



**THE NORTON
KNATCHBULL SCHOOL**

SCHOOL HISTORY

FOREWORD

BY THE RT. HON. LORD BRABOURNE

For a long time everyone connected with the Norton Knatchbull School has been hoping that a history of the School would be written. We now all owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Thomas for undertaking this task. I know that Mr. Mortimore has also given a lot of help in the writing of this book and Mr. Thomas has been generous in his thanks to him in his Introduction.

I became a Governor of the School immediately after the War, after inheriting the title from my elder brother, Norton, who was killed during the War. During the past thirty years, I have watched the School grow and prosper and my admiration has been unbounded for the way the school has maintained the very highest standards in difficult times. This has largely been due to the dedicated and talented staff, brilliantly led, first by Mr. Mortimore, and lately by Mr. Cox.

Mr. Thomas says at the end of his book that few schools, if any, have kept a continuous association with the family of the Founder for as long a period as this School has with the Knatchbull family. I am a direct descendant of the Founder and indeed, in 1879 it was agreed that one of the twelve Governors should always be the Knatchbull owner of Mersham-le-Hatch, and this still continues today.

I am extremely proud that my family should have had such a very long close association with such an outstanding School. We were delighted that when the time-honoured old name of "Ashford Grammar School" had to be changed it was decided to name it after the Founder, which we thought a great compliment! I wish the School every success in the future and I look forward to future generations of my family continuing our very close association.

CHAPTER 1
A FREE SCHOOL IN ASHFORD

CHAPTER 2
THE EARLY DAYS

CHAPTER 3
1650-1750

CHAPTER 4
THE GOLDEN YEARS

CHAPTER 5
DECLINE AND FALL

CHAPTER 6
THE MOVE TO THE HYTHE ROAD

CHAPTER 7
THE LAMPREY ERA

CHAPTER 8
MAKING DO

CHAPTER 9
THE SCHOOL AT WAR

CHAPTER 10
A NEW HEADMASTER

CHAPTER 11
A CHANGE OF STYLE

CHAPTER 12
THE PROMISED LAND

CHAPTER 13
THE NORTON KNATCHBULL SCHOOL

CHAPTER 14
'ALL BOYS SHOULD BE KEEN ON ALL GAMES'

CHAPTER 15
FASHIONS AND CUSTOMS

CHAPTER 16
THE OLD ASHFORDIANS

CHAPTER 17
TO THE FUTURE

CHAPTER 1 A FREE SCHOOL IN ASHFORD

Although we know quite a lot about the foundation of Ashford Grammar School, we cannot be sure of the exact year in which this took place.

In the early part of the Seventeenth Century, a great wave of enthusiasm for education was sweeping the country and this showed itself in the setting up of schools in many towns. Usually the founder was someone who had particular ties with the area. Since the Catholic restoration of 1559, education had become more closely controlled and the schoolmaster had to be licensed by the Bishop. He was obliged to teach the approved Catechism and to hold prayers daily. The use of the same Latin grammar—the Royal Grammar authorised by Henry VIII about 1540—was compulsory and so these schools became known as Grammar Schools.

The foundation of Ashford Grammar School followed exactly the usual pattern: In this case the founder was Sir Norton Knatchbull who lived at Mersham-le-Hatch near Ashford. He was born in 1569 and was a member of an old established Kent family which originated on the Romney Marsh and can be traced back at least as far as 1278 when a Clement Nechepol is mentioned in official documents. The name Norton derives from Sir Norton's mother Susan, daughter of Thomas Green alias Norton of Bobbing who was the natural son of Sir John Norton. The Nortons had for many years possessed land in the parishes of Norton, Sheldwich, Milton and Faversham.

Sir Norton would certainly have known of Grammar Schools set up in neighbouring towns such as Cranbrook and Tonbridge to supplement the educational work of the old foundations at Canterbury, Wye and Rochester and felt that Ashford also needed such a school. This was about 1630 but there is little evidence for this precise date,

In 1925, Capt. the Hon Michael Knatchbull (later 5th Lord Brabourne and father of the present Lord Brabourne) found in the library at Mersham-le-Hatch a copy of Philipott's 'Villare Cantianum' (1659) which he claimed belonged to Sir Norton Knatchbull, the third Baronet who succeeded in 1699. In fact the 3rd Baronet was Sir Thomas who succeeded in 1696. In the book there is a note under the heading 'Ashford' in his handwriting: 'Sir Norton Knatchbull founded a free school here in 1630 and endowed it with £30 per annum' but since we do not know on what he based this statement it cannot be accepted as conclusive proof. The original building bears a stone with the date 1635 and in about 1712 Warren recorded that the date A. D. 1636 was 'on the door entering the school' so this was presumably when the building was completed. Baptist Pigott, the first Master, received his licence to teach on April 20, 1637 so it seems doubtful that the school opened officially until that year. However, for many years the date 1630 has been accepted as the date of foundation and it is reasonable to think that this was when the first Sir Norton conceived the plan. The deeds of the school are dated February 20, 1637.

This certainly wasn't the first school in Ashford. Pearman's 'Ashford' (1868) states that Dame Alicia Fogge (widow of Sir John Fogge who founded the College for 'certain Priestes and Choristers' and whose helmet and tomb are in Ashford Church) left a sum

to be paid annually 'to two children of the College for helping the obit'. These would have been local boys who were taught enough Latin to sing in the Church services and would probably have been given a more general education as well. Clergy schools like this were suppressed in the Reformation but there are several references to other schools and teachers in the Ashford area before 1630.

It is often said that the famous mathematician and founder of the Royal Society, John Wallis, was an old boy of Ashford Grammar School but this is not so. His father was Vicar of Ashford from 1602 to 1622 and he was born at the College but in 1625 he moved from a school in Ashford to one in Tenterden because of an outbreak of plague in the town. The new Grammar Schools were nearly always set up in the shadow of the Parish Church so it is no surprise that Sir Norton chose a similar site for his school. He bought a plot to the West of the Church and arranged for the building of the School though he died in 1636 and was buried in Mersham Church. Although married three times he had no children and was succeeded by his nephew, also Sir Norton, who, fortunately, was of the same mind as his uncle and so put his wishes into effect.

Although the first Sir Norton must be given much credit for his 'favour and love of learning' as shown by his foresight in founding a school for Ashford, it is his nephew, also Sir Norton Knatchbull, who was responsible for devising the administrative plan which was so successful. He was himself a considerable scholar who obtained his B.A. at St. John's College, Cambridge and wrote several books. He was M.P. for New Romney from 1639 and, although knighted by King Charles I in that year and created a Baronet in 1641, seems to have managed to 'remain in strict seclusion during the civil wars'. He died in 1685 and, like the Founder, was buried in Mersham Church.

Two documents exist which tell us much about the origins and life of the first school. One is the first part of the deeds of Ashford Grammar School (February 22, 1638) and the other the 'Articles, Orders and Directions for the better Govt. of a Grammar Schoole within the said town of Ashford and for the election and continuance of the Schoole Master there'. This is undated but since it refers to Norton Knatchbull as Norton Knatchbull Esq. and he was not knighted until 1639 it was presumably written between 1636 and 1639.

As well as providing the land and buildings (which the deeds reveal were sold to the Trustees—Norton Knatchbull and eight others—for 'the nominal sum of 5s(25p)' he gave an endowment of £30 per annum to maintain the School. This was to come from the rents of about 32 acres of land at Newchurch known locally for many years after as 'the School Field'. Later the value of the land fell and in 1682 more land was granted to restore the original value of the annuity. £30 seems very little (about £900 by modern standards) to pay the Master and run the school but, as we shall see, the Schoolmaster could increase his income by other means.

CHAPTER 2 THE EARLY DAYS

Sir Norton's original school still stands in the Churchyard and is now known as the Wilk's Memorial Hall. Much of it is little changed and most of William Warren's description published about 1712 still applies:

The school is in length within from wall to wall 42 feet, and in breadth 20 feet 5 inches. The building is of brick. It has a chimney for fire for the scholars and a convenient study joining to the school for the master, and a little yard on the south side, which is now a garden.

On the door entering into the school is this date: Anna Domini 1636. On the outside of the school is the date 1635, in which year the school was built.

On the top of the school is a turret with a bell in it. On the turret is this date 1681; on the top of the turret a vane or weathercock with the Knatchbull's arms painted on it.

In the time of the first master (Mr. Pigott) the school was wainscotted. On the portal at the entrance to the school are these letters: B.P. ; E.P.

At the upper end of the school over the master's seat are the arms of the Knatchbills.

About the year 1711, the old forms and tables which were formerly used by the scholars were converted into desks and seats on all sides of the school. On the wall at the upper end of the school are these two Greek sentences (translated):

“MAKE GOD THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF ALL, DO THIS AND THOU SHALT BLESSED BE.”

On the outside of the school near the top towards the east are these words:

“BENEFACTORUM RECORDATIO JUCUNDISSIMA EST.”

The turret and bell tower has been removed but the master's seat and wainscotting—wooden panelling—inscribed with the initials of generations of scholars still remain. Above this panelling are some lockers from which the doors have long been removed; these were used for the storage of books. The inscription quoted (from Cicero's 'De Senectute') which may be translated as 'The recollection of things well done is most pleasant' was later moved inside and the Knatchbull arms moved to the north wall; neither of these remains.

In 1925 Capt. the Hon. Michael Knatchbull transcribed the original articles of the school and they tell us much about life in the school in those early days.

Ashford was then a small town of perhaps a thousand inhabitants and consisted of little more than the area around the Parish Church and Middle Row (not very different to what it is now), the High Street and a few other small roads. Apart from the weekly market which had already been in existence for several hundred years there were also corn, fish and butter markets some developed into more permanent buildings. In

1602 the Court House had been built in what is now Kings Parade on stilts rather like Faversham's old Town Hall.

The roads around the town were dusty and rutted in Summer and almost impassably muddy in Winter so it would have been impossible for boys to travel very far daily to school. Consequently right from the start some boys would have boarded in Ashford, usually with the Master. The School would have been small—perhaps 20-30 boys—at the start. The privilege of free education laid down in the deeds only applied to 'children of the inhabitants of the Towne and Parish of Ashford' and merely covered the teaching 'of the Grammar allowed and approved by the King's Majestic and other good Latine and Greek authors'. Thus the Master could charge boys coming from outside and also for extras such as boarding and teaching English and other subjects. The Articles warned the Master that if he took too many fee-payers from outside he must pay an Usher, or assistant teacher, out of his own pocket.

No scholar could be admitted unless he was able to read the Old and New Testaments 'in the English tongue' and so it meant that only the sons of the nobility, professional men, merchants and master tradesmen were likely to enter the school. Thus free education did not automatically mean education for the poor. The usual age for entry was about 7 or 8 and some may have stayed to fourteen or fifteen.

Life for the scholars was certainly not easy. The day started at 7 a.m. with the scholars 'devoutly kneeling praying to almighty God' and then lessons went on until 11 a.m. Afternoon lessons were from 1 p.m. until 5 or 6 according to the time of the year. Presumably some food was provided between 11 and 1 and the boys may have been allowed cut to wander around the market stalls or perhaps play ball or with tops. Other more vigorous amusements included cock-fighting and unofficially, climbing on the Church roof. Actually the Articles state that 'the Master shall not give leave to play except once a week unless a visitor or some distinguished person ask for them to play' but this referred only to school-time.

Nor did they work a five-day week! 'Every Saturday afternoon for two hours (unless it is a holiday or festival day) the Master must instruct and catechise the boys in the religion of the Church of England'.

'Boys go to Church on Sunday and other Holy Days. Those who come late, play truant or otherwise misbehave themselves are to be reprimanded by the Master on Monday mornings'.

In 1637 a gallery was provided in the Church specifically for the use of the School. The school day must have been long and boring and involved sitting for hours on a hard bench droning the Classics. The teaching of 'writing' and of 'numbers' was given low priority. They would have had only about six weeks holiday (at Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide) and, although we have no information on Ashford Grammar School specifically, brutality in similar schools was rife and discipline ruthlessly strict.

The articles stated that the Master must be a Master of Arts and a member of the Church

of England. The first Master was Baptist Pigott (or Pigot). Aged about thirty when he took the post he was educated at King's School, Canterbury and Trinity College, Cambridge. When he died in 1657 he was buried in the South Transept of Ashford Church. The Latin inscription on his tomb reveals that he was married twice and that 'he was a very loving husband and father and deserved well of his pupils and of the town albeit ungrateful. What had he done to upset them? Warren wrote in 1712 'I am sorry to find in the inscription such a charge of ingratitude' but offered no explanation. It should however be remembered that, for much of the time Pigott was Head, the Country was being racked by troubles culminating in Civil War. Although Ashford was affected less than many places, feelings ran high and we know that in 1644 the Church was seriously defaced. There was locally a Puritan teacher, Repentance Nicholls, who some might have preferred as Master of Ashford Grammar School so it is not unreasonable that Pigott may have had his enemies.

How did he live? He had as we have seen a private study attached to the school room. He obviously had a house close by where a few boarders would also have lived. His annuity of £30 was paid (originally at Easter and Michaelmas) on the Tombstone of Thomas Fitch. This is no longer there but was then on rising ground on the North side of the Church. It was well known as a place for settling bargains in the town. Apart from the rules for running the school, the Master's behaviour was also well controlled by the Articles. He had to satisfy the Vicar that he was fit 'both for his learning and dexterity in teaching and also for his honest life and conversation and public expression of God's true religion'. He could not have 'received Ministeriall orders or taken any facultie or licence to practise physicke'.

He was not to wear 'any indecent or unseemelie Apparel, nor commonly use gaming houses or haunt Taverns or Ale Houses, nor shall bee otherwise of scandalous life to evil example of his scholars'.

If he was ill, he still received his pay provided he found a substitute but if he 'fell into any contagious, infectious or incurable disease or sicknesse specially through his own default and evil behaviour he shall bee removed and put out from being schoolmaster'

The right of election of the Master went to the current owner of Mersham-le-Hatch. The trustees were to be helped in overseeing the school by the Vicar of Ashford and the Rectors of Aldington, Mersham and Chart Magna.

CHAPTER 3

1650-1750

By the time of Baptist Pigott's death the school was well established but we know little of the next two Headmasters. Pigott's successor was the Rev. Simon Howe; he resigned in 1668 to become Rector of Sevington and died in 1673. Next was a local man bearing the splendid name of Strangford Viall. On leaving the school in 1679 he took a living in Essex; he died in 1685 and was buried at Crundale.

The deed of appointment of Viall's successor, John Drake, still exists in the Kent County Archives. It is signed by Sir Norton Knatchbull the second and demands that Drake 'shall solemnly promise to apply himself to the teaching, instructing and profiting of all his scholars and to keep all the articles, orders and directives of government of the school'.

Drake was born at Woodstock in Oxfordshire, was educated at All Souls, Oxford but took his M.A. at Corpus Christi, Cambridge. He was an usher of the free school at Woodstock. He remained at the School for 33 years and died in 1712 at Charing. His body was brought to Ashford and 'being attended by his scholars and many others, was buried in the Parish Church'.

There still exists an inventory of the goods in John Drake's house taken after his death and this provides more information about the School at that time. Particularly interesting is a list of fees received for pupils' board and, in a few cases, schooling. A few examples are:

Rec. of Mr. Dine for six months' board for his son (7.6.1712) £6

Of Sir Edward Knatchbull, Bt, for his son's board from 12th January to 9th June 1712 £6.
10s.Od. (£6.50)

Of Mr. Robert Macall for his son's schooling, six months £1

It appears that Mr. Drake charged one pound a month for boarding and schooling whereas day boys paid one pound for a half- year's schooling. Sir Edward may have paid for some extras.

Space does not allow the publication of all the contents of Mr. Drake's House (perhaps the one in the High Street described later) but a few extracts may be of interest. The value of the contents of a parlour, kitchen, pantry, cellars, three chambers and garret rooms was £103. 11s. 8d. (£103.58). This included nine beds, five in the garrets, so a few pupils may have lodged here but there must have been other accommodation as well.

In 1712, Richard Bate, M.A. (Cantab) was appointed as Headmaster and was to survive until 1749. It seems that the post was both congenial and healthy since Drake and Bate spanned a period of seventy years as Heads.

According to a manuscript copy of William Warren's "History" dated 29th November, 1722 which is in the Canterbury Cathedral Library, Mr. Bate and Mr. Grove of Cambridge

University proposed the formation of a School Library in 1715. They promised to give several books and the scheme was well supported. 'Mr. Bate has entered the names both of the books and donors (in a book) which he keeps for that purpose'.

Richard Bate was also Rector of Boughton Aluph from 1731 to 1749 so presumably the restriction on Heads entering the Church given in the original articles must not have been enforced.

CHAPTER 4 THE GOLDEN YEARS

1749 saw the appointment of Stephen Barrett as Headmaster and this marked the start of a period in which Ashford Grammar School was to become highly successful academically and also very prosperous. This was remarkable because many other English schools which had been endowed at about the same time as Ashford Grammar School declined badly during this period. For example, Bristol Grammar School had 100 on the roll in 1764 but only a handful in 1800 and none at all by 1810! This was partly because many of the Endowed Grammar Schools still refused to teach much other than the Classics whereas newly-formed schools were giving a broader education.

In Ashford there was at first little attempt to teach outside the Classics but there was not much competition from other schools in the area. The main reason why the School prospered, however, seems to have been the personality of Barrett coupled with the social circles in which he moved, his great reputation as a Latin scholar and, not least, his business acumen.

Stephen Barrett was born in Yorkshire in 1720. He won a Scholarship to Oxford where he obtained his M.A. and received Holy Orders. He became a Curate in Hertfordshire but was by now well-known as a Latin translator and a contributor to well-known periodicals of the time such as the 'Gentleman's Magazine'. Among his circle of friends was the famous Dr. Johnson and a story is told of how the Editor of the 'Gentleman's Magazine' wanted a Latin poem translated. 'Give it to Barrett' said Johnson. 'He will correct it for you in a minute'. Whereupon Johnson and Barrett agreed to share the task which they completed in a very short time.

For some time the Master of the School had lived in a house in the High Street (No. 73, now the premises of Messrs. Ruffles and of Flamingo). In 1762, some gentlemen of the town formed a company to buy this house since no accommodation was provided for the Master in the original Endowment. Of the 15 shares, eight were owned by Barrett and the owners of the others allowed the house to become virtually his freehold. During this period the school expanded and the Master's house was linked through another to the original school-room. This second house was pulled down during the last Century. The land running from this set of buildings right through to Tufton Street was used as a playground so the school site was now a large one.

On the 6th July 1761 Stephen Barrett wrote to Sir Wyndham Knatchbull saying that he was thinking of resigning but could 'see no reason why an adequate successor may not be found'. He was at this time Curate at Hinxhill Church. He wrote that he thought his successor as Headmaster would be allowed to hold this post 'and then Ashford School etc. will not be (worth) less without a boarder than £200. And, at present greatly preferably to Canterbury School', In support he gave details of his gross income as Master for 1759.

These figures are rather complex but it would seem that there were in 1759 thirty Ashford boys, five of whom were 'on the charity' at 1 .6s.0d. (£1.30) each. Of these, twenty learned

writing for which they paid extra. We are not sure of the Charity mentioned but in 1702 a Dr. Thomas Turner had put the rent of land in Challock on trust to the Ashford Parish Church to educate poor children and so some of this might have been used. There were also 48 boarders who paid £21.50 and 35 of these were taught to write English. By the terms of the original Endowment, Latin and Greek would have been taught free to the Ashford boys; for the others it was included in the boarding fee. Fees for teaching other subjects and the profits from the sale of books were extra. It appears that there were 78 boys in the school in 1759 and 82 in 1760, There is also mention of teaching French, Mathematics and the writing of accounts as extras so an attempt was obviously being made to broaden the curriculum (even if only to increase income from extras!). No details of outgoings such as keeping boarders, maintenance and payment of ushers (assistant teachers) are given. In his diary, the Rev. Joseph Price, Vicar of Kennington at the time, suggests that the total income might have been £1,000.

There is a record of a 24 page book "Preces Matutinae necnon Vespertine" (1759) which was 'in usum Scholae Grammaticae Ashfordiensis' and was inscribed 'John Weatherall gave it on leaving to William Hussey Whitsuntide 1764. Most of it gives prayers and the Catechism in both English and Latin but the last three pages contain a series of four letters which a new boy was to copy out and send to his parents reporting progress. The third of these throws light on the home life of his schoolmaster:

Honoured Madam,

Five of us, in our turn, drank tea on Sunday in the afternoon in the parlour. My master was at home; before whom we are more silent; being accustomed to look upon our words, before we speak them to him. But to our mistress we can be as chatty, as to yourself. He was observing upon the excessive fondness of mothers, towards their children; and the effects of it. And I can tell you, he is of opinion, that the Kentish mothers in particular, outdo those of all other counties in this respect. I hope in God, that your indulgence for me, will never have any bad effect on me. I am sure, if I thought so, I would desire you, to be less fond of me. For it is a sad return for kindness, to torture and vex those whose only fault is loving you too well. Pray keep this letter by you: and if ever I requite your indulgence, with neglect; put it into my hands again and I am sure it will cure me and also convince my very eyes, that you have it under my hand, that I will for ever remain,

Honoured Madam,
YOUR DUTIFUL SON.
Ashford. Sept. 6th, 1759.

It is unfortunate that the punctuation of the writer is inferior to the tone of his feelings. Mr. Barrett did not actually resign until 1764. We do not actually know why he wanted to do so but presumably it was to give him more time to develop his other interests. He was certainly not selfish however and settled his shares in the Master's house as an educational charity trust so that his successors would be able to go on living in the house.

Mr. William Hodson, who may have been an usher of Barrett's, took over as Headmaster

but did little more than keep the School going until Stephen Barrett returned in 1766. In Rev. Price's diaries mentioned above there is reference to Barrett offering a Thomas Whitfeld (who lived in his house) £20 a year for two hours time in the morning and again in the afternoon, the first time that pay for an usher is specifically quoted; presumably his board and lodging was free.

We are told that a John Honywood, 'after spending ten years at Barrett's, was put in the 6th Form at Westminster School and was a better scholar than any he found in it and came away worse than he went'. This is surely a compliment to the Ashford Grammar School of the time.

In 1773 the Rev. Stephen Barrett finally left to become Rector of Hothfield. In 1801 he died at Church House, Northiam, the home of his son-in-law Edward Jeremiah Curteis. Curteis had been an Head Boy of the School which he attended from 1770 to 1775 and later became an M.P. for Sussex. Barrett was buried at Hothfield and left some £30,000—a considerable fortune in those days. 350 boys had entered the School during his time as Head and a list of their surnames still exists. Its pupils came from most of the best-known Kent families including, Boys, Deedes, Dering, Jemmett, Knatchbull, Toke and Tufton, for example, and this reveals the standing of the School.

Stephen Barrett is remembered as a Benefactor of the School and his name has been given to one of its Houses. He was succeeded by the Rev. Charles Stoddart, M.A. (Cantab.) who was appointed by Sir Edward Knatchbull, the 7th Baronet. He was to hold the post of Master until 1812 when he was 73. At this time the School was known locally as the 'Free Grammar School' or 'The Boarding School' and Charles Seymour in "A New Topography, History and Commercial Survey of the Cities, Towns and Villages of the County of Kent" described it in 1776 as 'one of the best seminaries of classical learning in the County'.

The earliest of the many initials carved on the wainscotting of the original building and still visible is dated 1792. (D. Boys, presumably of Boys Hall, Willesborough) so the panelling may have been renewed or refurbished during Stoddart's time.

We have two accounts of life in the School at this time. The first is from the "County Examiner and Ashford Chronicle" (1904) and was probably taken from a periodical issued in 1793. By this time Stoddart was also Rector of Newchurch. There were now about a hundred pupils but only a few of the Free Scholars for whom the School had been formed.

'The churchyard became a noisy crowded place on occasion. For example, on Shrove Tuesdays the Master was locked out while the boys clamoured for

'No more Latin, no more Greek,
No more pandies to make us squeak!'

He was only allowed in when he declared the day to be devoted to sports. These included cock-fighting, 'the Master being elected by acclamation Director of the Cockpit. Great was the glee of the youngsters as they produced their birds which were to show their pluck on the school-room floor'.

The May Day holiday was widely celebrated as a relic of celebrations in honour of the goddess Flora dating from B.C. 238. The hornblower of ancient times had given way to fiddlers, flute and clarionet players. The pupils joined the boys and girls of the town for this day, many of them blacking their faces to make them look like real Moors in the Morris Dance—said to be a corruption of Moorish Dance. The traditional song “Come lasses and lads” was sung.

The Grammar School Anniversary Meeting was another great day in the town as well as at the School. On its eve an assembly was held at the Saracen’s Head (where Boots’ store is now) and ‘on the day itself every seat was taken in the Church before 11.45, the time of the service’.

Perhaps the day most enjoyed by the boys was November 5th, then a Day of Thanksgiving by Act of Parliament from 1606. The Church bells rang and the special service for the day, which remained in the Book of Common Prayer until 1859, was well attended. Effigies of Guy Fawkes, dressed to look as ridiculous as possible with a dunce’s cap, crippled legs, a lantern in one hand and matches in the other, were carried round the town by the boys chanting the well-known rhymes.

For an actual account by a pupil of the School we go to the “Life of John Knatchbull” written in 1844 and reprinted in the book “John Knatchbull” by Colin Roderick (Angus and Robertson 1963). John Knatchbull was the son of Sir Edward, the 8th Baronet, and attended Ashford Grammar School with some of his brothers for several years before joining the Royal Navy in 1804 at the age of 14. He served throughout the period which Old Ashfordian Dudley Pope describes so vividly in his “Ramage” books and was discharged in 1818. From this point he seems to have gone steadily downhill and was eventually transported to Australia in 1824. Roderick describes his misfortunes well in his book but suffice to say that he was executed in 1844 outside Woolloomooloo Gaol for the murder of a Mrs. Jamieson with a tomahawk. He wrote the account from which I quote in the condemned cell. Since he had only memory to rely on some of his facts are dubious but they give a vivid picture of the School in Stoddart’s time.

‘I was sent to school at Dr. Stoddart’s in Ashford, three miles from my father’s. From this School myself and two brothers used to go home every Saturday and remain until the Monday morning (One day) my father (told us) that he should call for us after school in the afternoon, it being the anniversary day of the foundation of the School. My father, being one of the oldest patrons, and several other gentlemen of the county, always used to visit the School on that day after the examination of the boys. But what was his surprise, at four o’clock, on his way to Ashford, to find us boys sitting down upon the road side, cracking nuts that we had procured in the wood thro’ which we had passed. He stopped the coach and conveyed us to the school, sent for the Doctor, and actually stood by during the time the Doctor inflicted a severe birch whipping upon our naked posteriors.’

‘I remember once... all the boys were admitted to go into the town (at other times we were confined to the schoolyard, that being our place for playing) when we procured a vast quantity of rotten eggs; I threw one at Mr. Chas Stoddart, our second master, who

wore spectacles, and hit him in his glass eye while reading a letter..... What was the result? I was unable to say who did it.....At evening studies the Doctor was fully prepared to proceed to action, using a table well stored with birch. He commenced from the senior boy down to the junior, telling us that if we did not deserve it then, we should before the week was out'.

On another occasion he threw a cartridge of powder into an iron pot used by an old lady on a market stall for stewing apples. When the explosion took place, away went pot, apple stall, and old woman heels up.....But the next day we set the old woman upon her legs again, much better than before. All we wanted was the fun'.

The reference to Mr. Chas Stoddart as second master is interesting in that the Headmaster was also Charles; perhaps he employed his son or other relation as assistant. Mr. Stoddart was succeeded in 1812 by John Nance. Educated at Worcester College, Oxford he became a Doctor of Divinity in 1813 after joining Ashford Grammar School. Born at Boxley in 1774, his mother was a daughter of the Vicar of Ashford (1765-74). Her eldest sister married the Rev. James Bond who became Vicar of Ashford from 1774 to 1826. Dr. Nance married the Rev. Bond's daughter (his first cousin) and so the Vicarage, Church, School set-up became very much a family concern. He had been appointed Rector of Old Romney in 1810 and held that post until he died in 1853.

Judging by a report on the School by the Commisioners for the Education of the Poor, dated 1818, the school was beginning to decline in numbers: 'There are now only three boys on the Foundation; there have been six or seven at one time since the appointment of the present Master. :D r. Nance has about forty other scholars, most of them boarders, who receive exactly the same instruction as the Foundation boys. Each free boy pays 15s. (75p) a quarter for instruction in writing and arithmetic; they are taught Latin and Greek gratuitously.

Dr. Nance states that there is but little demand for classical education by the inhabitants of Ashford, which he chiefly attributes to 'the want of exhibitions to carry the boys to college which, without such assistance, the parents are unable to afford'. Carlisle, in "A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools" (1818) states that 'the Eton Grammars are exclusively used; and the system of education approaches as nearly as local circumstances will allow to the admirable Seminary'. He quotes Nance's terms for boarders as forty guineas a year (£42) including education, and says that 'the present celebrity of this School sufficiently bespeaks the care and ability of the Master' though it gives much credit to the high reputation built up in Barrett's days.

Dr. Nance resigned in 1832. During his time, the Rev. Richard Harris Barham, who became famous as the author of "The Ingoldsby Legends", was an assistant teacher at the School while holding the post of Curate at Westwell and later Ashford.

CHAPTER 5 DECLINE AND FALL

Ephraim Hemmings Snoad, M.A. (Cantab) became Master in 1832. The census return for 1851 reveals that there were then resident at the School the Master, his wife and nine children, two school ushers and 36 scholars. During the period 1841 to 1861 the character of Ashford changed; the population had doubled to about 7,000 and the Railway Works had been opened in 1847, the railway having arrived in 1842.

When Snoad died in 1856, the School was carried on by his widow, the teaching being in the hands of a temporary Master, Mr. Lee. Mr. H. Woodland who was at the School from 1856 to 1860 has left some reminiscences of this period: 'There were about fourteen boarders at this time and perhaps fifty day boys. The two sets did not mix much'. There were in all four doors in the old School Hall. That at the SW end was the day boys' entrance. The desks that formerly were set at right angles to the walls so that the boys sat facing the walls are now affixed to the walls. The recesses or lockers in the walls were called the coves and had doors; they were reserved for the books of senior boys'. 'A ring hung over one of the doors and the taking of the ring signified that a boy wanted temporary leave of absence. Indoor games were played at the West end of the School and were peg-tops and marbles played round a ring chalked on the floor'.

The new Master was the Rev. Robert W. Wright, M.A. (Cantab.) who was unusual in that he was a mathematician who wrote several books 'which commanded considerable sales'. By now regular advertisements were appearing in the local Press. They show that belated attempts were being made to attract parents by offering a wider curriculum. Pupils were now being offered history, geography and agricultural chemistry(!); they could now be prepared for 'the Universities, Professions, the Civil Service and Mercantile Pursuits'.

'Books to the value of £5 are distributed among those boys who distinguish themselves at the Midsummer examination and two scholarships for pupils of 16 about to proceed to either of the Universities tenable for two years at a value of £10 p.a. each are awarded'. Other money-making sidelines were available. 'Mons. Raze's French conversation and drawing classes are open to Ladies and Gentlemen on Wednesdays'. Mr. Philpott's dancing classes were held on Saturdays.

It cost six guineas (£6.30) p.a. in 1858 to send a day-boy to the School which included instruction in Greek, Latin, English language, the mathematics, history, geography, mapping, popular astronomy and agricultural chemistry. French, German, drawing and dancing cost a further four guineas (£4.20) each and Music cost six guineas (£6.30). Drilling, instructed by Sgt. Major Shiles, was a mere pound a year.

In 1866 the School's terms were advertised as thirty guineas (£31.50) p.a. with 'pupils ready for the Universities £80 or £100 according to age' and this included boarding. Books and other subjects were still extra.

Numbers still declined but a report of the 1858 Speech Day in the "Ashford and Alfred

News" indicated that standards were satisfactory. The Examiner's report said that 'the papers in History were remarkably good, those in Algebra and Arithmetic were in most cases very correct. In the Classical subjects... the knowledge the boys acquired is not superficial'. The Chairman, the Rev. J. P. Alcock, said that 'another good thing Mr. Wright had done was causing the boys to wear college caps or "mortar boards" whichever they please to call them..... It was a distinctive mark'.

This is the first mention of school uniform which appears to exist.

Robert Wright died in September 1867 and Francis A. Dewé of Caius College, Cambridge was appointed as the new Master but the writing was now on the wall. Periodic advertisements for the School still appeared in the local Press, the last one being in the Kentish Express of 30th June, 1871. It seems, however, that the School never reopened for the start of the new term and Mr. Dewé resigned. The reasons given for closure were that the premises had become totally inadequate for the needs of the district. It has been suggested that the passing of the 1870 Education Act which widened the opportunities for free education was partly responsible but there would have been insufficient time for this to take effect by 1871. In any case, it would not have had much influence on the sort of pupil who would then have attended Ashford Grammar School. Competition from the new or expanding Public Schools was a far more serious factor.

CHAPTER 6

THE MOVE TO THE HYTHE ROAD

For a number of years Ashford had hardly noticed its Grammar School but the moment it closed several influential people realised that a gap in the town's amenities had been left. They immediately set out to do something about this but in the same way that it had taken some years to put Sir Norton's original wishes into practice so it took ten years before Ashford Grammar School reopened.

In 1875 an application was made to the Charity Commission to discharge the last remaining Trustee; this was agreed and a new and more vigorous body to trustees was appointed. Permission was then obtained to sell the old buildings.

An auction was held in the Saracen's Head Hotel on 2nd June, 1875. Lot 1, which comprised the Master's house and connecting buildings, was sold to William Taylor, a miller who owned the adjoining property, for £710; he also bought Lot 3, the playground, this time for £400. Lot 2, the School building and adjoining offices went to a Mr. Thomas Wightwick of Canterbury for £620 (+ £8 for the fixtures!). He was in fact acting for Miss Elizabeth Dent Burra. She later sold it to Dr. George Wilks, a well-known Ashford doctor and an old Boy of the School. When he died in 1919 the premises passed to his nieces. A fund was set up to buy the building for community use; the Wilks Memorial Hall as it is known is now maintained by the Ashford Borough Council.

The £1,738 realised by the sale was set aside to start a fund for rebuilding Ashford Grammar School on another site. Mr. James Salkerd Burra, another member of the banking family who lived at Bockhanger, North of Ashford, then gave £4,000 to the fund. It was now necessary to find a suitable site. A map exists on which several possibilities have been pencilled in. One was at the corner of Elwick and Station Roads and another in Magazine Road. These were rejected mainly because of cost and the Hythe Road site was chosen. Mr. John Russell Lewis gave the three acres of land (worth £4,000) needed for the School and playing fields. This gift is commemorated by a plaque in the building. Messrs. Denne were selected as builders and the latest technology was to be used; the "Kentish Express and Ashford News" (3.8.1878) states that 'it has been decided that the whole of the outer walls shall be built hollow so that there should be no possibility of the school suffering from damp—a point of vital importance to the young likely to be educated within the walls'.

On the 17th August, 1878, the Foundation stone was laid by the same Miss Elizabeth Burra who had bought the old School. The trowel and gavel used are still in the possession of the School. Over 500 attended—mainly ladies—but the "Kentish Express" reported that the weather 'was unpropitious'. It went on to say that 'the long talked-of Grammar School for Ashford is at length to become an entity'.

While building was going on, an amended scheme for running the School was produced and finally agreed in June 1879; there were to be twelve Governors including the owner of Mersham-le-Hatch where the Knatchbulls still lived.

Building went well but there were administrative problems and by October 1879 the "Kentish Express" was becoming mildly critical: 'The schools are complete. It will seriously affect them if they remain unoccupied during the approaching Winter'. In fact another year was to pass with the School empty but at a Governors' meeting on 5th October 1880 a new Headmaster was unanimously elected. He was Edward Coulson Musson, M.A. (Cantab.), a geographer. He was at the time Head of Stamford Grammar School in Lincolnshire. It was announced that the School would re-open after the Christmas vacation.

By a coincidence in the same year, the Rt. Hon. Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen was raised to the peerage as the first Baron Brabourne.

Mr. E. F. Evans moved from Tonbridge School to become Second Master. Applications to join the School did not however pour in. From this date we have a record of every boy attending the school and the first boy to be entered was Harvey Brown of 7 Queen Street, Ashford (6.44.1880). The "Kentish Express" of 8th January 1881 advertises the proposed opening of 'Ashford Grammar School (New Scheme 1879), Chairman: Sir Wyndham Knatchbull, Bt'. The Governors felt that more publicity was needed and so held a public dinner at the Saracen's Head on the 13 January 1881: 'The Governors hope that friends and supporters will avail themselves of the opportunity for meeting Mr. Musson. Tickets: 6/- (30p). The School buildings will be open for inspection the next day'. The dinner was apparently well attended and the number of applicants went up from five (of whom three came from Stamford with the new Head and one was his son!) before the dinner to 23 within a week. It seems remarkable that the buildings should have stayed empty for nearly two years whereas recruiting only started seriously ten days before the opening.

The opening day, 18th January 1881. brought the worst snow-storm that Ashford had seen since 1836. 'The blizzard was so intense that day-boys had to walk backwards most of the way to school and the snow lay in twenty feet drifts along the Hythe Road'. The hot-water pipes in the buildings burst, one of the school-rooms was flooded and some of the windows were blown in.

Mr. Burra had endowed a Scholarship giving free education to a pupil for two years and the examination for this (in English, Latin and Mathematics) was held on the first day. The winner was Sidney Finn of High Street, Ashford, who lived up to the honour by becoming a distinguished mathematician and later Headmaster of Sandbach Grammar School in Cheshire. Finn later wrote of that first day:

'No one who walked to School that morning will ever forget that weather, the day-boys returned home that evening by bus, the wind and storm being too terrific for their tender frames.

'For the first few months daily battles raged between the day boys and the opposing street boys whom they encountered. Finally the School gained the upper hand and vanquished the Town, irate parents included. At first we were more ashamed than proud of the conspicuous black and white ribbons on our bowler(?) hats.

'Other recollections of those early years include memories of a blood-thirsty fight near the Cradle Bridge, of certain day-boys being caught wandering about the fields when supposed to be doing evening preparation work, of an exciting runaway from School and subsequent enlistment. Practice with a patent fire escape from a top window offered amusement; a Greek class whose chief preparation work consisted of playing tennis with a wool-ball on a desk (the Master present being solemnly appointed Referee) is still remembered'.

This is part of a much longer account which was published anonymously in the school magazine in 1899 and Finn wrote many years later that its appearance, not surprisingly, was not well received by some of those mentioned.

By the end of the first school year there were 31 on the roll with ages ranging from 11 to 16 so teaching them must have created problems. By the time Mr. Musson resigned in July 1884, 106 boys had been accepted and nearly fifty had left so presumably the numbers attending were still less than sixty.

The new Headmaster was Benjamin Snell, an M.A. of Trinity College, Cambridge who had been Second Master at Sutton Valence School; he was to remain for 21 years until 1905. His main recreation was walking and it was not unusual to see him set off to walk to Maidstone after a day's work.

During his time at the School great educational changes were going on throughout the Country. Elementary education which had started in 1870 was now in full swing and the 1902 Education Act had launched State secondary education for the more academic. None of this directly affected Ashford Grammar School at the time but it did mean that more people were taking an interest in education. Even so, the numbers in the School increased only slowly, the average intake being about seventeen. Pupils were mainly the sons of local business men and farmers and there were few boarders.

It was not until 1899 that 'systematic instruction in "Chemistry and Physical Science" ' was given. Partly by means of a grant from the Kent County Council, which was now beginning to take an interest in the School, and partly by subscriptions from Governors and Friends, an excellent block of buildings, admirably adapted for the purpose of Science teaching' was erected. One of the three rooms was for 'practical Physics which the boys are taught..... not by mere book-work (which is unsatisfactory) but by actual observation and manual experiment'. Mr. Snell was careful to point out that these innovations did not mean that there will be 'interference with literary training and the usual subjects of the curriculum'. The cost of the buildings was £463 and of the equipment was about £50.

July 1899 saw the first issue of the "Ashford Grammar School Magazine" which was 'to preserve a permanent record of the various events in the life of the School'. 'The price was 6d. (21/2p); it had 16 pages and was to appear each term.

Boarders were housed in the main buildings in a series of cubicles rather than dormitories which were more usual. By 1899 the number of boarders must have

increased since the annual supper which was a tradition was preceded by a cricket match between the North and South Cubicle teams. At the Speech Day, the Head said that the School now wanted 'twenty more boys and a gymnasium; if the neighbourhood could provide the boys he made bold to say that the gym would be built'. By 1901 it had been built.

An extract from the Headmaster's report of 1901 throws interesting light on the School's attitude to education: 'The School has not paid much attention to public examinations during the year but it had pursued the even tenor of its way. He hoped that the boys would maintain an honourable character for that was the most important thing of all during school life'.

Nevertheless, by 1903 the teaching of mathematics, science, languages and English essay writing was commended by a visiting Examiner so it seems that by now there was a real effort to give a modern education. Dr. Wilks urged the neighbourhood to support its Grammar School by sending more boys to it as happened in other towns with similar Schools.

Benjamin Snell resigned in 1905. During his time the School had moved along steadily but had not really progressed a great deal; the largest number at any one time during this period was 67, 35 of whom were boarders. In 1904 the School received its first visit by H.M. Inspectors (one result of the 1902 Education Act). We have no copy of the report but it seems to have been satisfactory.

The School has been the subject of much discussion both by local people and in the Council Chamber. There had been suggestions in the local papers that it had a snobbish attitude to local boys, but Mr. Snell denied this. When he resigned, the Governors and Old Ashfordians (of whom several were local dignitaries) sung his praises so it seems that the criticism was not strong.

Considering the small number of pupils it is surprising that there were 69 applicants for the post of headmaster. Mr. John Evans, M.A. (Cantab.) was appointed. The first State grant was received from 1903 and from this date a register of teaching staff had to be kept. The first name on it was that of Mr. Evans. He had been Senior Modern Languages master at Leeds Grammar School before coming to Ashford and as a boy had been a pupil of Mr. Snell's at Sutton Valence.

At the 1905 Speech Day there were further revelations about the atmosphere of the School. Mr. Evans said that 'he had been told that he would have great difficulty with the boys from the elementary schools as they were so rough, but he could not think of this remark without a feeling of indignation, for when he looked round the School for industry, keenness, good behaviour, integrity and refinement, he turned to these scholars'. This was a reference to boys joining the School from the State schools to which most children now went.

Undoubtedly, at the time Evans became Headmaster, the School was in a critical state both financially and to some extent educationally. Indeed, without the grants now

received from both Government and the Kent Education Committee it would have closed! Nevertheless, the School seemed to make an impression on those who attended it and the Old Ashfordians Association which had been formed in Mr. Snell's time now had a membership of 112.

In 1906 mention was made of P. F. Woodworth—`a boy any school might be proud of— who had passed the Cambridge Local Examination. Peter Woodworth was to become something of a legend in the history of Ashford Grammar School. He joined the school at the age of 14 in 1904 and left in 1908. He rejoined the School as a teacher in 1914 and, apart from a period of War service, stayed until he retired in 1952. Even then he still kept the closest links through the Old Ashfordians virtually right up to his death in 1979. No-one else has ever had such a long and affectionate association with the School. From now on things began to improve a little and in 1908 the roll had risen to 70, the largest total since moving to Hythe Road. Some information of staff salaries at the time is interesting. In this year, Mr. Tom Peach, an M.Sc. of what was to become Manchester University, was appointed as Science teacher in 1907 at £110 p.a. of which £30 was kept back as payment for his board since he was residential. He augmented this by taking an evening class in Magnetism and Electricity. In 1908 Mr. Albert Anslow joined the staff at £100 p.a. He had twelve years' teaching experience but no degree. He taught geography, Swedish drill, Shorthand and book-keeping. He left within a few years to become 'first a newspaper reporter and then the manager of a picture palace'. Mr. Evans received no actual salary but the Governors paid him £4.10s.0d. (£4.50) per boy and he received the profits from the boarding side. The incentive for a Head to build up numbers in his school was therefore tremendous.

In the Summer of 1907 the first of many School overseas visits was made. The Headmaster took 14 boys to Dunkirk to eight days and 'save for a little sea-sickness no-one was the worse'. The boys 'learned something of the prison-like discipline of a French boarding school and their hosts were astonished at our liberty'.

By 1908 the sports field had 'a handsome sports pavilion in place of a tattered tent' ; this was donated largely by Old Ashfordians. Boys had done well in the Senior Cambridge examinations and Ashford Grammar boys had obtained four of the 15 Senior Scholarships granted for the whole of Kent.

In 1909 the school magazine changed its name to "The Ashfordian" which it has kept ever since. A new cover was designed but had to be changed after the first issue with some embarrassment since the crest claimed to be that of the Burra family actually belonged to the Pomfrets and, even more shameful, the horses featured in the Kent and Ashford badges had their tails the wrong way up!

In October 1908, 'Johnny' Evans obtained the Headship of Judd's Commercial School, Tonbridge. There were 84 applicants for his post, 20 of them already Headmasters and, from a short list of three, Arthur Sydney Lamprey, an M.A. of Corpus Christi, Cambridge was appointed.

Evans had only been at the School three years but he had saved it from virtual collapse.

He was heard to say on leaving 'I shall be glad to be free of the worry of paying the grocer's bill, a reminder that Heads of those days often had other things than education to worry about.

CHAPTER 7 THE LAMPREY ERA

Arthur Sydney Lamprey had been an assistant teacher at Maidstone Grammar School for fourteen years before coming to Ashford. His drive and personality was to have the greatest effect on the fortunes of Ashford Grammar School since the appointment of Stephen Barrett in the Eighteenth Century.

He was a man of strong views who set out from the start with the hope of turning the School into, at the very least, a minor Public School. Shortly after Lamprey joined the School, H.M. Inspectors visited it and although they made a few criticisms their report concluded that the School was 'full of life and vigour', so he had the advantage over his predecessors of inheriting a reasonably thriving establishment.

He moved rapidly into action with an appeal for the better support of games 'which are almost as essential a part of a boy's education as his lessons'. To introduce competition into school activities he divided the School into two Houses to be known as Knatchbull and Burra.

In summer 1909 a 'manual workshop with ten benches of the most modern type and an equipment of the necessary tools' was provided. It was to be under the charge of Mr. Edward Bottle 'who is able to give us two afternoons a week', for which he was paid £30 p.a.

During this period the School received a number of trophies. A. E. Williams, who had left in 1888, gave a Cup for Fives in 1909. In the same year, Lord Strathcona, a Governor, gave a Trophy for shooting and Mr. Marc Beaufoy, a former M.P. for South Lambeth gave the Cup Awarded to the Victor Ludorum at the Sports each year. Mr. Lamprey gave a Bowl for House Competition. Old Ashfordians J. M. Goodall, W. B. Ritchie and L. M. Hobson gave Cups for swimming, Junior swimming (now diving) and for the smartest Cadet respectively. A Boxing Cup was awarded in memory of Lt. A. R. Knight killed in 1916 and this is now being used for basketball. To encourage food production 1947, Mr. Price, a local jeweller, gave a Trophy for gardening and this is now used for the 3rd Year Athletic Champion.

We have seen that to obtain a reasonable income it was necessary for a Head to build up the number of pupils and particularly, boarders. He quickly increased the number in residence including several from overseas; some of these stayed in his own house and apparently paid more for the privilege. Day boys could buy lunch at the School for a small sum. Boys were admitted at all ages, some being taken at less than ten in a sort of Preparatory section; both of Mr. Lamprey's sons joined the School when he did. It would be wrong to think that Lamprey was only interested in the business side. His interest in his pupils is shown by the fact that nearly every boy in the Admission Book has a comment written against his name indicating what happened to him when he left and sometimes with observations on his school life. Many of these comments which are in Lamprey's own writing are complimentary but others are more critical: 'a lazy ne'er do well; kleptomaniac— expelled; atheist and communist; expelled for disloyalty'. It seems

that he would support a worthy pupil through thick and thin but could be ruthless with anyone who fell short of his standards.

At this time there were still few houses between the School and the town. Some Old Ashfordians recall being abused as 'Grammar Bugs' and being bombarded with handfuls of clay from the bank adjoining Hythe Road by boys from 'the Council School'. Most day boys walked to school though some came by train and a few still on ponies. James S. Burra died on 4th February, 1911. He was Chairman of the Governors and without his generosity the School might never have re-opened in 1881; without his influence and support for the next thirty years it might have faded away. In 1942 a new class-room was opened near the gymnasium. This was reserved for the School Prefects and was even equipped with a typewriter 'the better to equip them for a commercial education'. Even more remarkable was the setting up of an electrical installation, there being no public supply in the area at this time. This was maintained by Science master, Douglas Ely, and lamps were fitted in 'the House, Chemistry Laboratory and Prefects' Room' which shows something about priorities!

The number of boys had now reached 85 and the annual Prize Day was now held in the Ashford Corn Exchange, since demolished. Amateur theatricals and a musical programme was rendered by the boys.

The same year a sum of £1,000 was left to the School by Mr. George Harper to endow Scholarships. This was considered particularly noteworthy as such gifts are now rare 'because of the incidence of taxation'. Mr. Harper had done much for the town including donating the Fountain in Victoria Park; this had originally been built for the London Exhibition of 1862 and when resited in Ashford was turned on for the first time by the first Ashford Grammar School Harper Scholar, S. Marsland. George Harper is still remembered by the School in the name of Harper House.

The energetic Mr. Ely, no doubt carried away by his success over the School's electrical supply, installed 'an apparatus for wireless telegraphy' in 1913. A twenty-foot high aerial mast was erected. Messages from stations 1,000 miles away were received and weather reports from Paris were sent every day to the "Kentish Express". A transmitter was also installed and a G.P.O. licence for its operation was issued.

This was in fact a remarkable innovation and, years later, correspondence in a leading radio magazine revealed that Ashford Grammar School had been the first school in the country to operate its own receiver/transmitter—as the "Daily Mail" had claimed at the time. Perhaps the highlight was one morning when the boys rushed out to see the army airship 'Delta' pass over. Mr. Ely immediately 'signalled on the one-inch spark transmitter and Oh! the joy of the immediate reply: H.M.A. Delta from Farnborough to Canterbury. All O.K. All O.K.'. Ground to air communication was then its infancy. Mr. Ely wanted to try experiments in communication between the School and passing trains but his request was met by a 'curt refusal from the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Co. So the School was deprived of another small piece of radio history.

Yet another technological innovation now appeared. A 'Kinema House' was built at the

end of the School 'so that moving pictures can now be thrown on a screen in the classroom'. For this purpose a licence had to be granted by the authorities; the cinema had lighting troubles however.

The Cadet Corps was formed in 1912 and 40 boys joined. The uniform was a khaki jacket with roll collar, shorts or riding breeches, School stockings and a forage cap with school badge (A.G.S.) on it. It was affiliated to the County Territorial Association and a supply of carbines duly arrived. Arthur Lamprey received the Lord Lieutenant's Commission as Captain and became the Commanding Officer.

Although the School was now a thriving and exciting place but some aspects had not changed too much. At the 1913 Speech Day, Lamprey was to say that 'he was no great believer in the educational value of examinations' and that 'it would be a sorry day for the British Empire if its citizens and officials were mere book scholars'. He 'had no hesitation in saying that the boy who had gone through his School properly could hold his own with the boys of any school in the country'. Although some would feel that Lamprey played down the importance of exams a little too far, few would dispute that his attitude was forward thinking. He did not neglect technology nor commercial training (which were ignored by most Grammar schools of the time) and to this day the School has produced a steady stream of engineers and other technologists. At the 1913 O.A. London Dinner, Ashford M.P., the Rt. Hon. L. Hardy, was to say that he hoped 'in the future the School would be able to do what it had done in the past—train railway managers (applause)—so that England would not be obliged to go across the water for them (renewed applause)'. By the Summer of 1914 the School had 105 boys, 19 of whom were boarders so the needed expansion was under way. In March the school had been stricken by such a severe blout of influenza that the doctor ordered it to be closed two days before the end of term. The School was visited by H.M. Inspectors again and they gave a generally satisfactory report but suggested certain structural alterations. This was in fact the first of such reports to become increasingly critical of the buildings and equipment but these problems were soon forgotten with the outbreak of War in August 1914.

The Cadet Corps might have been expected to thrive in the wave of patriotism which swept the Country in 1914. However, their enthusiasm was damped by the G.P.O. demanding the 'wireless outfit' in exchange for a receipt; their weapons were loaned to army reservists for training. For the first time since the School's foundation, its boys were deprived of their traditional seats in the gallery of the Church so that these could be used by soldiers.

There were now 114 boys on the roll including three Belgian refugees who were being given free board and education. Teachers were joining the Forces and in September 1915 the school started with an entirely new staff. Not surprisingly some of these did not come up to Lamprey's pre-War standards and when, at the end of the War, he looked back on the performance of some of them, he produced a list of 'wartime failures; the order of uselessness is appended'. The worst is described as being 'most useless and objectionable and...?'; the last word is left to the imagination! In fairness it should be said that some of the temporary appointments were very successful and at least some of the

others had done their best.

As this was not enough, one day Lamprey received a letter from the War Office saying, wrongly as it happened, that the School might be needed for military purposes and that no compensation would be paid if this occurred. By 1915 the School had 125 boys and boarders were now admitted to School House so that all day boys went into Knatchbull or Burra Houses. For a long time, negotiations had been going on to buy more land for playing fields and three acres behind the School were purchased from the local Council. The field was in poor condition and much work was needed to make it useable. A fund was set up to pay for it and Lamprey contributed generously to it.

A house which no longer exists but then stood at the S.E. corner of the present playground was absorbed into the School as "The Hostel". It was put in charge of a Miss Cox and junior boys who boarded there became part of School House.

For the first time, the Cadets attended the Public Schools Cadet Corps Camp at Marlborough. Not surprisingly, Lamprey, who was now a Major, took over a large part of the camp organisation, not least the Athletic Sports. This had 821 entries and was arranged, including the issue of a printed programme, within 24 hours!

The War was now beginning to be felt more in the School. 'Local tribunals have so cleared offices and farms that Companies and parents alike have had to employ youngsters of 14 and 15 whose education is not nearly complete'. The result of this was that the School lost many of its older boys.

The heating in the School had always been temperamental and in February 1947 70 feet of piping froze solid and had to be disconnected before it could be thawed out. Even though the School now grew a lot of its own vegetables it became a problem to feed the boarders adequately. "The Ashfordian" of December 1917 contained what is probably the only scientific research paper to appear in the School magazine: this was entitled "Manurial Test in the School Gardens 1917". Apart from details of activities the Wartime magazines contained many patriotic poems. Topics discussed by the Debating Society included "Will England become a republic after the War?" (lost 22-5) and two which still have a familiar ring: "Is the Channel tunnel advisable?" (lost 46-15) and "Should Ireland be self-governing?" (carried 15-13).

The Cadets were now very strong. N.C.O. Cadets were allowed to wear spurs; the Cadets had taken up cavalry drill and riding was taught. Occasional Church parades were held, the Cadets marching behind their band. They had obtained two dummy Vickers machine-guns.

Sir Wyndham Knatchbull, the 12th Baronet, died in 1947 and was succeeded by his cousin, Lord Brabourne who announced that on coming to reside at Mersham-le-Hatch he intended to take an active interest in the School. He nominated as his representative Governor, Mr. R. E. Maunsell, who was Chief Mechanical Engineer of what was to become the Southern Railway. His name will be familiar to steam locomotive enthusiasts. The end of the War in November 1918 should have been a time of rejoicing for the 150 boys in the School but unfortunately "The Ashfordian" had to say that 'we were so overcome by the (influenza) epidemic that we could take no part in the national

rejoicing'. This epidemic had swept the Country killing many and at one time two-thirds of the boys were ill; the School was closed several times during the term.

Teachers were now being 'demobbed' and returning, the names of Mr. H. L. Jenkins and Mr. P. Woodworth reappearing in School cricket teams. As the School returned to peace-time normality, its numbers increased steadily (1919-475, 1920-190 and 1924-207 including 59 boarders) and this put a considerable strain on accommodation. Mr. Jenkins took over "The Lawn", the house adjoining the School, and six boys boarded there. The late Dr. Thurston had left money to the School to provide medals for handwriting; this bequest is still used to provide prizes for writing. At this time, Dr. Wilks, who had given good service to the School as a Governor and an Old Boy, died and is, as we have seen, remembered by the renaming of the old school-room as the Wilks Memorial Hall. The Executors of Mr. W. F. Jemmett who had died in 1917 while Chairman of the Governors endowed what are now the Jemmett Art prizes.

In an effort to provide more accommodation, the "new Hut" was erected. So-called to distinguish it from "The Hut" which housed the Preparatory class of seven year-olds, this was formerly an Army Forage Barn at Dover and now provided two classrooms, E and F. It was to last 'until the promised new buildings appear when the Hut will provide changing rooms for games' but unfortunately these were not to arrive for 38 years and, in any case, the hut is still in use. The former laundry used as a 6th Form room became a Masters' Common-room and the Resident Masters' Study was now a Servants' Hall. In October 1920, Mr. Lamprey lent the School his 'meadow' which he had bought a short while before. This was on the far side of the Hythe Road and meant that the School would now have the use of ten football pitches so it was well endowed in this way.

The Kent Education Committee was now playing an even greater role in the running of the School and minor changes in the Governing body were made in 1921 to meet their wishes. Predictably, Lamprey did not take kindly to these since he feared they might affect his independence and he treated the County's Inspectors with suspicion. Tennis courts were now available in the School Wood on the far side of Joey's Lane (named incidentally after Joseph Vincent of Sprotlands). Arthur Lamprey had brought this some while before for use as a rifle range. Boys who wished to use the School Library had to pay a subscription (6d. or 21/2p. a term) and in 1924 there were 56 members. The accounts of the time show that £1.7s.0d. (£1.35) was spent on buying books during the first term of that year though some books were donated as well.

In July 1921 the Headmaster, who secretly hoped that a new benefactor would follow in the steps of Sir Norton Knatchbull and James Burra to give him new buildings, wrote: 'There seems to be a kind of finality about the School's progress; for the School is full; its present buildings can hold no more; we are forbidden to add to them. This of course should make for efficiency for obviously an Entrance Examination will have to come'. In fact the School now had 450 day boys and 60 boarders, 150 in the Junior House as "The Hostel" was now known, 7 in "The Lawn" and the rest in School House. There were ten assistant teachers.

In 1920 a remarkable man had joined the staff to teach Science and Geography—William

George Shannon. When appointed he had no degree but by the next year had obtained a London University B.Sc. by part-time study. The year after he became an M.Sc. by examination. During this time he became nationally famous as a geologist and was responsible for starting the teaching of that subject in Ashford Grammar School, one of the first to enter pupils for Geology H.S.C. examinations. A few years later as the result of his research he became a Doctor of Science for his work on the Old Red Sandstones of Devon. Today this is still a high distinction but then only a few would have been awarded each year and those almost always to University teachers. His eminence as a geologist was marked on his death by the acceptance of a table he had made from his mineral specimens by the Geological Museum in London. He laid the foundation of the School's collection.

Sports Day 1924 had an added attraction: 'While the School was waiting for the Sports, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales passed, slowing his car in accordance with a request from the Headmaster, so that the Cadet Corps and others had an opportunity of seeing him as he rose to acknowledge their salute'.

For some time Lamprey had been dropping hints about the need for a clock visible from the fields—'The umpires' watches are not always reliable'—and Mr. Knock, then Vice-Chairman of the Governors, generously presented the clock which still (though no longer working) overlooks the field.

In 1922 the School reached 220 pupils but after this numbers declined somewhat possibly because the fees were raised. From this year a uniform was to be adopted gradually throughout the School—'full particulars can be supplied on application to the Captains of Houses'. It was also intended to start a Physical Training Corps for all non-Cadet Corps boys and 'the uniform for this would be the School uniform referred to above'. A new work-shop was erected 'by the strenuous efforts of some boys'. The Headmaster proposed a reorganisation which would mean that every boy joining the School at or before the age of twelve could take the School Certificate examination at 16 and might enter for the 'second examination' (corresponding to A level) before leaving. Apparently things moved slowly for three years later H.M. Inspectors were urging its introduction!

At this time Speech Day was held on a June evening on the tennis courts. In 1923 the weather deteriorated steadily throughout but they were determined to complete the finale, an extract from "Henry V". By this time it was raining hard and there were other distractions. 'Aeroplanes flew over continuously and noisily, trains stole by and the Church bells were ringing. Still the audience sat it out to the end and professed to enjoy it greatly'. The noise of the aircraft mentioned drowned the few words uttered on what was probably the first public appearance of Henry Wilcoxon. He was to star in such early Hollywood epics as "Cleopatra" and later became a senior executive for Cecil B. de Mille. He and de Mille were co-producers of "The Ten Commandments" in 1956.

"The Ashfordian" of April 1925 recorded the death of William Dickson Burnside who had left school the previous July holding the Victor Ludorum at the Sports of that year. He had died in his bath poisoned by fumes from a defective gas geyser. His mother gave

to the School a sum of money, which he would have received on his 21st birthday, to purchase a Cup and endow a prize. The Burnside Cup is still awarded annually for diving and the Victor Ludorum of each Athletic Sports receives the Burnside prize. In the same year the Hon. Michael Knatchbull donated the Knatchbull Trophy for inter-House competition. This is still awarded annually and was presented at the 1925 Speech Day for the first time by Lady Doreen Knatchbull whose death we mourned in 1979. At the time of the General Inspection in 1925 the School had 193 boys of whom 42 boarded. 74 came from Ashford itself. The School had 25 boys between the ages of 9 and 11 and there were ten pupils in the 6th Form. The fees had been reduced slightly from the year before and were now £12 p.a. for day-boys living in Kent and £24 for those coming from outside. Boarders paid an additional £48 p.a. The Kent Education Committee paid a grant of £1,935.

On the whole the standard of teaching was commended, especially bearing in mind the poor facilities and equipment. Books were short and the Science Department had only three balances in working order; the Geography Department lacked good maps and a globe!

The Inspectors felt that the School had developed greatly during the past ten years and was performing a useful function as a secondary school for the Ashford district. Arthur Lamprey was said to have 'guided the fortunes of the School with great energy and resourcefulness'. Possibly because the War Office had dropped its grant the Cadet numbers dropped to 49 but to make up for this about fifty pupils were now 'Boy Scouts'. In 1926 the School became the first house in Ashford to have the electric cable brought in 'even if we have to wait for the current'; this eventually arrived on 2nd November 1926. By the end of the year the School was full again; although no permanent buildings had been added since 1908 the numbers had grown from 62 to 220!

Lamprey was now thundering against the authorities 'who can no longer claim to be aware of our disabilities in the way of buildings. If we could open our new School by 1930, our tercentenary, it would be a great occasion'. This was a little unfair since the Chairman of the Kent Education Committee had himself described the buildings as deplorable. In August 1927 both School and town were stunned by the news of Arthur Lamprey's death while attending the Cadet camp at Crowthorne. A day or two before Camp broke up he was taken ill and died during the night of 12th August aged 59. The Cadets Corps was perhaps his greatest love.

A few weeks before he had said to the Old Ashfordians: 'I have dreamed my dream'. This dream was to build a great School worthy of its Founder and fit to play a part in the life of town and nation. As if he realised that he had little time to live he added that much was still to be done but this was the heritage he left.

He was buried in the churchyard of Mersham Church. Although he did not get on with everyone he achieved much and in the words of H.M. Inspectors visiting the School after his death: 'The late Headmaster was a man of remarkable ingenuity and gifted with a power of improvisation'.

CHAPTER 8

MAKING DO

The sudden loss of a Headmaster like Arthur Sydney Lamprey who had a position of power never to be repeated could have had a disastrous effect on the School. It was however fortunate in having Harry Lionel Jenkins as Second Master and he immediately took over with great efficiency. He had been at the School since 1913 and, in spite of being gassed during his War service, he was an excellent sportsman.

The Governors wished the traditions established during Lamprey's time to be continued and so appointed Harry Jenkins as Headmaster. The K. E.C.'s policy at this time was normally not to appoint a member of a school's staff as its Head. For some time the School had been Voluntary Aided and relied mainly on the authority for its funds so now a discreet battle raged between Governors and the Kent Education Committee. This did not make life easy for Jenkins or his colleagues but eventually his appointment was confirmed.

For a while Mr. Lamprey's widow carried on the catering side and looked after the health of the boys, the profits and losses being her responsibility. The staff were of course responsible for administration and discipline of the boarders. She continued to live in "The Lawn" which remained her property. An interim inspection was carried out shortly after Jenkins took over and H.M. Inspectors made one or two comments on the boarding side: 'many Headmasters would insist on the door being locked, at least in the evening, between the passage leading from the maids' bedrooms to the boys' cubicles'. Mr. Jenkins has written '?' in pencil alongside this comment!

We are fortunate that we have reminiscences of life in the School House from two retired masters who were Housemasters there in the thirties, Mr. E. G. 'Chug' Summers, who died recently, and Mr. W. R. 'Bill' Dodd who is living in retirement in Africa.
Memories I (E. G. Summers)

At Easter 1929 Mr. Jenkins asked me to become a resident master. The House then had forty boys, some of whom went home at weekends. The duties were light and I paid £40 a year for board from a salary of about £5 a week and lived quite well.

The boarders were accommodated in cubicles, 'cubes'—mostly single but a few double—and I had a room little bigger on the same floor. I had a study on the second floor which Headmaster White on his tour of inspection described as having 'an indigenous odour of stale tobacco'. There was a smallish room called the boarders' study where they could read or play chess or draughts. Prep was done in the big class-room, Room A. It was preceded by a roll call when boys were required to show their presence by saying 'adsum', a relic of Mr. Lamprey's days.

Weekends were rather a problem especially in Winter when there were long periods of cold and darkness with nothing officially organised. On Sunday evenings some of the younger boys would sit by the fire in my Study while I read to them and plied them with chocolates and biscuits.

At 11 a. m. on Sunday mornings we duly repaired to the gallery at Ashford Church as Sir Norton Knatchbull had commanded 300 years before. An hour of letter writing in the afternoon assured Mum and Dad that their offspring was in good health. Numbers began to decline as transport improved and it is doubtful whether it would have lasted long after 1940 even if evacuation had not occurred.

Memories II (W. R. Dodd)

The whole length of the top floor contained the cubicles and as Housemaster you had a fag to bring your hot water in the morning. A corridor ran between the cubicles and a new boy had to be initiated as a boarder by sitting on a tin 'potty' holding on as best he could while sliding the length of the corridor dressed in his pyjamas. The rest of the boarders stood at their cubicle doors preparing to get in as many lashes as they could while the victim slid past. If he fell off he had to start again.

The other torture was to be shut under one of the locker seats in the cricket pavilion... In the winter the boarders used brown stone ginger beer bottles filled with hot water as bed warmers. Fire drill was great fun. One boy threw a canvas chute down from a cubicle window and then slid down it using his elbows as a brake. He was immediately followed by another boy. The two held the chute away from the wall while all the others come down. We could clear the top floor in one minute.

On the whole, life was pretty spartan for the boys but most seemed to enjoy it. The School now had 228 boys; 16 in the 6th Form. Five boys had obtained Higher School Certificates and 20 were awarded School Certificates. About two boys went to University each year.

Bus services were now better and country boys could more easily attend School societies. The House system was changed because Burra House was now so large that competition was one sided. It was divided into two, North and South Burra Houses, the Maidstone-Dover railway line being the dividing line for residential qualification. Games facilities were still excellent and changing rooms and showers were now provided. January 1929 saw the introduction of Hockey as a serious School sport though no inter-school fixtures were arranged until 1930. The game had started several times but faded away; this time it was to become a permanent part of the sporting programme. An aerial photograph of the School taken in September 1920. It shows the Headmaster's meadow on the Site opposite, where Ashford Town F.C. now plays. The huts between the junior House and the School had just been built.

Harry Jenkins was now making his influence felt but there were rumours of greater changes afoot. "The Ashfordian" for April 1929 reported: 'As many of our readers know, important meetings have been taking place concerning the future of the School. We have learned from the public press that the name of Ashford Grammar School is to be retained and the present Governing body will be represented by at least two of its present members, the owner of Mersham-le-Hatch and the Vicar of Ashford'. Even more remarkably in October 1929 a lorry arrived with a load of fencing-`the hailing we hope of our new School'. No-one who read this could have realised that nearly thirty years were

to pass before the new buildings appeared nor have appreciated how their lives were to be changed in that time.

The first overseas visit for 22 years was made, again to Dunkirk. 'The Plage which adjoins Dunkirk was crowded and on that first day we must have seen a considerable part of the French nation'. Eleven years later some were to remember this visit while waiting on the same beaches to be evacuated from France.

At the 1930 Speech Day, the tercentenary of the School, the Hon. Michael Knatchbull chaired the proceedings saying that 'some schools might be older than ours but he thought it unique that Ashford Grammar School should still have connected with it a descendent of the family which founded it'.

In December 1931 the School learned with little surprise that the scheme for new buildings had been postponed. New playing fields on the North and West sides of the School were now available and so the field on the far side of Hythe Road was no longer needed. It was taken over by the Ashford Town Football Club to be turned into 'an up-to-date ground' but only large expanses of corrugated iron fencing could be seen from the School until houses were built along the Hythe Road a little later. The house originally known as "The Hostel" and later as Junior House was to be knocked down as the land would be needed for the new buildings.

The Board of Education now decided that no more public money should be spent on the School and turned down a proposal by the K.E.C. that £6,000 should be spent on alterations and improvements.

In February 1932 the Chairman of the Governors, the 4th Lord Brabourne, had died on board the "Carnarvon Castle". His son, the Hon Michael Knatchbull who had always taken a great interest in the School, succeeded to the title and was elected Chairman of the Governors. Within weeks however he had been appointed Governor of Bombay and soon left for India. Sir Charles Igglesden replaced him as Chairman of the Governors.

In 1932 Speech Day was held in the School for the first time since the War. The Workshop was used and W. J. (Bill) Fewings who had joined the staff in 1929 was to remember that when the Chairman, Sir Charles Igglesden, climbed into his raised chair he had to be carefully guided so that he did not bang his head on the iron girders which supported the roof. As the School now had 250 boys there was only room for a dozen parents. The War Office now recognised the Cadet Corps again and soon it had nearly 80 members; it had a bugle band and signals detachment. The B.P. Scout Troup was flourishing and most of the boys belonged to Cadets or Scouts. The Miniature Rifle Club had over a hundred members.

In September 1933, Harry Jenkins died suddenly from peritonitis while in Somerset. He had spent twenty years at the School, six as Head. This had not been a easy time partly because of the problems over his appointment as Headmaster and partly because of the frustration of working in inadequate buildings and with poor facilities. Academic standards had risen and the School had weathered the change from the autocratic

control of Lamprey and his predecessors to one where Headmaster and local authority worked together. Peter Woodworth, who as Second Master temporarily took control of the School, recalled that 'Harry Jenkins knew how to deal with hardened delinquents though on one occasion there must have been charm in his method. After receiving a severe thrashing from him, a certain boy about to leave his study turned and said "Thank you Sir. Would you mind shaking hands with me?"

Mrs. Jenkins continued to run the boarding side as Mrs. Lamprey had done in similar circumstances but history was not to repeat itself. In February 1934 the Governors appointed a new Headmaster, Leslie William White, M.A., a former Scholar of Selwyn College, Cambridge. He had been Senior History Master at St. Olave's School in S.E. London where Arthur Lamprey had once been a pupil. He was an all-round sportsman playing hockey, cricket and Rugby football to a high standard. Leslie White, who now lives in retirement in Bexhill, writes of his first impressions of the School: 'It was constructed from an odd assortment of brick, corrugated iron and wood rooms, one of which was the tin hut which still housed a few nine-year olds. In spite of the unpromising accommodation, there was strong spirit of affection and loyalty among both boys and masters'.

In 1934, the School was again visited by H.M. Inspectors, mainly to discuss with the new Head, the Governors and representatives of the Kent Education Committee the problems concerning the buildings and organisation. It was felt that Ashford would need provision for a two-form entry of 60 boys each year. They attached great importance to the boarding element even though there were now only 17 boys in accommodation which could house 40. Plans had been approved for a semi-permanent structure housing two class-rooms and a Physics laboratory. The Chemistry laboratory was to be refitted. The Inspectors thought the buildings were falling into decay even if they were not actually unsafe. The new buildings were erected quickly.

In 1934 The Ashfordian reported that 'some O.A.s will be scandalised to hear of a revision of the House system. This has resulted in the coming of the names Harper and Barrett as well as Knatchbull and Burra'. All members of the former School House went into Barrett but otherwise territorial qualifications were removed. This system still remains today. In 1935 more building changes occurred. The 6th Form Hut was demolished, the old Green Room became the Armoury and the Red Room (room J) was only to be used occasionally. The gymnasium was to be used for its proper purpose three afternoons a week; at other times it was to be used as a Hall.

The School numbers reached 300 in September 1936. A School hymn-book bound in light blue with the badge in dark blue on the cover was published and sold for 2/- (lop) a copy. The K.E.C. sanctioned £1,000 towards a new swimming pool for the School—the old one in the Wood was closed in 1938—and a trial hole was dug but it was to be thirty years before a pool appeared.

In the thirties, the Bowater Shield for Athletics was given in memory of Mr. Norman Bowater whose son N. K. V. Bowater was at the School and was a good sportsman; in 1939 the Bernard Wright Cup for House swimming was presented.

The start of term in September 1938 was overshadowed by the Munich crisis which soon receded but left the School temporarily without a woodwork master as Mr. Lampard was called up. 'Such things as the working of the School timetable and the relationship between George III and the Whigs became less important than the effects of mustard gas on a detector'.

In February 1939 Lord Brabourne died in India. While out there he had kept an interest in the School. An O.A., Godwin Dickinson, working in India recalled that he met him from time to time and on each occasion he asked for news of Ashford and the School. By 1939 the School had 338 boys. At Founder's Day, the Headmaster presented a silver chalice and paten (designed by O. A. Percy Norman) for use in Mersham Church where this ceremony had been held for many years. This gift marked the School's appreciation of Canon Brocklehurst who had conducted all but one of the services held at Mersham for Founder's Day.

The School broke up in July as usual. At the end of the month, the Scout Troop went off to camp on the Hampshire/Sussex border. In the Troop log George Pearson recorded that on August 5th 'everyone reached home after perhaps OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL CAMP!' On the next page he has written diagonally across the page the one word: WAR!

CHAPTER 9 THE SCHOOL AT WAR

Ashford Grammar School was founded at a time when the incidents leading up to the Civil War were taking place. Although Ashford saw little fighting, the nearest probably being a skirmish near Wye, the disputes between Parliament on one side and the King and Church on the other must have made it an uncomfortable time for those living in Kent. Like the rest of the South-East, Kent had been on the Parliamentary side in the early stages of the War and in 1644 the Church was defaced. By 1648 sympathies were moving back towards the King. As we saw earlier these differences of opinion locally must have made things difficult for Headmaster Pigott.

One hundred and fifty years later England was involved in War this time with the French. Both town and countryside were filled with soldiers and from across the Romney Marsh came news of fortifications being built as Kent prepared for the Napoleonic invasion which never came. We have no information on Old Ashfordians at that time though Ashford must have become an exciting town for the boys at the School.

By 1899 the School magazine had appeared and so we know something of the effects of the Boer War. In the May 1900 issue we read: 'The Relief of Ladysmith was patriotically celebrated by an extra half-holiday, and the Relief of Mafeking, similarly celebrated has made us more patriotic than ever. We are looking forward to the day when news will come that Lord Roberts has hoisted the Queen's flag over Pretoria. It is to be devoutly hoped that this event will not occur in the vacation!'

In 1901 the "A.G.S. Magazine", while mourning the death of Queen Victoria, congratulated Old Ashfordians on returning victorious from the front. Trooper T. Strouts, member of a family which has supplied many Ashfordians, had helped to capture General Pretorius, one of the Boer leaders.

The South African War affected the School itself very little but in 1914 "The Ashfordian" was to say: 'During our games we have heard the mighty guns of H.M.S. Venerable pounding the German trenches in Belgium and we have rejoiced to see Old Boys honourably khaki-clad at our School matches'. The Cadets now had their responsibilities and 'non-cyclists were detached to guard the railway line between Hythe Road and the bridge on the Kennington Road. The telegraphy lines were the special care of the cyclists, the four lowest wires being those on which communications between England and the British Expeditionary Force in France depended'.

Apart from this, the first year of War had little effect on the School though one night an experiment to block all the coast roads in Southern England caused 'the boarders to do all their prep in darkness', a somewhat remarkable feat. 'But we are not down-hearted only ready to turn out with our bayonets if required'. We have written elsewhere of staffing and feeding problems. Mr. Lamprey bought some neighbouring woodland—the School Wood—and 'with the help of Form IV turned it into a productive potato garden' which avoided ploughing up the School field as had been suggested.

Mrs. Wood, who as a girl worked as a housemaid in the Headmaster's house (for 8/6 (42 1/2p) weekly with keep) remembers the Zeppelin raids. The War came much closer when you could hear the throb of German engines above your head. It was the practice of staff and boys to leave the buildings and go into the School Wood on receiving warning of approaching airships. On one occasion she recalls hearing the engines overhead and realising that there was no-one else in the School; she had not heard the warning. At times the noise of bombs bursting could be heard.

Perhaps even worse was the purring sound of the giant Gotha bombers making their return from 'their barbarous raids on London'. 'Who will forget the raid on Whit Sunday night of 1918 when the Gothas were assailed by the barrage of shrapnel from the eighteen guns around Ashford. How the earth did quiver and the air resound with the screeching shells'.

In all thirty-seven Old Ashfordians were not to return from the War. As memories of air raids and food shortages were fading, a mere twenty years later War again seemed inevitable. In 1939 a School party visited Belgium and Holland but by 26th August the staff had been recalled from their holidays and the School reopened a little late on the 19th September to find Wilson's Grammar School from London sharing its premises. The flavour of this period is best tasted from the memories of some of those who lived through it. It was soon decided to keep the School going though other Grammar Schools in East Kent were fully evacuated. Like London's famous Windmill Theatre, 'we never closed' and so for several years Ashford Grammar School was the nearest Grammar School to the enemy which was still open. In 1940 after Dunkirk those who had not forgotten the German air raids of 1914-18 worked out that the School was nearer to the enemy coast than it was to London and that aircraft now flew much faster. War-time memories-4 (W. J. Suter)

Somewhere at the time of Munich attempts were made to provide the School with Air Raid shelters. The plan was to dig a series of zig-zag trenches on the field close to the wooden class-rooms. These would then be roofed with concrete and earth a foot deep. Unfortunately the designers forgot that the field was a source of Ashford's water supply and so the trenches filled rapidly with water. One trench was fitted with a pump to drain it and was eventually used by the 6th Form. The rest of the School was accommodated in a long concrete block containing six or eight rooms each about twelve feet square. Each room had a tiny ventilator.

By June 1940 trainloads of exhausted troops were passing through Ashford and Headcorn boys described how the villagers passed tea and food to thousands of soldiers in troop trains. France fell and early in the Summer our boarding establishment finished for good.

The increased danger of raids meant Ashford ceased to be a Reception Centre for evacuees and on 23rd June Wilson's School left for Sussex.

Also in June the long silent air raid sirens began to sound again, at first almost every day, then more than once a day, and in at least one period of twenty-four hours it sounded

ten times. By 1941 the total had reached 1,000. Most of these warnings were of raiders passing over to targets nearer London. Often we saw and heard nothing but once I remember 30 black bombers roaring over me in formation apparently only a few yards above the Maidstone Road.

Warnings were a nuisance even if nothing happened since we had to get to the shelters, inside at first and then in Summer on the grass outside ready to dive in if anything happened (though this was not officially approved of course). Exams held in normal rooms were often interrupted, papers left, no talking allowed(!) and finished late. I remember a Physics exam which was disturbed in this way; one boy told me afterwards that while sitting in the sun he worked out a tricky problem in his head and then rushed in and wrote it out when the All Clear was sounded. This boy was later killed in action. We were not allowed to send boys home during a Warning and since school buses did not wait this often caused problems. I remember once taking a boy home to Challock, at 6 p.m. This was in my 1936 Austin 7. A basic petrol ration was available for all for a year or two and I received a supplementary ration for my Youth Work and Church activities. In 1940 Chug Summers, my wife and I camped at Hastingleigh with some scouts. The older lads worked on neighbouring farms for a few pence an hour-4d (1 1/2p) was typical-which paid expenses and even left a profit. I remember standing outside the cottages where we stayed with a Patrol Leader (John Law) and some other Scouts looking South across the downs to where bombs were falling and flames leaping up. We worked out that it was Lympne aerodrome going up in smoke. Three years later, Johnny Law died in the R.A.F. These Harvest Camps expanded and were held each year for the rest of the War.

During the Summer of 1940 we of course had a grandstand view of the Battle of Britain. One evening we walked across to Brabourne where a Hurricane had been brought down in a lane. The local Constable was officiously keeping visitors away but, as we left, he solemnly presented Chug Summers with a piece a few inches long. The next day we found that cupboards in local cottages were crammed with souvenirs.

The policy over evacuation was that only boys who lived in the town should go. All the staff offered to go or stay as the Head wished. Woodworth, Levy, Summers, Fewings, Dodd and a few others went to Witney and their story is told elsewhere. The School in Ashford was put in charge of Frank Pinch. My Autumn time-table shows a morning of six 35 minute periods, six days a week starting at 9 a.m. and finishing at 12.45, with a 45 minute break. At one time we were forbidden to have more than so many boys in one area so we had to spread out. One junior form moved its desks into the Scout Hut in the school Wood. This survived the War but was burned down by vandalism soon after. We also used the Baptist Schoolroom in St. John's Lane, Ashford. As the War went on other masters were called-up and we had to find replacements which included a number of women teachers.

The School life went on with its odd mixture of normality and abnormality. Sirens sounded many times a day and there were occasional bombings which were often unannounced. Incendiary bombs came more into use so the more active members of the staff were called on for "fire-watching". We were issued with a long-handled scoop,

a bucket of sand and a stirrup-pump to minimise damage at an early stage but with a long rambling roof like that on the School we would not have stood much chance. Fortunately the School escaped damage.

On 5th November 1940 I left the First Aid post where I sometimes worked and was driving up Church Road when without warning a plane roared down and a bomb demolished a house we were passing. It was about ten yards away; the car was enveloped in dust and smoke but sustained only a small dent on the bonnet. On 24th March, 1943 we had our worst raid. The siren went at 10 a.m. and I took my class to the shelter. I went back to the School for something and as I ran back to the School the bombs fell and columns of flame and smoke rose from the town centre. There was damage all over and a bomber blew up over Godinton Road, killing 53.

By 1943 our time-table was normal and by 1944 air raids had almost stopped. One fine afternoon we were sitting outside the shelter during a Warning, watching a returning Dornier with anti-aircraft shells bursting far behind it, when machine-gun fire broke out from the plane causing us to scuttle down the shelter stairs.

On 15th June 1944 at about midnight we watched from our First Aid Post as a succession of glowing lights passed straight across the sky regardless of thick anti-aircraft fire around them. A day or two later we learned that these were among the first of the pilotless flying bombs or V1s which were being launched against London. Known to one and all as "doodlebugs", they had a distinctive throbbing drone. The moment the engine stopped they plunged to the ground and exploded. Later we would all rush out to watch our fighters try to stop them. They were too fast for the Spitfires if they couldn't get them in the first dive but later the Tempests and jet-propelled Meteors could cope better. The moment the drone stopped you ran hopefully for cover.

On 13th July 1944 a 6th Former and I were cycling home from School about 5.30 p.m. when a V1 cut out over our heads in the Hythe Road. We took cover in someone's garden and the bang was pretty close; the School fields were covered with fragments. An hour or so before it had been thick with boys playing games! Fortunately these attacks did not last too long and the next year we were able to try to get used to peacetime.

Memories—II (E. G. Summers)

During the doodlebug period we had to stop camping. The District Commissioner, a veteran of two previous Wars, before imposing this ban took me into a field near his home at Mersham and, showing me twenty sheep which had been killed in an explosion, said 'How would you like that to be twenty of your Scouts?' There was of course no answer to this!

In the early part of the War, I was still running the boarding house. Although we had few air raids then, the safety of the boys was a worry. A scheme was evolved that when the warning went I would go to the junior boys' cubicles, drag them out of bed, tell them to put on a dressing-gown and send them down to the cellar. In practice as soon as I had gone away each boy went back to sleep again. In the end we arranged for a senior boy to

make sure that each junior went to the shelter.

Long periods were later spent in the shelters and many a boy who had not previously thought much of his teachers actually became quite friendly with them.

Evacuation (D. J. Millen)

On 12th September 1940, exactly a year after Wilson's G.S. had come to Ashford, we assembled at 7 a. m. to be evacuated ourselves. I was a 6th Former and so, although I lived in the country, went with the School so that the 6th Form could be kept together. A crowd of 150 boys was at Ashford Station that morning. We had a wide variety of cases and bags, but all had the regulation small square box containing a gas mask. No one seemed to know where we were going or at least those who did were following the war-time spirit of keeping mum. Somewhere outside Reading we were held up for what seemed an interminable wait. The rumour went through the train that there was a bomb on the line and this seemed to be widely believed though Leslie White later said that an air-raid alert was the cause. We now heard a rumour that we were going to Witney and this one turned out to be true. Eleven hours after setting out we arrived there but it was too late for us to be taken to our new homes so, after a meal, we were taken to the local cinema, not to see a film but to sleep. To a 6th Former it seemed an ad hoc arrangement but it may have been planned. Anyway the seats seemed comfortable but most of us soon found this comfort short-lived and slept on the floor. Early next morning one or two masters were discovered on spacious settees.

After breakfast we went off with billeting officers to discover where our journey led us. With a fellow 6th former I found myself with a family living in a large house quite close to the school. It was a place which belonged to a different era from the 1970s. The family employed a housekeeper, maid, chauffeur and gardeners and naturally we were very comfortably accommodated.

The physics and maths masters had remained in Ashford and so the Headmaster arranged for science 6th formers to attend Oxford City High School. Most of the work was of course done as guests of Witney Grammar School. Their buildings and grounds were shared between the two schools and, at least to a 6th former away most of the time, it all seemed to run smoothly. Mr. Levy set about equipping part of an unused Institute as a chemical laboratory and involved me in much of the ordering. I learned a lot from the experience and later had the opportunity to do a lot of practical chemistry. Some time after we settled in we were awoken one morning by loud explosions to find the room covered in broken glass. Bombs had fallen in the High Street almost opposite the house and army lorries were on fire. Some of us were then re-evacuated and we moved to three different homes in turn. Certainly evacuation was an education in itself in the variety of life-styles we met, but everywhere we were made most welcome. (Evacuation as many boys found, did not harm their education too much and Jim Millen went on to a distinguished career in chemistry and is now a Professor at University College, London R. W T.).

Evacuation — II (Leslie G. White)

I was at Witney with my wife and son, Bill. The Governors of the local Grammar School

made us very welcome and gave us a generous amount of time in the buildings and on the fields. Every day assembly was held in the open air.

The numbers at Witney were well maintained until the end of the Summer term 1941 but as the threat of invasion faded there was a drift back to Ashford and by the Summer only about 60 boys remained. When we left Witney the boys still at Witney gave us a book inscribed with the names of the surviving members of the party.

CHAPTER 10 A NEW HEADMASTER

The previous Chapter described some of the problems which Ashford Grammar School had to cope with in World War II and other Wars. However, school life had to carry on and the Headmaster's letter of March 1940, written in the so-called 'phoney war' period reveals that 'influenza, German measles, scarlet fever, common or uncommon colds had far more effect on the life of the School than the War'. Mrs. Lamprey's old house, "The Lawn", now housed the offices of Mr. White and the Head of Wilson's G. S. The state of the buildings now seemed less important and it was felt that their replacement and the new swimming pool would have to wait—'after all the War won't last long and these things will come with our new-found prosperity'. Ironically, the War Memorial Fund from the 1914-48 War was still in the bank!

In the midst of all this turmoil came the news in 1941 that Leslie White had been appointed Headmaster of Beckenham and Penge County School for Boys. His approach to management had made him popular with Governors, staff and boys in difficult times. First of all he had the problems of an expanding school in inadequate buildings followed by the difficulties of running a school split between Ashford and Witney. On one occasion when the School was at Witney it was decided to put on a concert for the Witney Red Cross. Leslie White had driven up from Ashford that day over a hundred miles of unsignposted roads and arrived just as the concert was starting. Although tired and hungry he went on stage and sung two songs in his fine tenor voice.

The new Headmaster, Evan Turner Mortimore had been Mr. White's successor as Senior History Master at St. Olave's School. He was a former Exhibitioner of Sidney Sussex, Cambridge and, like his predecessor, was a good all-round sportsman. He had represented his College at cricket, fives, football and athletics and later represented the Amateur Football Association on a number of occasions.

The paper of "The Ashfordian" became thinner and thinner and in April 1942 it was not issued at all, though a 12-page "Old Ashfordian" appeared. It came back later to announce that Mr. Frank Pinch, who had run the Ashford end of the divided School, was to leave to become Principal of the Ashford Technical Institute. He had been at the School 22 years and was a fine cricketer having been one of the few to make a century on his first appearance in first-class cricket when selected for Glamorgan.

"The Ashfordian" of 1942 congratulated Mr. and Mrs. Mortimore on the birth of a daughter, Jennifer. She was the first girl to be born at the School House though there had been two boys, David Evans (1906) and Bill White (1936). A third, Martin Mortimore, was born in January 1945.

All but six boys had returned from Witney by September 1942 and, boosted by a number of pupils who would have gone to Harvey Grammar School normally, the total had now reached 330 (taught by the Head and 15 assistants). About half of these now had school dinners; the boarding house had of course closed in 1940.

In "The Lawn" the Headmaster had been joined by the 6th Form and he said that he

was looking for a new and quieter haven. Forty years later, in 1980, "The Lawn" has again been taken over to provide additional teaching accommodation for the 6th Form. It is interesting to note that there are now 172 boys in the 6th Form (of whom perhaps 160 will take G.C.E. A levels) as compared to the 22 of those days (of whom 14 took Higher School Certificate).

As in World War I, the Cadets had flourished and now numbered about 100; they now formed A Company of the Ashford Cadet Battalion. The Scout Troop was also strong and a Spotters Club (affiliated to the National Association of Spotters Clubs as No. 281) had many members who reached a high degree of proficiency in aircraft recognition—they had plenty of opportunity for practice! The tuck-shop had fallen a victim to sweet rationing.

By Easter 1945, the end of the European War was in sight and the future of the School again became a topic for discussion. 'You will wish to know how the new (1944) Education Act will affect the old School. Most of the changes will come gradually but there will be one striking event in September 1945. Every place in the School will be free and school fees will be a thing of the past'.

The "Old Ashfordian" of June 1945 greeted Victory in Europe with mixed feelings. 'Our pride and joy in the great victory has been tempered by the thought that it has been won at a price'. The total number of Old Ashfordians who lost their life in 1939-45 was to be 62 and one master of the School—Alan Bastow—had been killed. As news of prisoners-of-war returning safely was being received, came the announcement that Nor-ton Knatchbull, the 6th Lord Brabourne, had been killed at the age of 21 in September 1943. It had been known that he had escaped from a prison camp in Italy but it was not officially revealed until June 1945 that he had been recaptured and shot on the same day. He was buried in North Italy. As a direct descendant of the Founder he was ex-officio a Governor of the School but he joined the Buffs direct from Eton, and later the Grenadier Guards so had no opportunity to take up office.

This in fact meant that from September 1946 the School would cease to be independent and in future would be completely maintained by the Kent Education Authority. Not surprisingly the Headmaster referred to this at some length at the 1945 Speech Day. Reporting that the School had had excellent examination results—40 School Certificates and 5 Higher School Certificates with two State Bursaries in Science—he hoped that 'no attempt would be made to force the new secondary schools into a constricting examination mould' but thought that some form of exams were good for a school and helped it to 'maintain its tradition of sound learning'. He hoped that 'it would be given to those members of staff who had toiled long years through the wilderness to see that promised day (when they would enter their new building) but he feared that the fate of Moses was in store for them'. His fears proved to be right!

CHAPTER II A CHANGE OF STYLE

Those Old Boys, pupils and teachers who expected that the title 'Voluntary Controlled' would mean drastic and immediate changes for the worse soon realised that the School was carrying on much as before. It did mean that there would be a revised Governing body though even this looked familiar since there were still to be live Foundation Governors one appointed by Lord Brabourne and one jointly by Lord Brabourne, the Vicar of Ashford and the Rectors of Chart Magna, Aldington and Mersham. Another was to be appointed by the Old Ashfordians. The others were to be nominated by the local authorities. The first O.A. Governor was Mr. W. C. Blacklocks, J.P., who was at the School from 1916 to 1921 and had been an active Old Ashfordian ever since. He was later to present a Cup for fielding. The Harper Scholarships, which were no longer needed to pay for the fees of some pupils, were now to be given to selected boys going on to Further Education.

Although there had been some suggestions about re-opening the boarding accommodation nothing happened and work was soon started on converting the cubicles into classrooms.

In 1946 The Ashfordian reported the marriage of Lord Brabourne to the Hon. Patricia Mountbatten. John Ulick Knatchbull, 7th Baron Brabourne, had succeeded his brother as an ex-officio Governor of the School and has remained on the governing body ever since. For most of that time he has been Chairman and has continued to play an active role in the running of the School.

In the same year Dr. Shannon, whose eminence as a geologist has already been described, died.

The question of the War Memorial Fund, which had first been established nearly thirty years before, now had to be considered again and a new appeal was raised for those killed in the 1939-45 War. Among the suggestions put forward and discussed by O.A. were a book of Remembrance, a tablet in Mersham Church and..... a cricket pavilion! The O.A. Committee decided to offer the money collected twenty years before for the provision of a memorial to Arthur Lamprey, to the Trustees of the Wilks Memorial Hall—the old Schoolroom in the churchyard—for the carrying out of urgent repairs. This was done and a brass plate commemorating Mr. Lamprey is in the Hall.

On 13th December 1946, a Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for Old Boys who died in the War was held at Ashford Parish Church. It was conducted by the Vicar of Ashford, Canon H. Duncan Bowen, who did much for education in Ashford and was at the time Chairman of the Governors. One master, Alan Bastow, and 62 ex-pupils were remembered.

In 1948, Mr. Norman Booth, who had joined the School as science master before the War, left to become Head of Science at Maidstone Grammar School. He was later to become one of H.M.'s most senior Inspectors and had much to do with the modern

developments in science teaching throughout the country.

A General Inspection this year was again not surprisingly critical of the buildings but suggested that something could be done about walls bare of paint, defective plaster and a general air of neglected maintenance. They felt that much of the furniture was worn out and that the piles of junk lying in many odd corners could be cleared out. Their report was not enthusiastic about the general standard of the School but put this down to the depressing buildings and equipment, the upheaval caused by the War and the problem of finding enough boys who could really benefit from a Grammar school education. They urged that the local authorities and Governors should give the Headmaster and staff all the backing they could.

The Winter of 1948 saw the complete collapse of the boiler serving the main school and it was condemned. In those austere times—the expected period of prosperity not having materialised—they only substitutes which could be offered were coke stoves in the rooms affected so that the caretaker now had to deal with the physics laboratory boiler, eleven coke stoves, gas fires, oil heaters and numerous coal fires dotted about the maze of buildings.

As memories of the War faded so the Cadets declined whereas the Scouts had now become the 10th Ashford (Grammar School) Scout Group consisting of both Junior and Senior Troops; the former had five patrols.

In 1949 the Book of Remembrance was completed. This was produced by Mr. W. M. Gardner who later made similar books for the Brigade of Guards and those Members of the House of Commons who died in the War.

This year also saw the end of sweet rationing and with it the re-opening of the tuck-shop. This was then run by 'responsible members of the Scout Group' which took a share of the profits. It was supervised by Mr. Summers who continued to do this until his retirement.

On the 7th October 1951 a Service of Dedication of the Book of Remembrance and of the War Memorial, which had at last been erected in front of the School, was held. The Memorial was unveiled by Mr. W. P. Garner, an Old Boy and parent, and the Book of Remembrance by Mr. Peter Woodworth. Both were then dedicated by the Vicar of Ashford. The Memorial had been designed and constructed by Old Ashfordian, Percy Norman.

Peter Woodworth was to retire in next year. As we have seen he had been associated with the School since 1904 as pupil and teacher and was to become a Governor on his retirement. He continued his contacts with Old Ashfordians until his death in 1979 and it is probably true to say that no other assistant teacher has made such a mark on the history of the School. Perhaps the words of the H.M.I.s who inspected the School in 1948 would have pleased him most: 'The Second Master is a fine old school-master'. In 1952 the death of Mr. Walter S. Jordan was announced. He had served as a Governor from 1918 until 1948 and in his will he left a sum of money to provide annual prizes for

the development of education in citizenship. These are known as the W.S.Jordan Trust Prizes and are still awarded each year for service to the community.

The news in 1954 that the proposed new buildings had passed to the planning stage was greeted with little interest—'we had heard it all before!'—but something was actually happening and a meeting of Governors was told that the Ministry of Education had approved the buildings for the 1955/6 programme at a cost of £118,000.

They were told that there was really no alternative to the use of a site between the existing buildings and the railway line mainly because of the high cost of drainage in other cases. The existing buildings would be taken over as an annexe for the North Secondary Boys' School; the Governors were assured that this was a temporary expedient forced on the authorities by the 'bulge' resulting from the high post-War birth rate. It was impossible to give a definite period for their use since circumstances were changing all the time but it was thought (somewhat optimistically as it turned out) that the situation might ease by about 1962. In practice the Junior section of the Ashford North Boys' School has occupied the buildings ever since and relations between the two schools have been remarkably good throughout the period.

In 1955, Mr. B. S. 'Barney' Bland retired after 35 years on the staff. He is remembered best as a hockey player and for his work with the Cadets.

On the 24th January 1956, three days after the 75th anniversary of the move to Hythe Road, the first turf was cut for the building of the new school. One immediate effect was the removal of the 'tin huts' which had been provided by Mr. Lamprey to cope with the increase in numbers after the 1914 War; they were now sold for £25 as scrap.

Another link with the past was broken by the retirement of Mr. Charles Levy who had taught Chemistry since 1929. Ironically he had been told on appointment that he might expect a new Laboratory at any time; 27 years later as he left the School he saw the first bricks being laid for it! In this year a Cup for cross-country running was presented by Mr. A. Bedo Long, Chairman of the Divisional Executive and an Old Ashfordian and this is still awarded annually. The 1956 Speech Day was something of a family occasion. The speaker was Sir Frederick Brundrett, Chairman of the Defence Research Policy Committee. His son and two of his brothers had been at the School and his sister, Miss Dorothy Brundrett, had just become School Secretary. She is retiring from the post this year.

The Headmaster was now able to report that work had begun on the new buildings: We are keeping our lead over Batchelors' Peas—whose new factory was being built at about the same time—and our factory should be ready to go into production by 1958. As "The Lawn" would not be needed by the Ashford North School, it was now to be used by Mr. Mortimore and his family. The old Headmaster's House was to be converted into two flats for the use of caretakers.

In April 1957 Mr. Bill Leborgne retired as caretaker after 35 years of endeavouring to keep the Hythe Road buildings warm, dry and clean. Many were to miss his nautical roll and tales of the "Warspite" which he had joined fifty years before as a boy. He was succeeded

by Mr. Barney Usherwood who was to be faced with the teething problems of the new buildings but survived and is still with us.

By September 1957 numbers had risen to a new high of 375 and the stage was set for the move to the new School. As if the mark the occasion the School was stricken in October with a flu epidemic so that on several days 180 boys were away.

CHAPTER 12

THE PROMISED LAND

Although a glossy new building had been provided, much equipment and many books had to be transferred from the old School. The move took seven weeks overall and the logistics of it were based on the fact that there was a large supply of free slave labour available. The only sign of modern technology was the use of the Scouts' trek-cart. The day selected for completing the move was Friday the 10th January 1958. As readers will have now realised is usually the case in the School's moments of high drama, the weather was appalling and the 375 boys left the Hythe Road buildings clutching their own books and sports equipment in pouring rain. Ashford Grammar School officially opened in its new home on Monday, 13th January 1958.

Ian Hamilton, who had taught in the old buildings since 1926, was heard to say that he felt like a slum-dweller who had been moved to a Council flat. An old lady walking across the field looking at the new buildings was overheard to say: 'What a pity they've built a factory so close to Ashford Grammar School'. Nevertheless, in spite of small criticisms it was the Promised Land. There is little point in describing the buildings since, although additions were quite soon added, they are still there for all to see. Everyone settled in surprisingly quickly and those pupils and staff who were at the School then all agree that the change brought about a new enthusiasm and a more vigorous attitude to both work and play.

On Friday, 28th March 1958, the new buildings were officially opened by the Earl Mountbatten of Burma after a short service of dedication conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The morning had been bright and sunny but the School's traditional ceremonial weather was not far away and by the time the Headmaster met Lord and Lady Mountbatten at the gate it was pouring hard. Nevertheless, the Scouts, who had formed a Guard of Honour and were by now soaked through, were duly inspected. Lord Mountbatten took all this in his stride and began his speech by saying that, as a sailor, he welcomed this weather and was sure it would bring luck to the School.

While introducing his father-in-law, Lord Brabourne said that it was a proud and important day for him as a descendant of Sir Norton Knatchbull who had founded the School over 300 years before. He hoped that another 300 years hence another Knatchbull would look upon this Friday as a family highlight.

Despite a bitter and snowy winter, staff and pupils brought up in the sub-arctic conditions of the old buildings, sweltered in their new-found comfort. "The Ashfordian reveals the rejuvenation of the School brought about by its move; existing societies and activities thrived and new ones appeared. The House system took on a new lease of life and by July 1959 the Editor of the magazine was prepared to admit that School spirit had improved. He said that the new intellectual development was reflected by 6th Formers giving up tiddlywinks and taking up Bridge.

The first Speech Day in the new buildings meant that the platform party was able to sit in reasonable comfort and the audience was actually able to see and hear what

was happening. The Assistant County Education Officer, Mr. Jessup, gave the School a slightly back-handed compliment while presenting the Prizes: 'Each school has its own character which can be tested by the sort of boy it produces. In my experience, the Ashford Grammar School boy was not always intellectually superior but he was good-tempered and was usually prepared to do a bit more than was expected of him'.

Yet another pillar of the School was to retire at this time. Mr. Harry M. Rand had been on the staff 38 years. He had succeeded Peter Woodworth as Deputy Head until he handed over to Mr. W. J. 'Will Suter just before the move; he was to stay on until July 1959 as Senior History Master. He had joined the School in 1921 and came to a staff-room which he described as being almost a family circle, made up of eight or so young men like himself just back from the War, keen games players and generally kindred spirits. By September 1959, the School had 400 boys for the first time and a few months later had its first General Inspection since moving. It received a good report and the H.M.I.s felt that the opportunities offered by the new facilities had been seized.

In the fifties a number of trophies were presented. In 1951, another Governor, Mr. J. W. Kennard, gave a sum of money to endow subject prizes and these are now awarded for good A-level results. In 1952, the parents of John Stanley Powney, who died while at the School, endowed the John Powney prizes for music.

This is perhaps a good point to take a look at the School as it entered the Sixties. Harry Rand, when retiring the year before had said that the new race of schoolmasters were very different to the ones of thirty years before but he approved of them. Others who had been in both buildings agreed that the School was different too. This had a number of causes. The far better resources and accommodation provided by the K.E.C. obviously helped a lot and the appointment of new staff had injected fresh blood. The public attitude to education had changed a great deal and there was now a tendency to regard exam qualifications as perhaps being more important than the need to produce 'a good fellow' as Arthur Lamprey would have said, an attitude which not everyone would agree with. Although the importance of qualifications cannot be disputed there is now again a realisation that unless these are coupled with personality and character they are not in themselves the complete answer. During this period of change, Ashford Grammar School did not ignore this fact, and for this much credit must go to Evan Mortimore who as Headmaster kept a sense of proportion and had the confidence of both staff and boys. The School's main problem at this time was that the size of its entry was not large enough to provide all the facilities which were desirable. The 6th Form was beginning to expand but the School was not really equipped to handle this expansion. At the other end of the scale, the Inspectors had felt that the School ought to try to do more for the rather less academic. In 1960, 288 O level subject passes had been gained and, of 59 A level entries, 49 had passed (7 with distinction). The 6th Form now numbered 44. That year twelve boys started University courses.

Further building was immediately started and a shell which was to become a metalwork shop was erected. What the Inspectors quaintly referred to as 'two teaching cells' had been put at the back of the second-floor balcony. One of these cells became—and remains—a Prefects' Room; the other was a Biology 'mini-lab'.

In 1960 an appeal was launched to build the Swimming Pool which had been projected before the War. The Old Ashfordians offered the whole of the capital held in the War Memorial Fund to the appeal and the Governors made a donation from the interest in the Endowment Funds which the School still held. The School amenities fund could offer £550 and the K.E.C. contributed £250 so that a total of £2,000 was already in hand. A figure of about £6,000 was needed and to help the appeal a number of activities were organised. These included a large Fete opened by O.A. Robert Holness who was well-known for his appearances on radio and television and a noisy and well-received concert by the Band of the U.S. 3rd Air Force complete with sousaphones. O. A. Eric Knight gave the fencing to surround the pool and it was possible for Mr. A. B. Long, O.A. and Vice-Chairman of the Governors to open it in the Summer of 1964.

The Cadets had been disbanded in 1958 but the Scout Group continued until 1963. Queen's Scout Philip Reeves was awarded the Cornwell Scout Badge, perhaps the highest honour the Scouts can bestow. Despite suffering from severe dermatitis which caused him great pain and needed continual treatment, he threw himself wholeheartedly into every aspect of Scouting including camping. D. C. Eric Summers wrote that he had 'set an example of Scouting unique in my 32 years experience as a Scouter'. The spirit of Scouting was kept up by the institution of a House Expedition held annually and devised by Mr. Malcolm Taylor who had largely run the Scout Troop since he joined the School. Eric Summers and Wilf Suter who had been pillars of Scouting in the School for many years continued to be active in Scouting circles. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is operated in the School. In 1965 the parents of O. A. P. M. Bradford gave a cup for the winners of the Easter Competition.

At this time several long-serving members of the staff retired. Mr. Ian 'Mac' Hamilton left in January 1965 so setting up a new record for length of teaching service in the School since he had joined it 39 years and 16 days before. Although a Scot, he had been capped for England as an Amateur Football International and played for that most famous of amateur clubs, the Corinthians. In July of that year Mr. E. G. 'Chug' Summers retired after 37 years as French and Latin master but he was to continue part-time for another six years giving him a total teaching span of 43 years! The kindest of men, he has contributed some of his memories of the School to this book, but was killed in a road accident shortly before it was completed. In 1966 Mr. W. R. 'Bill' Dodd was to go; he had taught Art at the School since 1928. He was C.O. of the Cadet unit for some time and, as a County hockey player, had done much to improve the standard of that sport. He has also given the benefit of his 38 years, association with the School in providing material for this history.

As if associated with the loss of these long-serving teachers came the first mutterings of radical changes to the educational system in Ashford which were going to have an impact on Ashford Grammar School. Ashford was by now a steadily growing town. In 1967, the Headmaster spoke of the possible emergence of a number of fully comprehensive schools in Ashford one of which might be based on the School but more imminent was to be an 'interim' scheme in which all pupils would go to their local 'High Schools' at 11 and at the age of 13 a proportion would transfer to the existing Grammar Schools which might be renamed. This news was received with little interest by the boys,

mild apprehension by the staff, and intense suspicion by Old Ashfordians. Of more interest to everybody was the erection of a number of extensions to accommodate the increased numbers expected in the School with a three-form annual entry of nearly a hundred. These extensions were going to be so large as to be virtually a new school. The involved three new advanced science laboratories, music, art and craft rooms, a gymnasium, 6th Form Common Room—an intriguing innovation of the time—and new geography and staff rooms. There was also to be what was described at the time as ‘a futuristic language laboratory’ and what seemed to be a vast kitchen and dining hall. To build all this, much of it integrated with existing rooms, meant that school life became difficult to say the least. The staff were condemned to life in a builders’ hut in front of the School and all had to work against a background of pneumatic drills, dumpers and unloading trucks. However, when the additions were opened quietly and without ceremony in 1968 all this was soon forgotten. By 1969 the School had 501 boys. In 1968, Mrs. Norah Nobbs, the widow of the distinguished ecclesiastical artist Leslie Nobbs, who was an O.A., endowed the Nobbs Awards to help boys travel for educational purposes.

In 1969 another ‘forty-year man’ retired. This was Mr. W. J. ‘Bill’ Fewings whom many generations of mathematics students will remember. Perhaps no-one other than Peter Woodworth kept such close links with Old Ashfordians and a colleague wrote of him: ‘We shall long remember the quizzical smile which took the sting out of what otherwise might have been a devastating remark, and also his rejection of anything that was false, pompous or merely silly.

In 1971 the era really came to an end with the retirement of the Headmaster. Mr. Evan T. Mortimore—‘Morty’—had joined Ashford Grammar School in 1941 under the most difficult conditions of wartime and as the youngest member of the staff. During his thirty years’ service the School had doubled in size and been re-born in new buildings. A new Education Act of 1944 had revolutionised the educational system so that Ashford Grammar School had changed from a small Voluntary Aided part-boarding school in old buildings to a lively state school in a new environment. “The Ashfordian” devoted eight pages to singing his praises and we can do no better than quote a few of the comments from boys printed there. ‘He always had time to listen to boys, masters and parents, and the boys received the same courtesy as the others’. ‘He made the School a happy place to work in’.

By far his best feature was his understanding. Some might have thought him soft because of this but he certainly knew when to put his foot down’. And so one could go on and on. His interests were legion—philately, heraldry, local history not to mention his sporting achievements.

“The Ashfordian” recalled his last School assembly: ‘His closing remarks were typical. “Well, time and contract buses wait for no man”, he had said and then swept from the platform leaving everyone in a state of disbelief that he had made his last appearance as Headmaster’.

Speech Day in May 1971 was a unique occasion in that three generations of Heads were

present. Mr. Mortimore was giving his last report as Headmaster, Mr. Leslie White, his predecessor of thirty years earlier was presenting the prizes, while the School was getting a first glimpse of its new Headmaster, Mr. Philip G. Cox, who attended with his wife. Mr. Cox followed in the long tradition of Cambridge M.A.s as Headmasters of Ashford Grammar School, being a former scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge, but unlike his predecessors and perhaps marking a new attitude to the appointment had spent periods in the Army and in Industry before taking up teaching. He came to the School from Wolverhampton Grammar School where he had been in charge of Geography. 1972 was unique in two respects; the School had its first four-stream entry and two Speech Days were held in the one year. This was because the new Head felt that this function should be held at a time nearer to the events for which the prizes were being awarded. Thus the one in May was for 1970-71 and that in October for 1971-2. Both were held in the evening so that more parents could attend. This had originally been the School's practice until wartime blackout made it impossible. The first of what has now become an annual Carol Service was held at Ashford Parish Church.

In July 1972, Mr. W. J. 'Wilf Suter, who had been Deputy Head for over thirteen years, retired after 38 years service. He had remained for one year after the appointment of the new Headmaster so that both Head and Deputy Head would not leave at the same time. He was the last member of the pre-War staff to go and his experiences of the School in wartime are described earlier. He had long been Senior Science Master and had long associations with the Scouts. After retirement he remained as G.S. L. of the 12th Ashford Group at the Methodist Church for which he has worked so conscientiously. Because of this long association with Scouting—over fifty years—he was awarded their Medal of Merit. In 1979 he donated a prize which will be awarded annually as the Suter Prize for Science. He was succeeded by Mr. Kenneth G. M. Hall as Deputy Headmaster. He joined the School from Solihull School, where he taught Modern Languages and was to introduce the teaching of Russian into the curriculum.

On 19th September 1972, some 300 parents met to discuss the formation of an organisation whose aims would be to give assistance to the School, mainly by the raising of funds. Although the School had for many years held Parents' meetings it had never had a formal Parents-Teachers Association. It was agreed to form the Friends of Ashford Grammar School to embrace Governors and O.A.S., as well as parents of present and former pupils.

We have seen many ways in which Ashford Grammar School was prepared to take advantage of modern developments in teaching and curriculum changes. Thanks largely to the enthusiasm of Dr. Shannon it was one of the first Schools to teach Geology to its 6th Form. More recently Mr. Trevor Eaton had introduced the Study of Logic and Ashford Grammar School was one of the earliest to enter pupils for this subject at both O and A level. In 1967 it had been one of the Schools chosen to develop the new approach to teaching Chemistry which was being pioneered by the Nuffield Foundation Science Teaching Project. A part of the published scheme (and a few years later, its revised form) was devised in the School. A little later the School started to teach Nuffield Physics and Nuffield Biology and it was for a time one of the few Schools in the Country to be teaching the three Nuffield Science course at Both O and A level. The Modern Language

Department was not slow in taking up new-type courses such as Nuffield German and Spanish and 'Cambridge Latin' appeared on the scene.

By now the rumours of reorganisation had been confirmed and so the new boys of 1972 were to be the last 11 year old intake in the School's history. It meant also that there would be no new boys in September 1973 ,and the School was to have a new name. Much discussion both formal and informal had gone on about this. Most Old Ashfordians and many of the present boys and staff would have liked to see the old name kept but the main body of opinion was that, since the School was no longer to be a Grammar School but was to become a 13-18 Upper School with a wider intake, it should be given a new name. Because of the long association with the Knatchbull family and the fact that the Founder's descendant Lord Brabourne took a considerable interest in the School's affairs, there was really only one possibility. The title "The Norton Knatchbull School" was therefore proposed and the Governors under their Chairman Lord Brabourne agreed. The Old Boys would however still be called Old Ashfordians, so keeping the tradition going. This then was the situation when Ashford Grammar School ceased to exist in the Summer of 1973 and the School re-opened in September as The Norton Knatchbull School.

CHAPTER 13

THE NORTON KNATCHBULL SCHOOL

Those members of the School and Old Ashfordians who expected an instant change (and, in some eyes, a step over the precipice towards disaster) were surprised pleasantly or otherwise, according to attitude, that little had changed. The only obvious changes were that a new notice board appeared at the School gate, there were no new boys, no-one who wrote to the School could spell the name properly, and no-one in Ashford knew where The Norton Knatchbull School was! The School numbers actually dropped to about 500.

A number of minor changes were made internally. Second and third year boys in the School were arranged into four House forms for each year, the old House names being kept. This system has been in force ever since so that all boys are now in House forms and this has given a little more reality to the House system.

The newly-formed Friends of Ashford Grammar School which had quickly become affectionately known as FAGS now became FONKS but otherwise carried on unchanged. September 1974 saw the School reduced to its smallest numbers for years as once again it had no intake. The annual Speech Day is an important and often interesting feature of a School's calendar but is perhaps rarely memorable. This year however the visiting speaker was Graham Hill, twice World Motor Racing Champion. Never one to be overawed by an occasion, he quickly built up a rapport with boys, staff, parents and guests which is unusual at a Speech Day, not an easy occasion for a visitor. Shortly after, when he was killed in an air crash, many remembered how after the formal part of that Speech Day was over and everyone else was discussing his talk over refreshments, Graham Hill was sitting on the gallery cheerfully signing prizes and programmes for a never ending series of boys..... and some parents.

In September 1975, the reorganised School now started in earnest with the arrival of 140 thirteen-year olds and fourth formers suddenly realised to their amazement that there were actually younger boys present. The new scheme meant that there was no more '11 plus' examination and that the transfer from the High Schools to Upper Schools was made by 'guided parental choice'. A great deal of work had been put in by Headmaster and staff liaising with the staff of the High Schools and attempting to forecast problems before this new intake arrived and so the transition occurred very quietly and efficiently with few problems arising.

A few years ago the Ashford and District Fire Services Old Comrades Association gave a Trophy for the best cricketer of each year. This was to be known as the J. Strouts' Memorial Trophy. John Strouts had been Chairman of this Association and was one of several members of his family who had attended the School. Ashford had the first Volunteer Fire Brigade to be formed in the Country.

During this period parents of a number of boys at the School have presented trophies: the Crannis Cup for field events, the Wilson trophies for swimming Champions, and in 1979, the Turner Prize for History.

Mr. David Williams was a part-time language teacher who died while at the School and his widow presented the D. O. M. Williams Memorial Prize for Spoken French. Just as the School was settling down into its new role as an Upper School, news was emerging of further reorganisation plans in which Ashford's secondary schools would in some way become fully comprehensive though it was not clear exactly how the School would fit into the new pattern. However, a change of Government in 1979 meant that these plans were dropped; the interim scheme became a permanent scheme and it appears that The Norton Knatchbull School will continue in its present form at least until the next change of Government.

By its 350th year the School had grown to 550 boys. Although this was smaller than it had been it seemed very crowded since some 300 of these were aged 16 or above. The 6th Form now numbered 172 of whom about 160 will probably be entered for A levels. This dramatic increase in 6th Form numbers was not entirely unexpected and so once again plans had been well prepared beforehand to deal with and once again the changes have been absorbed with little trauma. To ease the problems of finding accommodation for 6th Form teaching, "The Lawn" has once more been brought back into service so turning the clock back forty years.

One problem which is not obvious to outsiders is that of organising the G.C.E. and C.S.E. examinations in an Upper School with such a large number of entrants for a wide selection of subjects (entered through several different examination boards). Today the period from early May until the end of June is taken up with external examinations which involve a large proportion of the School. Well over a thousand individual entries have to be made and checked..... and then a fraction of the procedure has to be repeated in November and again in January. Although examination success isn't everything it is nice to realise that last year more O level passes were obtained than ever before and the A level results were as good as at any time in the past. The numbers going on to University or Polytechnic were the biggest in the School's history, with five going up to Oxford or Cambridge.

Some twenty subjects are now examined at O and A level and a further twenty are studied as part of General Study Course. One would like to feel that Sir Norton Knatchbull would be proud of the School he had founded. Throughout this History, the names of the Knatchbills have appeared regularly and the Founder's descendant, Lord Brabourne, is a frequent visitor to the School as Chairman of the Governors. As described elsewhere, Founder's Day is no longer celebrated but a short history of the School is read to all new boys. One hopes therefore that all those in the School know at least something of the association between the Founder's family and the School. By one of those strokes of fate which go to make up life the School was perhaps closer to the Founder than it had been ever before when it assembled on the first morning of its 350th year.

During the School holidays they had heard the news of the I.R.A. bombing which had killed Lord Mountbatten and two members of the Brabourne family while injuring others, including Lord and Lady Brabourne. At this assembly the School stood in silence. A few remembered that day 24 years before when Lord Mountbatten had stood in that

same hall and declared the new buildings open. Some fifty years ago, the Dowager Lady Brabourne had, as Lady Doreen Knatchbull, presented for the first time the Knatchbull Trophy donated by her husband. Many of the younger boys perhaps thought of Lord Brabourne's identical twin son Nicholas who, aged 14, had been the same age as many of them. And thoughts were with Lord Brabourne and his wife, (who had presented the prizes two years before), lying injured in an Irish hospital with their surviving twin son, Timothy.

CHAPTER 14 'ALL BOYS SHOULD BE KEEN ON ALL GAMES'

We have already learned something of the leisure activities of the boys in the early days. Organised sport played little part in school life before the Nineteenth Century and there are few references to sports before about 1850.

The "Ashford and Alfred News" of 30th August 1856 reports a cricket match between the School and the Junior Cricket Club played a week before on the Hall Field (near Boys Hall in Willesborough). The result: Ashford Grammar School 56, Junior Cricket Club 79. Cricket must have been played at the School before this since Kent was always been a strong cricketing county and in 1629 the Curate of Ruckinge Church was disciplined for playing 'at Cricket in very unseemly manner with boys and other mean and base persons of the Parish..... on many Sundays'. From 1834 Kent had gone through one of its strongest periods when, with players like the giant Alfred Mynn, they could beat All England. The record of the 1829 Oxford v. Cambridge match carries the line: Knatchbull b. Jenner 7. With this sort of background it seems that boys going to the School must have played cricket.

Of football there is no mention at the time. The game had been played in a rough and ready fashion with large teams and few rules for many years but it was not until the 1860s that law and order was established. The Public Schools including Westminster had much to do with organising the game and since many Ashford Grammar School boys went on to Westminster to complete their education it seems possible that soccer may have been played in some form.

A form of cross-country running usually in the form of "Hare and Hounds" certainly went on and carried on into the present Century when the sport became more formal. On moving to the Hythe Road site the opportunities for organised sport increased. It appears that Rugby football was played at the start. An Old 'boy at the School in 1881 wrote that 'we played football that term (Rugby) on a field leading to the Cradle Bridge and very curious football it was. One player got a try by dashing his cap in the face of the opposing full-back and when we pushed in the scrum we faced our own goal and pushed with our backs'. It seems as though a change to Association Football was soon made because by 1883 the School was playing the Town at football with fair success. There is in fact record of a game against Faversham G.S. at the end of 1881 and the School was very small so could hardly have played both games. 'The drive to Faversham was always exciting; pea-shooters being used on the outwards journey and songs keeping us awake on the way back'.

Cricket was still being played on the Boys Hall field though a cricket pitch was now being laid near the School.

In 1882 a School race was held in the Aquatic Sports at the Ashford pool. The handicapping was said to be so poor that 'some of the competitors nearly finished before the scratch men started'. 'One one occasion a small boy dived in the shallow end and stuck in the mud'.

The first Athletics Sports were held in July 1884 and hockey was played from 1900. They actually challenged the Ashford Town Club but 'our knowledge of the rules is limited and sticks is a sore trouble to us all'. The game did not really catch on for nearly thirty years. For some years the games of Fives was popular. In 1884 football was played on Henwood Farm, west of the present field.

Although the School was very small its teams were highly successful and indeed the standard of ball games was always high at the Hythe Road School since many of the staff appointed were excellent sportsmen.

Possibly the most distinguished footballer produced by the School was there from 1891-1895. He was S.S. Harris who went on to Westminster School. From there he passed to Cambridge and obtained a blue in football. He soon obtained the first of several full England caps. He played for England against Scotland in 1904 and was described by a sports writer as 'the outstanding forward on the field', no mean praise as he was playing alongside the legendary Steve Bloomer. Even more remarkable when one remembers that the match was played in Scotland and England won is the fact that the 'crowd was so impressed with Harris that they carried him head high off the field'. Harris again played for England against Scotland in 1906 this time in front of the first 10,000 international crowd. Scotland won 2-1 but Harris infuriated the crowd by 'passing the word back to play for safety so the game became a farce'. Why he did this is not clear but as a result the offside rule was changed so that a player could not be off-side in his own half and the brilliant but erratic Harris never played for England again. By 1909 he had retired.

In the Easter Term 1914 a Soccer Sixes competition was instituted and a Fives Tournament for the Williams Cup was started. Shooting was also a popular sport and in 1909 Lord Strathcona had presented a Trophy for competition.

The cricket match against Harvey Grammar School in May 1911 produced what was probably the best win the School has ever achieved. Ashford Grammar School batted first and scored 277 for 1 declared, J. A. Horne 151 n.o. and P. M. Care 103 n.o. Harvey were then bowled out for 34 with Horne and Kingsnorth each taking 5 for 15. Horne and Care had an unbeaten second wicket stand of 230 which they scored in 90 minutes and this feat gained them a mention in that year's Wisden. Harvey G.S. seemed to bring out the best in the School's cricketers for in 1921 they scored 169 for no wickets.

In the Summer of 1921 a Tennis Club was formed. Three rather badly surfaced courts were laid down in the School wood on land bought during the War by Mr. Lamprey. As we have seen he had also bought the field where Ashford Town now plays as additional playing-field accommodation in 1920 and in 1916 the School had obtained the Three Acres Field which is still part of the grounds. In 1931 a further piece of land was added on the North and West sides of the field as the Headmaster's Meadow opposite was given up.

Between the Wars, boxing was extremely popular and, in 1924 for example, over a hundred boys took part in the House Tournament. In the same year 61 of the boys were

able to swim well enough to wear the 'Swimming Button' and, as we have seen, the Burnside Cup for Diving was presented.

Hockey eventually became a regular sport in the School in 1929. It became stronger and stronger and in March 1939 a Hockey Festival in which six school teams participated was organised by the Headmaster. It was so successful that it was repeated in 1940 although the War had by then begun to make an impact on games. The names of schools evacuated from London now appeared in the fixture lists.

The 150 boys evacuated to Witney in 1940 found that the local Grammar School played Rugger but Ashford challenged them at Soccer and won 5-0. Witney G.S. soon got their own back on the Rugby field. The part of the School left at Ashford found there were no schools to play against and so fixtures with the many service units around were arranged. Many of these were tougher and more vigorous than the average school side and sometimes contained first-class players. In fact the School teams of 1941/42 were very strong indeed even though by now part of the field was being cultivated as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign.

By 1943 the biggest problem for sportsmen was obtaining equipment such as football boots and the shortage of hockey sticks, despite appeals to Old Ashfordians who had retired from the game, virtually caused it to be closed down. Swimming and athletic sports carried on throughout the War period except for the time of the flying bombs which caused the 1944 Sports to be cancelled. Fives had not been played since 1939 and one court was now used as a boiler-house though the game was revived rather half-heartedly for a short while later.

The end of the War saw the reintroduction of the Hockey Tournament, this time with teams composed of six men and five women. In order to be able to enter, the School combined forces with the Ashford County School for girls and put in two teams, the first one winning. The game continued to flourish in the School and in 1950 Peter Eades became the first Old Ashfordian to be awarded an England hockey cap. For a number of years after the War, the Old Ashfordians organised the Hockey Tournament which attracted many men's clubs from throughout Kent.

By 1952 the interest in boxing was waning and a strong body of opinion in Kent and elsewhere considered it unsatisfactory as a school sport and so it was dropped. To produce a replacement for House competition, it was decided at Easter 1953 to revive the School Cross-Country run. For many years the boys had held such competitions as Hare and Hounds and steeplechases but it was now to become a formal sport both at House and School level.

Hugh Marshall was perhaps the best all-round sportsman the School has seen in post-War years. He was an excellent cricketer and actually played occasionally for Kent 2nd XI but it was at hockey that he excelled. In 1960 he was awarded the first school boy international cap an Ashford Grammar School boy had obtained and in 1963 he captained the England Under-23 Hockey XI. In 1966 he achieved the distinction of being awarded the first of several full Scottish international caps; this was a most unusual

situation in the light of his having captained the England side only three years before! His father had been a Scottish football international in his young days. When he left school he went to Bristol University and after graduating went up to Oxford where he obtained Ashford G.S.'s first Hockey blue. He had therefore in three years been transformed from a Bristol University hockey player captaining England Under-23 to an Oxford University blue playing for Scotland.

Basketball, which had been introduced briefly in 1950, reappeared in the Seventies and Nigel Ayres was in the S.E. England squad in 1973, followed a little later by Mark Lawrence.

The opening of the School pool brought a revival of interest in swimming and occasional fixtures were held with other Schools. The opening of Ashford's Stour Centre with its heated pool enabled boys to swim throughout the year. It also offered sports such as squash and weight-lifting. A five-a-side lunchtime football tournament was organised there and one year the School entered two teams, one from the boys and one from the staff. There was a time when the former was top of the league table while the staff team was at the bottom.

Rather remarkable for a non-Rugby playing school, a team was entered on two occasions for the Ashford R. F.C. Schools 7-a-side Tournament—and won both times! An athletics Sports has been held since 1884. Ian Mackett, himself winner of the Victor Ludorum in 1979, has made an interesting study of School athletics for much of the period. Space does not permit the inclusion of it all but it reveals the way the Sports have changed over the years. In the early part of the Century there were a number of Open events including the 100 yards, throwing the cricket-ball, 440 yards, long jump and the mile; heats and finals were held for the sprint events and individual prizes were awarded. There were usually novelty races: for example in 1909 there were 220 yards handicap football race, 880 yards obstacle race and a consolation race-100 yards backwards! Other odd events which appeared from time to time were egg and spoon races, tug-of-war, slow bicycle race, sack race, three-legged race, 'pillow fight', and, in 1912, a stamp-licking race.

Handicapped races were popular and the rules used in 1914 show how these were often masterpieces of mathematical ingenuity. Two examples show this:

1. Handicapping is based on age and height. For example, in the 100 yards race, one yard start is to be given for every half-year of inferiority and one yard for every inch of inferiority; these starts are to be added together and divided by two.
2. In cases where the eldest boy is NOT the tallest, handicaps are based on an imaginary competitor as old as the eldest and as tall as the tallest. The least handicap is then reduced to scratch and the rest by the same amount.

And so it went on—all before the days of calculators!

In 1970 track distances were converted from yards to metres with field events following a year later. The Senior 5,000 metres race was introduced in 1972 and the Senior and Middle 3,000 metres in 1974 and 1972 respectively to replace walking events and give the

Sports greater depth.

About ten years ago the last of the novelty events—a House relay in which all First year boys entered—was dropped and today's Sports Day is a far more polished and technically superior exercise than was once the case, records being broken regularly. One must however feel that perhaps we have lost something from the Inter-War years when large numbers of parents and visitors attended, taking tea to the music of the brass band from the Ashford Industrial School.

The School has had a number of excellent athletes associated with it including H. T. Hammond, who won an Oxford blue for hurdling in 1932, D. C. Pemble, who came fourth to John Disley in the 3,000 metres steeple chase in an international meeting at the White City in 1955. and P. R. Hogben who jumped for England against Poland in 1957 reaching 6 feet 2 inches (below his best of 6 feet 3 ins).

It is lucky in having on the staff at the present time, two outstanding athletes. Mr. Graham Thomas was awarded his England vest for running the 400 metres in 1967 and Miss Fiona Rogers has run the 400 metres for Northern Ireland, obtaining two Silver medals in the 1978 Northern Ireland championships.

Broadening the sporting scene even more, sailing has become a popular activity since 1972. The gradual introduction of new sporting activities mirrors the attitude to school games. The 1935 maxim that 'all able-bodied boys should be keen on all games' just does not apply today—if it ever did. The more activities the School can provide the more likely it is to interest the maximum number of boys.

CHAPTER 15 FASHIONS AND CUSTOMS

In several parts of this book we have described aspects of life at the School. Before the middle of the Eighteenth Century it is unlikely that there was any official uniform but the wearing of an academic cap or 'mortar board' is mentioned then and appears in an early engraving. We are told that in the first few years at the Hythe Road school the colours were black and white (or more accurately, silver). The early accounts refer to bands of this colour being worn on bowler hats though this seems a little unlikely.

Quite soon, dark blue caps were worn with a red AGS monogram badge on the front. By 1910 the Headmaster was rather put out to find that other boys in the district were wearing similar caps and so the four blue bands radiating downwards from the button were inserted. The red badge was replaced by the Knatchbull shield which is still the School blazer badge. A Prefects' cap with gold braid at the back was introduced. For a while a blue cap with a metal House badge could be worn as an alternative but this fell into disuse in the 1920s. By the end of the 1950s, school caps were no longer compulsory for the 6th Form and within ten years had become a thing of the past for all pupils. For a time, the distinctive Cadet uniform was accepted as school wear. The dress of others is shown in pictures in this book, the distinctive Eton collar being obvious. The boys who came to Ashford in 1881 from Stamford G.S. with Mr. Musson brought a strange custom known as 'Kissing the Brick'. At Stamford there was apparently an old gate with a rather evil-looking gargoyle over it and new boys there were made to kiss this while being chastised by their colleagues. At Ashford, new boys were hoisted to the top of a wall in the Fives Courts. They had to lean over it and kiss a brick on the far side while the older boys made things difficult for them by pinching them. The custom carried on well into the 20th Century when it died a welcome death.

Another unpleasant act was the ducking of unpopular new boys in a tank of water known as the Frog Tank. New boys were also sometimes taken to the lower part of the School to see the School Ghost. This consisted of an older boy dressed in a white sheet and holding a broomstick across underneath. Eventually a boy named E. Rayner who was at the School from 1898 to 1903 and later died in the War set about the 'ghost' and exorcised it by attacking the occupant of the sheet. It is surprising that the boys were naive enough to let this go on for over twenty years.

A more recent and worthy custom which was carried out until recently was the celebration of Founder's Day. We have described how this occasion was regarded as a festive time in the early days of the School but for a long time the practice ceased. In 1910, Mr. Lamprey decided to combine the celebration of what was then called Empire Day and was held on the 24th of each May with a Service of Commemoration for the Founder. For the first time in 42 years, the scholars of Ashford assembled in the old school-room. The Headmaster presided and, as well as the staff and boys, some of the School Governors were present. Prayers were read from 'the book printed for the School in 1759' and the Hymn 'O God our help in ages past' was sung. A short history of the School was read by the School Captain, R. Kingsnorth. Dr. Wilks then spoke urging them to uphold the spirit of the Empire and the School. Three cheers were given and the

proceedings concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.

The general pattern of the Commemoration Service was not altered substantially for the next sixty years or so. For a number of years the annual shoot for the Strathcona Trophy was held in the afternoon of Founder's Day.

In 1918, the building was not available and so it was decided that the scholars would march to Mersham Church where the Founder was buried and the Service would be held there. This started a practice which to many of those who took part in it, was regarded as a memorable occasion. For some time the procession would be lead by Cadets and Scouts often with a brass band. On a number of occasions Cadet buglers sounded the 'Last Post' during the service. The weather for once often seemed to be hot and the marchers were revived at Mersham from large bins of water. After the Service, they re-formed and marched the three miles back to the School.

May 1940 was not considered a suitable time to march to Mersham so a brief service was held in the School. In 1941 for the only time Founder's Day was held outside of the Ashford area at Witney where most of the School was evacuated. In 1942 it was held at Ashford Parish Church. After the War the march to Mersham was resumed until 1960. By this time the School had become too large to accommodate it all in Mersham Church and so it was decided in future to use the School, Mersham Church and Ashford Church over a three-year cycle. The procession became less impressive with the disbandment of the Cadets, the loss of the band and finally the closure of the Scouts; it had become a rather untidy walk. Traffic on the A20 had increased and so police control was needed at several points. A combination of these circumstances meant that 1966 saw the last march to Mersham. For a while a short service was conducted at the School but eventually even this was abandoned as a regular event, perhaps

CHAPTER 16 THE OLD ASHFORDIANS

No history of the School could possibly ignore its Old Boys. Education is not an end in itself and perhaps the best test of a School is how well its pupils do when they leave to make their way in the World. From time to time, the names of some Old Ashfordians have appeared in this narrative but it is obviously not possible to list all the successful—or the notorious—from the thousands who have passed through the School. What we can do is to look briefly at the history of the School's Old Boys' association, the Old Ashfordians. The earliest O.A. we can trace is John Paris who left in 1639. He entered St. John's, Cambridge at 16 and later became Headmaster of King's School, Canterbury and Wye G.S, respectively.

We have seen that in the early days of the School it was normal to hold a service, the 'Grammar School Anniversary Meeting'. In the evening an assembly was held in the Saracen's Head, a hotel demolished in 1966 to make way for what is now Boots' store. The "Kentish Gazette" of 1776 contained the following:

ASHFORD SCHOOL FEAST

Many Gentlemen educated at Ashford School having expressed a desire that an Annual Meeting might take place; To effect therefore this scheme,

A SCHOOL FEAST

WILL BE HELD ON THE 20th AUGUST AT THE SARACEN'S HEAD IN ASHFORD

Stewards:

- Sir Edward Knatchbull, Bart
- Thomas Knight, Sen., Esq.

NB. A sermon will be preached on the occasion.

The Company of any Gentleman not educated at this School will be acceptable.

Dinner will be on the table at two o'clock.

These feasts probably carried on at least from time to time into the Nineteenth Century but there was no formal association of Old Boys.

In 1893 an Old Ashfordians cricket team first played the School and lost 84 to 129. In 1899, a number of Old Boys decided to call a meeting to set up an association 'to promote interest in Ashford Grammar School and to unite all Old Ashfordians in a bond of fellowship'. This was held on 10th April at the Saracen's Head with Headmaster Snell in the Chair. The formation of an Old Ashfordians' Association was proposed by Mr. G. S. Wilks and seconded by Mr. B. C. Drake; this was carried unanimously and a Committee was immediately formed. The first General Meeting of the Association was planned for Saturday 1st July when the cricket match 'Past v Present' was to take place. After a late start because of rain, the match got under way and the Past eventually won 60 to 56. The Headmaster entertained the teams to lunch in a tent on the field. This match has continued annually ever since although it is now usually held with less ceremony on a Wednesday.

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m. and it was decided to adopt the School colours of silver and black—'ties and hat bands can be obtained from the Secretary'. The annual subscription was to be 5/-(25p). Mr. C. S. Body proposed that a Dinner be held in London in January and also that a Smoking Concert should be held in Ashford in November, preceded by a football match against the School. Everyone then adjourned to the Dining Room where after the Loyal Toast and the singing of the National Anthem a very long series of toasts were proposed. A number of O.A.s rendered songs and these were followed by recitations. Everyone then sang Auld Lang Syne and again the National Anthem so concluding the proceedings which 'had been marked by the greatest heartiness and enthusiasm'. Many hours after they had started they all tottered out into Ashford High Street. Fortunately the Old Ashfordians of today are less extrovert and, usually, less verbose.

The proposed Smoking Concert was duly held in November and after the usual long series of toasts, recitation and musical items, a tambourine was passed round; the sum of four guineas (£4.20) was collected for the wives and children of those at the South African War.

On 17th January 1900 the first London Dinner was held, at the Holborn Restaurant. About thirty dinner-jacketed Old Boys and friends were present. Although the 1901 London Dinner was cancelled because of the death of the Queen, a pattern had now been established. The London Dinner would be held in the Easter Term, and Old Boys' Day—cricket match, A.G.M. and Annual Supper—in July. We have a menu for one of these Suppers held at the King's Arms, Ashford: Fish (salmon, mayonnaise sauce), Joint (roast lamb and mint sauce), Poultry (roast chicken with ham), Vegetables (new potatoes and peas), Sweets, Cheese. This was always followed by the usual long series of toasts, the speakers being frequently acclaimed 'with musical honours and Kentish Fire', the latter being a sort of rhythmic clapping. The gathering was then entertained by six or more O.A.s backed up by professional performers.

In 1909 the London Dinner was held at Frascati's Restaurant where it was to remain for the next twenty years. Throughout the 1914-18 War there were obviously no formal O.A. events. The cricket match was resumed in 1919 and first official post-War reunion was in December 1919. So many wished to play against the School that the usual fixture was replaced by two mainly involving Old Boys (Knatchbull v. Burra and School House and O.A.s v. the School).

An Old Ashfordian Football Club was formed in 1922. Two XIs were fielded at first, one becoming Champions of Division II of the Ashford and District League and also being the defeated finalists in the Ashford Charity Cup. This standard of success was not maintained however and in 1927 the Club withdrew from the League. It was revived in 1931 and again in 1935 when it entered the East Kent Old Boys' League, but there was little real enthusiasm.

In 1933 a Tennis Tournament was held and in the same year an upsurge of enthusiasm for Hockey was marked by the first fixture against the School. In 1921, 1922 and 1930 the Association gave Shields for House competition in football, cricket and hockey

respectively.

The Minute Book of the London Dinner Committee for the period 1925-39 and for 1947 still exists and makes interesting reading. In 1925 they had to pay Frascati's £16.11s.6d. (£16.571/2) for 39 dinners, the Head Waiter being tipped 10/6 (52 1/2p). Three 'artistes' were engaged: G. Ellis (2 guineas or £2.10), F. Burton (10/6 or 521/2p) and Clapham and White (1 guinea or £1.05). By 1929 rumblings of discontent at these high prices caused a move to the Golden Cross Hotel where they were charged only 5/-(25p) each but they presumably were not satisfied so they moved back to Frascati's in 1930. Various venues were tried for the next few years but World War II brought activities to an end after the Old Boys' match in December 1939. The "Old Ashfordian" magazine which appeared on a fairly regular basis contained pages of news of O.A.s on active service and a fund was set up to send books, cigarettes and sports kit to the 20 or so O.A.s who were in prison camps overseas.

Activities resumed in 1946 and two football teams were started but soon closed down. An O.A. Hockey XI was launched however and this proved to be highly successful for a number of years. In 1957 it ceased but Ashford H. C. has regularly had many O.A.s on its books. Recently successful Cricket tours have been organised.

In 1948 the Headmaster started a practice which has continued ever since of toasting O.A.s present at the Annual Dinner by decades. 1949 was the 50th Anniversary of the Association. The memorial plaque to Arthur Lamprey was unveiled in the old Schoolroom. The last Saracen's Head dinner was held in 1966; from 1967 it has been held in the School Hall. The London Dinner was discontinued in 1947 because of lack of interest but it was restarted a few years later at its present home, the Martinez, and has thrived ever since.

As we have seen the Association was rather disturbed at the news of proposed organisation in seventies and the "Old Ashfordian" for 1974 contained the following opinion: 'There is no fear of the School being comprehensive while there is still an O.A. alive'. Fortunately a change of Government in 1979 meant that these stirring words were never put to the test!

Appropriately the 1976 Dinner, which was the 200th Anniversary of that first recorded one in 1776 was addressed by Lord Brabourne's eldest son, the Hon. Norton Knatchbull (now Lord Romsey). The Old Ashfordians is certainly thriving despite changes in School organisation and many of its younger members have of course experienced life at The Norton Knatchbull School. The success of the London Dinner is unusual for a provincial School.

CHAPTER 17 TO THE FUTURE

This small book is an history and not a horoscope. It would be a brave man who tried to forecast the future of the School. Not surprisingly when one considers the vast sums of public money poured into education, the latter has become something of a political football. If only one lesson can be learned from the School's History it is that Ashford Grammar School and The Norton Knatchbull School have managed to adapt themselves to the changing World outside and the School is perhaps as successful now as it has ever been.

There are many schools in the Country which are more than 350 years' old but there must be few which have kept a continuous association with the Founder's family as this School has with the Knatchbulls.

The 350th Anniversary is to be celebrated in July 1980 when it is hoped that parents, friends and Old Ashfordians will join the Governors, staff and boys in a number of events. An appeal has recently been launched to build a pavilion to mark the occasion and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales has consented to visit the School on the 15th July. A Founder's Day service will be held in the morning and the recently retired Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Coggan, has agreed to preach.