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With every good wish.

Ross Gilkes

Fairfield

1898
1998

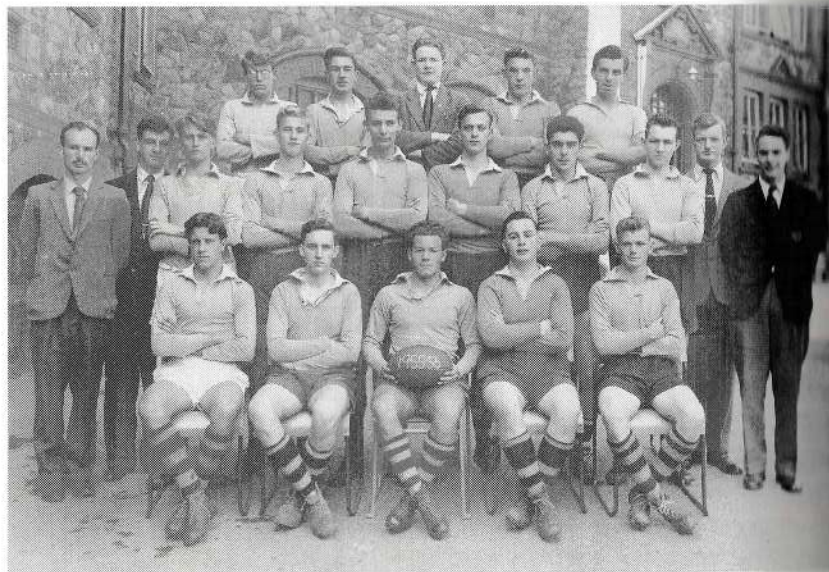
The Life of a School

BY
Ross Gilkes

soon increased to an average of 70 miles for day trips and considerably further on holiday-time tours.

In the School's early days, as we have seen, much play had been made of the worthy concept *mens sana in corpore sano*; but where the facilities for nurturing 'a healthy mind' were readily to hand that was not the case so far as 'a healthy body' was concerned. For years the sporting life of the School had been restricted by the lack of its own playing field, a situation remedied with the acquisition of the Northville ground, but re-created in the first years of the Second World War when Northville was no longer available. Mr. Stewart obtained the use of the Y.M.C.A. ground on Golden Hill, and the services of the excellent Mr. Meaker, and the first wartime Sports Day was held there in 1943; by 1950 Stoke Lodge satisfied the main demands of the School, including Sports Day, although the Y.M.C.A. and its hard tennis courts were still used for some years to come.

In 1943 the boys played rugby up to Christmas, then soccer in the Easter Term, cricket in the Summer; the girls played hockey and netball (which, with 1st, 2nd and U-14 VIs, 'has become more than a spare-time game at Fairfield') in Winter and tennis in the Summer. The distance of the playing fields from the School meant that rugby, soccer, cricket and hockey teams had little chance of



1st Rugby XV, 1955/6.

practising outside the weekly games periods; usually practice sessions were on Saturday mornings. Also, with the majority of pupils leaving at the end of their fifth year, the exodus of pupils at that stage could weaken a team considerably; in 1944, for example, there were no rugby fixtures possible because many of the 1943 team had left. As numbers at the School increased and more stayed on into the Sixth Form the situation for the teams improved, and, if the general level of success remained less than outstanding, at least the standard of performance and level of commitment rose considerably. In the 1945-6 season heads were down. Roy Stitch, Captain of the 1st XV, recorded only one win out of the seven matches played and found no pleasure in reporting 'no more success than has been usual in the past few years.' And although Gwynedd Pickard, Captain of the 1st Hockey XI, could speak of 'quite a successful season' – they had lost four out of seven matches – there was 'a conspicuous absence of "fire" amongst the team, which was perhaps partly due to the lack of enthusiasm in the School.' The soccer teams fared no better, the 1st XI winning only three of seven matches, the 2nd XI only one.

It was therefore decided in 1946 to drop soccer from the Easter Term and for the boys to play two terms of rugby. The change was popular and, compared to past performances, rugger, in 1947-8, enjoyed a successful season, the 1st XV winning ten of the sixteen games played; they lost to the usual strong sides – Chippenham (twice), Sir Thomas Rich's, Cleve, Marling and the old enemy St. Brendan's (0-52) – but Captain Richard Dancy thought the two terms of rugby had proved their worth, because 'enthusiasm, great at the beginning, grew and grew.' This new confidence owed a great deal to the coaching and enthusiasm of Mr. Horne and Mr. Croker; Baker, Davies, Goldsworth, Quick, Stock and Sully were selected for Bristol Public and Grammar Schools' Trials and Quick and Sully played in the B.P.& G.S. Junior XV. It was clear that standards had been reached which ensured that the School could compete with the best. The outstanding results of the 1950-1 season were the defeat of the Marling 'A' XV in both home and away fixtures, 13-0 and 16-3; it was not Marling's 1st XV, but to defeat any team put out by one of the finest rugby schools in the country was a real achievement. However, the outstanding result of any season was the School's defeat of St. Brendan's 1st XV in 1956; Mr. Rose, who had coached and guided the team since Mr. Croker's departure in 1951, wrote 'we ended the season magnificently, beating St. Brendan's 3-0 in a rousing game.' – even the customary colourful language of the Brothers on the touch-line was stilled! The School team on this memorable occasion was drawn from Dean, Seath, Shaw, Woodward, Phillips, C., Strange,

in the School continued to rise: in 1959-60 for the first time the girls entered for the English Schools Swimming Association (E.S.S.A.) Medallist and Advanced Awards and 10 gained the Medallist Award, Rosalyn Parker and Ruth Martin the Advanced; 40 girls gained their half-mile certificate, and the number of non-swimmers in the Lower School was steadily decreasing every year. In 1961-2 the number of E.S.S.A. certificates awarded to Fairfield girls and boys was the second highest in Bristol. Relay teams of girls and boys represented the School in the Bristol Schools' Final Gala and, in the individual events, Cynthia Peak (Junior Butterfly), Barbara Mercer (Intermediate Front Crawl) and Susan Baggett in the Senior Front Crawl. While he was still at the School, Mr. Edwards organised the annual North Bristol Area Gala and Fairfield swimmers took part with continuing success in individual and relay team events.

The new 'professional' approach is best seen in the development of athletics. In earlier days, as we have seen, the decision to hold a paper chase was, as often as not, taken on the spur of the moment – an early 'fun run', in fact; nothing so casual about the Cross-Country, which was carefully planned and supervised, it was also prepared for by the runners, and Fairfield teams – boys and girls – measured their skill against other schools in Bristol Cross-Country Races. The first Boys' School Race was run as a House competition in 1958, starting and finishing at Stoke Lodge; the Seniors ran over 4½ miles, Intermediates and



Sports Day, 1962. (Norman Dyer and Christine Thomas, Captains of Green House, receive the Cup from Councillor Nash).

Juniors over 2½ miles; the first of the Seniors home was Roger Heaman. Seniors Christopher Jones and Ian Gordon were first and second in 1960 (a misdirection by a marshal made it a 5-mile run) and in 1961, the year when Ian was placed third in the Bristol Schools' Cross-Country, sixth in the Gloucestershire Schools' event and also competed in the South Western Counties' Team. Michael Gregory won the Senior Race for the third consecutive year in 1964. Although the first School Girls' Cross-Country did not take place until 1965, the girls had already been taking part in the Bristol Inter-Schools' Races: in 1964 a team of Jill Pelley, Pauline Newman, Gillian Thomas and Doreen Illingworth won the Junior Race, Doreen being first home of 80 competitors; and, over 2 miles, Hasell Thomas and Janet Warrant won third prize in the Intermediate event; Fairfield entered 3 teams in 1965 and Janet Warrant won the Senior Race with Deborah Evans and Valerie Vincent being placed third and fourth. It was appropriate that when Mr. Edwards left in 1966 he had the satisfaction of knowing that the boys had just completed their best ever Cross-Country season, the team of Woodhill, Murrie, Warrant, Jones, Curle, Chard, and Osborne winning the Junior Team Prize in the Bristol Races, and Fairfield being just beaten into second place in the Marksbury Cross-Country.

With more emphasis on athletics after 1958, as well as competing in the Annual School Sports, the School's best track and field athletes were encouraged to take part in the City Finals, and, if successful, to progress further to County and Regional Championships. An outstanding prospect was Christine Thomas, who entered the School in 1955, and who, as she progressed through the age-groups for competition, emphatically established her reputation as a star performer at the School Sports by winning the Junior Girls' Individual Championship in 1957, the Middle Girls' Championship in 1958 and again in 1959, and the Senior Championship on three occasions – 1960, 1961, 1962. Of the eight girls and ten boys from Fairfield competing in the 1960 City Finals, Christine won the Intermediate Girls' 100 Yards in 12.1 seconds, Jill Faulkner came second in the Junior Girls' Hurdles, Martin Williams came second in the Senior Boys' 100 Yards, Dennis Thomas won the Intermediate Boys' Javelin with a throw of 142 feet 10 inches, and Adrian Cole cleared 5 feet 3 inches to win the Intermediate Boys' High Jump; on the strength of these performances they were selected to represent Bristol in the Gloucestershire Championships at Cirencester, although they were not able at this time to progress further to the Western Counties' Final. Christine did make it, however, in 1961; she won the Intermediate Girls' 150 Yards at the

called for interview for Staff vacancies, for visiting speakers to meetings of the Fifth and Sixth Form Discussion Club and the parents' International Guild, and she always had time to see that there were flowers on the War Memorial.

She was a gifted teacher, a superb organiser and administrator; highly efficient, confident, determined, and, in every situation, unruffled and always in control. As a disciplinarian she was positively awe-inspiring, needing no histrionics, no raising of the voice – in fact, she had no need to speak at all, her presence alone was sufficient to bring a class or an assembly to silent order and attention. To some she was undoubtedly something of Tartar, strict and unbending; but she exercised her discipline consistently and impartially. In the School she was such a pillar of strength that it came as a great surprise to many of us when she was passed over when the post of Deputy Head was first created. Miss Neilson once explained to me that Mr. Stewart had said he did this because Miss Worthington was 'too emotional.' If, in fact, he did say that, it must surely have been the most inaccurate assessment he ever made!

When I was first introduced to Stoke Lodge Playing Field I was told it was to be the site of a rebuilt Fairfield Grammar School. As the weather-vane of educational fashion began to swing the story changed: first the rebuilding would be as a *bi-lateral* school; then as the grammar section of a *comprehensive* school. The uncertainty continued, but, as the new comprehensive schools mushroomed, the need for another one at Stoke Lodge had virtually disappeared. We continued to look into the future through the columns of the *Evening Post*. Then, in the 1962 School Magazine, Mr. Stewart was able to report 'a disappointment tempered with the pleasure of anticipation,' because 'it is now publicly stated that the School will be rebuilt on the Stoke Lodge grounds. This has been hoped for for a long time, and the news is good, even if the probable building date is still a few years ahead.' It was not to be, but 'secondary reorganisation' had come to stay. In September, 1965, came 'the first change in the mode of entry to the School, when instead of drawing from the whole of the City, the entry came from a particular catchment area.' The process was continued 'with some modification of area' in 1966. Mr. Stewart felt that it would be some time before the full impact of these changes would be understood. 'Whatever this may be the School is well aware of the problems involved, and is determined that our whole effort will be directed to maintaining that indefinable "spirit of Fairfield" – something which is above price.'

That spirit, created by Augustus Smith, underpinned the achievement of John Stewart also. Responding to the presentations made to him at

celebratory School Concert in April, 1967, Mr. Stewart recalled a boyhood memory of a market-trader in his home town who proclaimed: 'I have stood in this market-place for twenty-five years,' over which time he had always peddled his wares honestly and fairly. Now that he, too, had attained his twenty-five years in the market-place, Mr. Stewart hoped that it would be thought that he could justifiably make the same claim. The thunderous applause, which greeted his speech, assured him on that score with unfeigned warmth and sincerity. One remembers him for many things: his enduring vitality and acuity; as a speaker, his wit and humour, fluency and clarity; his Treasure Hunts, which were such a popular feature of Sixth Form Christmas Parties, and his fiendishly difficult clues (did you know, for example, that *crambe repetita* means 're-heated cabbage' and should have directed us to the Kitchen?); his odd decision to take responsibility for lost property, his guardianship of the Pound and his unfolding of the mystery of the left-hand glove; his choice of the more blood-curdling tales of the Maccabees from the *Apocrypha* to read in Morning Assembly and his (mercifully) less frequent inclusion of a prayer 'to the great god Pan,' which caused closed eyes to open sharply, and (in the case of Miss Mills) steam to rise! But at all times one remembers his total commitment to the School and the Old Fairfieldians' Society, his kindness, his sincerity, his generosity, his humanity, his sense of fun and his enthusiasm; his confidence which aroused confidence in others; his readiness at all times to discuss problems and ideas, then his wholehearted support, encouraging effort and inspiring loyalty among Staff and pupils alike. Outside School he was closely involved with American Field Service and was an active member of the Bristol and Bath V.S.O. Committee, an interest which encouraged several Fairfieldians to take up the opportunity of an in-family stay in the United States and a year's service in Africa, India and the Solomon Islands as Voluntary Service Overseas cadets. He was a member of the Bristol Arts Centre and a loyal supporter of the Bristol Old Vic. He was remembered as a most effective President of the Bristol Branch of the National Association. There can be no doubt that those years in the market-place had been very well spent and are worthy to be remembered with pride, happiness and affection. It was a sad irony that the official announcement of the award of an M.B.E. came too late – a mere fortnight after Mr. Stewart's death on 28 May, 1981; there was, however, some consolation in the fact that, before he died, he did know that the award was to be made.

plays after heats at the Theatre Royal, Bath, to be one of five plays selected for the final of the 'In your Own Write Competition.' Also in 1993, the School's Pan-African Rhythm Ensemble, keen to make its mark, took part in the Swindon Music for Youth Festival for representative groups from the West of England, where winning could have earned a place in the National Youth Music Concert that Summer at the Royal Festival Hall. Mr. Frank was rightly proud of the Ensemble. 'We can't hope to match the orchestras, choirs or classical ensembles from larger schools or authorities, but what we have got at Fairfield is a tremendous cultural diversity amongst the students. This is our strength, and the ensemble combines instruments from the Western Classical and Rock traditions with the raw talent of percussionists from Caribbean, Asian and African backgrounds.' Rounding off the year, an added excitement was provided in November, 1993, when the School and some 30 pupils were used in the filming of part of an episode in the TV *Casualty* series.

The School placed a special emphasis on maintaining close liaison with the local primary schools, thus promoting continuity as pupils progressed from the primary to the secondary stage. In 1987 the English, Mathematics and Music Departments were already making a significant contribution in this regard, by bringing into the School groups of primary school children to take part in workshops in these particular subject areas; this was also an important objective in the setting up of 'Radio Fairfield' in 1995. This was made possible by the award of a grant of £8,000 from Barclays' New Futures for the purpose of developing an in-house radio station over the next two years. Firstly, loudspeakers were fitted in various areas of the School, all linked to a mini-studio; pupils were then given the necessary professional training in broadcasting skills and techniques at the Basement Studio, a youth/community recording studio located at Sefton Park Youth Club. The aim then was for Fairfield pupils to pass on these skills they had learned to pupils in the feeder primary schools, who could then produce their own 'talking newspapers.' At the end of the two-year foundation work the aim was to be ready to produce, on a regular schedule, programmes of a professional quality – a balanced mixture of music, current affairs, news and views – for broadcast on local network radio. In June, 1997, Radio Fairfield went 'on the air.'

The School has also established and maintained direct links with Business and Industry, which are clearly of great importance in Business Studies and the overall matter of careers guidance. In 1995 a Lower Sixth group went into business on its own account, setting up, as a Young Enterprise company, 'Absolutely Fabric,' producing and marketing a whole range of hand-made

goods – waistcoats, duffel bags, scrunchies, cosmetic bags, T-shirts – which were then successfully sold at trade fairs around Bristol. Practical, though not entrepreneurial, skills were also demonstrated by the Year Eight pupils who, as part of their Design and Technology (Textiles) course, designed and made the costume for a sci-fi space monster, which they wore in the St. Paul's Carnival Parade; and by the team of Year Nine pupils, whose mechanical alarm clock was awarded fifth prize in the Lord Mayor's Technology Awards. In 1991 similarly practical and creative skills went into the making of a video on the theme of anti-racism and titled *Changing Impressions*. It was made by Year Eleven pupils as part of a project run by the Watershed and the Co-op. This Fairfield entry was selected to be shown at the National Youth Film and Video Festival in Bradford, and, as well as a Certificate of Merit, the School was awarded £45 to be spent on further video productions.

Organised games activity continued at Stoke Lodge, but, nearer to School, use was also made of the Cabot School Tartan track for athletics, and the facilities of Easton Leisure Centre for badminton and of the Gloucestershire County Cricket Ground for squash. In the early 1980s, team games still flourished, in inter-House competition and in inter-school contests where Fairfield was represented at most age-levels for rugby, soccer, cricket, hockey, netball and tennis. They were, however, coming under mounting attack from several quarters. The School's decision to phase out the House system, in favour of the Year System, may have led to some simplification of general administration, but it also spelled the end of the perfectly natural, healthy and keenly-contested inter-House sporting rivalry. Such a result, of course, accorded well with the ubiquitous educational 'experts' who threw up their hands in horror at the thought of any encouragement of competition in all aspects of school life, and not just on the games field. Most damaging of all, was the Government's ill-advised decision to fix the minimum number of hours that a teacher was expected to work at 1,265 a year. Over many years, the willing and enthusiastic involvement of so many members of Staff had ensured the success of school games – after-school coaching, evening and week-end supervision at away fixtures, refereeing and umpiring at home; without such active and proficient support, no P.E. department could ever have managed, so that schools (including Fairfield) found their sporting calendar thrown into disarray when many Staff (with the approval of the teaching unions) responded to the Government's hour-fixing by withdrawing their out-of-school assistance altogether. Team games were badly hit as a result.

The School's P.E. programme continued to provide diverse activities in

School is also working on far-reaching plans to enhance still further the present facilities and thus extend the already wide range of educational opportunities. A long-standing aim is to replace the Modern Language huts with more permanent buildings, which will provide an extra classroom by linking up with the Music Suite. Especially innovative, and appropriately dramatic, is the plan to develop the Gym. by putting in an extra floor; the top floor would form a Dance/Drama Studio, while the ground floor would house a multi-Gym., a Community Room, dark room, and a new studio for Radio Fairfield. Associated with this particular development is the proposal to join with Cotham in bidding for Performing Arts College status, which will give a considerable fillip to the provision of Dance, Drama and Music courses. The last of these present aims (only 'present aims', because the fertility of ideas within the School will ensure that there are many more to come) is to leave Stoke Lodge and have instead a games field at a site in Redland. In this connection, it is interesting to note that parents living in the Westbury area of the City are presently suggesting that they are very much in need of a secondary school to serve their children; such a school could, of course, be built at Stoke Lodge. If that were indeed to be so, then those now far-distant rumours that a school would, sometime, be built on that site would, in fact, have come true – except that the school would not, after all, be Fairfield!

A School committee was set up in 1996 to make preparations for the celebration of the School's centenary in 1998. A Centenary Concert on Friday, 23 January provided a resounding opening, the programme based solely on the work and writings of past and present pupils and Staff. A large wall hanging, made by Mrs. Linda Curtis, with much help from pupils, and tracing the history of the School within a local, national and world context, was displayed on the end wall of the Lower Hall above where the stage used to be; it was officially unveiled by the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Jack Fisk. In the Concert that followed, the drama, dance and music gave a flavour of Fairfield's history and reflected work being done currently, either in normal lesson time or as part of extra-curricular activities. So impressed was the Lord Mayor by the School Band's contribution to the occasion that he invited it to play at a special celebration in the Lord Mayor's Chapel to mark the end of his own 'Year in Bristol.'

The Grand Open Day on Saturday 13 June, in spite of the morning's heavy rain, was just that – a Grand Open Day. The planned Street Party was scuppered by the weather, so that stalls, exhibitions and other activities were set up inside the School. Nevertheless, as the Summer Newsletter records, 'in spite of all the difficulties, the day was an enormous success, with near on a thousand

people visiting the School over the course of the afternoon and evening. We were delighted to welcome into the School local artists and craftspeople to run a variety of fascinating stalls and to perform in our evening concert. In addition, there were numerous entertainments and games to keep everyone amused, from Fairfield's answer to the World Cup Penalty Shoot-Out, face painting, and a coconut shy, to fascinating exhibitions on 'The Blitz Experience' where a wartime sitting room was recreated with sound effects and lighting, and experts were on hand to provide the most realistic of wounds! Refreshments were on hand from strawberry cream teas to our very own French Café!

A video, *Fairfield: The First 100 Years*, which tells the story of Fairfield through the memories of former pupils and teachers, was made by Sharon Stiles (an Old Fairfieldian (YG77) and daughter of two Old Fairfieldians Cynthia Wyatt (YG54) and David Stiles (YG53)) and Applecart Television Facilities, and was shown in the Monkey Temple/Drama Studio during the afternoon; it was also on sale at the Old Fairfieldians' stall in the Upper Hall. After only a short breathing space, the celebrations continued in the evening, with entertainment provided by bands and groups made up of pupils, Staff, friends and local residents, a barbecue, and, as the grand finale to a memorable day, a Fireworks Display that could be seen and heard all over Bristol!

As well as being the School Open Day it was also an Old Fairfield Reunion Day. 'Among the many visitors we welcomed,' continues the Newsletter, 'we were particularly pleased to see hundreds of past students in school, some of whom hadn't visited since leaving in the 1930s! The Library was packed throughout the day by "Old Fairfieldians" eagerly seeking out mementoes of their past in the old school magazines, photos and archive material. Our visitors' book is now crammed with the names of past students whom we hope we will keep contact with over the coming years.' Certainly, it was a day to remember.

The year 1998 marks the end of the School's first hundred years; it also marks the beginning of its second hundred years – *vale atque ave*. It is fitting, therefore, that Mrs. McAllister, who will be taking the School into that second century, should have both the last and the first word:

'In its Centenary Year, Fairfield is a vibrant, thriving school with a rising intake and oversubscribed in years 7 and 8 [formerly 1st and 2nd years]. Strong traditions, forged over its history and evident in the wonderful response from ex-students to the School's celebrations, provide an appropriate backdrop as we take the School into the millennium and the next phase of its own history.

'One of the great strengths of this school is, I believe, its ability to cope with