning the supervision of the Hartshead boys attending prayers in the main school,<sup>(13)</sup> but the Hartshead provision was not sufficient and by September 1919, Iliffe was reporting to his Governors that it had been necessary to use one half of a laboratory in the girls' section of the buildings as a form room.<sup>(14)</sup> Even this was not enough and in June of the following year a small private school, the Kenwood High School, was purchased by the Committee. This enabled 120 girls to be taught there and this in turn permitted the two rooms at the top of the boys' building, which the girls had been using, to be returned to the boys,<sup>(15)</sup> Finally, part of the Machine Drawing room was converted into a laboratory in order to help meet the needs not only of the day pupils but also of the ever-growing number of students who attended when the premises were used for further education purposes in the evenings.

The pressure of numbers on available space was heightened by the tendency for the duration of school life to increase considerably in the years immediately after the war. Here two factors were at work: the lowering of the age of entry and the increased stringency of the agreements which parents were required to enter into with the Authority. The nature and extent of the former factor can best be gauged from the following figures which Iliffe presented to the Secondary Schools Sectional Subcommittee in April 1924,<sup>(16)</sup>

Table 7.1 - Average Age of New Boys (1st Year) Admitted to Central Secondary School for Boys, 1918-23,

1918	-	12:4
1919	-	12:3
1920	-	12:1
1921	-	12:1
1922	-	12:0
1923	-	11:8

- (13) Central Secondary School for Boys, Staff Meeting Minutes, 5th May, 1920, unpub. M.S., H.S.A.  
 (14) Govs, Mins. Central Sec. S. for Boys, (G.C.S.S.B.), 3rd Sept., 1919, S.E.C.M. 1919-20, p. 228.  
 (15) G.C.S.S.B., 3rd June, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 107.  
 (16) S.S.S.S.C., 4th April, 1924, S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p.4.



The effects of this fall of almost nine months in average age on entry into the Central Secondary School for Boys were likely to be exacerbated in the years after 1923, for in 1920 a new form of Agreement was drawn up by the Authority for all its secondary schools. In 1918 and 1919 the Agreement had been such as to keep a boy at school until the end of the term in which he reached the age of sixteen. The penalty for premature leaving was then £2. The 1920 agreement not only raised the leaving age requirement from the end of the term to the end of the year in which the pupil was sixteen, but also increased the penalty to £7.

In the Girls' School there were, in 1922, some 64 girls in the First Forms who were over twelve years of age, a state of affairs of which H.M. Inspectors were critical. There were, however, 83 girls over sixteen in the school and the average leaving age had risen to 16:11 and the average length of school life to 4:5 years. (In 1914 the comparable figures had been 16:4 and 3:7).<sup>(17)</sup> The main cause of this increase had been the cessation of the transfer of intending teachers to the Pupil-Teacher Centre, but it was clear that the further reduction of the age for the Entrance Examination and the enforcement of the Agreement would increase still further the pressure which the school's 540 pupils were placing upon the existing accommodation. Two of the noisest classrooms had been handed over to the Education Committee's office staff and five rooms had been acquired at Kenwood, but three of the latter were quite small and it was still necessary for eight classes to be taught in the Leopold Street basement.

On the credit side, the increasing length of school life did make it possible to arrange economically for the five-year School Certificate Course for the less able pupils which the H.M.I.s recommended. But on the debit side it meant either increasing the number of pupils in the schools

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(17) H.M.I., Report on Full Inspection of the Central Secondary School for Girls, Sheffield, Nov. 1922, p.3. P.R.O. Ed. 109/7464.



or decreasing the annual intake of new ones. On 1st October, 1923, for example, there were 610 pupils in the Boys school and the admission of the normal entry of 140 in September 1924 raised the total number on roll to around 640. This increase compelled the occasional teaching of two classes in the Hartshead Hall and the use of a Leopold Street room which was unfit for teaching purposes, (18)

As the effects of the fall in the average age of entry and of the new form of Agreement began to work their way through the schools after 1924, the situation was bound to become even more difficult and it was obvious that the only effective solution to the school's problems lay in the provision of new premises on a new site. This had long been recognised but it was not until the end of 1928 that concrete proposals were considered by the Education Committee. A Special Section of the Secondary Schools Sectional Sub-Committee had been appointed to consider and report as to the most suitable site for two such schools. It visited sites at Hagg Lane, Intake, and at High Storrs, Bents Green, before settling on the latter (19) and provision for the new schools was made in the three-year Educational Programme. By that time there were seven hundred pupils in the Boys' school, every room was in constant use and the Headmaster, Luther Smith, had been reduced to taking the one or two classes which he taught in his own room. The Friends' School at Hartshead was still being used but even that was not enough and in September 1930 a further room was rented, in the Women's Meeting House, for a period of two years. The situation had been exacerbated by the return of a larger number than usual of post-Certificate pupils, (20) but not all of them were intending to do work leading to the Higher Certificate - many had entered the school at an exceptionally young age and were simply attending in order to meet the legal obligations which their parents had undertaken in signing the Agreement.

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(18) S.S.S.S.C., 4th April, 1924; S.E.C.M. 1924-5, p.5.

(19) S.S.S.S.C., 7th Dec., 1928, S.E.C.M. 1928-9, p. 510.

(20) S.S.S.S.C., 4th Oct., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 366.

High Storrs is some 3½ miles west from the city centre and in the late 1920s it was approached via a tram service which terminated about a half to three-quarters of a mile short of the school. The school was to be built at a height just below the 1,000 foot contour and its staff and pupils had a strenuous uphill walk to school each morning before they were able to savour the magnificent views westwards across the Pennine moors which the school enjoyed. The site was a large one of about 22 acres and within that area two possible locations for the new buildings were explored before it was finally decided to build at the east end of what had been the playing fields, adjacent to High Storrs Road. The cost was estimated in 1929 at £60,000 for each of the two buildings and furniture and fittings raised the initial financial provision to £127,300.<sup>(21)</sup> The plans provided accommodation for 520 girls and 585 boys (i.e. fewer than were attending in 1928) with a joint Assembly Hall and a gymnasium - also for joint use by both boys and girls, - chemistry, physics, botany and general laboratories, two lecture rooms, two art rooms, two music rooms, a cooking and laundry work room, a needlework room, a "general occupations" room, two libraries, two dining halls with a joint kitchen, two changing rooms, a medical inspection room and a rest room.<sup>(22)</sup>

Disagreement with the Board arose over certain details but a compromise was reached and whilst the Authority agreed to provide an extra gymnasium and reduce the size of the Hall, the Board agreed to accept the Committee's original proposal for an allowance of approximately 18 square feet per pupil.<sup>(23)</sup> The final plans, therefore, which went out to tender were for schools which would house 562 boys and 548 girls and by April 1931 deflation had made it possible for Messrs. W.G. Robson (Builders) Ltd. to put in a successful bid at only £95,053.<sup>(24)</sup> - a saving to the Committee

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(21) S.E.C., 25th Nov., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 446.

(22) S.S.S.S.C., 6th Dec., 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 489.

(23) S.S.S.S.C., 16th April, 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 138.

(24) B.S.C., 20th April, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 14.



of £25,000 on its original estimate. The schools, still retaining the name "Central Secondary" moved into their new premises in September 1933, and the buildings in Leopold Street which they vacated were taken over, after suitable adaptations, by a Commercial School and a new Technical School. (25)

As the population of the Central Secondary Boys' School had risen in the post-war years so had Iliffe's concern about the calibre of the entrant which he was receiving and one suspects that basically he subscribed to the view that "more" meant "worse". (26) At a Staff Meeting on 17th February, 1921 he raised the matter of the quality of the boys entering the school it having become apparent, in his view, that there had been a marked deterioration during the past year or two. (27) Several causes were suggested by the staff and it was decided to appoint a small committee to consider the matter and report back.

The Committee began its report by stating categorically that the average mental attainment of boys entering the school was distinctly below that of the boys four or five years ago. (28) This, of course, was a sweeping generalisation and, whilst the calibre of pupils sometimes does seem to masters to vary markedly from year to year, it must be remembered that although the Central Secondary Schools had increased their intake during the early post-war years and to that extent had gone further down the percentile scale, they still occupied the same place in the "pecking order" of candidates. That place was below King Edward's, as before, but above the newly opened Firth Park School. (29) Allowing for the vagaries in the predictive validity of the Education Committee's Entrance Examination, it would seem that the Central Secondary School was receiving basically the same calibre of entrant as before but that in addition to those boys it was also receiving a further one hundred and fifty who may or may not have been of lesser ability.

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(25) For the history of the Boys' Technical School see R. Underdown, "The History of Ashleigh School Sheffield", unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1972.

(26) Miss F.M. Couzens and J.W. Iliffe to G.S. Baxter (Sec. S.E.C.) 1st July, 1912, unpub. carbon T.S., H.S.A.

(27) Minutes of Staff Meeting, C.S.S.B., 17th Feb., 1921, unpub. M.S., H.S.A.

(28) 'Report of Central Secondary School Masters on the Quality of Entrants', unpub. dup. T.S. n.d. (probably April 1921) p.1.H.S.A. (29) See also above



No reliable data on the validity and reliability of the Entrance Examination exists but the masters did append to their report statistics in support of their claim that the classification of boys on entry into the school in September 1920 (which was done on the basis of the boys' positions in the Entrance Examination Order of Merit List) was not borne out by the results of the examinations which the school carried out at the end of that Christmas term.

Table 7.2 - Central Secondary School for Boys - Position of Boys in Form I, in the Christmas Examinations 1920. (30)

<u>Order of Entrance</u>	<u>Position in Christmas Exam</u>	<u>Scholarship Held</u>
* 1	1	Ecclesall Bierlow
* 2	46	Ecclesall Bierlow
3	7	Birley
* 4	37	Ecclesall Bierlow
* 5	87	Ecclesall Bierlow
* 6	21	
7	20	Birley
* 8	45	Ecclesall Bierlow
9	2	
10	18	Birley
*11	85	Birley
*12	51	Birley
*13	59	
*14	82	
15	32	
*16	64	
17	92	
*18	52	
*19	11	
*20	97	
*21	110	
22	60	
*23	80	
*24	23	
*25	76	

\*Boys known to have received special preparation for the Entrance Examination.

From Table 7,2 it is evident that special preparation seems to have achieved little lasting effect and that seventeen of the boys placed in the top twenty-five by the Entrance Examination failed to attain positions within

(3) 'C,S,S,B, Quality of Entrants', Appendix C. p.3.

the top thirty on the School's Christmas Examinations. Various reasons for the discrepancies in the two orders of merit may be advanced. The Entrance Examination, for example, was a test simply of arithmetic and English,<sup>(31)</sup> whereas the school rankings were based on a much wider range of subjects, and ranking based on the summation of the raw scores given on a number of papers marked by different examiners is statistically invalid. Even allowing for such factors, however, the performance of Form I, in the terminal examination in December 1920, would seem not to provide much sustenance for those who placed great faith in the predictive validity of the Entrance Examination; and few teachers with any length of experience would suggest that the calibre of the pupils whom they have taught has been uniformly the same every year. Mature judgement for all its subjectivity has much to commend it. On the other hand, it must be noted that the Staff Committee Report made no mention of the attainment or promise of those boys who had not been placed as high as the boys of Form I by the Entrance Examination but who had, nonetheless, scored highly in the school's examination.

The Staff Committee was of the opinion that several factors lay at the root of the ascribed decline. The abnormal conditions of the war came first on its list, followed by the increase in the number of boys who were being accepted by King Edward's, a lack of interest on the part of parents, and falling standards in the elementary schools.<sup>(32)</sup> Such problems as there were, however, were not limited to the first and second years. During the war the number of boys leaving each year in breach of their Agreements was at a high level, being 93 in 1916 and over 70 in 1915, 1917 and 1918. The number fell to 49 in 1919 but in 1920 rose to over a hundred.<sup>(33)</sup>

The Report of the Staff Committee was included by Iliffe in a reply which he sent in 1921 to Sharp, the Director of Education, in the course of

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(31) See below p. 346.

(32) C.S.S.B., 'Quality of Entrants', p.1.

(33) Ibid., Appendix C, p.3.



correspondence on the position of secondary education in the city which the latter had instituted following the opening of the Firth Park and Abbeydale Secondary Schools. The correspondence began with a request to secondary Heads to group the pupils admitted to their schools in September 1920 under four heads so as to show how they had progressed since their admission as "free placers". (34)

Iliffe was not happy with the rigidity of this request. (35) He merely submitted the report of the Committee of Masters, complete with appendices, and contented himself with designating only three boys whose performance did not warrant their admission to the school. It had not been possible to promote them into the second year and they were repeating the first year course; but there is no record of them subsequently having been transferred back to an elementary school. Moreover, despite his earlier concern at the quality of the entrant which his school had received in the previous few years, Iliffe concluded his letter by stating that the main body of pupils could be regarded as fairly satisfactory and that the first twenty-six on the 1921 Midsummer list gave promise of finishing their course with credit, i.e., reaching Matriculation standard at the end of the fourth year.

In commenting on the decline in the attitude of the boys towards school and the deterioration in their general demeanour, the Staff Committee in 1921 had drawn attention to the "absence of the example set by sufficient boys of the better type", and, although they did not use such pompous stereotypy, this was also the conclusion of the H.M.I.s after their general inspection in 1922. They pointed out that the school had suffered greatly during the war because of the depletion of staff and the loss of senior boys, but they were of the opinion that a revival had already manifest itself. (36) However, they shared Iliffe's disquiet at the large percentage

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- (34) Letter Sharp to all secondary Heads 29.8.21, dup. T.S., H.S.A. Also letter Newton (for the Director) to Iliffe, 3.10.21, unpub. T.S., H.S.A.
- (35) Iliffe to Sharp, 3.11.21, carbon T.S. H.S.A.
- (36) H.M.I. Report on the Inspection of the Central Secondary School for Boys, Sheffield, 1922, p. 16, H.S.A.



of boys who left before completing their course; in 1921-22 of the 114 who had left the school, 14 had been aged between seventeen and eighteen and nine over that age - hence, a large number must have left below the age of 16. In conjunction with this there was operating at the lower end of the school the factor which the Staff Committee on the Quality of Entrants had highlighted, namely the reduction of the average age on entry by about three months per annum. Thus, by September 1922 only seventy-eight of the boys who entered the school were above the age of twelve.<sup>(37)</sup> This meant that the boys whom it received were somewhat less mature than formerly. Financial constraints doubtless influenced many boys to leave, but recently the Authority had revised its scholarship scheme. Financial assistance was now given where need was shown not merely as a reward for examination success, and maintenance allowances were granted where further attendance without them beyond the age of fourteen would be impossible.<sup>(38)</sup> It was hoped that this added inducement to longer school life would have operated beneficially on both the Boys' and the Girls' schools, particularly in swelling the numbers staying on to take an advanced course leading to the Higher Certificate or beyond that to entrance to University. The H.M.I.s noted that in recent years the Boys had won few scholarships to the older universities but they believed that in the lower forms the standard of promise was noticeably high.<sup>(39)</sup>

The curriculum in the Central Secondary School for Boys was organised on what were fairly standard lines for many secondary schools at this time, French being begun in the first year with German or Latin added as a second language in the second year. Not all pupils took the second foreign language and, as the Commercial Course had disappeared, there was a Remove Form between the third and fourth year where the work was

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(37) Ibid., p. 3 and H.M.I., Report on Central Sec. S. for Girls 1922, p.3. P.R.O. 109/7464.....

(38) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p.3.

(39) H.M.I., C.S.S.G. Report 1922, p.5.

of a slightly lower standard than in the fourth form proper. The general standard of work, however, was considered to be distinctly high, especially in science and mathematics, though French was not believed to be up to the level of the other subjects. (40)

The curriculum and organisation of the Girls' school in the early twenties was of a similarly standard type. Latin was introduced for all girls in the second year though its continuation in the third produced some difficulties for the weaker girls. Three girls in the Sixth Form were studying Greek and the Advanced Course in Modern Languages and Literature had been recognised in 1920. On the science side physics was weaker than chemistry and botany, and, although biology was offered in the Fifth Form, few of the girls who were still at school then were on the science side. In fact, the main problem which the Inspectors found in 1922 was that of the curriculum for those who stayed for one year after the School Certificate, usually with the intention of going to Teacher Training College. The question was whether it would be worth their while taking the examination again for matriculation purposes, or whether it would be better for them to do a course completely divorced from any examination syllabus. The latter had undeniable merits but the Inspectors finally came down in favour of strengthening the foundations of the girls' knowledge via the former. Generally, they were favourably impressed with the curriculum and organisation, and with the general alertness, demeanour and attainment of the girls. (41)

In 1922 the Board of Education altered its policy on the frequency of general inspections and from that date they were conducted at intervals of ten instead of five years. (42) Thus, it was not until 1934 that the Inspectorate descended upon the schools again. During the inter-regnum a Senior French teacher had been appointed to the Boys' school and he and

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(40) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p. 10.

(41) H.M.I., C.S.S.G. Report 1922, p. 10.

(42) L.A. Selby-Bigge, The Board of Education, 1934, p. 146.



his three "skilful and well-informed specialist" assistants had brought the standard of French throughout the school up to one which was described as "highly satisfactory".<sup>(43)</sup> The syllabus was designed on "modern lines" but the Inspectors were still critical of the textbooks, which contained too much translation and gave too little scope for a more "direct" approach. There were at that time fifteen boys in the Fifth Form specialising in French, and ten in the Sixth, and whilst the Inspectors had been commendatory in their appraisal of French lower down the school they did not have the same confidence in the standards which were being attained on the Advanced Course. They conceded that the work of the Fifth and Sixth was by no means unsatisfactory but suggested that it was not as good as the standard in the main school would have led one to expect. Nonetheless, French specialists had won five state scholarships in the previous three years - a record of which many schools would have been envious since only 200 were awarded in toto each year.

In 1922 the Inspectors had remarked on the curious fluctuations which had occurred over the past few years in the numbers of boys taking Latin rather than German as a second foreign language.<sup>(44)</sup> It is probable that this swing towards Latin and away from German was part of the legacy of 1914-18, but the H.M.I.s were concerned that the preference for Latin could lead to an ignorance of German which would be detrimental to those boys wanting to take Honours Science at university. By 1934, however, the position had been reversed and the Inspectors were reporting a tendency for German to attract considerably more pupils than Latin, as a result of which the quality of the German forms had improved.<sup>(45)</sup> Only three boys were studying German in the Fifth Form and in the Sixth Form there were only two, but, in view of the recent popularity of that language lower down the

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(43) H.M.I., Report on Inspection of Central Sec. S. for Boys, 1934, p.8.

(44) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p.5.

(45) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p.8.



school, numbers taking German on the Advanced Course were expected to rise.

By 1934 the time allocated to Latin had been increased from four periods a week in the Second Year and five in years Three and Four to six periods at all stages. This increased allocation was perhaps a response to the observations which had been made in 1922 that most of the Fourth Form found the work decidedly difficult, though the Inspectors attributed this difficulty more to the fact that Latin attracted a much larger number of boys than did German.<sup>(46)</sup> By 1934, however, German had gained the ascendancy but the increased time allowance for Latin meant that the quarter of the school population who studied Latin did so with success. Very few failed to complete the three-year course but of the eleven who were offering the classical language for the Higher Certificate none was aiming at more than the subsidiary standard.<sup>(47)</sup>

The teaching of English language and literature at the school improved steadily throughout the inter-war period, though it must be acknowledged that in 1934 the plaudits of the Inspector were rather more for the flair of the teachers than for the exceptionally high standards of attainment of the boys. Of the former, he wrote, "It is difficult to find a group of teachers superior to these in point of skill and enlightenment"; but he was critical of the boys' written work which was not up to the standard he would have expected in view of their intelligence and alertness. Certain of his comments were, however, somewhat contradictory, for whilst on the one hand he suggested that the standard of work was better than the examination results would suggest, on the other, he drew attention to the fact that, whilst no work of Open Scholarship standard was being done, scholarships in English had been won and the results in the Higher Certificate had been remarkably good.<sup>(48)</sup>

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(46) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p. 12.

(47) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p.9.

(48) Ibid., p.9.

Teaching of modern subjects also manifest an improvement between the two inspections. In 1922, for example, the time allocated to History was very near to the permitted minimum and the results attained, as evidenced either by examination grades or by the general interest of the pupils, were not very high.<sup>(49)</sup> As with French, this was attributed not to a lack of zeal but to a lack of proper organisation and direction. By 1934 a good team of historians had been built up, led by a well-qualified teacher with eight years teaching experience. The syllabus taught was directed in years three and four towards recent British and European history and this was preceded by two years of work which sketched the outline of world and earlier British history.

Geography in 1922 was in a much more satisfactory state than history. All the teaching of geography was done by one man. He had gained a London external B.Sc. after the war and was appraised as an excellent class teacher who "realised the need for work to be done by the boys as well as by the teacher" and who had secured good School Certificate results.<sup>(50)</sup> The Report on the next inspection heaped considerable praise on the geographers: the work was of a very high standard; the exercises were well designed to test knowledge and encourage reasoning; good use was being made of the school and two libraries; there had been good co-operation with the wood-work department in making a Stevenson screen; the geography room was well-equipped; and it was hoped soon to acquire a cinematograph and a wireless.<sup>(51)</sup>

Art teaching, on the other hand, came in for the most serious criticism of any subject on either of the two inter-war inspections. In 1922 Art was taught by a man who had been at the school barely two years. He was an artist of experience and ability but had no previous teaching experience and, according to the Inspectors, had not yet found the right way to interpret his ideas in practice. The First and Fourth forms were apparently set the same tasks and it was perhaps not surprising that the Inspector should conclude that the boys had learnt very little and had

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(49) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p.9.

(50) Ibid., p.8.

(51) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p.9.



increased their knowledge and powers hardly at all. (52)

In mitigation, the Art teacher could claim that he was working under the most difficult circumstances; there was no Art Room, he had to teach all his lessons in the Assembly Hall and the boys had to stand for the whole of the time. He was, moreover, defended by Iliffe who in his comments on the Report informed the Governors that the method being followed was based on that of Professor Cizek in which the pupil was encouraged "to take ambitious flights of fancy from the outset acquiring technique *pari passu* with the development of his imagination." (53) Hence there could be no essential differences in the subjects set for each year - the differences lay rather in the standards of skill expected.

By 1934 a specialist Art Room was, of course, available in the High Storrs premises and the self-same teacher, using what seems to have been basically the same approach as twelve years before, was being praised both for his less academic approach, which gave a "refreshing freedom from the generally overstressed teaching of pattern", and for his real efforts to develop the creative impulses of the boys. (54)

Immediately after the First World War Manual Instruction was restricted to first and second-year pupils. The syllabus had been completely revised since the last inspection, in 1914, and after only one preliminary exercise the boys were allowed to design and execute models. In September 1934 Manual Instruction was introduced into the third and fourth years for the first time - but only for those boys in the C and D forms. The boys in II A, II B, III C and III D also had an extra period every week for drawing. Both woodwork and metalwork were taught and the boys spent half their time on each. A useful set of worksheets had been prepared

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(52) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p. 13

(53) J.W. Iliffe, 'Note on 1922 Inspection', unpub. T.S., H.S.A.

(54) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, pp. 11-12. This comment is perhaps most indicative of a change in the views of H.M.I.



for the boys, but it was thought that a collection of photographs and sketches illustrating traditional work and fine craftsmanship would be helpful in providing the right background for the more advanced work. (55)

Music, in 1922, was restricted to the first-year pupils and they had only one period a week, but there was an "excellent little orchestra". "Financial considerations" was Iliffe's only defence of the meagre accord given to music, but even when the school had been re-housed at High Storrs still only one period a week was given to music, though C.H. Biltcliffe, the visiting teacher, had been employed for an extra half day a week in 1929. (56) The singing lessons were given by a mathematics specialist and one can only speculate at the reality which lay behind the Inspector's observation that he managed a class of seventy "with skill born of long experience", (57)

Physical education within the school had been severely criticised in the 1914 Inspection and virtually nothing was done to rectify the situation in the immediate post-war years. Only one lesson of physical exercises per fortnight was allowed and although the staff had been augmented in September 1921 by the appointment of a fully-qualified teacher of physical training, his services had been so little utilised that he had been withdrawn at the end of that academic year. Thus, at the time of the Inspection in November 1922 P.T. was still being done at the Y.M.C.A. (58) and was being taught by a man who was conscientious but possessed of little knowledge of the subject.

In his comments to the Governors on the 1922 Inspection, Iliffe pointed out that financial considerations had compelled the termination of the employment of the P.T. specialist in July 1922 and that without the provision of additional gymnasium facilities it would be uneconomical to appoint a successor. (59)

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(55) Ibid., p. 12.

(56) S.S.S.S.C., 3rd May, 1929, S.E.C.M. 1929-30, p. 86.

(57) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p. 13.

(58) G.C.S.S.B., 6th July, 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-23, p. 125.

(59) J.W. Iliffe, 'Note on 1922 Inspection'.

Transference from Leopold Street to High Storrs brought no immediate improvement despite the adequacy of the facilities there. Physical education was described in 1934 as a weak subject, criticism being levelled particularly at the neglect of postural correction and development of the body. The conception of the objects and purposes of physical training and the place which it should occupy in secondary education were described as far too limited, as a consequence of which it occupied an insignificant place in the curriculum and far too little time was assigned to it.<sup>(60)</sup> In fact, of the twenty-two forms in the school, sixteen each received only forty minutes P.T. a week, and part of that time was taken up by changing and washing. The remaining six forms received no gym lessons at all.

This adverse report did, however, produce an immediate response on the part of the school and the Governors, and even before the final draft of the Report was published a specialist P.T. instructor was appointed.

It was in mathematics and science that the school had first made its mark,<sup>(61)</sup> and in 1922 the Inspectors observed that the work was of a distinctly high standard. The staff had recently been strengthened by the appointment of a Senior Mathematics Master, a scholarly man of high academic qualifications and a convincing teacher. The syllabus was on traditional lines, indeed, it could even be called old-fashioned but this was apparently a matter of conviction rather than convention; and the only unusual feature which the Inspection brought to light was the introduction of trigonometry in the second year.<sup>(62)</sup>

In science first-year pupils were given six periods a week in 1922 but, whilst the work in General Science earned the "warm commendation" of the Inspectors, they were critical of the failure to make provision for biology other than by way of the activities of school societies. By the

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(60) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p. 13. (The Board had published a new P.E. syllabus in 1933).

(61) See above pp. 92-3.

(62) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, pp. 12-13.



time of the next inspection Biology was being taught in the Sixth by an extremely well-qualified young master; special attention was paid to field work; an excellent biology tradition had been built up; and several Royal Scholarships had been won. Some criticism was levelled at the amount of lecturing which was done in the Physics theory lessons but generally-speaking the Report on science was favourable. Effective work was being done at all levels by an extremely well-qualified team, four out of five of whom had Firsts, (63)

Advanced courses in Science and Mathematics had been recognised by the Board of Education in 1917 and official recognition of advanced Modern Studies was given in the Autumn of the following year, subject to suitable amendments being made to the schemes for English, French and History. (64) At Higher Certificate level the Oxford and Cambridge Joint papers were taken since they facilitated entry for Town Trustee Scholarships, but there was the pressing problem of providing the necessary variety of choice of subjects without involving the Governors in undue expenditure on additional staff. Some boys were allowed to specialise in mathematics more than science and it was also thought desirable that others should take a second language as a main subject though the practice of scientists doing subsidiary German in the same class as advanced German specialists was deprecated by the Inspectors. (65) All this implied small classes and possibly substantial and additional expenditure on extra staff/to minimise this it was suggested that the number of private study periods be increased. However, Iliffe conceded that the practice of teaching main and subsidiary pupils in the same class had, for financial reasons, been carried too far and the practice was discontinued in July 1923. (66)

The Girls' school was also inspected in 1934 when it was found that only one year after the move to High Storrs the school population was

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(63) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report, 1934, p.11.

(64) G.C.S.S.B., 6th Dec., 1918, S.E.C.M. 1918-9, p. 350.

(65) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p.6.

(66) J.W. Iliffe, 'Note on 1922 Inspection'.



already too large for the accommodation. Indeed, when the plans for the new school had been approved in 1929 there were approximately 580 girls on the school's rolls, yet the plans provided for accommodation for only 520 and by 1934 there were some 600 girls in attendance. The fault would thus seem to lie with the Authority in not budgeting for a large enough school in the original plans. Abbeydale was the only other municipal secondary school for girls in the city at that time and pressure on these two schools was bound to be great in view of the absence of other secondary provision.

In the new High Storrs building pressure was particularly great on the specialist rooms and ancillary services such as dining. The staff ratio of 1:23.3 was considered by the Inspectorate to be just about average for a school of 600 girls but the teachers had only 2/3 free periods a week and appeared to be very hard worked,<sup>(67)</sup> Also hard worked were the pupils who, in compliance with the Authority's general policy, were compelled, with but few exceptions, to attempt the School Certificate examination in four years. It was, therefore, perhaps only to be expected that the shortness of the Main courses would lead to "clear signs of ill-digested work in all subjects",<sup>(68)</sup> The syllabuses were narrow and confined too much to examination requirements. History, Geography, French and Science seem to have been more than up to standard but Scripture, English, German and Latin came in for varying degrees of criticism from the Inspectors. The four years of the main course was, in their view, the most crucial matter raised by the 1934 Inspection, and at the subsequent conference they prevailed upon the Authority to consider at an early date the idea of allowing five instead of four years before the School Certificate Examination was taken,<sup>(69)</sup> The L.E.A. representatives managed to convey the impression that they were favourably disposed towards this suggestion,\*

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(67) H.M.I., Report on Inspection of Central Sec. S. for Girls, 1934, p.4, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7464.

(68) Ibid., p.5,

(69) B.E. Dept. Min. of Conference between H.M.I. and Representatives of Sheffield L.E.A., 23rd June, 1934, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7464.

but, in fact, no action was taken, just as no action had been taken four years earlier when the same proposal had been considered by the Headmistress, the Director of Education and the Chairman of the Secondary Sub-Committee. (70)

In the Certificate year Latin, having been begun by all the girls in the second year and dropped by a half of them in the third, became alternative to chemistry. Physics and botany were the other Main School sciences, but for those who sat the Examination a second time biology replaced botany. Housecraft was not then taught beyond the lower forms of the third year but it was proposed to extend the course for some of the girls up to the School Certificate stage.

However, not only did the four-year main course place undue pressure on the pupils, it also led to many girls in the upper school manifesting signs of intellectual immaturity and they were not helped in this by the predilection of the staff for doing too much themselves and leaving too little for the girls to do. In 1934 there were 15 girls in the first year and 10 in the second year of the Modern Studies Advanced Course, English, History and French being the principal areas of study. On the Science side a total of 7 girls were offering a selection of subjects from physics, chemistry, botany, zoology and pure and applied mathematics; and a considerable variety of subsidiary subjects were taken. Despite the criticism of immaturity which was levelled at the Sixth form, the Inspectors were of the opinion that the work done was creditable. In fact, girls won places at universities during the inter-war period and at both First and Higher Certificate levels pass rates in excess of the national average were achieved despite a shortage of specialist teachers in key subject areas: English and Mathematics, for example, each had only one specialist teacher as late as 1934. The situation at the Boys' school was by that time very much better for in 1922 it had acquired senior posts for the

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(70) S.S.S.C., 16th June, 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, pp. 143-4.



principal subjects of the curriculum; mathematics, science and modern languages, but, curiously, not English, (71)

It was then the practice for the average boy to take ten subjects for the First Examination. Dr. Moore, who succeeded Iliffe in 1923, continued this practice for two years but in January 1926 he outlined at a Staff Meeting a proposal that the number be reduced to nine. All boys studied English and Mathematics and were compelled to take those subjects in the examinations. They studied seven other subjects in the curriculum and under Moore's plan most boys were to be allowed to drop one of them, the weaker scholars being permitted to drop two or perhaps three, (72) This gave rise to some discussion as to the effectiveness of the existing school course up to Certificate level. The organisation was such that normally a boy would take the examination at the end of a four year course, but it was possible for the weakest boys to proceed via 4E to 4A and thus take the examination after five years at the school. Not all seemed to benefit from this, however, largely, the staff believed, because of discipline problems which began when they were in 3D and which they carried with them through 4E into 4A. The staff was divided as to the causes and remedies for this. One group argued that a five-year course should be the normal Certificate course and should replace the existing four-year one which crammed the better boys and brought them to the Fifth Form still immature and incapable of profiting from the Advanced Work whilst causing the weaker boys to give way under the strain and sink into the laziness and apathy of Forms 3D and 4E. Others held to the view that the pace of the quickest boys should be the pace set throughout the school with a four-year course being the norm.

The matter was not resolved at once but in January 1927 a new

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(71) G.C.S.S.B., 8th April, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p.6.

(72) C.S.S.B. Staff Minutes, 21st January, 1926.



arrangement of School Certificate forms was outlined. Under this scheme the total number of subjects was reduced to eight: English, French and Mathematics were compulsory, and History and the second foreign language were not to be dropped without special permission.<sup>(73)</sup> Nevertheless, both at the Central Boys and all the authority's other secondary schools it remained general policy throughout the inter-war period for pupils to take the First Certificate Examination after a four-year course.

During the 1930s the results which the Girls' and the Boys' schools achieved at School Certificate level were generally above (and often well above) the averages for both the city and the country as a whole.<sup>(74)</sup> The same was true at Higher Certificate level. There the percentage pass rate for the girls was usually around 80-85%, compared with a national average for the J.M.B. of 67-70%. Some boys took the J.M.B. Higher Certificate examination but the better ones were entered for the papers of the Oxford and Cambridge Board. The total number of such entrants was generally just under a half that of King Edward's but the percentage pass rate was mostly above the average for that Board and above that for King Edward's as a whole, though below that which the latter's free place scholars achieved. During the inter-war period 27 boys won State Scholarships, 91 won scholarships to Sheffield or London Universities, and 40 won awards to the older universities. Twenty Firsts were gained at Oxford or Cambridge and 36 at Sheffield or London, whilst 91 former pupils secured higher degrees. The girls for their part won 14 scholarships to Sheffield University and 5 to Oxford or Cambridge, and 18 Firsts and 40 higher degrees were obtained.<sup>(75)</sup>

The boys' extra-curricular activities during the inter-war period remained basically the same as those which had been instituted before the

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(73) Ibid., 20th Jan., 1927.

(74) See Appendix C.

(75) From S.E.C.M. 1919-39.

First World War, The mainstay of these was still the Shakespeare Society<sup>(76)</sup> and in their contributions to the published history of that Society both Dr. Moore and Luther Smith echoed the tribute which Iliffe had paid to it as the greatest unifying influence in the school.<sup>(77)</sup> Moore wrote that the Society as he knew it "had become the most potent factor in the social life of the school",<sup>(78)</sup> whilst Smith, who knew it both as a pupil-member before the war and as Headmaster in the thirties, extolled its role in developing initiative, responsibility, loyalty and team spirit.<sup>(79)</sup>

Old boys had been admitted to the Society in 1909 and, guided by Mr. Marsham, the Society had gone from strength to strength. Performances were given not only for parents and friends of the school but also for pupils in the public elementary schools and by 1922 the H.M.I.s were able to note that the annual Shakespeare production had become a notable feature not just of the school but of the artistic life of the city.<sup>(80)</sup>

The Literary and Scientific Society, the Natural History, the Wireless, the Meccano and the Musical Societies all flourished.<sup>(81)</sup> Expeditions into the country and visits to works were included in their activities and, later, Easter holidays in Paris were arranged for some of the boys.<sup>(82)</sup>

These, plus a revitalised House System and the ubiquitous Shakespeare Society, all gave testimony to a vigorous corporate life within the school, and in 1934 the H.M.I.s concluded that reserve on certain matters of detail should not be allowed to obscure the most favourable impression made by the school both as a place of learning and as a social unit. They were of the opinion that the school had maintained its high reputation in the educational life of the city and that "the move into splendored new premises in the good moorland air of High Storrs would no doubt prove a stimulus to further progress."<sup>(83)</sup>

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- (76) J.W. Iliffe 'Report for 1908-9', unpub. T.S., H.S.A.  
(77) J.W. Iliffe, 'The Shakespeare Society', in All Right on the Night, ed. G.W. Keaton, Sheffield, 1923, p.3.  
(78) W.I. Moore, 'The Society as I knew it,' in All Right on the Night, p. 12.  
(79) L. Smith, 'The Society as I left it and found it', in All Right on the Night, pp. 15-16.  
(80) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1922, p. 16.  
(81) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p. 10.  
(82) S.S.S.S.C., 2nd May, 1930, S.E.C.M. 1930-1, p. 98.  
(83) H.M.I., C.S.S.B. Report 1934, p. 14,



The girls for their part, had a Literary and Debating Society, a Science Society and a branch of the League of Nations Union.<sup>(84)</sup> Choral and orchestral activities flourished and visits to places of historical interest and to local factories, as well as holidays in the Lake District were regularly organised.<sup>(85)</sup>

During the inter-war period as a whole the move from the cramped, dark premises in Leopold Street was undoubtedly the greatest single event in the history of these two schools. It meant that instead of having to battle against surroundings which were the very opposite of conducive to efficient learning the staffs and pupils were able to function in an environment which was bright, open, cheerful and, on the whole, very well equipped. However, important though physical and architectural factors undoubtedly are, the pre-eminent forces in any learning situation must be the quality of the teacher and the taught. The Central Secondary Schools had their direct antecedents in the old Higher Grade School and by 1914 there were still many on the staffs who were former elementary school teachers. After the war, and after two H.M.I.s' Reports drawing attention to the matter, strenuous attempts were made to strengthen the staffs by recruiting first-rate university graduates. This policy was pursued with vigour by the Governors and by successive Heads (of the Boys' school in particular) and was undoubtedly successful in raising materially the calibre of the staff.

There was, after 1918, some concern on the part of Iliffe and his staff at the calibre of the entrant the Boys school was receiving. Data was compiled by the staff to substantiate this view, but both before and after the First World War the Central Secondary Boys' School was second to King Edward's in the "pecking order" of pupils who were successful

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(84) H.M.I., C.S.S.G. Report 1934, p. 16.

(85) S.E.S.C., 14th December, 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p. 494.



in the Committee's Examination for Entrance into Secondary Schools and it was the continual lament of the secondary schools opened in 1918 that they received only those pupils who were not placed sufficiently highly in the Order of Merit List to secure entrance to King Edward's or the Central Secondary Schools.

Whilst still at Leopold Street the Boys' school had begun to build up for itself an impressive reputation for scholarship. Open awards at the older universities as well as at Sheffield were won, and an impressive record of achievement at both Higher and First Examination levels was established. The school was never able quite to match the exceptional performance of King Edward VII School, but its academic attainments were, nonetheless, those of which most secondary schools would have been proud and many envious. Determined and successful efforts were also made by Iliffe, Moore and Smith to develop and round the corporate life of their school and by 1939 in ethos as well as in attainment the school could justly claim a worthy position in the upper echelons of secondary school education. Academic results at the Girls' school were not so spectacular but a sound reputation for learning and character training was built up, and by the close of the inter-war period both the Boys' and the Girls' establishments were flourishing, fully-fledged secondary schools. This transformation from their 19th century technical beginnings was doubtless one which delighted the Board of Education.

CHAPTER 8

THE PUPIL-TEACHER CENTRE

The educational institutions which the Sheffield County Borough took over on the appointed day in 1903 included not only 46 elementary schools but also the Central Higher Elementary School and a Pupil-Teacher Centre. The latter two were housed in adjoining premises in the centre of town on a site which they shared with the administrative offices of the Sheffield School Board and its successor. The site was cramped and overcrowded and the accommodation problems which so inhibited the development of the Central Secondary Schools<sup>(1)</sup> also plagued the Pupil-Teacher Centre.

During the 1880s Sheffield concentrated the instruction of intending teachers in four elementary schools and it was not until 1893 that a separate pupil-teacher centre was set up. After a brief period in the Free Writing School a new building for this centre was erected in Holly Street adjoining the Central Schools and the School Board offices. These new premises were ill-designed and inadequate with no hall, no free space for staff or students, no stairs and only one exit/entrance.<sup>(2)</sup> By 1906 the number of students had altogether outgrown the accommodation. The sixty-five pupils who were then in the preparatory classes were in full-time attendance at the Centre whilst the remainder of the total of 372 who were on the rolls attended half-time. Under the arrangements then prevailing, up to 224 pupil-teachers could be in attendance at the same time and there were, at most, only eight classrooms in which they could be taught. In 1907 the situation was even worse as, due to the changes in the Regulations,<sup>(3)</sup> only twenty-five pupils left the Centre but a further eighty were admitted. One preparatory class disappeared but the others were scheduled to remain in existence until July 1907. Thus, during the

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(1) See above pp. 201-4.

(2) A.W. Goodfellow, 'The Pupil-Teacher Centre', The Hallamshire Teacher, No. 15, Sheffield, Dec. 1963, p. 17.

(3) See below p. 228.



academic year 1906-7 there were about 420 pupil-teachers on the roll with over 200 of them actually in the Centre at any one time. Moreover, this situation did not seem to H.M. Inspectors to be one which was likely to improve in the near future since Sheffield needed an annual supply of 160 teachers and in addition to this the West Riding sent 52 and Derbyshire 3 of their pupil-teachers to the Sheffield Centre, (4)

In fact, the Inspector's forebodings did not materialise and by the time of the next inspection, in 1912, there were only 143 pupil-teachers in the Centre. Several factors were responsible for this. Firstly, the neighbouring authorities were no longer sending significant numbers of their children to the Sheffield Pupil-Teacher Centre. The West Riding, for example, had sent over fifty pupils to the Centre in 1906, but in 1912 it sent only three. Instead, the Riding was sending them to secondary schools which it was building itself. Secondly, the preparatory classes which had formerly been held in the Centre had been transferred to Secondary Schools. Thirdly, the number of pupil-teachers which the Sheffield authority was itself appointing had declined considerably. In 1906 the number of pupil-teachers appointed by Sheffield was just over 230: by 1912 the number had fallen to 135. This decline, in turn, was attributable not to the reluctance of the Committee to appoint pupil-teachers but rather to a marked falling off in the number of candidates coming forward for entry into the teaching profession. This was not a strictly local phenomenon, but it was a trend which the Inspectors believed the authority must watch carefully. The Inspectors were also of the opinion that the marked decline in Sheffield was not unconnected with the fact that the provision of secondary education in the city was much below the level that was considered necessary by most similar authorities, (5)

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(4) H.M.I., Report on the Inspection of the Pupil-Teacher Centre Sheffield, 1906, p.3, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7466.

(5) H.M.I., Report on the Inspection of the Pupil-Teacher Centre, Sheffield, 1912, p. 3, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7467.



There had, in fact, been a marked change in Board of Education policy during the first decade of the century - a change to which Sheffield remained largely indifferent. In 1904, the Board had been of the opinion that the pupil-teacher system not only must but should continue to play an important part in the educational system of the country. They favoured the development of separately organised Pupil-Teacher Centres and in their report for 1905-6 they observed that, "The growth in the number of fully-equipped centres during the past year has been very satisfactory."<sup>(6)</sup> However, by 1907 the Board had come to the conclusion that the cost of the pupil-teacher system, the disorganisation it caused in the secondary schools, the dissipation of energies and often sheer neglect which it fostered compelled some basic review of the system of teacher training. Their pre-eminent concern was to ensure that able pupils, whether intending to become teachers or not, received a sound general education in a secondary school. But, as it was impossible to leave the recruitment of teachers solely to the scholarship system, an alternative was introduced under which secondary school pupils who were at least sixteen years of age and who had been at a secondary school for at least three years were to be eligible for bursary grants to enable them to stay at school till seventeen or eighteen when they would enter a training college or become student teachers for a year prior to entering a college.

The Board's attitude was clear and Asher Tropp was probably not overstating the case when he suggested that the measures of 1907 forecast the death of the pupil-teacher system.<sup>(7)</sup> As Table 8:1 shows, the numbers entering upon pupil-teachership nationally fell every year between 1906 and 1910.

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(6) B.E., Report for 1905-6, p. 36.

(7) A. Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, p. 186.

Table 8:1 - Numbers Entering Upon Pupil-Teachership Nationally - 1906-1910. (8)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Pupil-Teachers</u>	<u>Bursars</u>	<u>Total</u>
1906-7	11,018	-	11,018
1907-8	8,308	2,044	10,352
1908-9	5,218	3,500	8,718
1909-10	3,763	3,352	7,115

The Sheffield Education Committee could not have been oblivious of the line which Board thinking was taking, but they chose to go against that policy. Later, after 1920, some acquiescence with the Board's desire to see all future teachers educated in secondary schools may be seen in the steps which the authority took to convert the Centre itself into a secondary school, but as late as 1938 Sheffield was one of only two urban authorities which maintained a pupil-teacher centre<sup>(9)</sup> and, although by that time secondary school status had been conferred upon the establishment, it was not until 1944 that the last pupil-teacher left.<sup>(10)</sup>

The Pupil-Teacher Regulations of 1903 and 1907 did not, of course, compel local authorities to close pupil-teacher centres and open secondary schools. The pressure for that was exerted more through Board reports and circulars and through the work of its Inspectorate. It was still open to authorities to ignore or resist the guidance which the Board gave. Sheffield chose to do just that. The minutes of the various committees and sub-committees whose work impinged upon the running of the pupil-teacher system contain but one reference to the Regulations of 1907 - noting the new entrance requirements and grants<sup>(11)</sup> - and none to the possibility of securing the general education of intending teachers in secondary schools. In fact, it was not until after H.M. Inspectors had commented pointedly on the matter that any response - other than the transfer of the preparatory classes - was made to acknowledge the fact that nationally the whole idea of educating future teachers as "a race apart" was being called into question.

(8) B.E., Report for 1906-7, p. 52.

(9) B.E., Ed. in 1938, p. 88.

(10) A.W. Goodfellow, p. 19.

(11) School Management Sub-Committee (SMSC), 6th May, 1908, SECM 1908-9, pp.53-4



However, the quite drastic fall in the number of entrants into the teaching profession which followed the introduction of the 1907 Regulations compelled the Board to modify their policy slightly in order to ensure that the elementary schools were not destitute of new teachers. In 1909, the Board had estimated that approximately 14,000 new pupil-teachers and bursars would be required each year, but by 1912-13 there were only 4,308 new entrants to the profession. In the year before the introduction of the new Regulations there had been 11,018. (12)

The draft articles for the Regulations for the Preliminary Education of Elementary School Teachers for 1913-14, therefore, indicated the Board's willingness to allow a special grant in respect of maintenance allowances paid to intending Government Bursars. (13) There was no suggestion of assistance to intending pupil-teachers except in the case of those who would be engaged in rural districts, but Sheffield's intention of retaining the pupil-teacher system had already been evidenced by its decision in March 1912 to make provision for around one hundred pupil-teachers a year practising in its elementary schools, and the draft regulations for 1913-14 contained little that was going to change the Committee's mind.

The curtailment in 1905 (14) of the period of pupil-teachership to two years had prompted Sheffield to give maintenance allowances for two years to fourteen year-old boys and girls attending secondary schools who were thought to show promise of becoming suitable candidates for the teaching profession. In 1913 the Committee's total expenditure on these allowances amounted to £1,082 p.a, and it was convinced that this, more than any other factor, was responsible for the fact that, although Sheffield had experienced a falling off in the number of candidates for the teaching profession, the diminution had not been so great as in many other large

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(12) A. Tropp, p. 186.

(13) Circular 821, 28th June, 1913.

(14) Though first published in 1903, the new Regulations for Pupil-Teachers did not come into operation until 1st January 1904 at the earliest and local authorities had until August 1905 to comply with them.



urban areas. Even so, the number of candidates for pupil-teachership in 1915 and 1916 was so small that the Board of Education sanctioned the admission of candidates to Preparatory Classes <sup>(15)</sup> held in the Centre. The termination of these classes had been approved by the Board a decade before <sup>(16)</sup> but their revival in 1915 did comparatively little to alleviate the acute shortage of suitable trainees which prevailed. It was estimated that approximately sixty young people would be taken in to the Preparatory Classes in 1915 but, in fact, only thirty-eight were admitted, <sup>(17)</sup> and although it was hoped to admit a similar number in 1916 only twenty-one candidates were deemed worthy of interview and of them twenty were appointed, <sup>(18)</sup>

This was nowhere near sufficient to make up the deficiency in the city's supply of teachers and it was obviously going to be impossible to increase the flow of recruits from the secondary schools until the war ended and the Committee were able to proceed with that extension of secondary provision which Sadler had outlined in his Second Report. The Firth Park and Abbeydale Schools were opened in 1918 but no increase in the supply of teachers from those sources would be felt in the elementary schools for a few years after that date. The Preparatory Classes continued into 1919 but still they did not yield the numbers of pupil-teachers which were required. It was decided, therefore, to make a special appeal to the Head Teachers of the public elementary schools with the object of enlisting their "whole-hearted co-operation" in bringing to the attention of the parents of their pupils the advantages of pursuing a career in the teaching profession. Some three hundred pupils were presented for the entrance examination and two hundred and forty of them were accepted. <sup>(19)</sup>

Thus, was begun the great post-war expansion of the Pupil-Teacher Centre and thus was set in motion the series of developments which culminated

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(15) S.M.S.C., 18th June, 1915, S.E.C.M. 1915-6, p. 195.

(16) H.E.S.C., 7th Aug., 1906, S.E.C.M. 1906-7, p. 208.

(17) H.E.S.C., 14th July, 1916, S.E.C.M. 1916-7, p. 107.

(18) S.M.S.C., 19th July, 1917, S.E.C.M. 1917-8, p. 124.

(19) Governors Minutes Pupil-Teacher Centre (G.P.T.C.), 14th May, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 60.

in the conversion of that institution into a secondary school. This conversion was not something which the governors of the Centre envisaged in 1920 - far from it. Indeed, their first submission to the Board of Education was for a central elementary school consisting entirely of intending teachers. This was a concept which was completely new to the Board, <sup>(20)</sup> but in practice it was merely an enlarged Pupil-Teacher Centre and the title "Central Elementary School for Intending Teachers" appears no-where else in the Sheffield records save for that fleeting mention in the correspondence of June-July 1920,

In fact, the authority had rather jumped the gun and was already proceeding with its expansion plans before the Board's approval was officially granted. In their reply of 7th July, 1920 to a letter which Percival Sharp had sent to them a month earlier, the Board indicated that they understood that the school was already open and that in view of the provisions of Section 8(i) of the Education Act 1902, Notices of the proposal should be published immediately.

The main intake of pupils took place at Whitsuntide. Before then only 220 pupils, most of them aged sixteen to eighteen, were in attendance, but at Whitsuntide there was an influx of more than three hundred additional pupils aged eleven to fifteen, <sup>(21)</sup> It was not possible to accommodate all of these boys and girls in the premises which the Centre then occupied and it was necessary for recourse to be made to the authority's by now traditional expedient of renting temporary premises from a variety of nearby institutions. The main annexe was in the schoolrooms of the Carver Street Methodist Church, but other premises were used as well during the nineteen twenties and at one time the Centre's activities were being conducted in no less than five different locations; the Holly Street Centre, Carver Street, the Townhead Street science rooms, the Arundel

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(20) B.E. to S.E.C., 7th July 1920, in S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 167.

(21) L.C. Dudley, 'The Old Centre', The Holly Leaf, (P.T.C. Magazine), Vol. 27, No. 65, Dec., 1933, p.9.



Street buildings of the College of Arts and Crafts, and, on Saturday mornings, some of the rooms belonging to the Central Secondary School. (22)

The injection of an extra three hundred pupils into the Centre did entail the appointment of additional teaching staff and twelve new teachers began work at the Centre in the Whitsuntide half-term 1920. Only two of them were men, and only two, one man and one woman, were recruited from outside the Sheffield authority. The two outsiders both came from secondary schools but only one of the Sheffield contingent had secondary experience, and that only brief, at Abbeydale Girls' School. It was obviously desirable and, indeed, the authority's clear policy to enhance the academic quality of the staff and of the new appointees all but three were graduates. (23)

The new pupils whom they were to instruct were selected partly upon the basis of satisfactory reports from the elementary school Head Teachers and partly upon the authority's opinion of the prospects of the candidates profiting from the instruction and passing the Certificate examination. The authority did not specify at that stage on what it was proposed to base that opinion but subsequently it became the practice for admission to the Pupil-Teacher Centre to be based on success in the same examination which was used for selection for secondary school places. H.M. Inspectors had reservations, however, about an Agreement to enter teaching being undertaken at the age of eleven. Their advice was heeded on this occasion and it was not at all uncommon for pupils to abandon all intention of teaching and follow, without penalty, what was, to all intents and purposes, a normal secondary school course. (24)

The major expansion which the Centre underwent in 1920 set it on the course which it was to follow for the rest of the inter-war period and which culminated in it being granted secondary school status in 1936.

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(22) Mr. A.W. Goodfellow (former Head of History at the Centre) oral evidence, 29.6.77.

(23) G.P.T.C., 9th July, 1920, S.E.C.M. 1920-1, p. 170.

(24) Mr. F. McKenzie (former pupil), oral evidence 23rd June, 1977.



In September 1921 the first application, for recognition as a secondary school with pupil-teacher centre attached, was made, <sup>(25)</sup> This was refused and early in 1922 the Board informed the local authority that they were prepared only to recognise that the Sheffield institution consisted of the pupil-teacher centre itself, preparatory classes for those aged 14-16 years and a public elementary school with an age-range of twelve (or under) to fourteen, <sup>(26)</sup> Following that, lengthy correspondence took place between the authority and the Board as a result of which the 1922 Inspection was arranged. In their Report the Inspectors were naturally concerned mainly with the question of recognition and with the alterations in staff, buildings and organisation which would be necessary before the school could be considered as complying with the Regulations for Secondary Schools.

At that time, however, it was still necessary for the Centre to fulfil its role as an institution supplying the city with elementary school teachers. The return of male teachers from the war had brought but little improvement in the overall situation and Sheffield was still suffering from a shortage of teachers in 1922. There were then some 85,000 children in its elementary schools and about 1,800 teachers. In 1921 two hundred and fourteen new teachers were required by the Authority but only eighty-four could be obtained, 80% of whom were from Sheffield itself. <sup>(27)</sup>

At the same time, then, as it was attempting to develop the Centre as a secondary school the Authority found itself compelled to resort to various expedients in order to attempt to rectify the short-fall in the supply of teachers, and it proved difficult to convince the Board of Education that the Centre was worthy of secondary status when its organisation premises and staff were of anything but secondary standard. The buildings were hopelessly cramped and inadequate; classes were being held in as

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(25) G.P.T.C., 15th Sept., 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p. 259.

(26) G.P.T.C., 7th Feb., 1922, S.E.C.M. 1922-3, p. 531.

(27) H.M.I., P.T.C. Report 1922, p.3.

many as five different locations; the ages of the students on roll ranged, in 1922, from 13 to 39,<sup>(28)</sup> few of the staff had Honours degrees; and even fewer had any real secondary experience. The Principal, Joseph Batey, though an excellent administrator,<sup>(29)</sup> was probably the least academically qualified of all the staff, having risen through the elementary school ranks and being in possession of no degree at all. This, the Inspectors informed the Governors, rendered the recruitment of academically highly qualified teachers even more imperative.<sup>(30)</sup>

For all these reasons the Centre failed in 1922 in its attempts to secure recognition as a secondary school. The Inspectors were not unsympathetic; they conceded that the concept of a central school with pupil-teacher centre attached represented an "earnest and promising effort to cope with the alarming shortage of elementary school teachers" in the city; but they concluded that even if the general policy of a special school for intending teachers were to be approved, temporary recognition under the Regulations for Secondary Schools would only be possible if drastic reductions in numbers were carried out, accompanied by a lengthening of the normal school course to at least four years. Quality, they believed, was being sacrificed for quantity.<sup>(31)</sup>

The Committee let matters rest at that for well over a decade. During that period attempts were made to strengthen the staff but only limited success was achieved. Joseph Batey, the Certificated Principal, died in 1931 and his place was taken by Alfred Meetham, the physics master in the Centre, and the possessor of an Ordinary Bachelor of Science degree.<sup>(32)</sup>

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(28) Ibid., p.6.

(29) Mr. A.W. Goodfellow, oral evidence 29.6.77.

(30) Memo. on Conference of H.M.I. with P.T.C. Govs. 3rd March 1922, P.R.O. Ed. 109/7468.

(31) H.M.I., P.T.C. Report, 1922, p. 13.

(32) Training College Sectional Sub-Committee (T.C.S.S.C.) 6th July, 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 241. The government of the P.T.C. was taken over by the T.C.S.S.C. in April 1923.



Meetham died in 1934 and Stephen Northeast, Second Master and Senior Physics Master at the Central Secondary School for Boys became the Principal. (33)

He was extremely well-fitted both by academic achievement (a First at London) and by length of secondary experience, for the post, but the Committee's attempts to raise the academic calibre of the general teaching staff were not so markedly successful. The number of graduates on the staff had been increased after the major expansion of 1920 but by 1936 when the Committee applied once more for recognition of the Centre as a secondary school, the quality of the staff was one of three factors which gave the Inspectors cause for concern. Some progress had been made but out of thirty-one full-time and four visiting teachers, only twelve held Honours degrees, whilst seventeen had either Pass degrees or none at all. Six had specialist qualifications. The situation with regard to secondary experience was even worse for eighteen of those teachers had previous teaching experience only in public elementary schools and seventeen of them had taught only in Sheffield. A further nine possessed no previous teaching experience, having gone straight into the Centre from college or university. This did not mean, of course, that they were incompetent but most of them were, according to H.M. Inspectors, out of touch with modern practice and tended to have a certain narrowness of outlook. (34) For this the ambiguous nature of the establishment itself as both an aspiring secondary school and a pupil-teacher centre was partly to blame for it had the effect of restricting the field of applications when new appointments were made, and of preventing younger teachers from moving to other schools. Thus, one of the most urgent tasks facing the Governors and the Headmaster was, the Inspectors suggested, the securing of well-qualified teachers with some outside experience.

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(33) T.C.S.S.C., 21st Nov., 1934, S.E.C.M. 1934-5, p. 501.

(34) H.M.I., Report of Inspection of City Sec. S. (formerly Pupil-Teacher-Centre) 1936, p.4.



The Inspection during which these comments were made was occasioned by a further request from the authority that the Centre be accorded the status of a secondary school. The Authority must have been aware of the fact that the academic qualifications of the staff of the Centre did not match those of the staffs of their other secondary schools, but it was once again the question of premises which loomed largest in their minds when they decided to approach the Board for recognition. In April 1936, therefore, the Training of Teachers Sub-Committee, which had assumed responsibility for the Centre some two months earlier, decided to ask for the Centre to be recognised as a secondary school as from September 1936 on the understanding that new buildings would be erected at the earliest possible date. <sup>(35)</sup> This the Board agreed to, subject to a Full Inspection in the Autumn yielding a satisfactory report. <sup>(36)</sup> The Inspection was scheduled for mid-October but a month before that the Authority was given some indication that the outcome might not be entirely unfavourable when it was informed that the Board were agreeable to the Centre's name being changed to "The City Secondary School" when recognition had been granted. <sup>(37)</sup>

The transference of the Central Secondary Schools to High Storrs in 1933 had eased a little of the pressure on the buildings which were used by the Education Committee in the city centre. Most of the Central School premises were taken over by the Pupil-Teacher Centre, for the newly created Junior Technical School, which was also housed in the central complex of buildings, had an annual intake which was only half that of the two Central Secondary Schools. This had made it possible for the Pupil-Teacher Centre to spread its wings a little and at the time of the Inspection it had possession of 17 classrooms, 7 science laboratories

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- (35) Training of Teachers Sub-Committee (T.T.S.C.), 3rd April, 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p. 31. In Feb. 1936 the T.C.S.S.C. was re-named the T.T.S.C. From Sept. 1936 recognition as a secondary school brought the City S.S. under the S.E.S.C.
- (36) T.T.S.C., 6th July, 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p. 201.
- (37) S.E.S.C., 14th Sept., 1936, S.E.C.M. 1936-7, p. 288.

and three lecture rooms, an assembly hall, a library, a dining room and special rooms for art and handicraft. There was no gymnasium but one was hired at the Y.M.C.A. some three minutes walk away; and domestic subjects were taken in a specialist centre a similar distance away. The accommodation was sufficient in quantity but in quality it "fell much below modern standards". The rooms were noisy, the ventilation poor and on most days it was necessary to use artificial lighting. (38)

At the time of the Inspection, the Lower Sixth Form contained seventeen boys and twenty-four girls, of whom about half were not expected to stay for a second year as they intended to become Student Teachers. The one-and two-year pupils were being taught separately as much as possible but this did not always mean that those aiming for the Higher Certificate were able to follow what was for them the best type of course. Obviously the outlines of a scheme had to follow the basic themes of the syllabus laid down by the examining board, but in history, for example, the Inspectors reported that the course catered too much for the seventeen students who were leaving at the end of the first year in the Sixth and too little for the five who intended taking the subject at Higher Certificate level. History also provided a good example of a subject being overtaught, for in both the Upper and Lower Sixth eight periods a week, were devoted to direct teaching which was "much in excess of existing practice". If that amount of time could be spared for history then at least one quarter of it should be spent on individual study in the library, the Inspectors believed. (39)

As one might have expected in an institution such as the Pupil-Teacher Centre, no Greek was offered in the Sixth Form and only one modern foreign language, French, was taught. Geography had not been developed at Higher Certificate level until 1935 and at the time of the Inspection

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(38) H.M.I., City S.S. Report 1936, p.5.

(39) Ibid., p.8.



there was still no course in Applied Mathematics. These riders apart, however, there was a tolerable range of subjects which were available to those who opted to stay on into the Sixth Form. They were expected to study four main subjects, English, History or Mathematics, French or Chemistry, and Latin, Geography, Physics or Botany. All had a weekly period of Scripture, singing and Gymnastics and an afternoon at the playing field, and they all listened to the talks for Sixth Forms broadcast on the wireless. Lower down the school the curriculum and organisation were, with few exceptions, similar to those in the other secondary schools in the city.

The distance of the fields from the Centre necessitated the devotion of a whole afternoon for each year's games and this, coupled with the pupil-teacher tradition of Saturday morning working, necessitated an eleven session week. Each day had eight teaching periods except Wednesday which had nine, though the actual working time on that day was no longer. The homework given was "considerable though not excessive" and could, the H.M.I. stated, probably have been reduced without detriment and even with profit, (40)

Recognition as a secondary school was granted in 1936 on the understanding that the school would cease to admit any pupil-teachers. The authority acted on this but not immediately, and it was 1944 before the last pupil-teacher left the school. Recognition was granted also on the understanding that the authority would erect new premises for the school. The outbreak of war naturally prevented any immediate action being taken on that beyond the drafting of sketch plans<sup>(41)</sup> but it is indicative of the authority's intentions and priorities that in the period 1937-39 it was concerned more with the provision of a new girls' secondary school in the Intake area and of two new schools on the north side of the city. Having secured secondary recognition for the old Pupil-Teacher Centre,

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(40) Ibid., pp. 4-5.

(41) S.E.S.C., 13th Sept., 1937, S.E.C.M. 1937-8, p. 283.

the authority seems to have shifted its attention to other areas of secondary provision, and it was not until the early 1960s that the City Grammar School, as it was then called, was able to move into its own purpose-built premises on the south-eastern edge of the city.

By the time the Board of Education was prepared to grant secondary school status the number of pupil-teachers in the Centre had dwindled considerably and the institution was overwhelmingly a secondary school in its ethos and orientation. Indeed, even by the early 1930s the numbers of pupil-teachers had fallen to an almost insignificant level. In 1931-2, for example, there were 719 full-time scholars on the roll but only 44 pupil-teachers, <sup>(42)</sup> Thereafter during the 1930s the total number of pupil teachers in the Centre fell slowly but steadily in every year except 1935-6.

By 1936 all pupils in the Centre, whether intending teachers or not, were admitted on the basis of their success in the Special Place Examination - the same examination on which admission to all the authority's secondary schools was made. Indeed, the Centre had long been looked upon as part of the general secondary provision of the city. The parents of children who entered the Centre were required to sign an undertaking that they would keep their child at school for at least four years, but since 1920 children entering the Centre had not been committed to entering the teaching profession, <sup>(43)</sup> though a large number did, in fact, proceed to two-year Training Colleges - many more in proportion than from any other secondary school under the Sheffield Authority. <sup>(44)</sup>

The practice of admitting children to the Centre on the results of their performance in the general Examination for Entrance to Secondary Schools had begun in 1920. From 1904 until then the Centre had been responsible for its own admissions procedure - subject, of course, to

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(42) T.C.S.S.C., 5th Oct., 1931, S.E.C.M. 1931-2, p. 410.

(43) Mr. A.W. Goodfellow, oral evidence 6.7.77.

(44) H.M.I., City S.S. Report 1936, p.2.



Board of Education approval. Its Entrance Examination was held annually in May and for the first year the papers were set by the authority's Inspectors and the Principal of the Centre. Thereafter, the conduct of the examination was entrusted to a board whose membership varied but which in 1905, for example, consisted of the Principal and Lady Superintendent of the City Training College, Iliffe, (the Headmaster of the Central Secondary Schools) the Principal of the Centre and the local Inspectors. (45) Some attempt was made to adapt the syllabus of the examination to suit the various institutions from which the pupils were drawn but this resulted in the examination becoming needlessly elaborate and complicated. As many as five different papers were set on a single subject, whereas in the opinion of H.M. Inspectors, one paper including the compulsory subjects and optional papers in French, Latin and Mathematics ought to have met the needs of the Centre.

Following the 1906 Inspection this system was altered and all candidates were required to pass the Oxford Junior Local Examination as a qualifying examination and they were then interviewed by a committee specially appointed for the purpose.

In 1912 the system was further modified so as to permit admissions on a Head Teacher's recommendation following four years of secondary school education; all other candidates had to sit the Entrance Examination. (46)

In the years between 1920 and 1922 the Centre took the bulk of its intake from the secondary and elementary schools, though some candidates were also admitted from industry and commerce. After 1922, however, nearly all the entry was taken from the public elementary schools on the basis of results in the examination for entrance to secondary schools, which was re-organised in that year. (47) About 50% of the candidates were successful

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(45) H.E.S.C. 10th Feb., 1905, S.E.C.M. 1904-5, p. 604.

(46) H.E.S.C., 12th April, 1912, S.E.C.M. 1912-3, pp. 1-3.

(47) H.M.I., P.T.C. Report 1922, p.4.

in gaining admission around this time and there were some 800 pupils in attendance at the Centre.

At this time also, there were indications that some success in bringing down the average age of the intake was being achieved. As Table 8:2 shows, the vast majority of the candidates who were accepted in 1921 were under the age of fourteen. In the case of girls the proportion of successful candidates who were under fourteen years of age to those who were over fourteen was approximately 4:1, whilst in the case of boys the ratio was almost 7:1. The table also provides a clear indication of the extent to which girls outnumbered boys - by about 4:1.

Table 8:2 - Ages of Candidates for P.T.C., 1921 (48)

		<u>Admitted</u>	<u>Not Admitted</u>
Boys	Over 14	5	2
	Under 14	34	3
Girls	Over 14	39	9
	Under 14	116	40
	<u>TOTAL</u>	194	54

Two years later, the Principal and the Governors were thinking in terms of reducing still further the age at which they made their administrative divisions. In 1922 unsuccessful application had been made for recognition as a secondary school and the authority could not but have been aware of the Board's desire to bring the age of entry into secondary education down to less than twelve years. It was pointed out, for example, in the Report of the Board of Education for 1922-23, that 11-12 years was increasingly the predominant age of entry over the country as a whole; and that while the number of pupils admitted in October 1923 was about 1,500 less than

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(48) G.P.T.C., 7th April, 1921, S.E.C.M. 1921-2, p.9.



in 1918, the number admitted at the age of 11-12 was about 40% more in the later year than in the earlier one. At the same time, admissions at other ages had shown a material decrease.<sup>(49)</sup> Board policy on the matter, then, was clear and unequivocal and it was evident that if the Sheffield Centre was ever to achieve the secondary recognition it cherished measures had to be taken to bring it in line with Board policy.

Part of this was accomplished through the Centre's intake being admitted on the basis of the general examination for entrance into the city's secondary schools, the age limit for which was gradually being reduced from 12;9 to 12;0 years. The Centre still admitted one class each year at about the age of fourteen, however, and in the Entrance Examination which was held in the Spring of 1923 the 289 candidates were divided into two groups according to whether they were over or under the age of thirteen on 1st August. Those who were over thirteen years of age would be ready for pupil-teachership in 1926 after a three-year preparatory course, whilst those under the age of thirteen would have a four-year course before they commenced pupil-teachership in 1927.<sup>(50)</sup>

In 1922 admissions to the Centre were made on the basis of the pupil's performance in the Committee's Examination for Entrance to Secondary Schools. In this respect, at least, the Centre was on a par with the City's other secondary schools. It did not, however, occupy a particularly high place in the order of esteem which had come to be established in parents' minds in the years after World War I. Its central location may have attracted some parents anxious to save on their child's tramway fares, but against this the fact that it was the city's only co-educational higher education establishment may not have endeared it to those who were more traditionally inclined. In view of this, it is perhaps all the more remarkable that the

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(49) B.E., Report for 1922-3, pp. 74-5.

(50) T.C.S.S.C., 9th April, 1923, S.E.C.M. 1923-4, p. 17.

Centre should have managed to build up for itself such a sound record of examination success over the years. The proportion of children leaving the Centre with a School Certificate was higher in the mid-1930s than for the country as a whole, <sup>(51)</sup> and in 1932 there was only one school in the whole of the Midlands and the North of England which was given a higher total number of passes by the Joint Matriculation Board. <sup>(52)</sup>

Even though the entry from the Centre was extremely large - 194 candidates altogether - this was quite an achievement for a school which had by no means the cream of the city's secondary population.

At the beginning of the century it was the Centre's practice to enter candidates for the Matriculation Examinations of London University. Sound results were obtained; in 1903, for example, out of twenty-two candidates who were entered eleven passed in the First Division and seven in the Second, <sup>(53)</sup> In the following year only one of the twenty-three candidates failed, and in 1905 all but four of the ninety-nine who were entered obtained their matriculation. It was not long, however, before the new governing body began to think in terms of changing examining boards. In July 1905 the Pupil-Teacher Section of the Higher Education Sub-Committee recommended that the more able students should sit the J.M.B. rather than the London papers, <sup>(54)</sup> In fact, the whole of the Centre went over to the Joint Matriculation Board but it was not until 1908 that the first candidates were entered. Thirty-eight pupil-teachers matriculated in that year, but in the years leading up to the outbreak of war the numbers fell steadily from fifteen in 1912, to ten in 1913 and only seven in 1914 as the numbers in the Centre as a whole decreased. <sup>(55)</sup>

The post-war expansion of the Centre naturally produced an upsurge in the number of pupils who were submitted for external examinations as can be seen from Table 8.3.

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(51) H.M.I., City S.S. Report 1936, p.2.

(52) T.C.S.S.C., 3rd Oct., 1932, S.E.C.M. 1932-3, p. 370.

(53) H.E.S.C., 14th Dec., 1903, S.E.C.M. 1903-4, p. 569.

(54) H.E.S.C., 14th July, 1905, S.E.C.M. 1905-6, p. 819.

(55) Reports of Principal of P.T.C. to H.E.S.C. Aug. 1912, Aug. 1913 and Aug. 1914, in S.E.C.M.



Table 8.3 - Sheffield P.T.C./City S.S. - School Certificate Results 1920-39 (56)

Year	School Certificate				
	Number	Matriculated	Passed Without Matriculating	Failed	% Pass
1920	39	15	11	13	66.66
1921	99	22	39	38	61.62
1922	46	15	28	3	93.48
1923	37	7	22	8	78.38
1924	147	26	72	49	66.66
1925	154	49	65	40	74.03
1926	127	37	60	30	76.38
1927	107	28	54	25	76.64
1928	140	34	73	33	76.43
1929	NO FIGURES GIVEN				
1930	190	37	82	71	62.63
1931	202	50	62	90	55.45
1932	194	49	84	61	68.56
1933	174	50	65	59	66.09
1934	133	38	62	33	75.19
1935	137	49	65	23	83.21
1936	121	34	60	27	77.69
1937	134	33	55	46	65.67
1938	96	78		18	81.25
1939	106	92		14	86.79

(56) Taken from the Principal's reports to the governing body 1920-39 in S.E.C.M.

Thus, over the period 1920-39 as a whole candidates from the Pupil-Teacher Centre achieved an average School Certificate pass rate of 71.42%, and in the years just prior to the 1936 Inspection they were achieving a pass rate which was in excess of the national average.

It was not until 1928 that the Principal began to report Higher Certificate results to his governors, but despite the great expansion in the intake which had begun in 1920 there were only six candidates for that examination in 1928. All of them passed, and three distinctions were secured. The number of candidates rose to 22 in 1932 and remained around that level throughout the decade. An overall average pass rate of 67.66% was achieved during that period and impressive numbers of pupils were sent forward to training colleges. Of 557 pupils who left between 1934 and 1936, for example, no fewer than 108 went into training colleges. This compared with 254 who sought careers in industry and commerce. (57) Sheffield City College was naturally the most popular choice amongst those intent on a career in teaching and this was the case with both male and female students.

The numbers proceeding from the Centre to a university were very much smaller. In 1933 only three pupils gained admission to a university and in the period 1934-36 only five were successful. The records do not contain lists of all the pupils who proceeded to a university, being concerned primarily with the documentation of those who were outstanding enough to win scholarships or exhibitions, and they contain no references to any pupil winning an award from the Centre directly to any university other than Sheffield. In 1934, however, a former pupil-teacher then in his fourth year at Sheffield University, did win the Senior Hastings Scholarship at Queens College, Oxford. (58)

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(57) H.M.I., City S.S. Report, 1936, p.2.

(58) T.C.S.S.C., 2nd July, 1934, S.E.C.M. 1934-5, p. 218.



The Principal's Reports, then, would seem to indicate that Sheffield was the only university at which pupils of the Sheffield Pupil-Teacher Centre won awards but this does not mean, of course, that places were not won at other universities and it would seem from evidence in the Centre's magazine, The Holly Leaf, that Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham were three universities at which former Sheffield Pupil-Teachers continued their education. (59) Nevertheless, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of those pupils who proceeded from the centre to a university, opted for the one in their own city,

Some idea of the extent to which the Holly Street institution had developed by the mid-thirties from a centre concerned solely with the training of teachers into a fully-rounded Secondary School sending pupils into all types of careers and all walks of life may be gained from figures which were presented to the governors in 1934 and 1935.

As can be seen from Table 8:4\* all those who obtained the Higher Certificate went either to university or to a teacher training college - none seem to have gone straight into commerce or business and, lower down the academic scale, those who secured their First Certificate predominantly chose to follow a career in teaching. The old traditions of the Centre still held good, In 1935, for example, 40.76% of those leaving the Centre with a School Certificate went into teaching, whilst in the preceding year the proportion had been even higher with 63.46% opting for a career in the profession. For the rest of the Centre's leavers no visible trend of occupational preference is discernible beyond a predilection for clerical or shop work.

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(59) L.C. Dudley, 'The Old Centre', The Holly Leaf, Vol 26, No. 64, July 1933, p, 28.

\* See overleaf

Table 8:4 - Employment Obtained by Pupils Leaving Sheffield P.T.C. 1934 and 1935 <sup>(60)</sup>

		1934		1935	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Higher Certificate Holders	To a university	1	-	-	-
	To a Teacher Training College	4	1	5	7
School Certificate Holders	Teacher Training College	11	22	9	21
	Univ. Day Training Dept.	-	-	1	-
	Clerks	2	5	3	14
	College of Arts & Crafts	-	-	1	-
	Laboratory work	3	-	-	-
	Commercial College	-	4	-	10
	Shop assistants	-	-	-	7
	Factory Hand	-	-	-	2
	At home	-	-	-	2
Not yet employed	-	-	-	2	
Holding No Certificate	Clerks	2	6	2	7
	To Junior Tech. School	2	-	-	-
	To Public El. School	-	1	-	-
	Commercial course	-	5	-	1
	Shop assistants	2	7	1	6
	Home duties	-	3	-	-
	Left the City	1	3	1	2
	Factory work	-	-	-	2
Not yet employed	3	4	1	1	

(60) T.C.S.S.C., 21st Nov., 1934, S.E.C.M. 1934-5, and 25th November 1935, S.E.C.M. 1935-6, p. 488.



The Pupil-Teacher Centre, like the city's intermediate schools, (61) was at pains to imitate and, if possible, emulate the secondary schools not only in academic achievement but also in social ethos. A Prefect system was operated, though it was perhaps not as élitist as some might have desired. All the members of the Upper Sixth were automatically made Prefects, and H.M. Inspectors were of the opinion that it would be better if a greater degree of selection and discrimination were introduced. This, they suggested, would lead to the Prefects being more esteemed and useful, though they did not spell out precisely how the latter of these two benefits would accrue. As it was, their duties seem to have been the usual supervisory ones and their principal sanction the imposition of detentions, subject to the approval of the Headmaster, (62)

A House system was also operated in imitation of the secondary schools and, as in the intermediate schools or indeed in many of the secondary schools themselves, it seems to have experienced successive periods of apathy and enthusiasm. There was no mixing of the sexes in the Houses and the preponderance of girls meant that whilst there were only three Houses for boys, there were six for girls. (63)

In the period before the outbreak of World War I extra-curricular societies and activities were almost non-existent. This was not surprising in view of the enormous demands upon the scholars' time and energy which the pupil-teacher system imposed, and it was not until after the great expansion of 1920 when the authority was ambiguously in the process of trying to convert the Centre into a secondary school, that any serious development of extra-curricular activities took place. The usual League of Nations, Scientific, Historical and Literary and Debating societies

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(61) See below pp. 270-1.

(62) H.M.I., City S.S. Report 1936, p. 15.

(63) It is perhaps indicative of the mores of the Centre that the boys' Houses were imperialistically labelled Zulus, Maoris and Kaffirs, whilst those of the girls were named after local stately homes such as Chatsworth, Wentworth and Haddon.

were formed along with a Latin Society which by 1937 had a membership of around seventy pupils, <sup>(64)</sup> Orchestral, choral and dramatic societies also flourished but games and other physical activities were severely limited by the distance of the fields and the absence of a proper gymnasium.

These difficulties were but typical of the general history of the establishment for successive Principals and Headmasters found that a large portion of their time and energy was taken up with trying to adapt the running of the Centre to the dismal restraints which the total inadequacy of the premises inflicted upon them. The organisation and teaching had to adapt to the buildings and it was not until some fifteen or so years after the end of World War II that matters were put the proper way round and a school built in which the accommodation would subserve the ends of the teaching.

During the inter-war period the Centre's problems were exacerbated by the ambivalent attitude of the authority. On the one hand, they were anxious to expand the Centre and to incorporate it in their overall provision of secondary education, but on the other hand they would not abandon the idea of continuing with the pupil-teacher system. During that period the number of pupil-teachers declined steadily but it was not until 1944 that the establishment ceased officially to be a pupil-teacher centre. In 1936 it had been granted secondary school status but for some considerable time before then it had been a secondary school in all but name. It had built up a sound record of academic achievement and, although it could never aspire to the heights reached by King Edward's and the Central Secondary Schools, the results it obtained at School Certificate level bore ample testimony to the industry of both pupils and staff. Although it

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(64) The Holly Leaf, Vol. 29, No. 73, Dec. 1937, p. 38.

did not rank in the top bracket of the city's secondary schools, its staff did not feel that it was the "poor relation", taking only those pupils who scraped in at the bottom of the order of merit list.<sup>(65)</sup> They strove to make the Centre into a genuine secondary school by raising the academic standards and pushing the pupils to achieve the best examination results of which they were capable. Often this was at the expense of "cramming" or even "spoon-feeding" but this was not unusual: the allegation that the staff pumped too much factual material into their charges and did not stimulate their powers of independent thought enough was a charge which H.M. Inspectors levelled at other schools in Sheffield and, one would imagine, at countless others throughout the country.

Well into the inter-war period a significant proportion of the staff was still made up of teachers who had been raised in the traditions of overwhelming industry and narrow concentration which characterised the pupil-teacher system. In many respects this was a boon - it engendered application and effort - but in the Centre there was, perhaps until the late twenties and early thirties, a certain lack not only of general culture but also of a wider outlook on the manifold possibilities which life offered. Even in the 1930s, after recognition as a secondary school had been granted, the teaching profession still remained the principal goal upon which pupils of the school set their sights. Few went into commerce or any of the other professions and most of those who either did not aspire to teaching or could not achieve the academic standards required for entry into it opted to make their way in life as apprentices or as clerks.

With the traditions and associations which lingered from the old pupil-teacher system the Centre was seen by the people of Sheffield as being closely linked with the career of teaching even after it had

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(65) Mr. A.W. Goodfellow, oral evidence, 29.6.77.



become the City Secondary School. In this it was essentially different from the city's other secondary schools; but in one respect at least, it was a typical of so many of them - Abbeydale, Firth Park, Nether Edge and for a long time the Central Secondary Schools - in that its progress and development were plagued and inhibited by the cramped, totally unsuitable premises in which the parsimony of the authority compelled it to operate.