



Stockport Grammar School The years of expansion 1980–2012

A personal perspective

by Stuart Helm

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1980–2012

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Stuart E. Helm B.A.

OS 1957–1964

Head of Art 1978–2006

Archivist 2006

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Foreword

James and William Ball's History of Stockport Grammar School was published to mark the Quincentenary but the story draws to a close with the appointment of David Bird as Headmaster and makes no reference to the events that were to celebrate 500 years of the school's continuous existence. It is from that point that chronologically our story continues but, with the benefit of hindsight, the events following on from the decisions taken just prior to 1980 require closer examination. This has inevitably led to some duplication of material but I have tried not to repeat too much information presented in the Ball account.

I make no apology for presenting a summary, for that it is all it can be, of the salient developments and initiatives over the last 32 years, but I hope it will give the reader a sense of direction and continuity to what has been an extraordinary period of growth in the school's history. It is primarily a record of opportunity, strategic planning, and an unwavering sense of purpose and commitment. Just a cursory glance at any one of the issues of the 'Stopfordian' magazine will discover a bewilderingly eclectic collection of stories of academic and sporting prowess, dramatic intensity, musical extravaganza, cultural and scientific exploration, travel and charitable ventures. It is the mark of a vibrant and successful educational establishment that has achieved on every level. The documentary evidence of all this activity is to hand for those who would seek out specifics but, while I have at times referred to

particular events, these have been in the context of historical developments and have not been singled out for unique attention.

In early 1980 the Governors, Headmaster, Bursar and the teaching staff were charged with the huge task of transforming a boys' grammar school of 600 in the Senior School with a staff of 33 into a co-educational establishment of over 1,000 pupils with 100 teaching and ancillary staff on a vastly enlarged site. The Junior School too was undergoing a similar, if not quite so dramatic, transformation. There were many devoted people working together with the same purpose. They could hardly have contemplated the enormous significance of their actions. The importance of this change of direction in the school's fortunes was at least the equal of the move from Chestergate to Greek Street and subsequently the move to Mile End.

During the previous 20 years the school had endeavoured to keep pace with educational demands. Despite a commendable building programme, the decision to go independent and the best intentions of the teaching and support staff, the combination of the financial strictures of the Direct Grant and the Assisted Places schemes had contrived to leave the school in difficult circumstances. Financially, academically and philosophically the school had needed to appraise its situation and look to its future. The acquisition of the former Convent gave it the opportunity to do just that. It was an opportunity that was grasped with both hands.

Co-education and the Former Convent Site – the Early Years

Building issues – where to start

The issues relating to the delicate negotiations involved in securing the satisfactory completion of the Convent purchase had focussed the minds of the Acting Chairman, David Blank, the Acting Vice-Chairman, Alan Kershaw and the Bursar, Val Hodgkinson. Now however the practical problems had to be addressed and a strategy devised with the priorities demanding immediate attention. A preliminary survey had been carried out but had hardly done more than identify the overall condition of the buildings. The new Headmaster Hugh Wright now joined the Bursar, and Peter Rowlinson, the new Vice-Chairman, in establishing a course of action. **1.**



The temporary path to Woodsmoor

One of the first problems was the need to provide access to the newly acquired grounds and buildings. Then the outline plan was to refurbish many of the existing structures and, in a number of cases, provide new facilities to accommodate the changing educational circumstances. Very little money had been spent over the last years of

the previous occupancy as it had been clear that changes to the Catholic authorities' educational strategy were planned. The new owners found structural problems, leaking roofs and a significant safety issue in the black and white tower building. This, the major classroom block, had only one staircase for use in any emergency evacuation. Its use was immediately restricted until acceptable changes could be made. There were other decaying single storey classrooms and toilets, poorly maintained tennis courts and a little used hockey pitch. In addition there were the remains of old Edwardian greenhouses and a copse of unstable poplar trees and overgrown rhododendron bushes. However within this collection of assorted troubles lay a potential jewel. The swimming pool, comparatively recently built partly with Convent parents' donations, was indeed a fine acquisition although here too serious remedial work was necessary. Apart from the obvious benefit the pool was most welcome as the first Grammar School swimming pool proposed for the Hallam site had fallen victim to budget cuts some 65 years earlier.

The projected costs for work in the initial stages of the Governors' Development Plan was £350,000. The plan provided for: a connecting walkway to the new site, improved toilet facilities, the conversion of the Sykes chemistry lecture theatre into a laboratory, an extension to the Junior School, the conversion of the Convent House into an arts and music centre, the development of departmental areas, provision for computer facilities, a new staff common room and a new sixth form common room. Added to this formidable list was the need to add an additional staircase to the black and white building. There were to be more sports facilities which included the two new squash courts, paid for largely with Old Stopfordian and Parents' Association money, and an all-weather surface on the Woodsmoor site. It was a huge undertaking with much of the work needing to be done all at once. Speed was of the essence and there was little time for considered reflection.

Although the plan had the broad agreement of all concerned there were inevitably some differences of opinion. In particular the Bursar wanted to demolish the Convent House, to allow for more building options, while Peter Rowlinson insisted on its retention on both aesthetic and functional grounds. In 2013 it is still there!

The pace of change was without parallel. In those early days key to the success of the operation was the contribution made by the Vice-Chairman, Peter Rowlinson, who gave unstintingly of his time and energy. Each week he, together with Hugh Wright, Val Hodgkinson, who was now acting as Clerk of Works, Richard Reeman, the Head of the Junior School, and Donald Roberts, the Second



The Convent House 1980



The Black and White building from Woodsmoor Lane 1980

Master, would meet to determine the next steps and agree individual action. The responsibility for overseeing progress lay with the Bursar and there was never an occasion when work was not completed on time or on budget. Apart from giving his time and experience, Peter Rowlinson provided invaluable architectural and building expertise from his construction company at cost for most of the period. The overall policy was 'let's try it and see if it works'. It invariably did! Although overall progress was reported back to the Chairman, Alan Kershaw, and the General Purposes Committee of the Governors, Wright, Rowlinson and Hodgkinson were given considerable leeway in the decision-making and were able to get on with the work largely unhindered.

In 1980, to help finance these measures, the Governors launched an Appeal to be directed by Richard Maurice Ltd. which by February 1981 had reached £150,000. The plan was for this appeal to come to a close in 1987 and link into the plans for the Quincentenary. At this time the fees approved for the summer term of 1981 were £383 in the Senior School and £295 in the Junior School. Additional income was certainly needed as the estimates for building work continued to rise as more detailed reports revealed increasing faults in both the Hallam and Woodmoor buildings. The cost for the conversion of the Convent House into an arts and design centre was now estimated at £180,000. Interestingly the cost of a new-build was £350,000.



The view of the site 1980

Academic initiatives

The building renovation and conversion tasks could at least be viewed with a critical analysis of facts and figures; however there was a very close correlation between financial planning and income. Sustaining pupil numbers was critical and in each year, thanks to the valiant efforts of the senior staff, the projected target was always achieved and thus cash flow was predictable. Changes to the academic life of the school required the consideration of many factors but there was a strong sense of excitement and determination to succeed from all the teaching staff. The entrance examination in February 1980 attracted some 330 boys and 270 girls and, in the absence of more than a handful of women teachers, most of the women support staff were asked to assist and help the girl applicants feel at home. To begin the task of addressing the issue of more female members of staff eight women were appointed, out of 12 new staff in total, for September. Two additional women were appointed to the Junior School.

In the event, 83 boys and 66 girls entered the school at 11 in September 1980 with only the usual transitional issues. Some 25 girls entered the Junior School at 7+. The initial entry of 22 girls into the sixth form was equally accommodated without major incident although some staff took longer than others to acknowledge the change in circumstances. There were some amusing situations as teachers, boys and girls took a little time to adjust to their new status. One such issue was what to call the pupils in the new situation. Some staff were uncomfortable with the idea of using forenames, but girls could hardly have been called by their surnames. For a while the issue was only partly resolved with boys entries in the register recorded as surname plus initials while the girls were entered with both forename and surname. In the event it became necessary to use both names for boys and girls to identify pupils in the enlarged school. Some teachers found that for the first time in their career they had to reprimand their pupils for wearing high-heeled shoes and vivid nail varnish while resisting appealing grins as an excuse for not handing in homework on time. All these things, however, were sorted fairly



The first intake of girls and additional boys 1980

quickly and a new normality began to prevail. The new regime inevitably necessitated some compromises but the enthusiasm and goodwill of the whole school community led by Headmaster Hugh Wright ensured that the transition went smoothly. 2.

After just a few weeks the presence of girls caused almost no comment and the older intake, in particular, had begun to participate in all areas of school life, as one member of staff put it 'as though they had been in the school for years'. Mention should be made at this point of the work of Mrs Sheila Renshaw whom Wright had appointed Senior Mistress. Her ability to deal sympathetically but firmly with the many, often minor but important, teething problems that inevitably arose was an important element in the establishing of ground rules. Sheila Renshaw set the standards required in the new co-educational environment.

Hugh Wright had inherited a curriculum which, over the years, had acquired a number of idiosyncrasies that had attracted widespread discontent among senior members of staff and parents. Piecemeal changes had been made erratically which had led to imbalances and

limited the selection of subject choices at 'O' level. The practice of taking some 'O' levels early was considered to be particularly unhelpful and there was a lack of a published curriculum with all choices and implications clearly stated. Wright's proposals simplified the situation and all pupils would henceforth take eight or nine 'O' levels in the fifth form. Alan Smith was to act as co-ordinator of forms 3-4 and David Hollows was to co-ordinate the administration of forms 1-2. Academically results at 'O' and 'A' continued to be strong with excellent admissions to the major universities but the policy of endorsing candidates to apply for Oxbridge in their 'A' level year was considered to be unhelpful and the Headmaster encouraged those with potential to return for a term, post 'A' level, to make their application.

Onward and upward

It was Hugh Wright's express wish that the school should begin to develop a programme of social service and plans were laid to introduce a number of schemes. In July 1980 it was reported that groups of boys had been regularly visiting Offerton House to work with mentally and physically disabled patients, while a similar activity was in place with geriatric patients at St Thomas'



First year girl athletes 1980

Hospital. The Venturers' Society organised by John Durnall continued to make visits to industrial locations while a succession of visiting speakers broadened the range of discussion topics in the sixth form. The regular games continued to flourish with athletics being given encouragement and support by John Shackleton OS, a member of the PE Department. The girls were already showing potential, ably directed by the newly appointed Head of Girls' Games Jan Bleasdel. By December 1980 the swimming pool with its roof problems largely solved, and arguably one of the better buildings of the Convent legacy, was in full use during term time with a professional coach employed for two and a half days a week.

In 1980 Roger Hand, the Head of Physics, presented a paper on 'computer science requirements' to the Governors which marked the beginning of the use of this technology in the school. Initially three Tandy computers were purchased while in 1981 £6,000 was approved for computers and software. Another sign of change came in the form of school transport. After representation by the staff the early months of 1980 saw the arrival of the first true minibus, a former company crew bus, kindly donated by the Chairman. **3.**

In February 1981 376 boys and 237 girls sat the entrance examination. Of these 231 had applied for assistance with fees. Twenty-five girls and five boys had applied to join the sixth form. In the event 35 awards were made from the new Government Assisted Places scheme while 13 pupils were the recipients of Greater Manchester Bursaries. One Bursary was awarded by the Stopfordian Trust.

By December 1981 administrative difficulties had afflicted the commercial company organising the Appeal and it was effectively closed. It had reached £200,000, which included a gift from the Goldsmiths. New approaches were directed mainly towards new parents by the Bursar. **4.**

The Woodsmoor site was now in full commission. The 'black and white' tower block had become a vital part of the school's classroom provision with financial help from the Hallam and Stockport Educational Trusts for equipment and books for a junior library. The newly opened squash courts were heavily booked.

In December and January 1982 an 'Open Morning' on a Saturday, followed by two further similar events in the evening, was introduced in order that prospective parents could come and be given tours round the site and talk to staff and pupils. Initially seen as a pilot scheme, this initiative proved to be very popular. This, together with the publication of the first prospectus for many years produced in school in 1980, laid the foundations for the development of a considered marketing strategy.

In September 1982, after lengthy discussion, the Governors agreed that the fees for the coming academic year should be £1,425 in the Senior School and £1,092 in the Junior School which was now accepting girls from the age of five.

School events continued to grow in ambition and breadth. Particularly notable in March 1982 was the Choral Society's performance of Handel's 'Messiah', its third annual event but with the school providing the orchestral accompaniment from its own resources. Tim Woffenden, Head of General Studies, was now organising Industrial Conferences for the sixth form with a panel of outside speakers and discussion group leaders.

During this period of significant change academic achievements continued to consolidate and improve particularly with pupils who needed more encouragement. The 1982 'A' level results had shown a percentage increase in A and B grades. The proportion of pupils going to university had increased despite a reduction in the number of available places nationwide. Two HMIs had visited the Mathematics and Music Departments and had commented favourably.



The sixth form common room 1982

Since 1977 the reliance on income from Government sources had been reduced from 55% to 5% but the Development Programme had resulted in a complete erosion of liquid assets but for £100,000. The whole programme had been funded from the school's own resources, including reserves, the Appeal and donations from the Old Boys' and Parents' Associations. 5.

In December 1982 Hugh Wright presented a report to the Governors detailing the increase in responsibility for many members of the teaching staff, as a result of the increase in pupil numbers both departmentally and in ancillary areas such as careers, 'O' and 'A' level examination administration and house staff duties. He also reported on a series of departmental visits in which he was able to discuss the structure and curriculum of each department and gain an accurate impression at first hand of departmental efficiency and to identify problems of equipment and space. Each department now had its own preparation or meeting room which allowed for better use of time but at the cost of

communication in a central common room. A Language Lab for use by whole forms was established in the Hallam buildings by David Mort.

Wright wrote: *'Every department has been substantially reorganised as a result of our development programme. In all cases without exception the effect has been highly beneficial, spectacularly so in the case of Music, Art, History and English. Storage facilities for teaching aids, proper display of books and refurbishments have all led to increased efficiency. I have been encouraged to see that our increased numbers have not led to a loss of cohesion and efficiency. In fact the reverse is true. Larger departments are leading to greater cooperation between staff within a department, to better organisation and to more effective oversight of pupils' work.*

In order to ensure that departments are aware of each other's aims, methods and ideas the Heads of Departments meetings and staff meetings have an increased importance. This will be increasingly important in coming years as the school is now assuming an identity as a large school and the



The original Language Lab in room 24 in the Hallam building 1980



The first computers 1980

effective exchange of opinion must not suffer as a result.

My conclusion is that the development of the school is proceeding well and that the school is a more hardworking and vastly better equipped place than it was in 1979. It also retains its traditional warmth and cheerfulness.'

The Headmaster's report was reflected in the increasing range of sporting and extra curricular activities that the school was now offering but the academic achievements were also continuing to improve. Thirteen pupils gained entry to Oxford and Cambridge for October 1983. Of these six were awarded scholarships or exhibitions, the greatest number that the school had ever gained in one year. Only 27 schools in the country gained more.

In July 1983 the Senior School role stood at 811 comprised of 569 boys and 242 girls. Of these 213 were in the sixth form which stood at 155 boys and 58 girls. In the following September the new intake comprised 82 boys and 63 girls at 11 and 12 boys and 34 girls in the sixth form. Staff numbers stood at 61 comprised of 39 men and 22 women. Of the women staff eight were part-time. The increase in numbers had associated consequences and Hugh Wright had emphasised two points on staffing to the Governors. Firstly, pupil increases in 1984/85/86 would all be at the fifth and sixth year levels. Increases in this area, where classes are generally much smaller than average, would result in a need for extra teaching accommodation and extra teaching staff and, secondly, the total figure for pupils in the school, i.e., 1,000, would be adhered to.

The financial costs of staffing, converting and refurbishing the former Convent buildings, together with the maintenance and replacement of plant and facilities on the Hallam site had become increasingly a cause for concern. In September 1983 the Governors noted the £3,428 expenditure on advertising relating to entries in the local press and other publications promoting the school and expenditure on staff appointment expenses of £1,817. The Governors agreed that once the renovation of the Woodsmoor Stable Block into a Languages Department had been completed expenditure should be confined, for the most part, to maintenance and essential work services. This in itself constituted a significant amount of money as repairs and replacements had assumed an almost continuous position on the list of budget considerations. Pool repairs cost £13,500, a new boiler in the main school cost a further £13,146 and pool chlorination equipment and cellar renovation in the Arts Centre came to a further £9,000.

However, despite some concerns over spending, schemes for the furthering of academic opportunity continued to be implemented. A second Home Economics room was in full use and the extension of the Sykes Chemistry Laboratory

and related improvements were proving invaluable to the Chemistry Department. The new netball and tennis courts on the Woodsmoor site were equally being fully used for lessons and competitions.

The need to keep up with developments in computer education was an important concern and it was clear that the school needed a dedicated room which could accommodate a full class of 30 pupils. The existing Tandy machines had served their purpose and much discussion centred round the need to provide all first year pupils with a basic introduction within the curriculum together with some 'hands on' experience. Departments also needed to use computers as a teaching aid. The decision as to suitable hardware and layout was to be decided by Ian Bruce, a member of the Chemistry Department, and the Bursar. After discussion a room at the turn of the stairs on the way to the hall over the drive was chosen as the location for this development and named the 'Adshead' room after a benefactor.

The school year 1983/84 continued to see ambitious musical events and drama productions. Among the regular concerts and competitions there was a very successful three week Music Tour to New England in March and Tom Stoppard's 'On the Razzle' in the autumn of 1983 was widely acclaimed. Produced by Geraldine Shannon-Little, it heralded a renaissance of the drama tradition of the Johnstons' era. Trips and visits which had been established for many years such as Mull, Wasdale and the Mountaineering Club's annual expeditions to the Dolomites, Corsica or the Pyrenees, led by Stuart Helm and David Martin, continued to thrive and become more ambitious each year.

The Junior School trip to Paris, the ski trip and dinghy sailing at Salcombe continued to attract much interest and involvement. The 1984 Industrial Conference was notable for its inclusion of Trade Union speakers. The timing was unfortunate as it coincided with the ninth month

of the greatest industrial dispute since the end of the war, the miners' strike, but nevertheless it provided for thought-provoking discussion.

The school had been particularly fortunate to have had the opportunity to acquire the former Convent site and it became clear that another smaller, but nevertheless strategically important plot was to become available. Increasing interest was being shown by commercial organisations in the area of land that lay adjacent to the school drive on the south side known as the 'Orchard'. After one planning application to build a number of flats was withdrawn the school decided in June 1984 to make an offer of up to £100,000 to purchase the land in the light of other companies showing interest. Mention should be made at this point of the help and financial support given by the Parents' Association over the years. Their enthusiasm and willingness to raise funds largely through the very successful annual Autumn Fairs had provided the school with much needed ancillary equipment and facilities. In early 1984 they presented a new minibus to the school at a cost of some £9,000.

In June 1984 the Headmaster announced the phasing out of corporal punishment, rarely used in any event. He also indicated that from September there would be six rather than five forms of 25 in the fourth and fifth forms setted by Maths and English. By October there were girls in every year in both the Junior and the Senior School. Departments were now benefiting from being centralised with their own work rooms. The Adshead Computer Room was in full use and other schools were visiting to note its design and layout. There was a new photographic darkroom within the Woodsmoor Hall building and preliminary plans were underway to prepare for the change from 'O' levels to the new GCSE examination at 16+. Speakers at the Industrial Conference in November complimented the level of organisation, enthusiasm and motivation of the pupils. There were newly forged links with a school in Lorient in Brittany and both French and German exchanges were fully established.

In February 1985 Hugh Wright tendered his resignation. The level of spending continued to keep pace with expansion and the Governors authorised the conversion of four Woodsmoor Hall block classrooms to laboratories. The Parents' Association offered to provide a second minibus to be purchased from the proceeds of the Autumn Fair to be held later in the year.

The new Headmaster Mr D R J Bird was formally welcomed by the Governors at their meeting on 26th March 1985. The offer of £100,000 had been accepted for the Orchard and further building proposals for a new dining room and kitchen and an extension to the Junior School were considered. The Wolfson Trust had gifted £7,000 for school use and the SPA gave a further £1,720 to support various school societies and activities. With the characteristic vision and financial wisdom displayed so many times over the last seven years the Governors under the chairmanship of Alan Kershaw authorised a capital development plan in May for the next three years of £1.1 million.

Hugh Wright left in the summer to take up the Headmastership of Gresham's School in Holt, Norfolk. Supported by his wife Jill, his tenure had coincided with an unparalleled period of successful growth almost without precedent in the independent sector. Wright knew full well that the changes would be under scrutiny from all sides. Supported by an encouraging staff, his achievements lay in the transformation of buildings and playing fields, the introduction of departmental areas, the development of the house and pastoral system, the encouragement of a much increased representative games programme and a new curriculum. He maintained connections with the Goldsmiths and the Headmasters' Conference serving as secretary and chairman of the North West Region, as a member of the central committee, a member of the editorial board of 'Conference' magazine and as the chairman of the community service committee. The initial decisions to purchase the Convent and increase numbers at the Grammar

School were not of Hugh Wright's initiation but he directed them and gave them his stamp. There was no haste, no panic. All was steady, careful and courteous. This was his style. He knew there were minefields around and he deliberately addressed issues at a measured pace. Under his leadership Stockport Grammar School took on the changes with characteristic resilience and prepared to address the next challenges that lay ahead .

On 17th November 1985 the Caretaker, Mr J Blackshaw retired after 46 years of service and the whole school community joined together to pay tribute to Joe and his wife Marjorie and to thank him for his cheerful, loyal, friendly and outstanding service.

A Period of Consolidation

Priorities

Little consideration had been given as to what the new Headmaster's task might be. There had been no brief from the Governors although David Bird had received plenty of requests from the staff after just two days. However, a continuous period of change dating back to the days of the Direct Grant scheme had inevitably meant some areas of school life still needed to be re-visited in the light of contemporary educational practice. He had also inherited a number of staff contractual issues which took some years to resolve.

Bird, in his first report to the Governors, highlighted the anomaly of the eighth lesson on Wednesdays, the rather rigid curriculum despite Hugh Wright's major changes, and the need to develop Craft, Design and Technology to replace Woodwork, currently a non-examinable subject at GCE. Bird also wanted to change the pastoral system from a vertical model to a horizontal one which would emphasise the role of the form teacher to be really responsible for the pupils and to increase the budget for staff 'inset' courses. He was not in favour of a House system for day schools but was persuaded by others to continue the tradition. Another rather more pressing concern was that of security around the site. Intrusions, thefts and aggressive confrontations were a growing problem with the school and grounds completely open on all fronts from Woodsmoor, the A6, the railway line and Davenport Park. Bird was keen to improve the visual identity of the buildings and to promote and celebrate the history and tradition in keeping with the school's increasing national standing by means of crests, stained glass and pictures. He was also keen to improve the signage at the top of the drive and fly the school flag on appropriate occasions.

The workload generated by the steady increase in pupil numbers with all the associated administrative, academic, sporting and extra-curricular activities that the school was now

engaged in was beginning to take its toll on all staff. It was not helped by the high proportion of part-time teachers. Added to this was an uncertainty about the implication of national pay awards on the independent sector and responsibility allowances in general. There was also pressure generated by a Governors' decision to reduce the staff/pupil ratio, to limit departmental budgets and be more cost effective in terms of staffing. In the years 1980–1985 there had been a significant increase in the school's income with the rise in pupil numbers in the lower school, some £400,000 surplus per annum. The first of these pupils had, however, now reached sixth form level necessitating a correspondingly higher cost per head.

Perhaps inevitably with a staff now comprised, for the most part, of younger teachers with experience in the maintained sector there were thoughts and ideas which challenged the perceived wisdom. As an example of this several staff were in favour of a more relaxed environment for the sixth form without a requirement to wear uniform or be on site during lunch time. Although these thoughts never gained any serious momentum open discussion of ideas such as these was commonplace in the common room and reflected the range of views and concerns of a committed staff who wanted more communication with the Governors and to have more of a say in the way the school was moving forward. Despite some dissemination of information, however, the Governors were not of a mind to endorse further openness on education or other matters.

Meanwhile the Governors were confirming further development plans for the provision of an extension to the Junior School and a new Bursary, Kitchens and Dining Hall again conditional on the economics of fee income and a close monitoring of cash flow which was always secure. Money was borrowed when it was cheap and builders were hired when they needed work. Throughout the whole of this period the Governing Body had demonstrated a constant momentum and loyal



The Junior School after the extension of 1988

support for the school. The General Purposes Committee had provided ideas, hours of expertise and professional advice. Notable in this respect were Alan Kershaw, who was running an extremely successful textile business, Peter Rowlinson, who owned a construction firm, James Hemsley, a local lawyer, Brian Tomlinson, an accountant, Joe Barnes, the Manager of the NatWest Bank in Stockport, and, subsequently, Charles Speight, another accountant, and Martyn Garner, a surveyor. The school was indeed fortunate to have such dedicated voluntary servants.

Sports fixtures, concerts, plays, excursions and visits continued to stretch the ability and motivation of their young participants, coaches, producers and organisers alike. The summer holidays of 1986 saw its full complement of trips leaving the country or venturing to its outermost limits with many staff and pupils involved as usual, while plans for the Quincentenary became ever more cohesive.

The biggest academic issues which the Headmaster and staff had to address in the year of the Quincentenary were driven by Government directives on the changes in the external

examination system at 16+ and at Advanced Level and an initiative by Bird to plan for a much revised curriculum to be implemented in 1987/88.

The GCSE proposals required a much greater focus on coursework, if in fact it had existed at all before. Although subjects such as Classics, Mathematics, Chemistry and Art required little significant change to their pattern and syllabus content, Modern Languages needed to make a major change of emphasis from literature to language. In Religious Studies, History and Geography the school's teaching had been moving in line with GCSE for some time but in English, Economics, Physics and Biology the changes took far longer to implement. Apart from changes to the syllabuses, departments had to devise assessments, introduce new class management and make new reporting schemes while ensuring that standards did not fall. Headmaster Bird was keen to introduce a 35 lesson week, much to the delight and relief of the Second Master, Donald Roberts, and to make changes to Wednesday afternoon games and activities which would save some £34,000 a year. It was becoming clear that some rationalisation of subject choices would have to be implemented at Advanced Level in order that set sizes were cost effective.

A celebration of 500 years of continuous existence

The Quincentenary celebrations coincided with the final year of pupil expansion after the introduction of girls in 1980 and in September 1987 the complement stood at 1,010 in the Senior School compared to the 600 pupils of a decade earlier. Teaching staff in the Senior School numbered 80 plus several peripatetic music teachers. Planning for the proposed diverse range of events had been addressed for some time by a steering committee chaired by the Chairman of Governors. It had first met on Friday 19th October 1984 and the members, representing many aspects of school life, had begun to discuss ideas and proposals. The Goldsmiths had requested to be kept fully informed of plans and had stated

their wish to be represented at any of the main functions while offering Goldsmiths' Hall for an official reception. With many factors to consider, the committee set about constructing a programme that would address the history of the school and celebrate current achievements, strengthen links with local organisations in the community, maintain and strengthen links with the OSA and promote the school in the north-west educational market. The teaching staffs of both schools were invited to be involved and each organise one event. It was hoped that nearer the time a visit by a member of the Royal Family could be confirmed. While all these objectives were important it had to be born in mind that the school needed to run as usual and provide the normal support and time allocation to pupils, particularly those sitting external examinations.

While Hugh Wright had contributed to the initial discussions it fell to the new Headmaster, David Bird, to oversee and direct the arrangements when the day-to-day running of the school was involved. The actual decisions and organisation of events had been decided by the Quincentenary Committee before he arrived. He and the staff, however, were keen that as many pupils as possible should be involved and to that end many hours of planning were embarked on to ensure that the wide range of events and activities went ahead as smoothly as possible. The Parents' Association, whose Autumn Fair had raised £6,270 in 1986, prudently decided to restrict their activities in 1987 to one big event and to direct the proceeds to supporting the major trips and events.

The result was a comprehensive and eclectic programme of events executed with military precision which began on Thursday 8th January 1987 with the publication of the new History of the School by James and William Ball OS. This was followed on Thursday 15th by a Service of Thanksgiving at St George's Church when the address was given by the Bishop of Chester, the Rt. Revd. Michael A Baughen. The Quincentennial choir gave the first performance of an especially

composed anthem by Professor William Mathias set to the words 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills'. The following evening there was a recital in the Hallam Hall which featured a number of prominent musicians including John Turner OS 1950–61, one of the country's leading recorder players and Paul Phoenix OS 1980–85 who was later to join the classical ensemble, the 'King's Singers'.

Also early in January there was a broadcast of 'Mastermind' which had been recorded in the Hallam Hall the previous November. The producer was an Old Stopfordian. January's events came to a close with a school drama production of 'The Woman who came to Dinner' which ran for four nights.

On Tuesday 24th February the possibility of a Royal Visit was realised when Her Royal Highness The Princess Anne was the guest of the school. The visit was unusual in that there was nothing specific to open or see but Her Royal Highness was shown the way in which the anniversary was being celebrated. David Bird recalls in his subsequent

newsletter to parents that she insisted on talking to every member of every group assembled to meet her and showed the greatest interest in all the plans and activities. She was entertained by the Senior Wind Band and by the Quincentennial Choir in the Hall. The Second Master had been particularly adept at moving groups of pupils around the site so that all had had an opportunity to see the Princess. The day was blessed with dry and sunny weather and as the red helicopter of the Queen's Flight hovered over the cricket square at the conclusion of the visit there was an enormous feeling of pride and achievement both in the seamless way the arrangements for the morning had unfolded and also in the number of pupils who had had the opportunity to meet the Princess.

The beginning of March saw an exhibition of pupils' artwork in the Woodsmoor Gallery and this was followed on Thursday 19th by the Founder's Day Service in St Mary's Parish Church. The Goldsmiths were represented by the Past Prime Warden, Sir Alan Wilson, the Second and Third Wardens, Sir Anthony Touche and Mr C R Ashton,



The Parents' Association Autumn Fair 1980s



The Princess Anne with Richard Reeman

the Clerk to the Company, Mr C P de B Jenkins and his deputy, Mr Donald Scott. The Bishop of Birkenhead dedicated an oak screen below the organ pipes, commissioned by the school to mark the occasion, and the Bishop of Malmesbury, Peter Firth OS, gave the address. The guests also included Sir John and Lady Jane Best-Shaw, the Founder's kin who had travelled from Maidstone in Kent.

Also on Founder's Day 2,500 commemorative stamp covers were franked with a specially designed Stockport Grammar School Quincentenary hand stamp. This innovative and successful enterprise was thought up and executed by Richard Barr who dealt with the Post Office with tact and diplomacy.

The Old Stopfordians' Association supported the celebration arrangements wholeheartedly. Noteworthy were the tireless efforts of Richard Reeman, Past President and Secretary of the Association and Headmaster of the Junior School. A most successful Ball was organised at the Town Hall on Friday 6th February and the Annual Dinner

took place at the same venue on Friday 20th March when some 500 Old Stopfordians attended. Demand for tickets at both events far exceeded the places available at the largest venue in Stockport. The Goldsmiths' party had stayed over for the Dinner and the Clerk responded to the Toast to 'The School and our Pious Founder' proposed by Malcolm Hall OS and Governor. David A G Coleman, as the 74th President of the Association, responded to the Toast to 'The President' proposed by Reginald Hardy OS.

School life was, of course, carrying on as normal not least with sporting fixtures and competitions. 1986/87 saw the first 'home grown' senior netball team. They had a highly successful season, winning all but one of their matches and bringing back several trophies from local tournaments. Hockey continued to grow in stature and experience with teams competing enthusiastically at all levels. The senior lacrosse and rugby sides, while taking part in their regular fixtures, were preparing for their closed season tours to the USA and Australia, New Zealand and Fiji respectively.

On 28th March the Choral Society, the Orchestra, the English Department and a host of individual contributors presented an evening of anthems classical and modern, and a production of 'Noye's Fludde', the medieval mystery play as arranged by Benjamin Britten. This was a less formal occasion than the Thanksgiving and the Founder's Day Services, and the audience was so large that only those who arrived extremely early were able to see most of the activity between the noble pillars of St George's Church. Among the other contributions to this fine evening's entertainment were Parry's anthem 'I Was Glad' and Britten's 'Rejoice in the Lamb' sung by the Choral Society recruited from pupils, staff, parents and friends.

While the school itself enjoyed a brief respite from activities in the Easter holidays, two major trips left England's shores. A new member of the PE staff, Derek Heine, together with Alan Heath, Head of Economics, who had been involved with lacrosse coaching for a number of years, had decided to explore the idea of a further junior tour to the United States, the home of lacrosse, after an earlier joint venture with William Hulme's School in 1982. Despite rather vague and somewhat brief communications with an unlikely contact rejoicing in the name of 'Spook' Hilgartner, three staff and 22 pupils set off for Lutherville, a suburb of northern Baltimore. The tour was a tremendous success and initiated a reciprocal friendship that was to last for 20 years. The History Club trip to Vienna, Prague and Budapest was a quite extraordinary and enchanting experience for staff and pupils alike. The contrast of capitalism and communism, extravagant baroque architecture and mile after mile of bleak fields followed by numerous grim high-rise flats proved an intoxicating mix for all.

It was perhaps inevitable that the high profile events would eclipse to an extent the regular trips, excursions and events that were very much part of school life on an annual basis, but to the staff who regularly gave up their time to organise these and to the pupils who took part their importance should not be underestimated. The French and

German exchanges, Salcombe dinghy week, Mull, Wasdale, the Industrial Conference, The Model United Nations General Assembly, the Music Competition, and other activities all provided many opportunities to sample the broader elements of education that characterised the school year.

The pupils of the Junior School, under the leadership of Richard Reeman, were not to be outdone by their elders and the Chairman ensured that they enjoyed their own meeting with Princess Anne. They then staged a thoroughly enjoyable production of the musical 'Oliver', notable for its enthusiasm and the contribution of so many staff and pupils. The 20th June, the one fine day in a summer of seemingly never ending rain, saw a Medieval Fayre with everyone in costume with clowns, acrobats, a puppet show, a band, sideshows, strawberry teas and 'mead'. It was a fun day which cleverly made the connection with the school's foundation in an appropriate and light hearted way. The 'Stopfordian' magazine also records all the other extra curricular activities such as the annual Paris visit, outdoor pursuits at Wasdale, the Independent Schools' Athletics Sports and Swimming Gala as well as the football, netball and cricket fixtures against other schools.

David Bird was insistent that the academic standard did not suffer during this period of celebration and the focus of the summer term was on work. Meanwhile the celebrations continued. On Friday 5th June the Town's Art Gallery hosted an exhibition of '500 years of SGS'. Put together largely by Nicholas G Henshall, the Head of History, with help from the Art Department, the exhibition chronicled the school's development from the earliest days in the Parish Church to more recent plans, registers, documents and photographs. There were examples of uniform, teaching aids, books and sporting equipment all reflecting past eras of school life. On Friday 12th June the London Branch of the OSA hosted a reception at the House of Commons.

Towards the end of June there was a Schools' Cricket Festival Week which climaxed with an inaugural fixture against the MCC. On Friday 26th there was a Dinner for past and present staff followed by Sports Day on the 27th. The diary for the beginning of July was equally full with school exhibitions and displays and an OSA Reunion and Barbecue. Over 1,100 former pupils and staff and friends of the school attended on a glorious summer evening, a time for reminiscences and memories and tall stories of days gone by. There were several notable characters present including Professor Leonard Edge (1915–23), past Headmaster F W Scott and Digby Smith who had taught mathematics from 1919 to 1963. Stuart Southworth, President of the OSA for the 450th anniversary linked past and present. It was followed on the Sunday morning by a service in the Hallam Library and a Reception in the garden of 'Shaa House'. All in all a fitting conclusion to a year of totally appropriate celebration for one of the oldest secular schools in the country with an unbroken history.

But the calendar of events was far from exhausted. As alluded to earlier the detailed planning for three major trips had been in hand for many months and, initially, years.

The Quincentenary Walk , some 500 kilometres, began in Chepstow and followed as closely as possible Offa's Dyke north to Chester over the Hatterall Ridge in the Black Mountains and then right over the Clwydians. The route then followed the Cestrian Link from Prestatyn to Wildboarclough, a particularly difficult section where the team had to contend with mud, nettles, fallen trees, tumbledown stiles and disappearing paths. This was the crux of the walk. It is doubtful that it had ever been attempted before in its entirety. The final phase through to Buxton and subsequently the Goyt Valley and home saw a rather better pace for the tired but elated group. The training for this considerable undertaking had been no less arduous with long days high up on Kinder Scout and the Cumbrian Way, a route of 125 kilometres from Carlisle to Ulverston at Easter undertaken in snow with very heavy packs. The full account of the expedition recorded in the 'Stopfordian' magazine details many more aspects of this extremely taxing venture. Thirteen pupils were led by Andrew Alexander, Derek Heine and Piper Richmond, later to become Mrs Piper Martin, and assisted by Claire Miles, Dr Geoff Herbert and Phillipa Dunn.



The end of the 500K Walk



Pangnirtung Pass Baffin Island Expedition

Another major expedition was to Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic organised and led by Stuart Helm and David Martin and assisted by Judith Cantrell. The idea for this grew out of the experiences gained on the annual Mountaineering Club trips to the Dolomites, Corsica and other European high level trekking routes. There were strong and persuasive arguments to draw the expedition to that part of the world. Admiral George Back OS had been involved in many adventures in the early years of the 19th century in pursuit of the North-West passage and an expedition to Baffin Island would reflect something of that spirit. The three staff members were soon joined by Howard Bentley, a friend, climber and member of the Kinder Mountain Rescue Team, and Bob Whittall, another member of the team and an Old Stopfordian. Their enthusiasm and technical input was to prove extremely helpful. The younger members of the expedition were sixth form pupils and recently left Stopfordians currently at university who had been on several of the summer trips.

There were serious financial implications and the expedition was fortunate to be sponsored by local businesses, school funds and the Young Explorers'

Trust, a branch of the Royal Geographical Society. Further financial assistance came from Survival Aids, Air Canada and Colourpoint, a photographic processing company who gave free processing and the loan of a large camera and free film. Bowaters of Disley gave large drums that enabled ropes, axes, tents, stoves, dried food supplies and chocolate to be packed for the long journey. Personal gear went in rucksacks taped to withstand the rigours of eight sets of baggage handlers and three different aircraft which became progressively smaller as the group neared its destination in Pangnirtung in the Auyuittuq National Park Reserve.

The report of the expedition in the 'Stopfordian' magazine relates in detail the problems of moving almost a ton of gear by pack frame through waist-high ice melt braided streams, glacier crossings and the ascents of Mount Asgard and Mount Bilbo. The account recalls life in this vast Arctic wilderness and the overall success of an enterprise which contributed in no small way to the Quincentenary celebrations.

The initial idea for a world rugby tour was first mooted early in September 1983 by Len Kynaston and Steve Dunn and by November a steering

committee had been formed. Focus was on players who were then in the second, fourth and fifth years. Again it would be easy to underestimate the amount of organisation and sheer hard work in dealing with the myriad of issues that arose in the arranging of such an enterprise but eventually an ambitious tour of four weeks was agreed. The party of 26 boys and the two staff left Gatwick on 7th July on route for San Francisco followed by Honolulu, Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney, Nadi (Fiji) and Los Angeles before returning to Gatwick on 9th August. The squad played nine exciting and challenging games against a wide variety of opponents from quite different cultural backgrounds. The chance to experience southern hemisphere rugby at first hand was a unique opportunity which was grasped by all and every aspect of the trip was declared a huge success. The party was generously hosted at every venue and the fundraising and support in Stockport was yet another example of the whole school community pulling together in this magnificent year of celebration.

There was one final but extremely significant event left in the Quincentary calendar. A reception at Goldsmiths' Hall was held on 15th October hosted by the Prime Warden Sir Anthony Touche, Bt. The highlight of the evening was a short but

elegant speech by the Prime Warden who recalled with pleasure the long association between the Goldsmiths and the school and pledged continuing support in the future. Thus was the rapprochement, which began in 1937 with the visit by the then Prime Warden, Sir Crisp English, complete. The Goldsmiths had decided to make a very generous gift to the school to mark the occasion and the Chairman was pleased to say that the money would be used to assist children who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to join the school. One feels that Sir Edmund Shaa would have agreed with that sentiment.

Speech day was held on Tuesday 7th July, the last day of term, when the Guest of Honour was the Rev. Frank Sargeant, Bishop of Stockport. The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, the Secretary of State for Education had agreed to present the prizes but in the event had withdrawn. At the end of the summer term, Alan Smith, a long-serving member of staff, retired. **1.**

By any standards the Quincentenary celebrations must be considered an overwhelming success with so many of the activities and events achieving their objective in spectacular fashion particularly when the academic demands of the school



The World Rugby Tour squad

consumed so much of the time of the Headmaster and staff. It was, however, increasingly clear that the process of reviewing practices and procedures needed to continue although the aim of improving academically in 1987 was achieved.

In September 1987 there were 1,002 pupils in the senior school – 541 boys and 461 girls – with 262 in the sixth form; 149 pupils joined the first forms and 12 new entrants began the sixth form. Despite the fact that the school had been accepting girls at 11 for seven years there was still an imbalance. The entrance exam of 1987 had produced 171 boy passes but only 112 girl passes, although the ‘girl acceptance rate’ was higher. By the end of 1988 the school had, perhaps a little hesitantly, settled into yet another phase of its history. It could justly feel very proud of what it had achieved over the preceding ten years. In a period of considerable national educational upheaval and social change the grammar school had skilfully maintained and enhanced its reputation for traditional values and academic rigour. It had absorbed the Quincentenary, adjusted to its new role as a co-educational establishment, one of the first independent schools in the country to do so, and declared its intention to meet new educational challenges head on. However, one thing was clear. The pace of change would only accelerate from now on.

No Time for Congratulation

Changes all round

There were a number of issues that were refusing to go away. The Governors had been increasingly concerned about the level of overall spending at a time when they wished to press ahead with a building programme and it had become clear that this could not be sustained without a review of staff numbers, overall teaching resources, rooming and an appraisal of staff responsibilities. These issues had generated considerable depth of feeling by all those involved. They were all the more pertinent against the implications of a proposed 16.4% pay rise in teachers' salaries by the Government. Added to these issues was the need to address the academic preparations for the newly introduced GCSE examination, due to be examined first in 1988, and major changes to the Advanced Level syllabuses with the possibility of taking a qualification at the end of the first year of study. It was perhaps inevitable that within the school community a range of concerns should have built up as the size of the school increased. By December 1987 many of these concerns remained unresolved including a strong wish for greater communication and consultation with the Governing Body and a greater understanding of the curricular and extra-curricular demands on the teaching staff. Staff, however, continued to receive an 'Incentive Allowance' above the national 'Baker' salary scale. In the event there were some consolidations of teaching time and changes in departmental rooming to accommodate new academic teaching requirements. GCSE option groups and Chemistry, in particular, required more classroom and laboratory space. It was also proving increasingly difficult to provide coaching from the existing staff for four major winter games but it was hoped that new appointments would alleviate this to some extent.

The extension to the Junior School had gone according to plan. The new Dining Hall project opened for business at the start of the Easter term

1989 and was immediately praised by all as a considerable success. Visitors to the school could hardly suppress their admiration. Not only was it an extremely attractive space with its sprung maple floor and effective noise deadening insulation but its contribution to the daily life of the school community, in its efficient provision of some 1,500 hot meals in little over one and a half hours in an atmosphere of civility and social interaction, was not to be underestimated. At the same time a new large car park looking towards the A6 on the site of the recently acquired 'Orchard' was completed greatly enhancing the look of the school from the road while providing much needed additional parking provision. Before long enquiries were being made from organisations within the town to hire the Dining Hall but concern over damage to the floor and overuse made that outside usage unlikely for the foreseeable future. The school community, however, was grateful for the increased space now available for its own activities.

Other changes to the usage of rooms and the overall refurbishment of facilities, while not making as dramatic a statement as the Dining Hall nevertheless continued to improve the resources and enhance the general visual appearance of the school. There had been comparatively minor changes encompassing, for example, the general office under the arch where the 'Sergeant's' little office had been since 1916, crests and shields in the hall over the drive and the conversion of the former chapel in the Convent House as an additional English classroom. These small but not insignificant changes and the naming and the refurbishing of the 'Brooke' Art Gallery, after a recent benefactor related to Ben Varley, in the ground floor of the black and white building on the Woodsmoor site, all helped to promote the school's overall sense of purpose and direction. The Governors continued their deliberations for further improvements announcing their intention to consider plans for the next development programme consisting of a CDT centre, a new Geography suite of rooms, an additional sixth form common room and further facilities for



The new Dining Hall exterior



The new Dining Hall interior



The view of the site 1989

Chemistry at an approximate cost of £2.2 million. Although in this account it has not been policy to record every sporting and individual academic achievement a comment made by Mr Wilf Paish, an official coach of the British Olympic athletics team since 1949, after coaching young pupils at SGS during the summer term is worth recounting. 'I can honestly say that your school is one of the finest that I have ever visited and I include among all of those most of the major public schools in the time.'

New senior management

In December 1989 Headmaster Bird declared his wish to change the nature and composition of the senior management of the school. While the school was smaller but growing, the 'ad hoc' arrangement between the Headmaster and the Second Master had worked tolerably well, although much of the day-to-day running had out of necessity been delegated to the Proctor, Harry Robinson. However his intended retirement in

1990, after 38 years of service, and the proposed retirement of Donald Roberts in 1991 or 1992 allowed for the possibility to create new management posts and restructure responsibilities. In addition the Headmaster proposed that a Head of Sixth Form, a Head of Middle School and a Head of Lower School be appointed to deal with boys and girls equally for discipline and pastoral care.

In March 1990 the Governors appointed Mr P V Dixon, from St Dunstan's College in London, as Second Master from September when he would work alongside Donald Roberts until his retirement in the summer of 1991. Mr J P Ashcroft from Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Ashbourne, was appointed to succeed Harry Robinson as Proctor. Internal appointments included Mary Harris, formerly Head of Classics, as Director of Studies, Nicholas Henshall as Head of Sixth Form, Alan Gregg as Head of Middle School and David Hollows as Head of Lower

School. Sheila Renshaw, who had done so much to assist girls in the school, was to continue as Principal Teacher but she would no longer be responsible for the welfare or discipline of girls. This re-definition of senior posts was a major step forward in the organisation and management of the school's strategy and day-to-day business.

Computers were now being used in the Reception Office to keep essential records and to organise administration, by departments to prepare material and to use as a teaching aid and by Ian Bruce in the Adshead Computer Room for teaching full classes where the Acorn BBC computers were still in use. The Bursar had opted to keep his administration system separate. However, while five years previously the school had been in the forefront of computer provision it had now fallen behind in terms of contemporary thinking.

In January 1991 the Governors were able to confirm their intention to develop the area where the old wooden classrooms 1A, 1B, John Stanley's former art room and the original 'Norris' Gym stood to provide for a new Geography

Department, additional Chemistry laboratories, an improved Craft and Design facility and an additional sixth form common room all centred around a new court or quadrangle. This was to be a major undertaking and the school was fortunate to be able to call again on the expertise and experience of Peter Rowlinson, the Vice-Chairman of Governors. His contribution, together with that of the Bursar ensured that building work proceeded without major disruption to the daily life of the school. There were also plans announced to build an all-weather pitch between the Headmaster's house and the Science block. The organ in the Main Hall was giving cause for concern and it was decided to investigate the possibility of an electronic replacement.

The Government had recently introduced a National Curriculum for State Schools and, although there was no requirement to fulfil those criteria to the letter it was clear that an increasingly wider range of subject choices would have to be offered in order to bring the school's curriculum more into line with the maintained sector. Reflecting the economic situation prevailing in the country, and levels set by other



The Adshead Computer Room



The Music Tour of the USA group in the quadrangle

HMC schools in the North-West, the fees for the year 1990/91 were set at £3,042 for the Senior School and £2,412 for the Junior School. However, the fee level still lay towards the bottom of a table of independent schools of similar status in Greater Manchester and Cheshire. On a lighter note a recently appointed Home Economics teacher, Ruth Haskins, began a pilot scheme whereby fourth year pupils could participate at bronze level in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

With regular changes and additional recruitments to the staff, more or less continuous revisions to the curriculum, concerns over planning issues relating to building proposals, overall financial issues and continuing debate over teaching and extra curricular responsibilities, those in charge of managing the school could not relax. Every term brought new situations that needed to be addressed. The breadth of the school's activities continued to expand, however. There had been a further resurgence of drama activity with Geraldine Shannon-Little's production of 'Much Ado About Nothing' and pupil Laura Wolfe's production of J B Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls'. Mrs Carol Condliffe produced an ambitious

musical, 'The Boyfriend', in March.

The standard of music in the school was continuing to improve. There were three orchestras, four bands and three choirs and in the summer of 1990 there was a 100% pass rate in the Associated Board Exams with 30% gaining a distinction and a further 40% gaining a merit. Despite problems recruiting coaches, and who was to pay them, the school was able to mark 100 years of Lacrosse hosting a festival in July with their friends from Lutherville, Baltimore, USA. Cricket too had suffered from a lack of staff expertise but a new cricket professional's influence was beginning to pay dividends with the younger boys. Wasdale Camp at the end of the summer term continued to provide excellent opportunities for outdoor pursuits for older pupils while first and second year pupils eagerly looked forward to the regular Whitsun trip to Mull, for many their first trip away from home and under canvas. A member of the English Department was organising the, by now firmly established, 'Model United Nations' Conferences. A comprehensive report by the Cheshire Diocesan Organ Adviser and Organist at St George's Church, Michael

English, and the Head of Music, Jackson Towers, concluded that an electronic organ replacement utilising the existing consoles should be considered and this was duly accepted by the Governors. This was purchased at an exceptionally good price, typical of the efficiency of the Bursar in negotiating the best deal. The pipe work at the back of the stage was to be sold and the new sound was to be relayed through large speakers positioned high above the concrete coffering.

A member of the Junior School staff, Paul Roebuck, had been developing computer programmes specifically designed for use in school. He was keen to develop his ideas further and his initial software was introduced into the Junior School to assess its practicality. Richard Reeman reported to the Governors his increasing concern that the school was losing pupils to other establishments who admitted children at the age of three to four years. The implications of the National Curriculum were also being felt in the Junior School and Headmaster Reeman was anxious to apply whatever aspects of the scheme were appropriate with all the implications of financing, training and equipment.

In July 1990 Mr A Carter had been appointed to the post of Deputy Head of the Junior School and Harry Robinson retired after 38 years of service to the Senior School. **1.**

Demand for word processing and computer resources in general within departments and for individual pupil usage was increasing rapidly. Archimedes computers were being used in departments but it was clear that a more co-ordinated policy would need to be introduced soon.

The changes to the academic management of the school were beginning to have a beneficial effect on the daily life of the school. The duties of the senior staff had been more closely defined and the Heads of Lower, Middle and Upper Schools were beginning to address issues such as pastoral care and subject choice with greater coherence and co-

ordination. Increasing emphasis was put on responsibility for internal examinations, letter sheets, parents' evenings and the monitoring of wayward pupils. The new Proctor had done much to improve registration and punctuality and the enforcement of the dress code. Sadly in February 1991 the caretaker, Bert Wilkins, died. He had always been keen to help anyone and he was a great loss to the school community. He was replaced by John Walkman, a man of prodigious energy and strength.

On 31st March, the Bursar, Wing Commander Val Hodgkinson, retired. He had been appointed in 1978 when the school had been independent for two years following the loss of the Direct Grant status. Money was very much in short supply and the administrative, budgeting and financial organisation was much as it always had been. By the time he retired, not only had many of the structural changes documented in this account been completed but the accounting system had been totally re-organised. 'Cash flow' had become a key word and budgets were allocated in a new way. Throughout his time as Bursar, Val Hodgkinson's budget forecasts were extraordinarily accurate enabling the Governors to plan their development and expenditure prudently. He had been responsible for overseeing the many and varied building projects and refurbishments that had been commissioned and it is to his credit that these were all completed within very tight time scales. He was replaced by Mr J H Leay who had been Bursar at Prior Park College in Bath. Planning issues continued to frustrate plans for the construction of the all-weather pitch. One point of contention had been floodlighting and it was agreed to submit a further planning application for a pitch only and to address the issue of lighting at a later date.

Bird had been keen since his arrival to enhance the spiritual side of school life and had made substantial progress in re-organising assemblies using a new hymn book. The Governors now agreed to the appointment of a School Chaplain from September 1991. This was to be a part-time

post arranged in conjunction with St George's Church. A Lenten 'residential' visit had already been in operation for some time and it was envisaged that the Chaplain would assist with services and pastoral issues, preparation for Confirmation and aspects of General Studies. As a result of the increase in pupil numbers it was reluctantly decided that it was necessary for the venue for the Founder's Day Service to be changed from the Parish Church of St Mary's in the Market Place to St George's where the Carol Service had been held for many years. The Junior School Carol Services were held at St Saviour's Church across the A6 in Great Moor.

The whole question of the availability of staff with adequate experience and ability to coach teams had been a thorny issue for some years and despite some new appointments of specialist PE staff there were still concerns about the number of teams that could be put out on Saturdays with reasonable prospects of being successful. To this end it was decided to appoint a Lacrosse Coach in the first instance. In addition there was increasing concern over the condition of pitches and, specifically, the problem of drainage. The saga of the all-weather pitch had continued with the latest application being turned down despite the recommendation of the Planning Officer. It now appeared that the only recourse was to proceed to a Public Enquiry. On a lighter note the OSA agreed to fund cricket covers at a cost of £5,000. The Parents' Association had agreed to purchase a set of new gang mowers.

After six years of procrastination and delay the Charity Commissioners finally approved the new Constitution of the Governing Body. Countless drafts had been submitted and amendments agreed and finally on 14th February 1991 the final document was delivered. It says much for the persistence and determination of Councillor David Foulkes together with a helpful intervention at the last hurdle by Val Hodgkinson that the Constitution was at long last approved. The main Board now numbered 17 members although the management committee numbered nine. 2. In

May the Board approved the lowering of the Junior School entrance age to four years and the possibility of the purchase of 3 Clifton Park Road adjacent to the existing buildings was discussed.

At the end of the summer term 1991, Donald Roberts retired. The Staff Dinner to mark his outstanding service to the school was attended by four Headmasters. Donald had arrived at the school in September 1951 to teach Classics and in 1959 he became Head of that Department and took on the Editorship of the 'Stopfordian'. When Francis Scott became Headmaster Donald found ways to interpret Scott's modernising but somewhat idiosyncratic approach and assumed responsibility for drawing up the timetable. At this, and understanding how the school ought to work, he was very successful and, displaying characteristic diplomacy, he kept the ship on an even keel through some very stormy waters. When W S Johnston retired it was only natural that he should become Second Master. Francis Scott wrote 'Before he was appointed there was some idle talk of "job specification", but we all knew he was our man.' Roberts' strengths were his patience, integrity, meticulous preparation and the ability to cut through a mass of jargon and pretentious verbiage. He was always able to offer advice, a practical solution and in so doing was of enormous help to Hugh Wright and later to David Bird who were both made most welcome.

The new building project had inevitably inconvenienced the day-to-day running of the school but was now nearing completion and its additional teaching space enabled departments on both the Hallam and the Woodsmoor sites to expand a little in terms of teaching space and staff work rooms. When the new facilities were opened for business in September 1991 the whole enterprise was universally praised, with possibly somewhat muted applause from those departments which had yet to benefit from this level of regeneration. Apart from two rooms added at the front of the school in the 1960s this was the first time since the Hallam site had been built that brand new teaching rooms had been

added to the combined site as opposed to refurbishment and re-allocation of use. The new buildings were rather more than just an addition or an extension of facilities. Arranged around a new quadrangle or court they substantially improved the way that many pupils were able to work. The upper sixth had gained their own common room and exclusive use of the new court. The new Chemistry Laboratories were of university standard. The Geography Department had gained a whole suite of rooms and the CDT area was now able to offer teaching opportunities to external examination level. **3.** The school had acquired a custom-built careers room, a bookshop and an exhibition area. Many of the modifications and alterations to other spaces had been undertaken by the Caretaker, John Walkman, and the Maintenance Department during the summer vacation and demonstrated the way that all

aspects of the school had pulled together to achieve this transformation on time. By the start of term every room was clean, furnished and ready for the pupils. By November, the new reception class in the Junior School was proving to be a great success.

The new Bursar, John Leay, and the new Second Master, Paul Dixon, together with invaluable support from Paul Roebuck who had been seconded from his teaching post in the Junior School, had made significant progress in establishing the way forward with IT in the school. The financial support given by the Parents' Association, primarily through the very successful Autumn Fairs, continued to provide funds for equipment and resources. The total profit raised from the Fair in November 1991 exceeded £9,500.



The new sixth form court September 1991



Preparation for the all-weather surface 1992

The matter of the all-weather Surface had at last been resolved in the school's favour although the costs of the Public Enquiry, amounting to £17,000, had been awarded against the school. Quotes for the work involved amounted to some £250,000. This had been a major task.

Just before the start of the Christmas term 1992 Richard Reeman died suddenly. Although he had spent some time in hospital it was thought he had completely recovered and this news came as a complete shock to the whole school community. Reeman had been appointed by Headmaster Philpot in 1959 and five years later became Master in Charge of the Junior School, then located in two large semi-detached houses in Davenport Park. In Hugh Wright's time the post of Headmaster of the Junior School was created. As the title changed so did the scope for his influence for he now attended Governors' meetings where his contributions were much appreciated. Richard Reeman had been a stalwart of the Old Stopfordians' Association and a founding member of the Parents' Association. Throughout all his years of service the Senior School had had the

assurance that the Junior School would provide large numbers of pupils who would do well in the entrance examination and play a strong part in school life. In all that he did for the school he was unselfishly supported by his wife Gwen and their three sons. Reeman's deputy in the Junior School, Andrew Carter, took over as Acting Head.

At the end of the Summer term 1992 Sheila Renshaw retired. There were a number of members of staff who had played a significant part in the change to co-education but none more so than Mrs Renshaw. For several of her 18 years at SGS teaching biology Sheila was the only female teacher; yet by the time of her retirement there were 38. The essential responsibility of introducing female staff and girls into the Senior School in 1980 lay with her. It is difficult to overestimate the importance and significance of her role in those early years. Sheila had that rare gift of being able to see the best and the brightest side of any situation. She had been able to give valuable advice to two Headmasters not least in the difficult task of entrance procedure and selection. She quickly became expert at helping all



Sheila Renshaw

the pupils concerned with their university entrance as far as the sciences were concerned and would go to endless trouble to help the new arrivals, and the not so new, through issues and problems that arose. The fact that co-education proved to be such an outstanding success was largely due to her. The result of a survey by the 'Financial Times' in March 1992 pronounced the school to be the most successful co-educational school in the country.

By any standards the school's academic record was continuing to rise year on year. Recently appointed staff were introducing additional ideas and expertise and the increased resources in terms of classroom teaching space, laboratories, library and IT provision were all contributing to a positive determination to succeed by the whole school community. The excellent 'A' Level results of 1992 ensured that of the 127 pupils in the upper sixth, 93 gained places at universities, including 14 at Oxford and Cambridge, and a further 27 gained places on Honours courses at polytechnics. Substantial improvements to the processing of UCCA/PCAS forms and the typing of references now ensured that pupils had a head

start in the application procedure. **4.** School policy was to continue to provide for single science teaching and all first and second year pupils were now receiving timetabled IT lessons in one of the two computer equipped rooms. **5.** There were also opportunities available for sixth formers to increase their knowledge and understanding in this area. Paul Roebuck was now working part-time as the IT Operations Manager while the school increasingly adopted his dedicated programmes for teaching and administration.

Once the Governors had decided in principle to extend the boundaries of the site if the opportunity arose the school was fortunate to be offered further properties within a short period of time which demanded close scrutiny. In November 1990 the Bursar had been asked to make discreet enquiries regarding the availability and purchase price of 218 Buxton Road just to the south of the drive, the only remaining visual impediment at the point where the drive met the A6. The house was in a poor state of repair and in March 1991 the school completed the purchase. The property was immediately scheduled for demolition enabling the extension of the car park to the A6 and the widening of the entrance to the drive. In September 1992 the house adjacent to the drive immediately to the north became available and the decision to purchase this property was taken in the December. Partly rented by a dentist's practice the property allowed for accommodation on a temporary basis for new staff or exchange students. In December 1994 the school's offer was accepted for the purchase of 3 Clifton Park Road, adjacent to the Junior School's entrance in Davenport Park. The most exciting prospect, however, was the news in August 1994 that the Davenport Theatre was to be offered for sale, the current owners having decided that its continued use was uneconomic. This was an opportunity that could not be ignored as there was clearly interest from other parties who would develop the site for commercial purposes, and more importantly, restrict any further expansion plans along the A6 frontage.



The demolition of 218 Buxton Road 1991

After the death of Richard Reeman, Andrew Carter, his deputy, had been in charge of the day-to-day running of the Junior School and in January 1993 he was confirmed by the Governors as the new Headmaster. In June of that year plans were outlined to develop the front of the Junior School with planting to screen the building from the road. At the same time the Woodsmoor tennis courts were given a much needed refurbishment.

In August 1993 the Governors determined to set up a limited company in the event that in the future central Government might choose to restrict or limit the charitable status of independent schools. This involved no change in the school's status and the school itself remained a charitable trust of which members of the Board were the trustees. At around the same time, they decided that members of the Board should retire at seventy, a condition of service already the practice in the maintained sector. The maintained sector also had an established programme of inspections which, while mandatory for them, were expensive. The Headmasters' Conference had recently instituted its own inspection programme and the Headmaster gave notice that the school should begin to use this facility. Inspections would take place at four or five-year intervals. **6.**

By April 1994 the Governors of the school had reached the conclusion that communications with the media and other agencies and general advertising should be co-ordinated and be the responsibility of a Public Relations Officer. By November of the same year an appointment had been made with the brief to develop relations with prospective parents and Old Stopfordians and to raise the profile of the school in the community.

Maintenance of the playing fields, and drainage in particular, both on the main site and at Dialstone Lane had become an increasing problem over the years and had contributed to the difficulties of fielding teams particularly through the winter months. The Dialstone Lane Fields were leased by the school from the Stockport Playing fields Association and were in a particularly poor condition but in December 1995 after long-drawn out discussions the school acquired an option to buy the land. The sale was completed in March 1996. Meanwhile in the summer of 1995 the main school playing fields had been treated to a major drainage programme.

For many years the school had been leasing an old schoolhouse in Wasdale in the Lake District using it as an outdoor pursuit base for a number of

weeks in the year and in November 1994 a new lease for a further 20 years was agreed. Wasdale camp, for three weeks at the start of the summer holidays, had become an institution. Countless boys and girls had lived under canvas, for a week at a time, eating their meals and drying wet clothes before the fire in the old schoolhouse while planning their next adventures on the fells. Older and more experienced pupils acted as camp leaders and, together with volunteers from the teaching staff, introduced new recruits to the ways of the Lake District.

In January 1995 the school agreed to purchase the Davenport Theatre from Apollo Leisure subject to a two-year lease-back arrangement. An agreement was also reached whereby an announcement of the acquisition would be withheld until 1997. The transfer of ownership of the theatre was by no means straightforward. The owners had long since accepted that the venue was not commercially viable but there were many in the town who vociferously opposed the sale despite freely admitting that they had not been to a performance there for 30 years. In all the heated arguments the Bursar John Leay was seen by the protesters as the villain of the piece. At the last minute they attempted to have the building listed by English Heritage which would certainly have been a major and expensive problem for the school. The English Heritage Inspector, shown round the theatre by the Bursar, refused to give out any hints as to the outcome and a nervous wait preceded the final report.

In March the Governors agreed plans to increase substantially the numbers of pupils in the Junior School which would provide 75 pupils for the Senior School, some 25 more than the current intake. This would be achieved by adding one class per year. The purchase of 3 Clifton Park Road allowed the opportunity to increase the amount of teaching space but implicit in the plan was the need to extend the buildings substantially and the school architect Mr D Curran of the Taylor Young Partnership was asked to produce a long-term plan to incorporate the current thinking. There

was also the ever-present problem of traffic congestion which would clearly be exacerbated. In August of that year it was decided to withdraw an existing planning application to ease congestion around the entrance in Davenport Park and to consider a solution which would incorporate further changes to the car park adjacent to the A6. As this scheme was dependent on increasing car parking capacity and traffic flow on the main site, incorporating land on which the Davenport Theatre stood, it was decided to present a further planning application. This could be combined with one for the whole development adjacent to the A6 at a later date and, importantly, not breach the agreement with Apollo Leisure. In June it had been agreed to accept a quote by Piggott and Whitfield to install lighting on the all-weather pitch but to defer putting in a planning application until after consent for the Junior School scheme had been given.

A musical event in the Easter term of 1995 deserves particular mention. Carol Condliffe of the Music Department, had brought back from a period of study in the United States the idea of a Prism Concert. The Prism was a panorama of sound moving from one area of the building to another with each performance overlapping until the final work ended. The concert, held at St George's Church, required considerable organisation with the players moving to new locations silently and frequently. Complemented by constantly changing lighting to accentuate different areas in turn the concert was a huge success and proved to be the forerunner of several subsequent ambitious productions in the church.

Academically the school continued to move forward and embrace changes and initiatives particularly in areas of communication and accountability. In January 1995 the Headmaster, the Bursar and the Second Master assisted by the Heads of Department produced a development plan which identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and highlighted a number of issues to consider for the future. The impetus for the

development plan suffered something of a setback, however, by the known retirement date of David Bird and also by the announcement that the Second Master, Mr Paul Dixon, would be leaving in the summer of 1996 to take up an appointment as Headmaster of Reigate Grammar School. The Music and Chemistry Departments were inspected in January revealing the inadequacy of the facilities for the teaching of Music in the former Convent House. Concern had been expressed by the Headmaster over the increasingly high cost of some school trips and permission for one in particular, a projected hockey and netball tour to Australia at a cost of some £1,300, was refused. Current fees at this time were £ 3,897 per annum in the Senior School and £2,977 in the Junior School. Another concern expressed by the Governors was the lack of policies to deal with particular issues that the school might face. Chief Superintendent Ron Astles, a recently appointed Governor and former Chairman of the Parents' Association proposed an emergency planning policy to deal with crisis management and to address the ever increasing possibility of litigation. In November 1995 a policy with regard to the running and responsibility of school trips was published and further policies on media relations, pupil discipline and the appeals procedure were agreed.

One of the issues identified by the increased attention being given to marketing was the desirability of keeping in touch with as many former pupils as possible. In November 1995 the school decided to absorb the cost of life membership of the Old Stopfordians' Association and include all school leavers in its database. **7.** Easter 1996 saw the first edition of a new publication, 'Taking Stock', with news of school events, articles and features. This was the brainchild of the Public Relations Officer and was to be published three times a year and distributed to pupils, parents and governors. Another very significant event at Easter was the school's connection to the internet and its first website. **8.** Continuing with the ongoing practice of

refurbishment and replacement of equipment, £20,000 was allocated for six new cricket nets.

In November 1995 there had been another significant development in terms of land acquisition. The school had learnt that the large white building on the A6 leased by the Kwikfit Tyre Company might become available for purchase.

The end of an era

David Bird's tenure as Headmaster was coming to a close and between June and October 1995 the Governors placed advertisements for his replacement. The successful applicant was Mr Ian Mellor, 48 years old and a graduate of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and currently Head of Sir Roger Manwood's School in Sandwich, Kent. By coincidence the Chairman of Governors, Alan Kershaw had also decided to retire and on the 19th March 1996 Mr C E Speight, the Vice-Chairman, was elected to replace him.

Alan Kershaw had been a Governor since 1972 and Chairman since 1979. An Old Stopfordian, he was first and foremost a successful businessman who applied his considerable drive and energy to consolidating the school's financial position and leading a programme of investment and renewal. At that time governors of independent schools were inclined to leave educational decisions to the Headmaster of the day preferring to concentrate on financial matters. Alan was no exception in this respect but he was always ready to support David Bird when a decision on some particular issue was called for. With his clear, positive and direct style he had led from the front in a time of constant change. His response to issues that arose could never be anticipated but his navigation of the years of change was precise, accurate and unwavering.

In February 1996 the Junior School had its first full ISJC Inspection. **9.** The summer term of 1996 heralded significant changes in the ongoing development of the school. Principally this would

be the last term of David Bird's Headmastership. However in addition to Paul Dixon's departure Nicholas Henshall, a former pupil and Head of History with 25 years of service and current Head of Sixth Form, was retiring as was David Hollows, the Head of Craft and Design and Head of Lower School, who had taught at the school for 24 years. There were to be changes to the responsibilities undertaken by the senior management team with Paul Ashcroft assuming the duties previously undertaken by Paul Dixon with some tasks divided amongst other senior staff. Mrs Mary Harris had declined to take on some of Dixon's role and remained as Director of Studies. The Inspection of the Junior School had been satisfactorily completed but pressure had been building on the teaching staff as a result of long-term absence through illness and other calls on staff time. **10.** Despite initial thoughts that confidentiality on the Davenport Theatre purchase should be maintained until February 1997, a meeting of all parties in January 1996 had agreed that disclosure could be made sooner and on 2nd July the new Vice-Chairman Mr Martyn Garner was able to

announce that the planning application had now been submitted for the whole Junior School scheme. The orientation of the school was to be altered to face the playing field and vehicular access via Clifton Park Road would now only be for staff. Completion was scheduled for August 1997. No. 11 Clifton Park Road had been offered for sale and this too was acquired with a view to longer-term development of the Junior School site.

David Bird had taken on the Headship when the prevailing attitude of the Governors had been one of 'need to know'. Despite their undoubted commitment and skill in planning and financial management, open discussion of issues was not a consideration. The Headmaster had little power in the area of overall planning. Decisions on financial matters were restricted to the Governors with instructions on how to apply them handed to the Bursar. David Bird was never asked to sign a cheque or to contribute to the finance or building committee agendas. This, however, had the effect of reducing any possible conflict between the Bursar and the Headmaster, a situation often



The construction of the new Junior School extension 1 (1997)



The construction of the new Junior School extension 2 (1997)

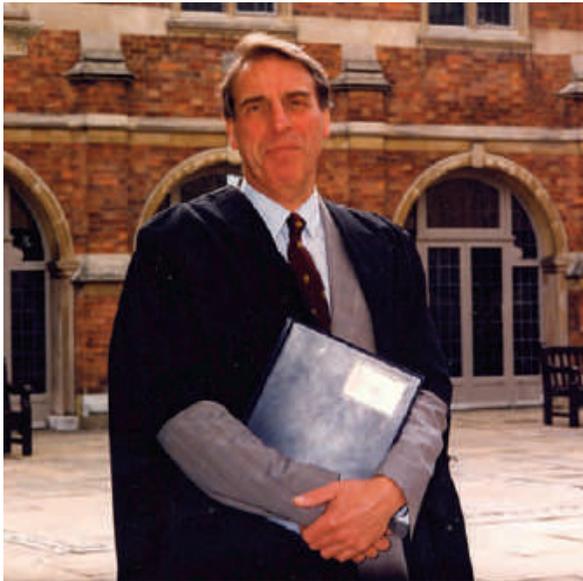
encountered in independent schools. He had not been allowed to improve or in any way change the nature of Speech Day and there were ambiguities in the relative status and responsibilities of the Junior and Senior School Headmasters which were not tackled by the Governors.

Without a brief or a job description to respond to, Bird determined his own terms of reference and direction. He set his own academic standards and made private predictions to the Governors based on comparisons with other schools of similar status. He was able to acquire a surprisingly accurate feedback of progress and events through the Old Stopfordian and parent networks and through friends of the school.

In his comprehensive closing report to the Governors David Bird emphasised the strengths of the school, straight-thinking, good sense, good discipline, hard work and honest open endeavour. He had been determined to address the difficult

issue of fairness in awarding allowances for extra curricular responsibility to those staff who made a major contribution. He wanted to avoid appeals at all costs and felt strongly that marketing and promotion of the school could be handled by the talent and expertise already on the staff. He was reluctant to allocate money and time on areas which did not benefit the pupils. Bird acknowledged that written policies were necessary in increasingly litigious times but he was increasingly of the opinion that 'policy' was eclipsing 'practice'. The three main planks of his stewardship – assembly, uniform and homework – were not recorded as a policy but were understood normal practice.

Under David Bird's leadership the school became recognised as a model for any institution wishing to throw off the shackles of single-sex education and several schools had made visits in preparation for their own co-educational ventures. Thrown in at the deep end at the outset of his



David Bird

Headmastership with the need to guide the school through the demands and challenges of the Quincentenary year, David Bird was able to make his mark immediately. His strength of character was complemented by his presence, a figure who exuded leadership and yet who retained the capacity to listen with sympathy and patience. Whereas the traditional, established and proven views of the Governors and the Headmaster might be expected to produce an old-fashioned school out of touch with the current world of education, the reverse had been the case. Steady but essentially sound progress had been made. For the most part Bird had been supported by a motivated staff who worked hard to produce increasingly improving results. One such was Nicholas Henshall who, as Head of History as well as Head of Sixth Form, set the academic pace guiding his Advanced Level pupils to outstanding levels of success. Headmasters' wives are rarely given credit for their unpaid contribution but David's wife Valerie had supported her husband at all times, provided hospitality and support for many sixth formers, while entertaining some 765 pupils to tea in Shaa House over the years. In a similar vein Bird's secretary, Judy Baker, was a source of enormous support as she was to be to two further Heads.

However, as with previous changes of Headmaster, there was a legacy of issues to be



Alan Kershaw

considered and decisions to be made. There was a pressing need for the academic incorporation of the Junior School under the overall management and responsibility of the Senior School Head. IT and the use of computers in education demanded a concerted and comprehensive strategy. Competition from other educational institutions required a greater emphasis on marketing and public relations and there was a movement to increase the range of subjects offered for examination. These were just some of the topics that would find their way into Mr Mellor's 'in tray'.



Wasdale Camp 1996

New Perspectives

Broadening horizons



Ian Mellor



Charles Speight

Ian Mellor's initial impressions of the school community were very positive. His report to the Governors in December 1996 identified a school 'that knew what it was about'. It needed no new 'mission statement' simply greater debate on how best to achieve its goals. 'The vast majority of what I have seen,' he wrote, 'is extremely impressive.' Mellor was particularly impressed with the motivation and focus of the pupils both in and out of the classroom and he paid tribute to the skills and personalities of the teaching staff.

However, Headmaster Mellor wanted to address one issue as soon as possible. Triggered on his first day by the UCAS reference preparation procedures, which necessitated much duplication of time and effort, he proposed a major review of the Information Technology facilities. He set out terms of reference for a root and branch analysis of requirements for a system that would cater for all the school's needs and be flexible enough to allow for growth. Any new system would need the services of a full-time Operations Manager.

The report on the Junior School inspection had been supportive of the policies and practice, recognising strengths but had identified a need for greater liaison with the Senior School or, as Ian Mellor put it, 'one school, one purpose'. More attention was to be given to careers advice within school, with emphasis on a sense of direction with regard to choices and UCAS thinking. There was a need for non-academic recognition in areas other than sport and an effective working model of appraisal as 'staff development'. **1.**

One of Ian Mellor's strengths was the genuine interest he took in the everyday aspects of school life, talking at break-time to pupils in the quadrangle or wandering around at lunchtime on duty. He had an eclectic range of interests and views and was happy to debate any of them at length. He made clear his commitment to provide a caring environment not just for the pupils but for the staff and the whole school community in whatever capacity they were employed. He encouraged a philosophy of making teaching a positive experience.

The combination of Mellor as Headmaster and Speight as Chairman was proving to be good for the school. It was a genuine partnership where ideas could be, and were, freely exchanged. Neither vetted each other's speeches. They both were happy with what the other was going to say. Both felt that communication was important and the Chairman was keen to elicit the views of the Board and those of the Bursar and senior staff in order to produce a blueprint for the future development of the school. He wholeheartedly endorsed Ian Mellor's view that all who worked for the good of the school should have their contribution recognised. Sadly there were still some small pockets of resistance among staff and Governors to this enlightened approach as late as 1998.

March 1997 saw the beginning of the end of the security problems which had plagued the school for a number of years. Various schemes had proved to be unsuccessful and after a protracted series of meetings with the local planning authority a perimeter fence was to be erected with provision for visitor identification at a single point of entry. Planning permission had been granted for the Junior School extension on 16 October 1996 and building was well underway. It was envisaged that numbers would increase to approximately 450 over the following three to four years. Senior School numbers had been stable since 1987 at around 1,000.

Open Day arrangements and public relations initiatives were now having a very positive effect with prospective parents and there was much praise for how the school's external relations were being handled giving the school a significant advantage over its competitors. In 1997, 570 children sat the examination, of whom 370 were called for interview. 290 were offered places including 57 from the Junior School. Of the 150 who accepted, 62 were awarded assisted places.

The Headmaster indicated his intention to institute a Whole School Review beginning after Easter looking at all aspects of school life both

major and minor. An initiative between the English and Music Departments produced another exceptionally well received Prism Concert performed at St George's Church.

The Governors agreed fees for 1997/98 at £4,266 in the Senior School and £3,285 in the Junior School. In June 1997 the Government had given notice of their intention to phase out the Assisted Places Scheme. This news had caused considerable concern not only among the staff who were becoming increasingly concerned about maintaining academic standards but also among those who were motivated by the terms of the Founder's Will to provide an education to the community at large, not just to those boys and girls whose parents could afford it. There was no real dissent among the Governors, however. The survival of the school was and always will be based on having enough pupils but the Governors were also beginning to devote more time to the question of bursaries.

Further building considerations

In mind now was a germ of an idea to visually enhance the presence of the Senior School by re-orientating the main entrance to face the A6 incorporating a new reception area, library, teaching rooms and administrative offices.

In September 1997 the rebuilt Junior School was finished and was officially opened by the Duke of Westminster on the 20th January 1998. The purpose-built facilities for Art, Design Technology, Music, Information Technology and Science had been completed in 1987 and to these were added eight new classrooms around a paved courtyard, including a new front entrance facing the Senior School.

The design of the car parks now allowed for pupils to be dropped off by car or school bus within the school's own grounds and to walk directly into either the Junior or the Senior School. The school had been able to add the Kwikfit building to its portfolio but, unless there were unforeseen

developments, that lease would not expire until 2027. However, the lease provided for a fixed income for the school with reviews every five years and thus provided a valuable source of additional income. With this purchase came the satisfaction that the school now owned all the land from just north of the drive along the A6 right up to Woodsmoor Lane, a not inconsiderable achievement which, as one Governor put it, 'necessitated a huge leap of faith'.

Academic issues, largely outside the school's control, continued to frustrate planning. Flaws in the Government Performance League Tables, uncertainty as to the Labour Party's stand on selection and assisted places funding and the failure of the Dearing Report with all its inconsistencies and lack of clarification on, for example, core skills were unhelpful. **2.** Ian Mellor had always felt that a Labour Government would be less of a threat to independent schools than a Conservative one. Grant Maintained Schools, created by the Conservatives, had opened up the way for schools to have a much greater say in their own development and if this initiative was extended there was every possibility of a competitive threat to the independent sector.

Within school the House system was working well. There was lots of interest and participation with many pupils having the opportunity to take part in sporting competitions as well as music and charity fundraising. Many more staff had joined a House. The work of the Infant section of the Junior School was considered excellent by HMI Inspectors on a visit.

Meanwhile significant progress had been made in IT. R M Nimbus, a company experienced in providing school systems had been contracted to build an infrastructure throughout the school. Paul Roebuck had been appointed Systems Manager. There was a full-time member of staff in charge of IT in the curriculum and the two computer rooms were full to bursting point every day.

In March 1998 Ian Mellor advised the school that there would be a full HMC inspection in the summer of 1999 which would almost certainly include the Junior School. **3.** Staff Committees were reporting back within the Review consultation period with the aim of producing a School Development Plan. At this stage one recommendation was to move from eight GCSEs to nine. **4.**

The Davenport Theatre had been demolished between May and July 1997 and in the summer of 1998 the car park reached its final north, central and south manifestation reaching far out onto the Woodsmoor site, incorporating a second sweeping entrance onto the A6 in addition to the one on Woodsmoor Lane. The security arrangements were completed over the summer with electronic gates in place at various locations and a gatekeeper stationed by the corner of the Dining Hall.

The Old Stopfordians' Association had been a source of support to the school in a variety of ways over the years and on Remembrance Day, the 11th November 1999 the service to remember the school's dead from two World Wars and the Falklands conflict was held in the Main Hall for the first time with the Senior School and some 20 members of the OSA in attendance. It was a most moving occasion. **5.**

The Chairman's plan to develop a long-term strategy was beginning to bear fruit and in the autumn of 1999 the Governors were able to make some exciting announcements. For some time they had been considering the next step in the expansion of the school's facilities. They had looked closely at the recommendations of the Headmaster and the Bursar and considered the thoughts of the teaching staff before proposing an ambitious long-term Development Control Plan. A number of different options and directions had been discussed to be funded in phases. The idea to build a new entrance suite facing the A6 had been put on hold and at the top of the list was a Sports Hall and a Technology Centre incorporating

Home Economics. The two existing gymnasia were really too small and facilities for Design and Technology were recognised as being inadequate. This was almost certainly to be the object of phase one. A second phase was likely to produce a new Library. Both these projects would free up space for other subjects to expand into and generally ease congestion. The Sports Hall complex was confirmed with a projected completion date of September 2001 at a cost of £2.8 million. The location was ideally suited to the overall objective of drawing the two sites of the school together while providing a visual focus from the A6 with external access from the new south entrance.

The inspection had gone well. The school had what the Lead Inspector called 'the shortest feedback session I have ever given', so pleased was he with what he found. One outcome of the Report was the confirmation of the increase from eight to nine subjects at GCSE. This seemingly simple change would give pupils much greater freedom of choice in the selection of subjects to study but it also had implications for teaching space.

Government initiatives were gradually becoming clearer and there was to be a major change at Advanced Level. From September 2000 all sixth formers would begin four 'A' levels and be assessed at the end of the first year ('AS' level). They could then continue with all or some of those subjects in the second year (A2) with the opportunity for re-sits at frequent stages. 6. The implications of these changes were, huge increases in examination time, less teaching time and substantially more administration.

The extra-curricular activities of the school had been growing numerically year by year since 1980 and in 1998/99 the extent of those activities was able to be more comprehensively recorded in a totally new format of the 'Stopfordian' magazine. Articles could be enhanced with many more photographs and illustrations of artwork printed in colour for the first time. The termly news publication 'Taking Stock' was becoming more ambitious in content and layout.

In December 1999 Andrew Carter, the Headmaster of the Junior School left to become Head of Vernon Holme, the Junior School of Kent College, Canterbury. He was replaced by Mr Larry Fairclough who had previously been Headmaster at Heathfield School, the Preparatory School for Rishworth School, Ripponden.

Over the years, and particularly since the expansion in numbers and buildings, the Junior School had developed an identity and an autonomy of its own with charismatic and popular Headmasters initially under Richard Reeman and then under Andrew Carter. The Governors had seemed reluctant to question educational practices and had been content to allow this situation to continue. It was well into Ian Mellor's time before the Board decided to appoint a Governor with particular responsibility for liaison with the Junior School. Both David Bird and Ian Mellor had identified the need to unite the two schools with a common agenda where overall control and responsibility lay with the Senior School Headmaster. Both had tried a number of strategies with varying degrees of success. Larry Fairclough, an experienced Head, held similar views to Mellor and from that point on progress was made on many fronts, notably in the entrance examination requirements and the systems for warning parents that the Senior School might not be the right choice for their child. Both, however, wanted to ensure that most boys and girls were sufficiently well prepared to enter the Senior School.

To celebrate the Millennium, the Chairman, Charles Speight, organised an evening reception on Friday 30th June on the terrace of the House of Commons. The evening was hosted by Stephen Day, MP for Cheadle. Almost 200 governors, staff, former staff, Old Stopfordians, pupils, parents and friends gathered together to exchange news and reminiscences. The event was particularly notable for the presence of five Headmasters, Messrs I Mellor, D R J Bird, H R Wright, F W Scott and L Fairclough. Former Chairman of Governors, W A Kershaw attended along with Sir Adam Butler, the Prime Warden, and Mr Robin Buchanan- Dunlop,



Five Headmasters – Houses of Parliament 2000. Hugh Wright, Larry Fairclough, Ian Mellor, David Bird and Francis Scott



Tony Cheslett on Mull

the Clerk to the Goldsmiths' Company.

Sadly one annual trip which had taken place for many years saw its last adventure in the summer of 2000. The first and second year trip to Mull, often the first experience, for many boys and girls, of walking and camping away from home, was

initially the initiative of John Stanley, the former Art Master. It was he who had led walking trips to Italy, Greece and Corsica in the late 1950s and 1960s. A number of members of staff had continued the tradition before an illness to Tony Cheslett, a keen walker and the most recent leader, signalled an end to the long coach journey

to the Western Isles. Soon, however, this valuable experience would be replaced by an outdoor activities residential programme for the new 11-year-old intake a little nearer to home in Derbyshire.

In September 2001 the eagerly awaited Sports Hall and Design Technology Centre was ready for occupation. Designed deliberately as a stand-alone building, although connected to the swimming pool with a main entrance facing the



The Sports Hall entrance facing the A6



The footing of the Sports Hall and Technology building

new drive, the Sports Hall offered facilities for badminton, basketball, short tennis, five-a-side, football and cricket nets. There were plans to add a climbing wall at a later date. There was a fitness and training room and additional changing facilities. The Design Technology Centre now included Home Economics and Textiles teaching facilities whilst providing additional space for display and resources. The workshops were fitted out with high specification industrial equipment for working in wood, metal and plastics. A computer studio offered CAD potential. The New Building was officially opened by HRH The Duchess of Gloucester on 13th November 2001.

Since 1996 the pace of building activity had been relentless and the contribution made by the Chairman, Charles Speight, and particularly the Vice-Chairman, Martyn Garner, who chaired the Building Committee for many years, and his successor Roger Yates, should be recognised. The Building Committee met with incredible frequency whenever a new project was underway, both during the pre-contract stages when planning consents were being sought, always a nervous experience, and during the actual construction process. It says much for the close attention given by those Governors and other members of the Building Committee that building projects were always completed within a small margin of the amount approved by the Board. It was Martyn Garner who persuaded the Governors to spend an additional £22,000 putting chrome banisters and panels in the Sports/Technology development, a detail which significantly improved the look of the building.

An emphasis on bursaries

Meanwhile the debate over the provision of bursaries had moved on. The loss of the Assisted Places Scheme had only brought the issue into sharper focus as for some time the Governors had been considering ways in which the financial foundations of the school could be secured. **7.** The funding from the Assisted Places Scheme had amounted to £750,000 annually.

In September 1999 Christine Henstock's role as Public Relations Officer had changed. She had become the Development Director and Mrs Tina Luckhurst had been appointed to the post of Marketing Manager. Mrs Henstock was given the brief to produce a strategy for fundraising. In October a Development Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Governor Norman Reeve and representing the broad constituency of the school. One of its first decisions was to commission a report from a professional fundraising company which reported back in July 2000.

The decision was taken to launch a Bursary Fund, aimed mainly at Old Stopfordians, and in October 2001 two initial presentations were given by the Chairman and the Headmaster, one at the College of Arms in London and the other in the Hallam Library at School. Plans were also announced at the same time for phase two of the Development Control Plan. This was confirmed as a New Library and Learning Resource Centre to replace the Hallam Library which was no longer adequate for the numbers of pupils in the school and the rigours of the curriculum. This would have the added advantage of being able to restore the Hallam Hall to its former function at the spiritual heart of the school to the delight of many former pupils who retained fond memories of assemblies and dramatic productions. The presentations were a great success and were followed up by a number of other initiatives. As a consequence, the Bursary Fund was established. In September 2002 there was a further launch meeting directed at parents introduced by Bruce Marshall OS, an executive of Warner Brothers, who had negotiated with J K Rowling to bring the Harry Potter books to the big screen.

One aspect of the fundraising strategy had been to encourage Old Stopfordians and friends of the school to make a bequest in the form of a legacy and in so doing become members of the newly formed Edmond Shaa Society. On 20th March 2003 there was an Inaugural Lunch to which members were invited and which was attended by representatives of the Goldsmiths' Company and



The Library in the Hallam Hall

Sir John and Lady Best-Shaw, the Founder's kin. One comparatively minor, but very significant, change was made in the school's sport provision in the 2003/04 winter season. Football was introduced as an activity in the first year for boys. The decision had already been made to phase out lacrosse, primarily because of the lack of suitable opposition but also because of the difficulty of finding coaching staff. One rather more pragmatic reason to replace lacrosse with football, however, was the need to acknowledge the wishes of prospective parents and pupils who had increasingly asked for its inclusion in the curriculum. There was a degree of irony in the current position, as football had been the boys' winter sport for a long time in the Junior School and, historically, it pre-dated rugby in the Senior School. Until recently the Old Stopfordians' Football Club had been the backbone of the Association.

March 2003 also saw Charles Speight retiring from the Governing Body. He had been a member of the Board since 1988, becoming Vice-Chairman in 1993 and Chairman in 1996. A life member of the Old Stopfordians' Association, he was President in 1988/89. As Chairman Charles had been

enormously supportive of school events and his unassuming and encouraging manner was always appreciated. He had been heavily involved in all the building projects since 1990. Charles Speight's experience of business and finance had been invaluable in securing the purchase of the Dialstone Lane fields and the Davenport Theatre. His most significant contribution was his role in the extension of the Junior School and the Sports Hall and Technology Centre. Speight was replaced by another Old Stopfordian, R L E Rimmington, an accountant, a Trustee of the Stopfordian Trust and a Governor since 1992. **8.**

In the summer of 2003 Mary Harris retired. Ian Mellor had recognised her contribution to the school and for the past five years she had been Deputy Head alongside Paul Ashcroft. The post had incorporated that of Director of Studies with responsibilities for timetable, staffing and the delivery of the academic curriculum. Mary Harris had been appointed in 1980 as a part-time teacher of Classics. Two years later she became full-time and Head of Department the following year. In swift succession came the posts of Assistant Senior Mistress and Director of Studies. She had been a valued member of the school's



Richard Rimmington

senior management team. Mrs Harris was replaced by Miss V L Barrett who had previously taught at Portsmouth Grammar School.

The Governors had been particularly busy over the last 12 months. Vice-Chairman Lady Charlotte Beatson, the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel J A Christie-Miller, the former Chairman, with the help of the Headmaster and the Bursar, had written or re-written many of the school policies. These were now listed on the school's updated website and had ensured compliance with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Vice-Chairman Ron Astles had chaired the Business Planning Committee which had carried out a full risk assessment of the school's activities while Governor Norman Reeve continued to chair the Development Committee. Governor Roger Yates was leading the Building Committee in the detailed planning of the new Library and Resource Centre. Although there had been many discussions with regard to this project, Chairman Richard Rimmington arrived at one meeting and said briskly: 'Never mind a one storey structure, it makes much better economic sense to build the library and a new science area all at once.' Thus was born the idea to change the design to include

new science labs on a second storey above the Library. It was not until after further discussion that it was decided that physics was the most logical department to occupy the additional space. The decision to incorporate a new Physics Department above the Library was significant for a number of reasons. The problem with the Woodsmoor site was that it was effectively a separate campus and despite the best efforts of all concerned much time continued to be lost as pupils crossed from one site to the other between lessons. Although most departments now had all their teaching space and resources more or less adjacent to each other the Biology and Physics Departments straddled the two sites. This meant that essential and expensive equipment often had to be duplicated or transported with staff frequently moving between the two sets of laboratories. The new plans meant that Physics could now leave Woodsmoor and its base in the 1957 science building on the Hallam site. Biology could also vacate Woodsmoor and withdraw entirely to the 1957 building. Chemistry, had of course, recently been provided for in the 1991 development. Removing the need to provide science facilities at Woodsmoor would prove to be an important factor in subsequent planning for the future of that site.

In October 2004 the Governors raised the profile of the educational sub-committee and its brief now was to question strategies and encourage broader educational debate. The Governors had also appointed the first female Old Stopfordian to the Board. Sarah Carroll was one of the pioneer girl pupils in the early 1980s and was an Investment Banker in the City of London.

There were increasing concerns over the Government's Strategy Unit's plans to alter the terms of the charitable status of schools. For 400 years 'advancement of education' had been a charitable status in its own right but it was now being proposed that a charity must be able to demonstrate 'public benefit'. The problem was that although the school could demonstrate its commitment to bursary places and other activities involving the local community, the Government

had declined to define exactly what it meant by 'public benefit'.

Refurbishment and maintenance were always items on the agenda and during this time the all-weather surface, 'Reemans', and the Woodsmoor tennis courts had been completely re-laid.

Meanwhile, Ian Mellor had declared his intention to retire at the end of the 2005 academic year.

Building work began on the Library and Physics building in mid-July and construction work was scheduled to finish in the spring of 2005. Major refurbishment of the three Biology Laboratories was carried out during the summer along with other significant building and maintenance work, mainly in monsoon conditions. At one time the Bursar, John Leay, and the ancillary staff were juggling with 20 different contractors on site as well as coping with a 130,000 gallon flood on the Junior School playing field that was having its drains renewed.

Throughout all this activity the Development Appeal was gathering pace. During the summer of 2004, a successful telephone appeal to Old Stopfordians took place. The total of cash and pledges, including promised legacies, had reached £1.5 million. This, in the final year of the Assisted Places Scheme, was welcome news.

At the beginning of the new academic year there was news of two Headmasters of Stockport Grammar School. On 25th July Francis Willoughby Scott, Headmaster 1962–1979, died. His funeral service, attended by 200 family and friends, was held in Plymouth where he and his wife Margaret had lived in retirement. In October the Governors were able to announce that the new Headmaster would be Mr Andrew Chicken the then Head of Colfe's School in South-East London. After teaching history in Rochester and at Manchester Grammar School he had become Head of History at Cheadle Hulme School before being appointed Deputy Headmaster three years later. In his final year there he was Acting Headmaster.

In April 2005 both the Senior and Junior Schools

were inspected. Independent school inspections were now formalised and to be expected on a six-year cycle. The school was to be the guinea pig for a new style of inspection which differed from that of 1999 in that it looked rather more rigorously at school management strategies and their implementation. The inspectors employed a technique known as the template approach. They arrived with a set view of which boxes must be ticked and how but with little consideration of other ways of doing the same job. Despite pre-inspection briefings there was no indication of the form the inspection would take. The initial feedback afterwards was digested by the Governors for five minutes. They were far from impressed and declared that they did not recognise what the inspectors were talking about. In the event the final Report was quite different in tone. Interestingly the examination results for that year were again the best ever.

While the Report declared that standards of achievement had been maintained in a caring and friendly environment it chose not to emphasise that aspect that had so characterised Ian Mellor's Headmastership. It highlighted areas in which it was considered further improvements could be made. The report recommended that a school development plan be constructed to agree plans and priorities, that a coherent approach to marking within departments should be formulated, that there should be an increase in the number of subjects offered within a broader timetable and that a plan be devised for systematic monitoring of the departments by the senior management team. It also recommended the identification and sharing of good teaching practice with a view to establishing consistency of high quality teaching and effective performance across the school. The Junior School inspection followed a more conventional pattern acknowledging the high standards set.

As Ian Mellor's last term drew to a close, tributes to his stewardship were heartfelt and emotional. The Chairman, Richard Rimmington made reference to 'our enthusiastic, inspiring, popular and highly respected Headmaster. He possessed

the precious asset of a great love of children and an overwhelming desire for them to do well in school, to enjoy school and to be equipped for the wider world when they leave.'

Ian Mellor had been a passionate and enthusiastic advocate of bursaries in order to maintain the social mix and fabric of the school, to maintain academic excellence and to give the same opportunities to children as he himself received. Over 10% of pupils in the Senior School were benefiting from bursaries. He had energetically promoted the Bursary Fund. He was always ready to engage in debate on any topic anyone chose to initiate and his forthright views invariably won the argument. As Paul Ashcroft, the Deputy Head recalled, 'As is often the case with good leaders, he was either right or right and his considerable intellect never let him down.'

Ian Mellor made no attempt to hide his contempt for league tables and educational targets set by successive Education Ministers. Equally he had no time for what he perceived to be political correctness in the educational system and the inexcusable variation in standards of marking by the Examination Boards which took forever to correct. In an attempt to conform to the new orthodoxy the Government directed Core Skills Programme was taught for one year. However, when all the school's mathematical elite failed the Numeracy Test something was clearly wrong with the scheme. **9**. He steadfastly refused to inflate the league tables by either entering weak pupils as private candidates who would then not show up in the statistics or by refusing them entry altogether.

Ian Mellor's contributions to the development of the school deserve particular mention. When he joined the school in September 1996, the school had just a small number of computers. He argued passionately from his earliest days that the school needed to invest massively in IT and persuaded the Governors to spend more than £1 million on hardware, software and infrastructure in order to ensure that pupils could benefit from the latest

technology. By 2005 the school had over 300 PCs, laptops, printers, whiteboards and scanners with plans for more to come. On the building side, the whole of the frontage of the school had been redeveloped. Very much on Mr Mellor's initiative, and with his enthusiastic support, the Sports and Technology Centre was built along with the new Library.



The new Library and Physics building

Communication in the Digital Age

A catalyst for change

The new library was a great success. Equipped with study areas, IT research facilities and a separate IT suite, it was available for use from the beginning of the autumn term. The final three days of the summer term had seen the transfer of some 15,000 books, 600 pupils having volunteered to form a human chain to pass boxes of books from the Hall library to their new home. Now the Hallam Hall would be available for meetings, recitals and other gatherings once more. The seven specialist Physics teachers and the two technicians quickly adapted to their new spacious accommodation. The new Library and Physics Laboratories were officially opened on Wednesday 7th December 2005 by the Duke of Gloucester. The Duke was delighted to accept the invitation as the Duchess had previously opened the Sports Hall and Technology centre and he joked that they now had 'his and hers' plaques. In September, responding to parental demand and to ensure continuity, the Junior School opened a nursery section for children aged three.

Over recent years the range of extra curricular activities in the school had continued to expand. Particularly notable was the growth of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Begun in 1990 by Ruth Groves with just 20 pupils the scheme now had a quarter of the Senior School participating at Bronze, Silver or Gold level. Between 1990 and 1996 a total of 630 pupils had been involved in the scheme. In 1995 the school became its own Operating Authority, being totally responsible for all aspects of the Award and dealing directly with the North West Regional Award office.

Music and Drama productions continued to explore ambitious new directions. The first ever Model United Nations Conference held at school was a great success with the international broadcaster and author Kate Adie opening the event. Over 200 delegates from ten UK schools took part. **1.**

A World Challenge Expedition had recently returned from Venezuela with a further trip planned to return to Uganda in 2007. **2.** Geographers had visited Iceland and Kenya and other trips had travelled to the USA, France, Germany and Italy. Other excursions, too

numerous to mention, successful team sports fixtures and individual sporting successes in both the Junior and Senior Schools increasingly demanded attention and recognition.



Andrew Chicken

The new Headmaster Andrew Chicken had quickly addressed the recommendations of the inspection. A parental survey had demonstrated high levels of satisfaction but had highlighted areas similar to those noted in the report. A School Nurse had been appointed from September 2006 to supervise the day-to-day care of the whole school community but also to be responsible for the provision of high quality health education. **3.** A Learning Support Co-ordinator had been appointed in January. The Inspection Report had provided the catalyst for a major overhaul of the way that the internal reporting and monitoring of staff and teaching standards was conducted. Towards the end of his Headmastership, Ian Mellor had asked David Howson, the Head of English, to join the Senior Management Team with the express purpose of asking difficult questions. Andrew Chicken appointed Howson to the post of Senior Tutor, with a brief to ensure that the best teaching practice and standards were achieved in all

departments. He was also to oversee the appraisal and professional development of members of the teaching staff. Heads of Department had been looking at the breadth of the curriculum and the various ways it could be delivered. Philosophy had been introduced as a subject at Advanced Level and Spanish at GCSE and a team was reviewing all aspects of the school's pastoral provision. From September 2007 there had been a major change in the organisation of the school day. For many years, the constant pupil traffic moving in both directions between lessons at the Hallam and Woodsmoor ends of the site had been unsatisfactory and much time had been lost. Now there was to be a new fortnightly timetable with five lessons each day instead of eight which, it was hoped, would accommodate the broader curriculum and reduce the frequency of pupil journeys.

While the school was addressing these issues there was a more general concern about the national fall in the birth rate during the 1990s and increasing competition from other excellent schools in what was perceived to be a declining market through a tightening economy. However, the school's popularity was confirmed when in September 2005 the recruitment process had yielded a seven form intake and the following year saw a similar pattern. Soon after his arrival the Headmaster had spent a considerable amount of time compiling a new prospectus. This marked the beginning of an emphasis on communication with existing and prospective parents, embracing a range of new technologies.

In the autumn of 2006 the school announced the creation of an Annual Fund. This was to provide additional resources to fund projects and bursaries but with a view to complete selected projects within the lifetime of a child at school. A number of financially modest ideas were proposed, and donors were encouraged to support a project of their choice. It was considered unlikely that these projects could be funded from fee income. While this initiative proved successful in its first year it was subsequently absorbed into

the larger fundraising strategy after that. By the autumn of 2007 almost £180,000 had been received which included two grants from the Zochonis Educational Trust.

In November 2006 the Bursar John Leay retired. During his fifteen years of service he had managed the financial affairs of the school with dedication and a professional, almost ruthless efficiency while demonstrating a great fondness for the school. The Governors were always very supportive of his attempts to ensure that unpaid fees were never written off until every attempt had been made to collect them. Under his stewardship the appearance of the school had been transformed. John had overseen the major building projects including the sixth form court, the all-weather surface, the rebuilding of the Junior School, the Davenport Theatre project and the car parks and the new school entrances. Heavily involved at the concept and planning stages he had managed the construction of the Sports and Technology Centre and the Library with assurance and authority. During this period he had also dealt efficiently with the avalanche of new regulations which had poured out of successive governments. John Leay was particularly proud of how incredibly efficient and professional were the great majority of the support staff who now numbered over 80. Early on he had spent much time persuading the Governors to refer to them collectively as support staff, and not non-teaching staff. He then spent further time persuading the teaching staff to do likewise. He was particularly pleased when his staff involved themselves in wider school activities as when, for example, Karl Bond, the security guard and Sally Brown, the IT manager and technician, gave freely of their time spending countless hours assisting with D of E expeditions and Wasdale.

The new Bursar was Christopher Watson, a former Head Boy of the school. A chartered accountant, Mr Watson was previously Director of Corporate Services, Skills for Justice, which is the sector skills council covering all employers, employees and volunteers working in the UK Justice system. Prior to that for over 20 years he was employed in

various business managerial roles in the Granada Television group.

On Thursday 24th May 2007 Sir Chris Bonnington, Britain's most respected and well-known mountaineer, friend of Peter Boardman OS and a patron of the school's Development Fund, gave an extremely moving illustrated talk about three of his Everest climbs and his friendship, experiences and memories of Peter. The evening event was extremely successful and contributed to the £30,000 which had been raised to build a climbing wall in the Sports Hall. Some £10,000 of this had been donated by the Parents' Association. The climbing wall had been the most popular recipient for support under the Annual Fund initiative and was completed in August 2008. It was opened officially by the distinguished climber Pat Littlejohn on 21st November. **4.**

Lacrosse at the school finally ceased at the end of the 2006/07 season. The history of the sport at SGS can be traced back for more than 100 years. Generations of pupils had come to appreciate the technique and skill required and, on leaving school, had fed the Old Stopfordians' teams. In recent years, however, it had become increasingly difficult to find qualified coaches despite the considerable support of the Old Stopfordians' Lacrosse Club. For some time the activities of school lacrosse and the OS club had been effectively one and the same.

The Governors had been re-structuring the School's constitution and on 31st August 2007 the school was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. The Governors were now both directors and charitable trustees. It had been an opportunity to review all aspects of their governance which had taken many hours of work by the old and the new Bursars and, in particular, Governors Lady Beatson, Andrew Booth and David Foulkes. The process of incorporation placed responsibilities on all Governors and, as a result, it was decided that the Mayor of Stockport, after many decades, should cease to be an ex-officio Governor of the School.

On 12th November 2007 Lt. Col. John A Christie-Miller, former Chairman of Governors and a Patron of the Development Fund, died. His service to the school continued a long and distinguished family tradition, following his father, Sir Geoffrey. John Christie-Miller's wife's great-uncle Sir Alan Sykes Bt. had been chairman from 1921 to 1950. John Christie-Miller's daughter, Lady Charlotte Beatson, was Deputy Chairman of the current Governing Body. 5.

The school's irritation with the publication of 'official' Government league tables continued with the school's position appearing artificially low. This was as a consequence of the decision to enter candidates in Mathematics and Physics for the challenging International GCSE papers which are not included in the Education Department's calculations. The majority of academic independent schools had suffered a similar fate. The 'Financial Times' offered a useful corrective; their calculation revealing Stockport Grammar School to be the best value large co-educational independent school in the country.

Marketing considerations

The Headmaster and the Governors had deliberated at length the issue of marketing and the whole question of communication with current and prospective parents. Andrew Chicken's new prospectus presentation had included a DVD to complement the written text and a new school website was launched in March 2008. A decision was taken to develop a more co-ordinated approach to managing the school's internal and external communications while ensuring that due emphasis was placed on the many links with the local community. These functions were to be managed in a single department headed by a Director of External Relations and in March 2008 they appointed Mrs Rachel Horsford, who was currently holding a similar position in the University of Manchester, to the post. Mrs Christine Henstock, who had held the post of Development Director, and who had

been responsible for much of the work of the administration of the Bursary Fund and the publication 'Taking Stock' had left to take up a position at the Royal Northern College of Music. At the same time, Mr Michael Flaherty was appointed to take responsibility for the co-ordination and development of Information Technology across the curriculum. He was to bring considerable experience to the role having been selected as one of the six national 'lead practitioners' in the subject by the Specialist Schools' Trust. A full-time Website Editor was appointed to keep all content up to date while continually looking for ways to improve the site. While the emphasis of the External Relations Department was to be on marketing and recruitment, the infrastructure that had been successfully developed to encourage funding for bursaries was to continue both as a declared aim of the school but also to address the concerns of the Charities Commission agenda of 'public benefit'. In the year 2007/08 bursaries to pupils, mainly from the school's own resources, had amounted to over £800,000 and in 2008/09 were projected to rise to £900,000. The Governors had also realised that the school needed to be more transparent about their finances and key financial information was distributed to parents during the year. Some 60% of income was spent on salaries and only 4% was made as a surplus to repay borrowings and provide for improving facilities.

Despite near record numbers in the school in 2008/09, when there were two further years with a seven form entry at 11, the Governors were understandably cautious about continuing expansion plans given the overall financial situation in the country. Discussions were underway, however, to build an Arts Centre primarily for English, Drama and Music and plans had reached a quite detailed stage. It was becoming increasingly clear though that if this development went ahead there would be no money left to deal with the increasing maintenance problems surrounding the black and white teaching block at Woodsmoor which were becoming a priority.

The economic downturn and the prospect of a recession demanded careful future planning. School fees, while remaining very competitive with other schools in the area stood at £2,847 per term in the Senior School and £2,193 in the Junior School. Plans for the use of the land on which 11 Clifton Park Drive now stood had encountered planning restraints and in 2007 the property was sold.

In terms of the range and breadth of opportunities for all, another of the recommendations of the last inspection, the school had continued to surge forward. The traditional core of major games had been complemented by activities including: dance, badminton, basketball, fitness, swimming, climbing, fencing and girls' football. The school had enjoyed a rapid improvement in the status of football as a major sport. To this list could be added the British Mathematical Olympiad, the Physics Olympiad, the Model United Nations, Mock Trials and regional and national Junior Masterchef competitions. Responding to points arising from the parents' survey there was now a more comprehensive choice of hot and cold food available at lunch time in the Dining Hall and a Breakfast Club for those who arrived at school early. There was also a School Council of elected pupils with uniform, meals and school rules on its agenda.

One activity, in particular, typifies the involvement of large numbers of pupils demonstrating a range of disciplines and skills. The production of 'Les Misérables' in December 2009 had been the school's greatest theatrical challenge in recent memory. It had brought together a cast and crew of more than 80 pupils from across year groups. The audience at each of the six sell-out evenings enjoyed a magical performance complete with two and a half hours of music, a 21-piece orchestra, a complex set designed and built by the Technology and Maintenance Departments with a circular revolving stage and elaborate sound and lighting. It was directed by Helen Lawson, Head of Drama, and Phil Robinson of the Music Department.

Developments in Information Technology were moving ever more quickly. Paul Roebuck, on whose expertise the school had relied for so long, had left transferring his knowledge to Cheadle Hulme School. As Systems Manager, Roebuck had designed, installed and developed a system that had transformed the delivery of ICT at the school. He had always been ready to sort out problems for the teaching and support staff all of whom were invariably on a steep learning curve. A new support team was now in place. As well as the introduction of remote access for staff and pupils to the school's network, the network itself was rebuilt over the summer of 2009. In the autumn a new data management system was introduced – iSAMS. This provided the foundation for recording all pupil data and improved the communication between school and parents. One of the first opportunities to put this to good use was the use of text messaging to inform parents and staff about the closure of the school because of the January snow. The 2008 website was proving difficult to navigate and Tom Fern, the Web Master, was given the task of completely re-designing the site. Digital communication with parents and prospective parents had become the norm and short films showing all aspects of the Senior and Junior Schools were commissioned in DVD format.

A significant retirement in the summer of 2009 was that of David Foulkes, a Governor of long standing. David had been appointed in 1976 as a representative of Stockport Council and over the years his experience and advice on a range of matters had proved to be invaluable. David Foulkes had also been a Governor of Stockport College and in a position to observe and commission current educational management practices in higher education at first hand. As a result of experience gained he was gradually able to persuade the Board at the Grammar School that bringing in additional expertise and educational management skills from outside would greatly assist and improve the overall development of the school. Foulkes' influence was a factor in the comparatively recent creation of an



The Woodsmoor Hall and the black and white block prior to demolition

Education Sub-Committee. He also proposed the appointment of two Vice-Chairmen in order that the considerable workload and responsibilities of the chairman could be shared among key people in committees. David Foulkes was a vociferous advocate of the establishment of the Nursery. Having taken the decision in 2009 to delay the planning for an English, Drama and Music Centre it was becoming increasingly clear that the fabric of the buildings on the Woodsmoor site was deteriorating rapidly and would shortly require considerable money spent to arrest the decline with no appreciable long term benefit. If the Arts Centre project were to proceed the situation at Woodsmoor would only worsen as it was clear that even with the best financial management both developments could not go ahead simultaneously. The Governors, therefore, decided instead to focus on classroom accommodation on the Woodsmoor site. The Woodsmoor Hall and laboratories had been left empty since the new Physics development and in the summer of 2010 those buildings were demolished. The plan was to re-house many of the departments based at Woodsmoor in the new classroom block. English would benefit from additional space and Music could expand into

more of the rooms in the Convent House. The black and white building could then be demolished and the area landscaped. This would be the biggest capital project ever undertaken by the school. The building was scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2012. The project was to be financed by the surpluses built up over the years and from bank loans repayable over the next ten years. The general economic situation had affected recruitment in the Junior School and, reluctantly, in 2011 the decision was taken to reduce the number of the teaching staff by three.

On 18th November 2010 the school was honoured to receive a visit from HRH Prince Edward The Earl of Wessex. The Prince, who is the Patron of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, had requested the visit to acknowledge the work done by the school. Prince Edward took the time to talk to pupils at all stages of the Award who demonstrated many different activities and skills.



View of the site July 2007

During 2011 the Governing Body had continued its policy of considering the purchase of land when it became available and acquired the freehold of the site of the flats in Royal Close, adjacent to the drive on the north side. It also purchased flats 7–12 outright. The school was also beginning to look forward to the following year in order to be able to celebrate 525 years of the Foundation and in April of that year some extremely welcome news was received that helped the overall mood of optimism. At short notice, but not totally unexpected, both the Senior and Junior Schools had been inspected. As this record of the school's progress and achievements begins to come to a close, it is worth quoting from the concluding paragraph of the inspection report.

'The pupils' overall achievement and their learning, attitudes and skills are outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally well educated and the school fulfils its aim to enable boys and girls from a wide range of backgrounds to realise their potential which gives them the best possible start in life. The personal development of pupils is outstanding. They demonstrate excellent moral, social and cultural development and have a clear set of values and principles which inform their

positive perspective on life. The provision for extra-curricular involvement is outstanding.'

The report on the Junior School was no less complimentary. 'The quality of the pupils' achievements and of their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent.' Overall in the reports there were several ideas for further improvements but these had been anticipated and had already been incorporated into the school's targets. 6. Here was conclusive evidence that Headmaster Chicken's five years of strategic planning had paid off.

A parental survey had been carried out by RSAcademics, four years after their previous report. It provided extremely positive feedback. 98% of respondents rated the Senior School's academic results in the top two categories of 'very good' and 'good' and 90% rated the provision of clubs and extra-curricular activities similarly. The Junior School received responses placing them in the top three out of 30 preparatory day schools surveyed by RSAcademics.

In keeping with the overall appraisal policy, the Headmaster had been appraised by John Kelsall,

a former Headmaster of Arnold School, Blackpool and Brentwood School, Essex and now an Educational Consultant. Kelsall wrote, 'Andrew Chicken is totally committed to providing the best possible education for the youngsters of SGS... he cares deeply about the pupils individually and collectively.'

On 12th June 2011 Alan Kershaw died. A Governor for 24 years and Chairman for 17 years until 1996 his legacy was the beginning of the expansion policy that the school had continued to sustain so productively.

By December the re-built website was receiving over 600 visits each day. A fortnightly e-mail newsletter had proved a valuable vehicle for communicating news of the school's busy programme and 'Taking Stock' and the 'Stopfordian' could be readily accessed from the website. Social networking sites were now being used to increase the range of contact with parents.

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On 25th February 2012 the celebrations to mark the 525th year of the school's foundation began with a Gala Concert held at the Royal Northern College of Music. The concert was a collaboration between the School Chamber Choir and Chorale and the Cheshire Sinfonia. The programme began with the combined voices presenting Handel's 'The King shall Rejoice' followed by the Sinfonia singing Mozart's Symphony no. 38 in D Major. After the interval the combined voices joined together again for Haydn's 'Nelson Mass in D Minor'.

Between 14th and 17th of March there was a sell out production of 'Oliver!' by the Senior School which again demonstrated the breadth of talent across the school. From cast, chorus and orchestra, to backstage, technical and marketing teams, the production saw 180 pupils from the first year through to upper sixth involved in a seamless and highly energetic show. The chorus

and orchestra were conducted by the Director of Music, Michael Dow, direction was by Drama teacher Alison Moffatt and the show was produced by the Head of IT, Michael Flaherty.

On 22nd March the annual Shaa Lunch for donors and legators was held in the Hallam Hall and this was followed by Founder's Day on the 23rd with the Service at St George's Church. The address was given by Bishop Lindsay Urwin.

On 2nd May a reception hosted by the Goldsmiths at Goldsmiths Hall in London attracted over 200 guests representing every facet of the school community. The reception celebrated the ongoing relationship which began with the foundation of the school by Sir Edmund Shaa. Speeches by the Clerk to the Goldsmiths' Company Dick Melly, Chairman of Governors Richard Rimmington and Headmaster Andrew Chicken focussed on the connection between the Company and the school, the present-day achievements of pupils and staff and the importance of the bursary campaign that accompanied the 525th anniversary celebrations. The Clerk was able to announce that the Head Boy and the Head Girl were to be invited to be the guests of the Company at the Jubilee Lunch hosted by the Livery Companies in honour of Her Majesty the Queen at Westminster Hall.

On 4th May the now annual Oxbridge Dinner was held at Hertford College Oxford. This was followed by Speech Day at the Plaza Cinema in Stockport. This was to be the second year that this venue had been chosen for the event after a most successful experiment in 2011. Although in many ways it was desirable to hold Speech Day in school there had been no space large enough to house all the pupils for many years and it was generally felt that the whole school community should come together to celebrate the year's achievements. On 8th September the External Relations Department organised tours around the school for the local community as part of the National Heritage Open Day Events.

The Chairman, Richard Rimmington, retired in the summer of 2012. He had been appointed to the Board by Alan Kershaw in 1992 having been a trustee of the Stopfordian Trust since 1987. He became Chairman in 2003 and led from the front in his unwavering support of the Governing Body, the Headmaster and his staff and, not least, of all the pupils' activities, both academic and extra-curricular. Richard had been tireless in the effort he had devoted to preparing for meetings and no governor had probed the finest detail of the accounts with a more analytical eye. Although his professional training and commitment to the preservation of tradition made him, at times, rightly sceptical of prophetic vision, he had nevertheless been determined to ensure that the school continued to move forward in both facilities and management whilst preserving a genuine concern for every member of the school community. He was replaced by Vice-Chairman, Ron Astles, a former Chairman of the Parents' Association, who had been elected to the Board in 1993.

At the start of the autumn term 2012 the new Woodsmoor teaching block was ready for occupation. Much work had gone on over the summer to ensure that snags would be kept to the minimum. The state of the art building now provided 22 classrooms for English, Drama, History, Classics, Psychology, Business Studies and Economics. Teaching for these subjects was in purpose-built rooms designed to high specifications for energy efficiency in a carefully monitored and controlled environment. New ICT equipment had been installed in each room.

The plan was for the black and white building to have been demolished during the summer but again planning issues and the discovery of asbestos conspired to delay that until half term. It had also been decided that the stable block which had housed Modern Languages for many years could usefully be extended a little into the space vacated by the black and white building at little extra cost for the additional space gained.



The new teaching block at Woodsmoor



The demolition of the black and white block

A Time to Pause and Reflect

The integration of the new teaching block into the life of the school at the culmination of the 525 celebrations provides a convenient place to pause and reflect on the achievements of 32 years. Even to chronicle the events since 1980 is exhausting. At various times since that time the school has been hailed as 'a model of co-educational practice'. If that was the case then it most certainly is now. The academic reputation remains very strong indeed. 'A' level students obtained outstanding results in 2012 with nearly 90% of all entries receiving A*, A or B grades in a 100% pass rate, a level of success only fractionally behind the best ever results of 2010. **1.** This ensured that nearly every one of the school's students was able to proceed to the university of his or her first choice. For several years the school had been using the A Level Performance System (ALPS) to set targets for sixth form pupils, to monitor their progress and to provide a value-added assessment of the quality of the results. The school had been consistently graded as 'outstanding' for the quality of teaching and learning and in 2012 both the 'Sunday Times' and the 'Financial Times' ranked it in their 'Top Hundred' tables.

Stockport Grammar School has, however, never subscribed to the theory that academic achievement is the sole criterion by which to measure success. As important as grades and marks are, the current school policy offers an education that is more substantial and enduring than the accumulation of technical knowledge. It invests in qualities of character and the development of personal attributes. In this regard there are as many pathways through the school as there are members of it. The school has always offered a range of extra-curricular activities and now it excels in the extent to which girls and boys take advantage of the extensive programme of co-curricular activities which broaden horizons, foster self awareness and encourage leadership and responsibility. Competitive sport, under the overall leadership of Chris Wright, Head of Department since January 1989, continues to

thrive with increasing numbers of pupils gaining honours at national level in a variety of sports. As part of the ethos of the school, sport develops discipline, determination and the ability to perform under pressure. It also develops a desire to win but teaches the importance of losing with dignity.

There is now much greater interaction and understanding than ever between the Senior and Junior Schools. There are cross-over initiatives with staff from the Senior School providing input into the Junior curriculum, particularly in Maths and English. The Curriculum Co-ordinator in the Junior School works closely with the Director of Studies. After the entrance examination in February the pupils begin an enrichment programme experiencing the nature of life and lessons in the Senior School. A large team of sixth form pupils helps with clubs during lunchtime and after school. Overall numbers in the Junior School are currently around 350. The main intake is through the nursery which can accommodate 32 boys and girls. A further 10–12 enter into reception and there is increasing parental interest in years 5 and 6. The traditional entry at 7+ has all but disappeared. Over 90% of pupils transfer to the Senior School.

In 2011/12 in the Senior School some 122 pupils received some level of bursary provision – 12% of the school population. **2.** Three Shaa Scholarships were introduced to commemorate the 525th Anniversary. These are offered on the basis of outstanding academic performance in the 11+ examination procedure and provide a £525 reduction on the fees. Two music scholarships are available each year covering up to 25% of the fees. The school's commitment to providing wider benefit to the community pre-dates any instructions issued by the Charity Commission. Arrangements for the letting of the Sports Hall and swimming pool had first been administered through a private arrangement negotiated by Bursar John Leay but the school now manages a programme of lettings after school and at weekends targeted at improving the opportunities

of groups of children in the local community. In similar vein the Dialstone Playing Fields have been made available to junior football teams in the town. Academic activity and staff expertise is shared with schools in the state sector.

The school refuses to become complacent and continues to strive for increased effectiveness in all that it sets out to achieve. With an established reputation, excellent facilities, responsive pupils, a well qualified and committed staff, a financially secure future and robust pupil recruitment at 11+, it could be forgiven for taking a more relaxed approach. However, there continue to be many factors which need to be addressed. The continuing difficult economic situation, especially in core recruitment areas, the projected decline in pupil numbers and the demographic, financial and competition challenges facing the Junior School are just some of the issues that demand attention. But there are opportunities as well to further develop the 'student voice' and pupil leadership, to continue to reflect the social mix of Stockport and to extend the capacity of staff to adapt classroom practice to changing pupil needs.

However, thanks to the combined efforts of Headmasters, Governors, teaching and support staff and, not least, the pupils over the years, the school is exceptionally well placed. It has been able to absorb the less radical examination directives of successive governments and deflect some of those policies which have restricted and curtailed the activities of mainstream establishments. Relations with the Goldsmiths' Company have never been stronger. By adopting a process of continual re-evaluation and analysis of working practices and with a proven history of planning for the future the school can face the next period in its distinguished history with confidence and conviction. One senses Sir Edmond Shaa would have agreed and approved.

Acknowledgements

The celebration of 525 years of continuous existence provides a logical point at which to bring this particular account to a halt. Future writers may approach a history of the school from a different perspective and with even greater hindsight but any examination of the earlier material will necessarily be more clinical and less personal without the benefit of first-hand experience.

In concluding this account of the last 32 years I am immediately conscious of the need to apologise for the huge amount of information and activity that has necessarily had to be omitted. I can only repeat that the resource for all of the factual content may be found in the school archives.

In the text I have made little reference to members of the teaching staff, many of whom have made a major contribution to school life over the years. Some attempt has been made at redress by listing those longest serving staff in an appendix. If there are others who feel their efforts have not been recognised I apologise again. All the records of the many staff who have given of their own particular expertise and enthusiasm may be found in 'Stopfordian'. Neither could the school have achieved the remarkable pattern of growth without the unstinting efforts of all the secretarial staff, the external relations staff, kitchen staff, technicians, caretaking, maintenance and ground staffs and, more recently, computer technicians. These legions of support staff have, over the years, provided invaluable support and expertise enabling initiatives, ideas and directives to be realised. Successive Governors too have made enormous contributions bringing wisdom, experience and their own professional expertise.

My grateful thanks to all those whose comments and observations I have noted,

included and sometimes used verbatim for their clarity and precision, to compile this account. In particular I would like to acknowledge the reflections of:

Judy Baker, David Bird, Andrew Chicken, Larry Fairclough, David Foulkes, Richard Griffiths, Val Hodgkinson, John Leay, David Howson, Ian Mellor, Charles Speight, Hugh Wright and the reports of Richard Rimmington and Donald Roberts.

Stuart Helm.

Footnotes

Co-education and the Former Convent Site

1. During the period of negotiations David Blank and Alan Kershaw were acting Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. Alan Kershaw and Peter Rowlinson were appointed Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively as of 27 March 1978. Hugh Wright, the new Headmaster, took up the post in April 1979. In 1980 the Full Governing Body comprised: three co-optative members, nominated members from the Goldsmiths' Company, the Hallam Educational Foundation, The Alan Sykes Trust, The OSA (2), The Teaching Staff, ex-officio, the Mayor of Stockport, representative members, Stockport Metropolitan Borough (4), Cheshire County Council (2).

2. The girls' entry at 11 caused no relationship problems as many had already attended co-educational primary schools.

3. Its predecessor in the early 1960s, a somewhat unwieldy vehicle, had suffered the indignity of falling over on its side while conveying a geography field trip party of boys in the south of England. The new vehicle, however, would not pass muster with today's health and safety regulations. It had two long inward facing bench seats and when the brakes were applied firmly the occupants would all slide forward towards the front. There were no seatbelts.

4. The Governors were dissatisfied with the way the Appeal Company was operating and terminated the agreement.

5. This method of funding development was to establish a precedent for all future expansion to date. Contrary to popular myth the school has never enjoyed endowments with which to fund buildings and bursaries

and has had to rely, for the most part, on fee income and prudent financial housekeeping.

6. Headmaster Bird's CV is recorded in the Ball History.

A Period of Consolidation

1. Alan Smith's contribution to the school is recorded in the Ball history.

No Time for Congratulation

1. 'Robbie' was one of the post-war generation teachers whose contribution was exemplary. He arrived in 1952, a graduate in French from Manchester University and taught that language with discipline throughout his time at school. His service with the RAF made him the ideal candidate to become CO of the ATC. He played an important role in school music for many years founding a wind band and giving permanent existence to an orchestra. He was meticulous in his record keeping and was, for a long time, responsible for the organisation of external examinations. Hugh Wright created the post of Proctor which Robbie applied himself to with loyalty and his usual high level of care and attention to detail much preferring to find a lost Home Economics basket or lend a tie than write a hard letter home or hold a detention.

2. The Governing Body now comprised 12 co-optative members and nominative members appointed on behalf of the University of Manchester, the Ephraim Hallam Trust, the Alan Sykes Trust, The OSA and the Teaching Staff.

3. Craft, Design and Technology, while in its infancy as a subject having replaced Woodwork, was now able to undertake a wider range of materials.

4. University and polytechnic entrance application procedure.
 5. As opposed to combined science courses increasingly being offered by the maintained sector.
 6. Headmasters' Conference – the body which represents more than 250 independent schools.
 7. Membership of the Old Stopfordians' Association had previously been voluntary with former pupils paying a nominal life membership fee.
 8. The web address was www.argonet.co.uk/users/sgs
 9. ISJC – Independent Schools Joint Council, which subsequently became ISC, responsible for inspections. ISI – Independent Schools Inspectorate.
 10. Paul Roebuck had been spending half of each week setting up and managing the embryonic IT system in the Senior School but his teaching in the Junior School had been covered internally.
5. The Service had previously been held in the Hallam Hall on the Sunday nearest to the 11 November. In 2011 the number of Old Stopfordians attending had risen to 80.
 6. The original suggestion was that an additional set of 'AS' levels could be taken in the second year as an option instead of continuing to A2 level.
 7. As noted earlier, unlike many other similar independent schools, Stockport Grammar School has never had any significant endowments and has always had to operate with the careful management of fee income.
 8. The Trust Fund established to assist fee-paying parents who had fallen on hard times.
 9. The Core Skills scheme was quickly dropped from the Government's agenda.

Communication in the Digital Age

New Perspectives

1. Pupils had been attending MUN conferences at home and abroad since before 1990
 2. World Challenge Expedition, a company specialising in the organisation of exploration and assistance to communities in Third World countries. They would provide the leaders and infrastructure for pupils and staff to get involved for periods of several weeks. The first venture of this type was in 2002.
 3. Although there had been a School Doctor for many years this had been solely in an advisory capacity with only occasional visits to the school.
 4. Peter Boardman's exploits are recounted in detail in the Ball history.
 5. Details of the Christie-Miller family can be found in the Ball history.
1. Two schemes operated over the last 15 years had not been successful largely due to lack of time provision.
 2. The Dearing Report – a Government initiated report by Sir Ron Dearing in 1997 primarily on the future of tuition fees and university funding.
 3. HMC not OFSTED, the inspection body responsible for the maintained sector.
 4. The previous review of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) prior to Ian Mellor's arrival had stalled at the completion of the diagnostic element.

6. For a number of years the school had been making use of ALPS, the 'A' level Performance System to set targets for sixth form pupils and also to provide a value added assessment of the quality of 'A' level results. The data is compared nationally by the Department of Education and the school's results have consistently been graded as 'outstanding' (top 10%). A similar system, MidYIS had been employed to determine value added scores at GCSE level.

A Time to Pause and Reflect

1. A refinement of the 'A' level grading system brought in by the Government in 2010.

2. The Zochonis Charitable Trust has donated £215,000 to the school's Bursary Fund since 2007. Since 2012 the school has developed a partnership with the Ogden Trust which encourages the support of Physics and offers bursaries to sixth form pupils. In recent years a number of generous legacies have been received, the most significant being that of the charitable trust established by Alan Baxendale OS.

Retirees and Current staff with 25 Years or More Service to the School

- 1987** Alan Smith. 1950. German. House Master.
- 1988**
- 1989**
- 1990** Harry Robinson. 1952. Proctor. French. ATC; Jim Swallow. 1963. Head of Maths. Wasdale Camp; Pat Spiller. 1970. Deputy Head Junior School.
- 1991** Donald Roberts. 1951. Second Master. Head of Classics. Sailing.
- 1992** Sheila Renshaw. 1974. Senior Mistress. Biology; John G Durnall. 1961. Head of Geography. Housemaster. Venturers Society.
- 1993**
- 1994**
- 1995**
- 1996** Nicholas Henshall. 1971. Head of Sixth Form. Head of History; David Hollows. 1972. Head of Lower School. Head of Woodwork .
- 1997**
- 1998**
- 1999**
- 2000**
- 2001**
- 2002** Ken Hollin. 1975. Physics. Careers.
- 2003** Alan Gregg. 1977. Head of Middle School. Head of Biology. House Master. Wasdale Camp; Mary Harris. 1979. Director of Studies. Head of Classics.
- 2004** Carol Condliffe. 1976. Music. Wind and Big bands. Prism Concerts.
- 2005** Stephen Cross. 1980. History; Derek Short. 1975. Head of Chemistry. Jackson Towers. 1976. Head of Music. Choral Society.
- 2006** Alan Heath. 1974. Head of Economics. Lacrosse; Stuart Helm. 1978. Head of Art. House Master. Mountaineering. School Publicity.
- 2007**
- 2008** John Boulding. 1979. Head of Maths. Music. Lacrosse.
- 2009** Ian Bruce. 1982. Chemistry. Computers; Paul Roebuck. 1975. Junior School Maths. Computers.
- 2010**
- 2011**
- 2012** Kim Bridges. 1982. Head of Middle School. Biology. World Challenge Expeditions; Gill Lockwood. 1986. Physics. House Mistress. Hockey. Work experience.

Staff with over 25 years service still currently teaching.

John Bird. 1983. Formerly Head of Classics; Tony Cheslett. 1985. Maths. Outdoor pursuits; Lucy Lammas. 1987. Maths. Sixth Form Ball; David Martin. 1976. Geography. Oxbridge. Prizes. Mountaineering; Jacques Metivier. Biology. 1980; Chris Muscutt. 1982. House Mistress. Head of German. Co-curricular. Outdoor Pursuits; Rayna Johnson. 1986. English. Careers; Wally Krywonos. 1980. Chemistry. House Master. Photography. Rugby.



Aerial view of the school 2013